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Eportfolio Based Assessment Case Study

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Module Title:

ePortfolio Module (15 ECTS) on DIT’s MSc Applied eLearning

Context:

The ePortfolio module is an essential component of the MSc Applied eLearning. This is a two-year part-time accredited professional development programme aimed at a wide range of academic and professional staff: lecturers, teachers, tutors, eLearning specialists, researchers, consultants, trainers in commercial enterprises, policy makers, librarians, learning and technological support staff and managers. The MSc is designed to support these participants in growing the confidence and skills to develop, facilitate and manage eLearning in different contexts and with diverse, authentic pedagogical approaches. It is anticipated that on successful completion of this programme, participants who are endeavouring to establish eLearning opportunities in their organisation are fully supported, as well as those who are considering blending this with a career in an educational setting, in teaching, training or educational management. The strengths of the programme lie in the sound pedagogy and research underpinning all modules, the substantial applied project, the diverse range of optional modules and the development of skills that are all captured in an ePortfolio to enable participants to be responsive to the changing emergent technologies in the future.

The ePortfolio is a long thin module which is core to the programme. The module is not assessed until the end of the second year when the participant submits it as one third of the formal summative assessment for the MSc. The other two components are an academic paper written for the target journal of the participant’s choice, and the completed eLearning project (typically a small eLearning resource).

Overview & rationale of the assignment:

The 15 ECTS ePortfolio module runs across the two years of the programme and is assessed in its entirety on completion. Throughout this time, participants are expected to demonstrate evidence of their learning as they progress through the core and elective modules (see Figure 1) – and all this is captured in the ePortfolio, as well as evidence of their prior knowledge and motivations and critical reflections on their professional practice.
Participants also provide evidence of research and of eLearning resources designed and developed across the programme. The rationale for the ePortfolio is that it meets the needs of participants who are required to undertake a number of short modules, which many take in sequence. A mechanism is needed to capture and build a more holistic sense of their learning journeys across all the core and elective modules, and show how their learning from one module is informing the next.

The ePortfolio serves as constructivist learning space where participants can reflect on their learning journeys, as centralised collections of work on which they are assessed, and as integrated showcases where they can demonstrate their accomplishments to each other, module tutors and for the future, potential employers.

Therefore, 15 ECTs are allocated for the successful completion of an ePortfolio that demonstrates continuous work and reflection on all formal and informal learning. It assembles evidence of learning throughout the two years of the programme, which includes formal assignments and informal activities completed to demonstrate participant skills and knowledge related to applied eLearning. The development of the ePortfolio helps participants synthesise much of what they have learned, as well as create one cohesive package that demonstrates the skills and knowledge that they bring back to their professional practice and working context. In essence, the ePortfolio serves as a record of what each participant has learned during the programme. The purposes of the ePortfolio assessment system are to guide participant learning through the entire programme as well as ensure achievement of programme standards.

**Assignment Details:**

**Criteria/Instructions**

*The ePortfolio is comprised of:*

- All completed assessments from core and elective modules.
- Materials capturing learning experiences during each module (e.g. blog entries, photos of work completed in class, prototype e-learning resources, links to third party resources with commentary on how these have supported participants’ learning in the module).
- Each participant creates a reflective commentary (text, image, video, podcast, etc) on their learning after each module. This reflective commentary is based upon an analysis of how the participant has achieved the learning outcomes for each module, any revisions that they have made along this learning journey how their eLearning practice is progressing.
- Digital artefacts that demonstrate connection with eLearning practice and informal learning.

**Criteria:**

- Overall Structure and Presentation
Task Length

There is no word length associated with the ePortfolio module assignment, although there are some required elements to be included in the final product. Participants are expected to have created a distinct space for each taught module of the MSc, and also to have developed space for their second year project which will typically include prototypes of the eLearning project as well as documentation of their research undertaken for the journal article.

A word limit of 1000 is set for each of the two substantive final reflections. The first is a reflection on the second year of the MSc, and the project implementation inclusive of research conducted. The second reflection is on the overall learning from the MSc as a whole. Both reflections are expected to reference literature to contextualise key learning points and draw out actions for the future.

