

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.

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| Student group | BA/BA(Hons) Performance Production and Management SCQF: Level 7 - 10 Further information about the programme and module is available at: http://www.qmu.ac.uk/drama/courses.htm |
| Name of tutors | Simon Girdler |
| Purpose/s of ePortfolio | ePortfolio for PDP |
| Background | <p>The students range in age from 18 to early 20s and attend their programme of study full-time. There are approximately 12 learners at each level of the programme and most are seeking a career in the management of performance.</p> <p>The programme examines the totality of performance production and management, focusing on large scale theatre, small scale theatre, touring, experimental performance, regional theatre, national theatre, subsidised theatre, commercial theatre and festivals and events. It covers all areas of marketing, fund raising and finance, the production process, cultural policy and management process.</p> |
| Intended purpose(s) of using the ePortfolio | <p>The reason for implementing PDP supported with the ePortfolio was that the students undertake a large amount of practical activity as part of their degree. To encourage the students to reflect on this, they are asked to complete a reflective journal. The ePortfolio was the perfect tool to make this process more formal and get the students to focus on their personal development.</p> <p>The purpose of this journal is for students to develop managerial thinking and a sense of self analysis/awareness in their professional development. Ultimately they need to develop a “management head” and this takes time: the online journal is a tool to help them develop this by providing an environment for a “mental gym.” They are introduced to the online journal in first year and continue to use the tool throughout their programme of studies.</p> |
| How are the students introduced to the ePortfolio and what support mechanisms are available to them? | <p>The introduction is undertaken in a face-to-face session in a computer workshop. The learners are given a short briefing on PDP and trained to use the ePortfolio system. They are shown how to create a blog, how to post to a blog and how to share blogs with their peers and with their tutor. Also, the demonstrations explains how they can create different blogs for different purposes, for example, they may have a private blog and then use some of the postings to this for their shared/public blogs. Critically when they are introduced to the blog, the emphasis is on the why use the blog and why engage with PDP processes rather than why use this particular piece of software as it is intended they will engage with PDP and lifelong learning throughout their lifelong learning journey. After the learners have shared their blogs, they meet on an individual basis with their tutor to discuss their postings and issues that have arisen.</p> |
| Which tools are used in the ePortfolio? | Blog (online learning journal) Sharing |

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| <p>The challenge(s)</p> | <p>Technophobia is a problem with some students and a lack of understanding of the purpose of self analysis. Also there is a resistance to what is seen as yet more written work for them to undertake. Some saw it as a chore. Keeping an online reflective journal was not something that came naturally to many of the students and there was fear of the “blank sheet” and writing something that was wrong. Some students compensated for this by writing a lot that was not necessarily appropriate.</p> |
| <p>Tutor feedback</p> | <p>Training and constant references to the importance of PDP and ePortfolio to the outcome of their practical mark were very important. If the students are not reminded of the necessity of engaging in this way of working, especially in the early stages of their studies, it will be forgotten.</p> <p>Discussion of the use of the online journal has become part of any tutorial time with students. This encourages the students to see the use of PDP as integral and core to their ongoing learning and to encourage the process of self reflection to become one of the tools for management and future personal development.</p> <p>From my own point of view, the practical activity teaching process is not set in stone and needs to be constantly adapted. Rather, it is fluid and must flow. The use of a reflective journal enables one to stand back from the teaching process and best define an approach that meets the needs of the students.</p> |
| <p>The ePortfolio advantage for students taking this module</p> | <p>The process of constant self analysis and writing about it focuses the mind. This tends to lead to strategic thinking about future activity and lends purpose to learning outcomes.</p> <p>One of the most important benefits is the development of self awareness and personal responsibility. It facilitates the change from school leaver to undergraduate and adulthood. It enables students to develop a process by which they can begin to map out their future career paths in a strategic and purposeful manner. Students begin to develop a trust in their own abilities and to link their studies with their future career development.</p> |
| <p>Key points for effective practice</p> | <p>The process of self analysis and development have formed the foundation of any teaching in practical activity. It has proved invaluable in the development of these particular students.</p> <p>It instils a sense of personal responsibility for professional development and develops a positive process of self evaluation - hopefully leading to successful problem solving and strategic and sympathetic leadership in the future.</p> |
| <p>The student perspective/comments</p> | <p>Student feedback is being collected.</p> |
| <p>Technical issues</p> | <p>The main technical issues focus on student IT skills.</p> |
| <p>Conclusions</p> | <p>Focused thinking and planned, strategic activity are a real benefit to students’ learning outcomes. A sense of development in a professional vein allows the student to realise a sense of purpose and there is an element of instant gratification which is extremely beneficial as a motivational tool.</p> <p>It is important to get over the hurdle of it being seen as a chore. It becomes part of a students’ sense of ‘taking responsibility for their own learning’ and this assists the transition from school leaver to under graduate and to successful employee.</p> |

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| Further information | Comments from the ePortfolio support team: This is one of the few exemplars of using one of the tools of the ePortfolio system at a programme level and highlights the advantages of encouraging students to take control of their learning from first entering higher education. |
| Key words | Reflection; personal development planning. |