

Short-listed entry for e-Portfolio/ePDP Award



Embedding e-Portfolios into the FE Curriculum

In 2005, as part of the ISLE project, Duncan Gillespie and Robert Brown from Dumfries & Galloway College started working on an idea to use the open source WordPress blogging platform to host student e-Portfolios. From the initial pilot project, the WordPress e-Portfolio has grown to cover all curricular areas and even been adopted by other Scottish colleges.

The Dumfries & Galloway solution is a fully-featured e-Portfolio, offering a secure space to store evidence and reflect on progress made. The large variety of themes on offer allows students to customise the look of their pages and showcase achievements in a personalised context.

The e-Portfolio is seen as a benefit by the learners, with 77% indicating that they thought an e-Portfolio would help them gain employment. Other findings from a recent survey showed:

- 85% had a raised awareness of employability
- 81% had enjoyed using it
- 77% reported improved evaluation and reflection skills
- 81% reported improved communication and IT skills
- 65% would continue to use it after college

One key advantage to the system is that once students have completed their courses the college can export their work to a freely hosted external site such as WordPress.com. This means that students have indefinite free access to a fully-functional e-Portfolio - something that goes well beyond the common 'export to a CD' option offered by other solutions. The Dumfries & Galloway portfolio now also meets IMS standards to allow import/export facilities to compliant systems.



Figure 1: Int1 Engineering student portfolio

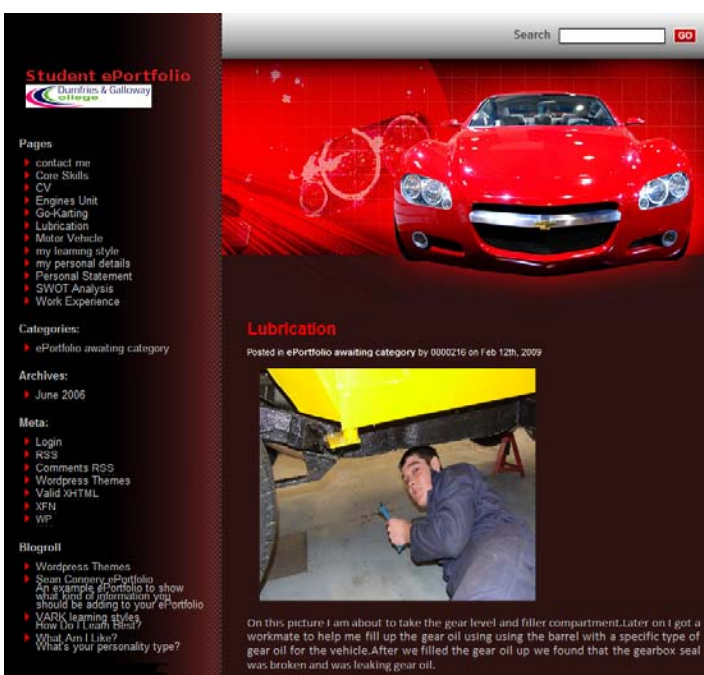


Figure 2: Motor Vehicle student portfolio

The e-Portfolio system is supported by a set of administrative tools (epManager) developed at the college. Tied into the student records system, members of staff are easily able to set up groups, add/delete new users and set permission levels. For the next academic year, additional features on the horizon include adding support for mobile phones, allowing students to update their e-Portfolios on the move.

e-Portfolios have also been introduced as part of the college's schools link provision allowing tutor support out with class contact time, further aiding the college to meet the Curriculum for Excellence, blended flexible delivery and remove barriers to create a seamless transition from school to college.

While a learner's e-Portfolio can stand alone, it has proved much more successful when embedded and engaged with the employability skills work, tutorial classes or within core skills classes so that the learner can see the linkage between key lifelong learning skills and applications. Changes in learning that have occurred as a result of involvement are the learners' ability to reflect on their level of skills, increased involvement in blended learning from tutors across a range of curricular areas and development of targeted support for certain learner groups.