Marks Assigned

The MSc programme is assessed on a pass/fail basis with no numerical grading, and on successful meeting of the assessment criteria, 15 ECTS is awarded. However, all criteria must be passed in order for the full pass to be achieved – there is no means of compensating through other pieces of work. If a participant exits at the end of year one, 15 ECTs credits are awarded provided continuous evidence of learning and reflection is present across the year one modules, and that the participant completes a 1000 word reflection learning during the first year.
Supports provided

MSc participants are encouraged to use the model of e-portfolio development (Donnelly, O’Keeffe) shown above to support their gradual compilation of the e-portfolio over two years. In addition, comprehensive ePortfolio support has been designed and integrated across all stages of the two years of the MSc:

- **Induction:**
  A number of activities have been crafted as an introduction to the ePortfolio, as for many of the participants, this is the first time they have developed one:
  
  **Discussion:**
  - What is an ePortfolio?
  - What can you use to make your ePortfolio?
  - What is reflection? What is creativity?
  - Examples from outgoing Year 2
  - Developing an eLearning philosophy

  **Participant In-class Activity:**
  - Creation of test site using Wordpress (emphasise option to explore other tools)
  - Creation of “hopes, fears, expectations” video clips
  - Upload to their ePortfolio site

  **Participant After-class Activity:**
Students must develop the following pieces of writing:

- ‘Prior learning and experience’; eLearning philosophy; start a blog to capture reflection
- weekly blogs which will form part of ePortfolio assessment, but reflection can be in any medium (writing, video, podcast etc.)
- A supporting site has been created in WordPress with a breakdown of tasks and tips to guide participants in the early stages of their work. They can also access links to each other’s ePortfolios and previous successfully completed e-portfolios.
- The link to the Support site is https://ditmsceportfolios.wordpress.com/, however access is currently restricted to the MSc cohort as current students’ work is included and they may not have chosen to make this public as yet.

- **Technical Workshop:**
  Updates and Troubleshooting
  - Review of progress so far
  - Review of tools and best suited to the task/troubleshooting
  - Progress with the after-class activities from September, and weekly blogs
  - Creating separate pages/tabs for each activity

- **Developing new content**
  - Developing multimedia for your ePortfolio: podcasting, screencasting, concept mapping, Wordles, etc.

- **Pedagogical Support:**
  - Peer review
  - Tutor online feedback is given during the first and second semesters of the first year.
  - Formal works-in-progress sessions are held with peers and tutors in both years of the programme.

**Support Summary**

Participants are supported in the compilation of their ePortfolios throughout the MSc programme. The formal induction at the very start of the programme includes a two-hour workshop on setting up a basic ePortfolio, guidance to participants as to what the ePortfolio might consist of, and some starter activities (e.g. to make a short video of their hopes and expectations of the programme). Introductory materials to support reflective writing are also distributed, and participants are encouraged to write weekly reflections. A further workshop is then scheduled approximately six weeks into the programme to provide additional support and guidance. At the mid-point of semester one, online formative feedback is given by the module tutor. This addresses the rubric that will ultimately be used to assess the full portfolio at the end of the MSc. At the start of semester two, our first work-in-progress session is held and participants present their ePortfolios to each other and to the tutor for the first time. A further week of online feedback then takes place at the mid-point of semester two.

During second year, participants use the ePortfolio to support their applied eLearning project work. It also houses the supervision logbook which each individual participant maintains and which is seen only by that participant and his/her Supervisor. Two further works-in-progress sessions are held, at
the end of each semester. Formative feedback is given by two tutors as well as peer feedback from the full cohort.

Rubric/Marking Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formative Assessment:</th>
<th>MSc Applied eLearning</th>
<th>e-Portfolio Checklist: Year 1 and start of Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have I included these items in my e-portfolio?</td>
<td>CHECK:</td>
<td>What do I need to do next?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Learning Journey Page</strong> (may be combined with or in lieu of Professional Development)</td>
<td>eLearning philosophy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior Learning and motivations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hopes, fears, expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page for each Module</strong></td>
<td>Notes and reflections from each modules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Items for assessment for each module</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Professional Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Learning theories</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>ID and eAuthoring</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Elective module</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Research methods</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have I used appropriate references in my work?</strong></td>
<td>Academic Referencing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence of engagement with academic literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 2 Project Page</strong></td>
<td>Chart the development of the artefact, technologies tested or evaluated, storyboards, sketches etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervision Logbook</strong></td>
<td>Private area where you can record/document meetings with your Supervisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflections for each module</strong></td>
<td>Reflective commentary on learning from each module</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keep in mind that you will need to produce a reflective commentary on the MSc programme and your project at the end of Year 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Summative Assessment:**

The form below shows the assessment criteria for the final version of the ePortfolio, submitted at the end of the second year of the MSc. At the end of the second year, participants are asked to produce two substantive pieces of reflective writing for their ePortfolios, showing their learning across the MSc programme, and in the eLearning project they have undertaken. They are invited to provide a starting page for the examiners viewing their ePortfolio, which may be separate to the ePortfolio homepage. This can guide the reader through the material in a particular way, perhaps based on a theme.

