

e-Portfolios

What institutions really need to know

A project based at the University of Nottingham is proposing a reference model of e-portfolio for lifelong learning, testing the concept of the Framework by seeking to identify the key generic services with which e-portfolios will interact – first of all in relation to admissions and transition processes between study and employment at different levels.

Distributed e-Learning Tools projects are developing applications of e-portfolio systems in institutional, departmental and subject contexts. A number of regional pilot projects involve organisations in different sectors using e-portfolios to enhance the learner experience and support transition on a regional basis.

Studies have delivered reports, FAQs and other relevant support on the legal and records management issues relating to lifelong learner records and e-portfolio systems. Reports have been produced on methodologies for reviewing e-portfolio products and guidance for institutions implementing PDP through e-portfolio.

The JISC e-Learning Programme website is regularly updated with links to developments, outputs and resources for e-portfolio applications.

This briefing paper has been edited by Glenaffric Ltd e-learning consultants in association with Angela Smallwood, Director of the CETL for Integrative Learning at the University of Nottingham and Janet Strivens, Centre for Lifelong Learning at Liverpool University and Senior Associate Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement, who both led projects funded through the JISC MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme.

Alternative formats of the briefing paper can be found at: www.jisc.ac.uk/publications

Further information and resources

JISC MLEs for Lifelong Learning PDP and e-Portfolio projects

www.jisc.ac.uk/elearningfocus/mle/pdp

JISC MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme

www.jisc.ac.uk/mle_lifelonglearning_info.html

JISC e-Learning Programme

www.jisc.ac.uk/programme_elearning.html

Centre for Recording Achievement

www.recordingachievement.org

JISC infoNet e-Portfolios infoKit

www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/InfoKits/effective-use-of-VLEs/e-portfolios

DfES e-Strategy (2005) *Harnessing Technology: Transforming learning and children's services*

www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/e-strategy

HEFCE strategy for e-learning (2005)

www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2005/05_12/

DfES (2005) *Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work*, Parts 1, 2 and 3

www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/skillsgettingon

DfES (2004) Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice (The Schwartz Report)

www.admissions-review.org.uk/downloads/finalreport.pdf

UUK (2004) *Measuring and Recording Student Achievement. Report of the Scoping Group chaired by Professor Robert Burgess*

bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/measuringachievement.pdf

QAAHE Guidelines for HE Progress Files

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/default.asp

JISC

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Briefing Paper

March 2006

Key messages for senior managers have emerged from a three-year JISC programme on MLEs for Lifelong Learning, which funded ten multi-institutional projects working across different sectors and organisations to support student learning and progression. The work of the Programme involved exchanging data with key external bodies such as UCAS, local education authorities and large employers.

With a strong focus on the interoperability of e-portfolios across a wide range of contexts, the Programme has been able to explore the likely impact of national policies for lifelong learning upon individual institutions and their medium-term strategic planning of technological and pedagogical development.

Policy context

The prominence of e-portfolios and personal development planning in a number of national policy initiatives and documents gives even greater weight to the Programme's findings:

- The 2005 DfES e-Strategy *Harnessing Technology: Transforming learning and children's services* proposes a personal online learning space for every learner, which will contribute to an electronic portfolio to build a record of achievement throughout lifelong learning
- The 2005 HEFCE *strategy for e-learning* includes an objective to encourage electronic support for describing learning achievement and personal development planning, identifying specific actions for JISC and the HE Academy to investigate the use of e-portfolios across institutions and sectors
- The 2004 DfES *Review of fair admissions to HE* includes a definition of 'fair admissions', drawing upon e-portfolios for richer applicant information to aid widening participation and ease transition
- The 2004 Burgess Scoping Report *Measuring and Recording Student Achievement in HE* envisages all HE students using an e-portfolio in the medium term, with students themselves the crucial translators and conveyors of information about their learning and achievement

- The 2004 QCA *Blueprint for e-Assessment* proposes that by 2009 all awarding bodies should be set up to accept and assess e-portfolios. Further (FE) and higher education (HE) institutions will soon be receiving students used to e-portfolio-based assessment
- UCAS is committed to moving towards entirely web-based admissions and review processes, offering enormous benefits in terms of speed, data accuracy and future developments in response to changing demands. All HE applications will be received online by 2007

Lifelong and personalised learning policy drivers propose that all learners should be able to develop, record, repurpose and transfer a wide range of information about themselves electronically, as they progress through different levels and episodes of learning, training and employment.

