Drivers for the project

The Australian ePortfolio Project is a research study commissioned by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). One of the responsibilities of ALTC has been to investigate the potential of ePortfolios in higher education, considering both:

• an institutional transcript recording student achievement, and
• a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development.

The project has dovetailed with the National Diploma Supplement (Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement) funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

Project goals

• To provide an overview and analysis of national and international ePortfolio contexts.
• To document the types of ePortfolios used in Australian higher education.
• To examine the relationship with the National Diploma Supplement project.
• To offer guidance about future opportunities for ePortfolio development.

Project partners

• Queensland University of Technology (lead institution)
• University of New England
• The University of Melbourne
• University of Wollongong

Key outcomes of the project and relationship to graduate attributes

To support innovation, productivity and economic development in Australia, Federal Government policy seeks to:

• enhance the quality of education
• encourage widened access to education opportunities
• stimulate integration between vocational education and training and higher education.

Internationally, ePortfolio policy and practice seek to support an engaged and productive workforce by drawing together the different elements of:

• integrated education and learning
• graduate attributes
• employability skills
• professional competencies
• lifelong learning.

The Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement seeks to provide an internationally acceptable format for presenting institutionally authenticated information about learners. An ePortfolio can help learners better understand the value of their achievements, not only through their academic studies, but also through formal and informal learning activities in other areas of their lives.

Early adopters of ePortfolio practice recognise the potential of the ePortfolio process — when it is embedded in learning and teaching activities — to help students move beyond the state of knowing what they have learned to consider how they have learned.

By reflecting on their own learning and achievement, learners are encouraged to plan for their personal, academic and career development.

Key challenges to overcome in order to realise the benefits of the project

Stakeholders in the learning and teaching policy environment need to be conscious of the potential of ePortfolios, when integrated into current and future eLearning strategies, to contribute to:

• student-centred learning strategies
• transparent learning outcomes
• relevant employability skills for graduates.

Significantly, the successful adoption and implementation of ePortfolios require strong alignment between the strategic, tactical and operational areas of academic management.

Learner mobility within and between education, training and employment sectors depends on international technical standards. Interoperability issues can support the exchange of information and data across institutional, sectoral and jurisdictional boundaries.

Communities of practice will provide valuable channels of communication between educators with shared interests and ideas, and will also encourage scholarship and research. Australia is in the early stages of ePortfolio practice and research when compared with many other countries. There is scope to undertake investigations into the impact of ePortfolios on key areas and learning outcomes within and beyond university.