

MINI REVIEW

STUDENT'S PROFESSIONAL EPORTFOLIO: AN INCREDIBLE TEACHING LEARNING TOOL PRACTICED FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN U.S. UNIVERSITIES

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Student's eportfolio is a collection of work (evidence) in an electronic format that showcases learning over time. It is used as a distinct and incredible tool for professional teaching learning during higher education in many US universities. The practices associated with e-portfolio e.g. designing "authentic" assignments, using engaging and active pedagogy, periodic self-, peer- and teacher-formative assessments, and requiring students to reflect on their learning—help to move both professors and students into a teacher/learner relationship where "guiding" really works. Much information required about eportfolio preparation can be found on individual universities' websites and can be readily available for access by students and faculty. The present article briefly compiles the basic information required to know before building a professional eportfolio alongwith their potential benefits.

What is an eportfolio?

Student's eportfolio is a systematic and organized collection of evidence. Students generally use e-portfolios to collect their work, reflect upon strengths and weaknesses, and strive to improve. This is a platform where students can display their abilities with evidences and reflections. The data that faculty, departments, and institutions derive when they assess the work in portfolios, is very important and reflect upon it in curricular contexts, and use the data and reflections to plan for improvement.

E-portfolios provide a rich resource for both students and faculty to learn about achievement of important outcomes over time, make connections among disparate parts of the curriculum, gain insights leading to improvement, and develop identities as learners or as facilitators of learning.



Figure 1. ePortfolio

Some definitions of "students' portfolio" are: "is the documentation of one's activities and experiences in learning"; "a systematic and organized collection of evidence used by the student to monitor growth of his own knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a specific subject area"; "a purposeful, collaborative, self-reflective collection of student work generated during the process of teaching and learning".

In simple manner, an ePortfolio is a collection of work (evidence) in an electronic format that showcases learning over time. When you think about your ePortfolio and the types of evidence that it contains, it is important to think carefully about its purpose and intended audience.

An eportfolio may contain all or some of the following:

- Files of various formats (text, pictures, video etc.)
- Evidence related to courses, programs of study etc.

- Writing samples (which might include several drafts to show development and improvement)
- Projects prepared for class or extracurricular activities
- Evidence of creativity and performance
- Evidence of extracurricular or co-curricular activities, including examples of leadership
- Evaluations, analysis and recommendations

What does an eportfolio provide?

A well-executed e-portfolio program is an incredible tool for higher education. They provide institutions with authentic assessments of students' learning and promote the deeper learning that is expected from the students. The electronic or digital portfolio is an ideal format for collecting evidence of student learning, especially for those outcomes neither amenable nor appropriate for standardized measurement. Additionally, ePortfolios can facilitate student reflection upon and engagement with their own learning across multi-year degree programs, across different institutions, and across diverse learning styles while helping students to set and achieve personal learning goals. ePortfolios provide both a transparent and portable medium for showcasing the broad range of complex ways students are asked to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities for purposes, such as graduate school and job applications as well as to benchmark achievement among peer institutions.

How can the eportfolio be a tool for teaching learning?

As students enter college, most do not imagine being responsible for their own learning. They believe that, somehow, teachers make them learn or, in some cases, prevent them from learning. Many even see assignments, required courses, and exams as obstacles to get around on the way to their ticket to the future—the degree. The practices associated with e-portfolio e.g. designing “authentic” assignments, using engaging and active pedagogy, periodic self-, peer- and teacher-formative assessments, and requiring students to reflect on their learning—help to move both professors and students into a teacher/learner relationship where “guiding” really works. Emphasis shifts from delivering content toward coaching and motivating students as they try to solve

problems that are of genuine interest to disciplines, professions, or communities. While additional research will be completed on e-portfolios *per se*, there is already promise in the fact that good e-portfolio programs use a combination of practices already shown individually to be effective in helping students learn (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000). eportfolios are gaining support as a way for students, faculty, programs, and institutions to learn, assess, and improve through a mutual focus on the work that students complete over time—work that can both facilitate and document a range of ambitious learning outcomes.