'e-Portfolios ... are personal online spaces for students to access services and store work. They will become ever more useful as learners grow up and start moving between different types of learning and different institutions.'

Secretary of State for Education and Skills, January 2006

What this means for institutions...

The task of addressing these agendas calls for joined-up thinking about ICT infrastructure nationally, and requires provision for every single student. It moves to the centre of e-learning and e-administration developments.

e-Portfolios

What institutions really need to know

Portfolio use is a long-established feature of certain disciplines. Students more generally have been offered a range of electronic tools to support their learning, such as personal web spaces, blogs, online careers resources and cv planners. What the national strategies propose – and the MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme explored – is a vision which, while building on these initiatives, looks radically different. It foresees an important shift in the ownership of e-portfolios from individual institutions to the learners themselves. It anticipates a new generation of technology where an e-portfolio for lifelong learning will no longer be an institution-provided package or system. It will be a learner-owned application, independent of any individual institution, interacting with services accessed over the web.

e-Portfolios open opportunities for learners and institutions (see table below).

Advantages to be gained in being able to transfer e-portfolio information between institutions include:

- Richer levels of information from prospective students
- Enhanced effectiveness of induction processes
- Continuity of development for the learner
- Improved retention and progression
- Better academic acculturation of students
- More effective transition from education to employment

Key issues and challenges

While the requirement to implement HE Progress Files by 2005/06 suggests a pragmatic approach based on current systems and practice, the recommendations from the MLEs for Lifelong Learning Programme point to the need to prepare for a rather different technological context in further and higher education:

- Current implementations of e-portfolios within single institutions already lend themselves to integration with major institutional systems, including VLEs, student records and finance systems. This integration may extend to course and module information for the identification and provision of pathways and guidance for personal development planning. It may also extend to human resources systems, given the usefulness of e-portfolios for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff and the prospect of students graduating with e-portfolios and moving to employment in colleges and universities
- The effective use of e-portfolios for transition between and across institutions requires the use of standards and specifications for systems interoperability and the transfer of learner information
- The development of e-portfolios for lifelong learning has implications for institutional strategies for the provision of mobile and wireless technologies
- As long as individual institutions provide their own e-portfolio systems, there will be issues of:



- broadband availability and data storage capacity, including catering for the increased demand for space for sound and video material
- security, privacy, ownership and authentication of the personal information that is stored
- The use of e-portfolios to support the widening participation agenda can only work effectively when safeguards are in place to ensure that all students have equal access to technologies that help them to enhance their capabilities and reach their individual potential as reflective lifelong learners

What JISC is doing

The further development of e-portfolio tools, applications, systems and infrastructure is a major theme of the JISC e-Learning Programme.

JISC is leading, with international partners including the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), an initiative to build 'the e-Framework for Education and Research'. This is a common, service-oriented approach to the development and integration of computer systems in the sphere of learning, research and education administration. The Framework is the result of a shared conviction that it is better to expose networked functions, such as user/group data or learning content, as simple services rather than as features locked up inside monolithic systems. This approach offers institutions more flexibility, more scope for pedagogic innovation and better return on present and future investment.

'...we will have to re-engineer the data so that wherever you are in the education system the individual learner can demonstrate to another institution, an employer, or to a parent, what they have done, how they are succeeding and who they are.'

Director of DfES Communications Directorate,
January 2006

The learner creates different kinds of portfolios...



For a range of purposes...



Permitting, as the learner chooses, a range of interactions

Developmental or progress portfolio, personal and reflective

- Personal
- Learning in formal education
 - Training
 - Employment and career development

Dialogues with

- Friends/peers
- Tutors (eg feedback)
- Mentors
- Careers advisers
- Appraisers

Presentational portfolios, selected from the material collected in the developmental portfolio

- Targeted, for
- Application for admission to a course of study or for a job
 - Induction
 - Collaborative learning
 - Assessment or appraisal

Transactions with institutions, exam boards, employers

Peer group discussion, review and project work

Open to be read, for example, by potential employers

Untargeted – an open 'showcase'