Implementing eportfolios for student reflection

This case study documents the Nursing Studies eportfolio implementation journey as a possible structure for others to adopt and use as a means for encouraging student self-reflection.

**School:** Health in Social Science

**Target Audience:**UG and PG students in Nursing Studies

**Staff Involved:** School of Health in Social Science and Information Services Learning Services

**Date:** January 2012

Key features

* This case study documents the Nursing Studies eportfolio implementation journey as a possible structure for others to adopt and use as a means for encouraging student self-reflection. Although the need from Nursing Studies was discipline driven their approach is widely applicable across a range of disciplines and is appropriate both for vocational and non-vocational disciplines. To this end the trigger questions developed and documented at the end of this case study are easily transferable.
* At all levels within Nursing Studies, professional requirements mandate the need for the maintenance of documentation to demonstrate competencies and experiences as well as illustrate academic performance and practical skills. Therefore, recording artefacts relating to academic/professional progress is a key component of their study.
* The professional requirements used by Nursing Studies follow the Royal College of Nursing's Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) made up of six core elements and twenty-four specific dimensions as well as the Medical Schools’ Generic Professional Skills developed from guidelines from the General Medical Council. At a broad level these largely follow the University’s Graduate Attributes Framework, as well as specific requirements relating to the discipline.
* Although the case study does not refer directly to these professional requirements they are the underlying drivers for the direction adopted.

Planning

* This work in essence has been on going since 2008. However, as part of the University of Edinburgh ScotPID project an opportunity was provide to “step back” and look at the Nursing Studies journey as a means of providing some suggestions for other disciplines about to start their own journey of eportfolio use/implementation as a means for encouraging student self-reflection.
* The work was carried out via meetings with appropriate staff in Nursing Studies (largely Dr Anne Robertson) and IS Learning Services.

Project

Since 2008, under the direction and drive of Dr Anne Robertson, Nursing Studies have used an eportfolio for reflection and other student curricular tasks.

The first group of Nursing Studies students who were introduced to the eportfolio tool, PebblePad, in 2009 included postgraduate students taking part in the MSc in Advancing Nursing Practice programme. Within that programme, the traditional ‘supervised reading’ component was replaced with PebblePad webfolios (worth 20, 40 or 60 credits). Each student was given detailed guidance before they started work on their webfolios. The personal and reflective nature of compiling a webfolio allowed students to deploy more flexible ways in presenting the topic of their self-directed study. In developing their webfolios, students compiled text and multimedia (pictures, sound and hyperlinks to video clips), then submitting these for assessment.

All webfolios were expected to have a learning plan - including reference to personal and professional development and incorporating the student’s philosophical stance. The rationale for the production of the eportfolio was included. The creation of the webfolio produced an end product that was more than a listing of thoughts and achievements, encouraging students to move beyond a ‘tick box’ approach towards talking about what they had done, why they did it, how one experience led to another and how they made discoveries along the way. The students provided links to other PebblePad assets created in their learning journeys – blogs, action plans, meetings, achievements – as well as links to examples of work and final outcomes, using images, video or other means that suited their stories. The organisation of the materials, artefacts within each eportfolio facilitated ease of navigation for the reader.

Assessment of webfolios is based on the same criteria as used for marking paper-based work. For example, elements such as referencing, cohesion and arguments are considered as well as the overall integrity of the piece of work. Marking guidelines also highlight the importance of reflecting professional/personal growth, including evidence of self-reflection and assessment and identifying future professional/personal development.

From these early steps, the proposed new curriculum for UG and PG nursing students has seen many paper-based activities related to professional development and reflective learning being gradually converted so that they can be conducted through the eportfolio system. This includes the submission of all traditional UG and PG assignments (essays and dissertations) via PebblePad.

Reflection on what students have learnt can be recorded as learning assets stored privately within an eportfolio repository or shared with others – learners can choose who sees the outcomes of their reflections. Even when the assets are kept private, the skills and abilities acquired in the process of reflection contribute to students’ writing about their clinical practice, on which they are assessed. The reflective process encourages students to make connections between the different elements of their learning, and to understand the links between learning that has occurred in the academic and clinical setting.

Resources

* Documentation of the Nursing Studies journey took significant staff time, but the process allowed the staff involved to reflect and evaluate what had happened. This allowed very busy staff the space to “step back” and take time out to review how their use of eportfolios had evolved and how they might use them in the future.
* A [s](http://www.employability.ed.ac.uk/CaseStudies/documents/HSS-ImplementingEportfolios-TriggerQs.pdf)et of trigger questions has been developed that other disciplines can use as a guide to the successful implementation of eportfolios as a means for encouraging student self-reflection.

http://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/all/modules/contrib/scald_file/icons/application_pdf.png [Implementing E-Portfolios- Trigger Questions](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/hss-implementingeportfolios-triggerqs.pdf) (16.15 KB)

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/hss-implementingeportfolios-triggerqs.pdf>

* Although these were developed from a vocational area these are widely applicable.

Evaluation

* Since the introduction of eportfolios, staff have commented that the level and quality of reflection carried out by students has improved.
* The final resource – trigger questions – has only recently been produced so evaluation data is not available.

Advice

Taking this approach takes time and commitment from all involved but the benefits to all are high.

Key contacts

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<http://www.ed.ac.uk/employability/staff-information/how-employability-addressed/good-practice/hss/eportfolios>