

# Using e-portfolio to enhance development of graduate attributes: implementation planning

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## Abstract

*A small study of six students explored the use of an e-portfolio product and assessment tasks. Integrated into the assessment tasks were a set of graduate attributes. A 5 week period of unsupervised, but supported, use of the e-portfolio product indicated the following: (1) the more students used the product the more they liked it and (2) the understanding of the graduate attributes was enhanced. The next step is to tackle planning the implementation for a large group of students and this will be the focus of the Nuts and Bolts Session.*

## Introduction.

The use of e-portfolio technology has growing support in the higher education sector. In particular research has been undertaken to examine the employment of the technology to promote development of graduate attributes (Cranney et al., 2005).

In order to plan for a broad implementation of an e-portfolio product, a small study was completed in order to develop insight into student use of the e-portfolio product adopted by the University, and their engagement with graduate attributes.

## Method.

Five meetings were scheduled across five weeks to introduce students to the e-portfolio task and to provide some paper-based resources on graduate attributes, including a guide explaining how they were integrated into assessment tasks. In between meetings, students were encouraged to explore the product freely and also by completing set tasks (i.e. share something meaningful with another participant using the e-portfolio functionality).

Support for the technical use of the product was kept to a minimum, although there was a discussion board on the learning management system that students could use to for troubleshooting.

Evaluation was by questionnaire and semi-structured focus groups.

## Results.

*Table 1 – Codes derived from discussion on the use of the e-portfolio product*

| <i>Prompt Phrases</i>                 |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Advantages &amp; Disadvantages</i> | <i>Use of Structured Graduate Attribute Profile</i> | <i>Advice for other students</i>       |
| Instruction                           | Instruction for completion                          | Timing                                 |
| Useability                            | Useability of profile                               | Awareness of complexity and technology |

|                    |                       |                            |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Layout<br>Function | Motivation/Engagement | Persistence<br>Taking time |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|

**Table 2 – Codes derived from discussion on the Graduate Attributes**

| <i>Prompt Phrases</i>                   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Awareness of Graduate Attributes</i> | <i>Relevance of Graduate Attributes to study, especially first year</i> | <i>Ability to map development of Graduate Attributes</i> |
| Pre-trial knowledge                     | Relevance to self   | Ability using e-portfolio product                        |
| Awareness                               | Relevance to all  | Benefits of mapping                                      |
| Taken seriously                         | Relevance to e-portfolio product ‘assets’                               |  |
| Source of information                   | Relevance for action using e-portfolio product                          |  |
| Current knowledge                       | Comment on overall experience   |  |
| Awareness                               |   |  |
| Source of information                   |   |  |
| Use of information                      |   |  |
| Taken seriously                         |   |  |

## **Discussion.**

The small number of students who participated in this study managed the new e-portfolio technology with minimal support. There was some variability however in how students responded to the graduate attributes and the reflective strategies in the e-portfolio product.

As the Faculty plans for a wider implementation of the e-portfolio product there is a need for instruction, not so much on the use of the product’s functionality, but on how to use that functionality to enhance learning. If the graduate attributes are going to be a feature of this, then the link between assessment tasks and the intended development needs to be more transparent.

## **References**

Cranney, J., Kofod, M., Huon, G., Jensen, L., Levin, K., McAlpine, I., Scoufis, M. & Whitaker, N. (2005) Portfolio tools: learning and teaching strategies to facilitate development of graduate attributes, *Uniserve Blended Learning Symposium Proceedings*, 25-30. Retrieved February 27, 2010, <http://science.uniserve.edu.au/pubs/procs/wshop10/2005Cranney.pdf>

## **Session outline**

### **Whole group discussion ice breaker (5 mins):**

Exploration with group about e-portfolio experience and development of graduate attributes.

### **Presenters (5 minutes):**

Review of trial of e-portfolio product and the plan for broader implementation at La Trobe University.

### **Paired discussion (10 mins):**

Participants consider one or more of the following:

1. the potential value of developing this initiative within their own institutions.
2. how this topic enhances the experience of first year students.
3. how this initiative may be evaluated.

### **Presenters + Whole group discussion (10 mins):**

Draw together ideas from participants – what has come up that has not been part of the local experience. Discuss if participants would consider/have considered / have implemented / similar initiatives within their own institutions or nationally.

