

EPortfolio case study

This template provides an overview of how ePortfolios have been integrated into the curriculum at a programme or module level at QMU. If you would like any further information about the case study or ePortfolios at QMU, please contact eportfolio@qmu.ac.uk.

Student group	<p>Contemporary Food and Drink – core module of: Ba/Ba(Hons) Hospitality and Tourism Management Ba/Ba (Hons) International Hospitality Management</p> <p>Further information about the programmes and module is available at: http://www.qmu.ac.uk/be/subjectareas/hte.htm</p>
Name of tutor(s)	<p>Trevor Laffin</p>
Purpose/s of ePortfolio	<p>For formative feedback For Personal Development Planning</p>
Background	<p>The students range in age from school-leavers to mature students and attend full-time. They are supported outwith QMU through WebCT, our Virtual Learning Environment. There are around 50 learners on this module and a high percentage of these are international students.</p> <p>The aims of the module are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce the students to a range of factors influencing the production, provision and consumption of various food and drink products • To encourage participation in problem solving activities through the processes of group work <p>Assessment involved the development of a poster presentation and a Viva based around a food or drink related issue. The learning outcomes assessed through this assignment include the student's ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of issues in relation to food and drink provision and consumption in the contemporary society • Identify, analyse and critically evaluate a particular problem in relation to contemporary food and drink issues • Critically reflect upon theoretical concepts and literature in relation to a forefront issue • Make formal oral and written presentations, including a poster, using appropriate formats <p>To assist students in preparing for this assessment, they were required to use the meeting tool in the ePortfolio system, PebblePad, during semester 2. Students were also given the option of developing an online journal (blog) for personal reflection in relation to this module. It was anticipated that use of a reflective blog would assist the learners in preparing for the viva assessment.</p>
Intended purpose(s) of using the ePortfolio	<p>Learners on the module worked in small groups to identify, analyse and critically evaluate a particular problem in relation to contemporary food and drink issues. The ePortfolio meeting tool was used in order to record the weekly group meetings and to provide evidence of meetings, which was then shared with the tutor. In addition to recording factual information, the meeting tool also has the facility for reflection and students were encouraged to use this area to reflect on the processes of group work and the outcomes of the weekly meetings.</p>

	<p>The meeting tool was used essentially as a group tool, so that one member of the group would create the plan and then 'share' this amongst group members. One member was then responsible for sharing the weekly group meeting plan with the tutor and this process was facilitated via the gateway area.</p> <p>Sharing the meeting plan with the tutor was to be in lieu of some face-to-face meetings, which the tutor had in previous years used to discuss progress with groups. Reviewing meeting outcomes through the gateway enabled the tutor to monitor progress, to identify students who may have been having difficulties and also to provide formative feedback. Whilst feedback was provided in the form of comments attached to meeting plans through the gateway, these submissions were not formally marked. Students only had permission to view their own group meeting plan and so had no access to meeting plans belonging to other groups.</p> <p>The meeting tool in PebblePad provides an online facility for structuring a meeting plan. Within the tool are appropriate sections, which are clearly labelled and organised. For example, the tool provides sections for a statement of purpose, location details, date, attendees, outcomes, supporting resources, and reflection. Users can fill in as much or as little detail as they require.</p> <p>In some cases, learners will continue to use the ePortfolio system for other modules in their programme, or will move assets such as meeting plans and blogs to a webfolio. A webfolio could potentially be moved to a professional body's ePortfolio system.</p>
<p>How are the students introduced to the ePortfolio and what support mechanisms are available to them?</p>	<p>Learners were introduced to the QMU ePortfolio system through a formal face-to-face training session in a computer workshop. The tutor introduced the topic and outlined the purpose of using the ePortfolio for this particular module. A member of the Centre for Academic Practice introduced the ePortfolio system and tools to the students.</p> <p>The introductory session focused on how to access the system and learners were shown how to set up a meeting plan and a blog. Students were also shown how to publish the meeting plan to the relevant gateway. All learners were given the opportunity to have hands-on experience of using the meeting tool and the blog tool. A trial gateway was set up so that learners could also practice submitting to a gateway during this introductory session.</p> <p>Learners were made aware of support mechanisms such as the dedicated QMU eportfolio email helpline and the location of user guides.</p>
<p>Which tools are used in the ePortfolio?</p>	<p>For this module the following tools were used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting tool • The blog tool • The gateway (ePortfolio equivalent of an online assessment dropbox)
<p>The challenge(s)</p>	<p>Many of the students in this particular group required one-to-one assistance in using the meeting tool and in submitting to the gateway.</p> <p>For tutors, using the meeting tool in this way may prove to be a challenge to begin with. For example, being confronted with a large number of submissions in the gateway area on a weekly basis could be a daunting prospect for tutors who are new to this environment. Tutors need to be made aware of the archive facility, as this can assist in making the process of reviewing submissions more manageable. Providing formative feedback on meeting plan outlines in this online environment is an unknown and requires the development of new processes.</p>

Tutor feedback	<p>It takes time and effort to introduce an ePortfolio to learners. This impacts on:</p> <p>A) the student experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is essential that the students focus on reflecting on their experiences of the module not the technology • Learners need to be prepared from the very start of the module about the role of the chosen tool and its advantages for them in the long-term <p>B) the tutor experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation needs to be prepared to walk learners through the purpose and use of specific tools and it is not possible to always plan for everything • It takes time to become adept at providing feedback online and it does not come naturally to all tutors. To ensure consistency, tutors need to be briefed about the process and the technology they will be using.
The ePortfolio advantage for students taking this module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve student IT skills - once over the barrier learners are able to extend their IT skills and have a digital archive which they can continue to develop as they progress through the programme • A regular record of meeting outcomes – this will assist the learners in identifying progress in problem solving skills and provide a point of reference for the summative assessment • Linking to their professional PDP – our learners have developed something that they can show to others very quickly and build upon for their professional bodies
Key points for effective practice	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think carefully about how the online tool will be introduced to the students especially those who are less comfortable with IT • Provide lots of support and advice, especially technical advice <p>Meeting tool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide written guidelines on how to use this tool effectively • Provide exemplars, but allow a degree of freedom for students to structure their own meeting plans, in order to reflect their unique learning <p>Gateway (online assessment dropbox)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always provide a test gateway so learners can familiarise themselves with this process, especially when outwith the institution • Remind students that they will only receive email notification that they have submitted to the institutional gateway in their institutional email – not their personal email accounts • It is important to stress to students that only themselves and the tutor have permission to view materials they have submitted to the gateway
The student perspective/comments	We are currently collecting student feedback
Technical issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IT skills of students will be very variable and younger students will not always be more 'au fait' with computers • If learners and tutors do not regularly use the system, they will forget how to use it – provide top-up, just in time sessions
Conclusions	
Further information	Many of the students in this particular group required one-to-one assistance in

	using the meeting tool and in submitting to the gateway. A high percentage of learners enrolled on this module were international students and it is possible that they had difficulty understanding the concepts involved. There may also have been difficulties understanding some of the technical terminology. For future reference, extra time may be required for similar cohorts during the introductory session. Also, top-up or small group sessions may be required.
Key words	Meeting tool; online journal; reflection; gateway.