Assessment is made on a Pass/Fail basis, with work referred for resubmission when it does not meet the pass criteria on the first attempt. Therefore the criteria are divided into two sections/categories only, “Pass” and “Refer”. Each of the criteria listed below must be passed in order for the work overall to receive a pass grade. Comments and feedback are provided along with the result under each heading. The assessment criteria were developed by Dr Roisin Donnelly and Muireann O’Keeffe, and this version with some minor amendments by Dr Claire McAvinia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ePortfolio title/theme:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ePortfolio URL:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Structure and Presentation**

**Pass**
- Very well-presented and systematically organised.
- Clear and logical learning journey.
- Clearly written, evidence of continuous contributions over the programme duration.
- Excellent attention to academic conventions concerning referencing, quotation, bibliography and footnotes.

**Refer**
- Presentation is poor, disorganised.
- Unclear learning journey.
- Writing style lacks coherence, lack of evidence of continuous contributions to the ePortfolio.
- No evidence of links to academic works (academic texts, journals etc.)

**Scholarship**

**Pass**
- Provides evidence of a highly critical analysis and/or synthesis and interrogation of appropriate literature.
- References to literature should go well beyond the readings provided in individual module materials.

**Refer**
- Lack of critical analysis and examination of appropriate literature.
- Lack of linkages with wider academic reading.
### Design and Implementation

**Pass**
- The ePortfolio reflects the individual flair or style of the individual.
- Evidence of learning is demonstrated through a range of media (text, multimedia, images etc.)
- Contains originality in relation to one or more of the following: the development of theoretical insights, conceptual analysis, approach/methodology and/or understanding of the topics.

**Refer**
- Lack of effort in creating an original and individual style.
- Lack of examples where student has represented learning through different media.
- Lack of evidence of one or more of the following: the development of theoretical insights, conceptual analysis, approach/methodology and/or understanding of the topics.

### Reflective Practice

**Pass**
- Contains evidence of continuous reflective practice throughout the programme.
- Deep levels of reflection are attained which are informed by research, literature and/or practice.
- Demonstration that deep reflection impacts on professional eLearning development and work practice.

**Refer**
- Lack of evidence continuous reflective practice throughout the programme.
- Insufficient reflective examples established; little evidence of self-reflection and subsequent action planning to develop and modify eLearning practice.

### Discussion

**Pass**
- Demonstrate a high level of clarity of meaning and purpose.
- Demonstrate evidence of coherence of argument and pursue an integrated, sophisticated and consistent line of argument or reasoning.
- Be informed by an exceptional level of critical thinking and analysis.

**Refer**
- Unclear meaning and purpose.
- Lack of coherence in individual's reason across the ePortfolio.
- Lack of critical thinking and analysis.

### General Commentary on the ePortfolio:
Reflection on Implementation & Lessons Learned

From the first iteration of the ePortfolio in the MSc in 2007, we found that in order to engage programme participants in the ePortfolio process, it was necessary to provide them with extensive support.

- We found that participants must perceive the **value** of ePortfolios for learning and/or professional development in order to be motivated to use them.

- Not all participants can **reflect deeply** without adequate learner support in the form of reflective writing guides and scaffolding which are needed to support reflections in their ePortfolio; we have placed a focus on participants using their reflections to link theory with their own practice in eLearning, and helps them identify their strengths and areas for development.

- Participants in recent years are better at incorporating more **multimedia artefacts** into their ePortfolio in a meaningful way (for reflection), moving into pedagogically creative territory. They have generally become more comfortable and more accomplished in their dealings with digital technologies. During the past five years we have observed the level of peer-to-peer collaboration and support around new technologies growing considerably, and in a specific way. As participants’ confidence and abilities increased from cohort to cohort, the reliance on a few expert participants, which was noted in the first two cohorts in particular, gradually gave way to a broader sharing between a much larger number of participants, all seeking ways to improve the technological aspects of their ePortfolios. We have introduced participants to tools they may not have seen before, showing them examples of how other academics and industry eLearning practitioners have used them, and encouraging them to explore these with their own students/users and preserve records of this usage, and employ them to enrich the presentation of their accomplishments in their ePortfolios.

- Linked to the improvement in tool usage, we found that **sharing** the ePortfolios with peers was vitally important; this should be nurtured at the beginning and supported thorough online group feedback activities and in class presentations of ePortfolios.

- In terms of suitable **ePortfolio platforms**, we moved away from Mahara to WordPress as an initial platform. Participants are also free to choose the platform of their choice and many have adopted Yola, Wix and Weebly. We see this as a way for participants to engage in more individualised, autonomous learning practices.

We see all this happening as a result of dedicated support and encouragement led by the programme co-ordinator and reinforced by all the module tutors.