

- assessment decisions are made remotely by an assessor through access to the learner's e-portfolio. The learner is not restricted to assessment visits for contact with the assessor.
- email communication enables learners to contact the assessor if there are any issues or problems with evidence collection or progress in general.
- the creation of a forum within the e-portfolio site may enable learners to communicate with, and learn from, each other.

Feedback will be recorded by the assessor along with any action points agreed to address any learning or further evidence requirements. Each learner should ideally be supported at work by a coach and/or mentor who will help address any identified learning needs.

Authenticity of evidence

Authenticity of presented evidence might be seen as a potential problem. However, assessors will have been trained to judge matters such as authenticity of evidence and there are a number of approved procedures which will help to confirm ownership of work.

These include:

- electronic signatures
- use of workplace mentor as confirmation/witness
- evidence emailed through third party e.g. the mentor

Of course, not everyone will want to use this method of evidence collection and assessment, and some learners will prefer to, and be more suited to, the use of the traditional paper-based portfolio. Where this is the case, learners should have the choice of their preferred route. It is worth remembering, though, that a combination of both methods will also work. Learners might want to consider storing reports electronically and keeping a paper-based record of their product evidence – some learners may feel more secure knowing that their evidence is at hand and some may prefer to have hard copy of their work available for reference.

The e-portfolio is a developing tool in this age of technology enhanced learning. Where it can be employed, it may transform the learning experience for your learners.

Further reading and research

JISC (The Joint Information Systems Committee) (www.jisc.ac.uk) is currently operating a range of projects related to e-portfolios.

European Institute for E-Learning (<http://www.eife-l.org/eifel>) is responsible for Europortfolio, the European Consortium for the Digital Portfolio

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ePortfolios

'It is our belief that in 2010 every citizen will have an ePortfolio; this belief is supported by strong evidence....' (ePortfolio 2004, European Institute for E-Learning Conference). This article highlights the benefits of using ePortfolios in the achievement of vocational qualifications and for wider use by an individual learner.



There is a growing school of thought in learning circles which advocates the utilization of technology that is available to maximize learning and development for all. Electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) allow learners to record their lifelong learning achievements and create a showcase for their skills.

A personal electronic portfolio may typically contain not just assessment results, but information about each individual, for example:

- personal goals
- past achievements and results
- current skills levels
- examples of previous work
- evidence from performance at work
- competencies required for particular jobs

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In short, an e-portfolio will be a continuously updated record of an individual's learning life which can be shared with others. All of the information contained in an e-portfolio is stored electronically, organised and archived, easily accessible and can be selected to suit the appropriate audience.

ePortfolios and S/NVQs

Vocational qualifications (S/NVQs) recognise competent performance at work by assessing individuals against a nationally recognised standard of performance. Assessment of a person's ability to perform a given task will also identify any learning needs and this process enables people at work to increase and develop their skills and also receive a nationally recognised award.

Traditionally, evidence of performance for these awards has been stored in a paper-based portfolio of evidence. Paper-based portfolios can be cumbersome, require a lot of attention to detail and are time consuming in terms of assessment – e.g. referencing of pages, assessor has to sift through documents during assessment visits, and can only be presented for assessment when the assessor is present. They also require a lot of time from the learner, e.g. photocopying, referencing of pages etc, which can make the learning experience a laborious one.





Achievement of vocational qualifications relies on learners generating proof of their performance through a variety of sources of evidence



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Portfolios tell a story. They catalogue accomplishments and achievements to provide the evidence that, in the case of vocational qualifications, performance standards have been achieved. However, they do not have to be paper-based. ePortfolios have been developed to maximise use of computer-stored evidence. Most of us at work nowadays have access to, and depend upon, information technology for some or all of our jobs. The evidence needed to demonstrate our performance for vocational qualifications is very often at our fingertips.

Achievement of vocational qualifications relies on learners generating proof of their performance through a variety of sources of evidence. One major source of evidence is work-related products, which are usually the physical end products of the job done, e.g. letters, reports, work plans etc, and these products will also include the details of the preparation, and various stages of completion.

Use of electronic portfolios for storing evidence will provide learners with a more efficient method of presenting this evidence for assessment. The e-portfolio provides an electronic platform for the planning of assessment, recording of assessment decisions and provision of feedback to learners - which is the agreed process for assessment of vocational qualifications (assessor unit A1, assess candidates using a range of methods)

Benefits of adopting e-portfolios may include:

- making learning accessible at a time, pace and style of learning that meets learner needs (learndirect scotland pledge point 1)
- providing the learners with clear information that will help them make the best personal choices about learning programmes and maintain control of their learning (learndirect scotland pledge point 2)
- enabling learners to monitor progress and record achievements continuously, and not just at the end of a completed programme (learndirect scotland pledge point 5)

Sources of evidence can include:

- assessor reports
- written reports
- completed documents
- photographs
- video evidence
- audio evidence – professional discussions, witness testimonies

All of the above can be stored electronically or scanned into computers for uploading to the e-portfolio.

Almost every occupation has a nationally agreed standard of performance which provides the content for vocational qualifications. These occupations range from Bingo Operations to Bricklaying and all can benefit from the use of electronic portfolios.

Tips for learners for generating evidence

- read through the unit content and ask the assessor to clarify and explain anything that is unclear
- check the evidence requirements for each unit/element – these requirements are usually quite specific on the amount and type of evidence required
- get familiar with the knowledge and understanding requirements – sometimes evidence that is produced will also cover the knowledge and understanding requirements
- ensure that the evidence presented is valid, reliable and current, i.e. personally produced, fit for purpose and recently produced
- ensure that any documents submitted as evidence are annotated, to clarify the relevance – this will help to meet knowledge and understanding requirements because it describes how and why the document has been used

Tips for learners for using an e-portfolio

- create an electronic folder to contain all relevant evidence
- save any relevant evidence as it is generated, e.g. if producing a document which might be relevant evidence, save it to their electronic folder at the time
- concentrate on one unit at a time, to begin with. Once confident using the e-portfolio, allocate appropriate evidence generated to relevant units
- complete the electronic evidence matrix/competence claim continuously – this will allow identification of any gaps in the evidence requirements
- if in doubt about a piece of evidence, save it, submit it and let the assessor decide
- submit evidence for assessment when the requirements have been covered

Benefits to learners of online assessment

- progress is much faster as learners do not have to rely on assessor visits for each assessment decision
- learner's work is submitted as and when completed, or by agreed assessment deadlines. This means much more flexibility for both learner and assessor.
- more choice is available to the learner as to when evidence is collected, stored and submitted for assessment
- no more cumbersome folders to carry around
- process is much more environmentally friendly as it involves no paper, polythene sleeves, folders etc.
- where qualifications are funded externally, the feedback to learners also provides a review record for the external funder