Usually, in Pharm.D. program, eportfolio is assigned at different levels such as level 1, level 2 and level 3; at first, second and third year respectively. Students can choose among described abilities such as pharmaceutical care, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making etc. When students prepare their eportfolios based on their abilities and experiences, they need to write the reflections. ePortfolios have much utility as unified ways for students to document their integrated learning among and across their educational pathways toward a degree. In addition, AAC&U's initiatives of development of principles and models for integrative general education programs is particularly suited to an eportfolio framework to help students, faculty, and others to map the intentional pathways to demonstrated competence of essential learning. With rubrics, direct assessment of student work drawn from the curriculum, co-curriculum and beyond the campus can be carried out. The work students produce through embedded assignments in courses, programs, activities, internships, research projects and other HIPs becomes the basis for student progress and attainment in a unified eportfolio system. ePortfolios create transparency around demonstrated learning and allow student artifacts to be used as evidence of accomplishment for employment, graduate school or accountability and reporting to external audiences.

What are the stages to develop the student eportfolio?

Portfolio development may be considered an ongoing and dynamic process that involves four stages:

* *Collection*: accumulated material toward mastery demonstration and standards achievement; gains and

improvements will be shown as growth during professional years transition.

**Reflection*: "think about thinking" to derive meaning from experiences as a mechanism to propel development.

**Reduction*: selection of portfolio artifacts that demonstrate mastery or path toward mastery of specified performance outcomes.

**Display*: the organization of selected artifacts in a visually appealing manner to demonstrate mastery of performance outcomes and to permit a comprehensive review by a panel.

What is reflection?

Although there is a lots of meanings for what reflection is, we define it as the process of making a deep evaluation in our consciousness about our thoughts, feelings and actions of previous experiences. What keeps the portfolio from simply being a scrapbook is the reflection the student undertakes regarding how each ability was achieved, showing selected artifacts as evidence to demonstrates his educational growth and development.

How reflections benefits learning?

It is recommended to do reflection process as close as possible to the experience. A properly written reflection for each ability is beneficial in learning process in following ways:

- reflecting on work enhances its meaning
- think about thinking (metacognition)
- reflecting on experiences encourages insight and complex learning
- reflection is best done alone, but, it is enhanced when we ponder our learning with others
- involves linking a current experience to previous learnings (scaffolding)
- involves drawing forth cognitive and emotional information
- to reflect, we must act upon and process the information, synthesizing and evaluating the data

What are the different considerations in writing reflections for patient oriented services?

A student is expected to take into account following considerations in writing reflections for patient oriented services (Johns' model of structured reflection, 1995)

- What was I trying to achieve?
- Why did I respond as I did?
- What were the consequences of that for the patient, others, myself?
- How was this person feeling? (or these persons?)
- How did I know this?
- How did I feel in the situation?
- What internal factors were influencing me?
- How did my actions match my beliefs?
- What factors made me act in incongruent ways?
- How does this connect with previous experiences?
- Could I handle this better in similar situations?
- What would be the consequences of alternative actions for: the patient? myself? others?
- How do I now feel about the situation?
- Can I support myself and others better as a consequence?
- Has this changed my ways of knowing?

Which files to include in student's eportfolio?

Text files: to display students' thinking

Images: to convey messages without words

Sound: shows student's communication skills or represent a student's interest or project

Video: display student's presentations and performances.

Students eportfolio is uploaded as different file formats and can be accessed by concerned faculty for the possible improvements and then final assessment.

Conclusion

A well-executed e-portfolio program is an incredible tool for higher education. They provide institutions with authentic assessments of students' learning and promote the deeper learning that is expected from the students. An authentic eportfolio helps professional students to continuously improve their learning outcomes and are useful not only for their academic credentials but also for their job applications and further professional carrier.

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