

Leap2A is an open specification for transferring learner-owned information between different systems. e-Portfolio tools and systems are now widely used by learners to present evidence of learning, achievements and abilities for many purposes, including application for a job or university, assessment or professional accreditation. During their studies, these learners may invest significant time and effort in collecting, selecting, reflecting on and presenting the information included in their e-portfolios, so it is vital that their work doesn't disappear or become unusable as learners move to another college, university or into the workplace.

## Data portability

JISC and JISC CETIS have been supporting a group of vendors and suppliers of e-portfolio tools and systems to develop Leap2A, an interoperability specification for e-portfolio related information. Leap2A enables information created by the learner to be transferred to other systems and tools. Although other e-portfolio specifications exist, these have proved difficult to work with in practice. The aim of this work has been to create a simple specification which is easy to implement. Recent interoperability pilots have demonstrated that data can be transferred between widely used systems such as PebblePad and Mahara, as well as other

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e-portfolio tools. Leap2A has reused other specifications such as Dublin Core and Atom, and it is designed to work well with other specifications.

## Benefits of Leap2A

Using Leap2A offers benefits for learners, e-portfolio systems managers as well as vendors and suppliers of e-portfolio tools and systems.

Leap2A enables **learners** to transfer information from old portfolio systems to new ones as they move between colleges, universities or into the workplace. Learners will no longer need to copy and paste information from one system to another. Where learners use several e-portfolio tools or systems, methods are being developed using Leap2A to allow them to synchronise the information across systems. It also provides a format for learners to back up the e-portfolio information they already have.

It will be easier for **staff supporting e-portfolio use** to persuade learners to develop their e-portfolio if they know that they can take their Leap2A formatted data with them when they leave, or use it in other systems at the same time.

For **e-portfolio system managers**, Leap2A makes it possible to migrate from one e-portfolio system to another without the need for a customised data

## Definitions

A **standard** is an agreed, repeatable way of doing something

[www.bsigroup.com/en/standards-and-publications/about-standards/what-is-a-standard](http://www.bsigroup.com/en/standards-and-publications/about-standards/what-is-a-standard)

**Interoperability** is the capability of a product or system to interact and function with others without any access or implementation restrictions

<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/interoperability>

## Systems that have implemented Leap2A

ePet  
[www.eportfolios.ac.uk/ePET](http://www.eportfolios.ac.uk/ePET)

Mahara  
<http://mahara.org>

MyProgressFile  
[www.myprogressfile.com](http://www.myprogressfile.com)

PebblePad  
[www.pebblepad.co.uk](http://www.pebblepad.co.uk)



migration solution, reducing the risk of data being 'locked into' one system. Eventually, where the college or university management information systems can interoperate with Leap2A, it will become feasible to integrate information between systems such as the e-portfolio system and the student records system, thus reducing the duplication of data.

**e-Portfolio system suppliers and vendors** will be able to reassure customers that the information they put into their system will be able to be reused in the present and retrieved in the future.

A recent JISC briefing paper titled 'Assessing the Business Case for Standards' outlines the wider benefits of developing and using open standards in education.

## Open process

Leap2A is an open specification, developed through a process of open debate and consensus, so that it can be freely implemented by anyone. The specification has attracted significant international attention and is expected to be available under an Open Web Foundation or similar licence. A framework for the governance and management of the specification is currently being developed by the Leap2A community.

## On the horizon

Partners at PebblePad, and the Universities of Newcastle and Nottingham, are currently working together to produce a number of Leap2A compatible web services

with the goal of being able to manage learner information from one place. A 'semantic web' version of the specification is also in the pipeline.

Outside the higher and further education sector, a number of professional bodies are currently exploring how Leap2A might be used to support interoperability of learner data.

In the long term, it is hoped that Leap2A will assist in the development of the market for e-portfolio tools by providing a strong base for the wider adoption of these tools and practices.

## What you can do

If you are a vendor or developer of an e-portfolio system you can get involved in with the Leap2A community to ensure that your system can export and import Leap2A configured data. As an e-portfolio system manager or a learner using an e-portfolio system, you can ask vendors and suppliers if their systems use Leap2A, and stress the importance to you of making your information future proof.

This briefing paper was written by Christina Smart, JISC CETIS, on behalf of JISC.

Alternative formats of this briefing paper can be found at:  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/publications](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications)

## Further Information

Leap2A  
[www.leapspecs.org](http://www.leapspecs.org)

JISC CETIS is the Centre for Educational Technology and Interoperability Standards. It supports JISC and the educational community and runs a website which provides journalism, news, events and resources in this area.  
<http://jisc.cetis.ac.uk>

JISC's e-portfolio work  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/eportfolio](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/eportfolio)

Effective Practice with e-Portfolios  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/programmerelated/2008/effectivepracticeeportfolios](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/programmerelated/2008/effectivepracticeeportfolios)

Assessing the Business Case for Standards, an introduction for strategy planning and resourcing committees  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/briefingpapers/2009/bpbusinesscaseforstandards](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/briefingpapers/2009/bpbusinesscaseforstandards)

e-Portfolios infoKit  
[www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios](http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios)