

**Title**

Using ePortfolios with health professional learners to develop their digital identities for learning and continuing professional development

**Authors**

Susi Peacock (QMU), Jane Hislop (QMU), John Cleak (SHU) and Claire Morgan (SHU)

**Track 4: healthcare****Word count: 736****Abstract**

ePortfolios are one of the latest tools available to educators in higher education. They have the potential to promote learning and encourage personal development by supporting (a) the learning process, (b) the product of learning and (c) the transition of learners at various stages of the lifelong and life-wide journey, for example, from learner to clinician. All three of these roles can be used to develop and extend the digital identity of the learner whether within formal education or as a qualified, practising healthcare professional (Barrett & Carney 2005; Ward & Grant 2007; ISLE 2005; JISCinfoNet 2008). The ePortfolio is a personal, private, learning tool that is organised and managed by the learner. The tool can be used to review and reflect on learning (Roberts et al. 2005) and support continued personal enrichment through commentary and feedback with selected individuals and/or groups in order to develop the digital identity of the learner, whenever, wherever throughout their life-wide learning journey.

The purpose of introducing ePortfolio in healthcare subjects is to encourage our learners to “develop the skills to continue building their own personal portfolio as a lifelong learning tool” (Siemens 2004). Many employers and professional societies are now expecting our graduates to be familiar with ePortfolios and ePDP/eCPD, for example, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Institute of Radiographers. Unfortunately student reaction to the use of an ePortfolio for PDP, in preparation for CPD, has been ambivalent at best (Oradini and Saunders 2007; Pond 2007; Cosh 2007; ISLE project 2007; Tosh et al. 2005).

This presentation draws upon our current research being undertaken as part of an international collaboration, and our combined experience of implementing ePortfolios for over three years with healthcare learners in a range of subjects across two institutions: Queen Margaret (Scotland) and Sheffield Hallam (England) Universities. Our case studies are drawn from both institutions at different levels in different programmes.

One exemplar discusses the implementation of the ePortfolio tool within the curriculum of an M.Sc. (Pre-Registration) Physiotherapy programme. The ePortfolio has been integrated within this programme in modules which seek to promote and develop lifelong learning skills necessary for CPD. Currently students are required to submit a portfolio of their learning

on completion of their level 1 studies. Students carry out a critical reflective account of their learning experiences in level 1 which they submit as an ePortfolio. The students are asked to support their account with evidence of their learning experiences which they have gathered over their studies in Level 1. The students will build upon the ePortfolio as they progress onto their clinical placements and in level 2 of their programme. It is hoped that by the end of the programme students will have developed a comprehensive portfolio resource which they can take with them into their working environment and use to support CPD.

Another case study at a different institution draws upon the introduction of the ePortfolio for level 1 undergraduate physiotherapy learners. Tutors work with students to encourage them to actively participate in PDP through the ePortfolio and to acquire the skills necessary for them to engage with CPD upon graduation. Learners are encouraged to work with tutors to develop their IT skills and digital identity and to reflect on relevant issues such as “How to survive semester 1.” Students are asked to consider key worries and concerns about university life and study using tools such as the swot analysis, the blog and the action planner.

Through our numerous case studies in subjects such as radiography, nursing and physiotherapy, we consider:

- The role and purpose of ePortfolios in the learning environment and how this links to the expectations of the professional bodies for ePortfolios for CPD;
- A sustainable technical implementation discussing issues such as data protection and alumni access;
- The student perspective on ePortfolios;
- Issues when integrating ePortfolios into the curricula;
- Barriers to the implementation of ePortfolios.

#### **Attendees will leave this presentation with**

- A clearer understanding of the term and potential roles of an ePortfolio in the learning environment to support PDP and then CPD and develop lifewide digital identities;
- Exemplars of how the ePortfolio can be implemented within the curricula in preparation for CPD;
- Further insights into the student perspective of ePortfolios;
- Issues for consideration when planning an ePortfolio implementation;
- References and web/paper-based resources on implementing an ePortfolio developed by the team.