

ePortfolios for Reflection

7 Best Practices

Overview

The use of ePortfolios for reflection in the learning process has recently been identified by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) as one of eleven high impact practices in response to evidence of its connection to elevated performance, increased satisfaction, and greater levels of student persistence (Watson, Kuh, Rhodes, Penny Light, & Chen, 2016). This guide provides a synthesis of current best practices relevant to the use of ePortfolios for reflection in higher education that are ***all informed by the references cited.***

1. Follow a “Collect, Select, Reflect” process
 - a. **Collect:** Gather artifacts that could be used to demonstrate learning (assignments, photos, articles, links to relevant websites, ideas, etc.)
 - b. **Select:** Ask students to select specific artifacts for intended purposes (representations of best work, demonstration of progression, etc.)
 - c. **Reflect:** Ask students to consider what they selected, why they chose to select it, and how/why it is important to their learning

2. Use the Integrative Learning model
 - a. Integrative Learning = learning over time + learning across context + intention
 - b. Provide an on-going learning community where students can share ideas over time (beyond the time frame of one course)
 - c. Provide students with a timeline and checkpoints to keep them on track throughout their academic experience

3. Make the learning relevant
 - a. Encourage students to intentionally build relational links between prior understanding of material, and the material that is currently being learned
 - b. Invite students to make connections between personal goals and the goals of the portfolio assignment
 - c. Ask students to find relationships between: assignments, assignments and lived experiences, courses in programs of study, among disciplines, and among assignments and experiences as they relate to learning outcomes/goals
 - d. Ask students to make connections/identify relationships between the learning experiences and their real-world lives

4. Define reflection as a form of learning
 - a. Invite students to bring in ideas from multiple sources and to get their hands dirty by putting ideas together
 - b. Ask students to reflect on what matters (and provide clear goals for doing so)
 - c. Remember that learning is social – make it a conversation

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- d. Make risk okay – encourage and value risk taking in the context of an assignment (design choices, artifact selection, strategies for defining connections, etc.)
5. Scaffold strong ePortfolio skills
 - a. Include experiences that facilitate and lead up to an ePortfolio assignment
 - b. Provide clear guidance that helps to focus students on important issues
 - c. Create opportunities for students to practice or hone reflective skills
 6. Support effective digital communication
 - a. Encourage students to consider their “audience”
 - b. Provide students with “design hints” or templates to encourage best practices
 - c. Provide learning opportunities that support skills for creating an effective “digital identity”
 - d. Ask students to intentionally manage their internet presence by ensuring that it matches who they are, and who they hope to portray themselves as
 7. Design successful reflective experiences
 - a. Create assignment prompts with the end result in mind – what do you want students to gain from the reflection?
 - b. Inform students about the benefits of ePortfolios - why it is and will be helpful or relevant to them
 - c. Balance reflective activities with other kinds of assignments
 - d. Consider various forms of reflection
 - e. Vary the timing of reflective activities (before, during, and after)
 - f. Provide timely, validating, practical, and encouraging feedback
 - g. Align learning experiences with desired learning outcomes within specific contexts (for relevant portfolio audiences)
 - h. Keep it simple (don’t radically change everything in your course)

References:

- Eynon, B., Gambino, L. M., and Kuh, G. D., (2017). **High-Impact ePortfolio Practice: A catalyst for student, faculty, and institutional learning.** Stylus Publishing LLC: Sterling, VA.
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- Reynolds, C., Patton, J., and Rhodes, T., (2014). **Leveraging the ePortfolio for Integrative Learning: A faculty guide to classroom practices for transforming student learning.** Stylus Publishing LLC: Sterling, VA.
- Watson, C. E., Kuh, G. D., Rhodes, T., Penny Light, T., and Chen, H. L., (2016). Editorial: ePortfolios – The Eleventh High Impact Practice. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, Vol 6 (Number 2). Retrieved from <http://www.theijep.com/pdf/IJEP254.pdf>