Epsilen ePortfolio Primer for Queensborough Faculty – rev 4

The Epsilen Environment

Epsilen is a centrally hosted eLearning environment offering a wide range of course delivery, assessment and collaboration products & services.

Designed by and for educators, Epsilen offers opportunities to create ePortfolios, deliver online course materials, assess institutional and student outcomes and interact and collaborate with colleagues any time, everywhere.

At Queensborough Community College our Enterprise License provides us with access to Epsilen products including:

- ePortfolio
- Global Learning System (GLS) - similar to Blackboard
- Group Collaboration Tools including a Chat Room, Wikis, and Discussion Boards
- NY Times Repository
- Learning Matrix for Assessment
- Social & Professional Networking

What is an ePortfolio? - collect, reflect, present…

ePortfolio means different things to different people. Some see ePortfolio as a tool to be used occasionally (a few times a year) to display and reflect-on artifacts that demonstrate a student's overall college experience. Often mentioned are key waypoints such as Cornerstone, Milestone, Capstone, and Writing Intensive courses, or Learning Communities or Service Learning Projects.

Another way to use ePortfolio on a more regular basis is within every course. For example, if teachers create Cornerstone, Milestone, Capstone, and WI **assignments** modified to require **reflections**, a number of benefits will be realized. First, for students, creating and then reflecting-on artifacts will become the norm - this represents **the real value of ePortfolios**. Second, using the ePortfolio interface & tools will become as natural as using a word processor, so users (both students and teachers) will NOT need to keep re-learning the system from semester to semester. Third, a greater body of artifacts and reflections will be posted. Fourth, students will be able to create showcases from a larger / richer body of their work.

The primary purpose of having student e-portfolios is to engage the student throughout his or her academic career. By having an electronic space where a student can store and present academic achievements the student gains a better sense of progress toward his or her academic goals.

Some Caveats

- Blackboard, like other Learning Management Systems (LMS), is Teacher-centric - **an ePortfolio is Student-centric**. Teachers may provide guidance, but it is the student who decides what & when to post artifacts, and it is the student who decides who gets to see those artifacts. The ePortfolio is his or her record of an academic journey, not the instructor's
- Teacher guidance: since the ePortfolio belongs to the student it is imperative that teachers motivate students to post artifacts by 1) providing assignments that require posting; 2) recommending that they post quality examples of their work 3) recommending that they post their work in non-public spaces
- Why "Public" display is NOT a good idea for most Student artifacts
    - **Copyright** issues - you may NOT post "fair-use" artifacts in "publicly" viewable folders or pages
    - Everything you make "Public" is viewable and copy-able by everyone on the Internet
    - **Privacy** cannot be maintained in "publicly" viewable folders or artifacts
    - **Plagiarism** - anyone can copy what you have created and post it as their own

Artifacts, Reflections and Assignments

Artifacts can be text, spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, Websites, graphics, audio, or video. Both teachers and students need to know which **file (Artifact) formats** Queensborough supports and where those files get posted (remember the Epsilen limit of 8MB per file, 125 MB per account).

- Text - .PDF,.TXT, .DOC & .DOCX (not recommended) - post directly to Epsilen
- Spreadsheet - .XLS - post directly to Epsilen
- Presentation - .PPT (PowerPoint) - post directly to Epsilen
- Website - .HTML, .ASP, .ASPX - post to College Web server via ACC
- Graphics - .JPG, .GIF (sized properly for the Web) - post directly to Epsilen
- Animations - .SWF, .GIF - post directly to Epsilen
- Audio - .MP3 - post directly to Epsilen
- Audio streamed - .FLA, .WMA - post to College Web server via ACC
- Video Embedded - .FLV - post to College Web server via ACC
- Video non-Embedded - MOV - post to College Web server via ACC
- Video streamed - WMV - post to College Web server via ACC
- Video YouTube - .FLV - pointer to video stored on YouTube

A good artifact:

1. Is carefully created or selected
2. Represents at least one standard
3. Demonstrates competencies of the standard
4. Looks professional
5. Gets paired with a relevant and insightful reflection (reflections can be written, audio or videotaped)

Reflections: see also ePortfolio-izing an Assignment

Ultimately, reflection and dialogue with others will result in insights as to:

1. What factors / prior knowledge enabled you to complete the assignment?
2. What actions did you take, what choices did you make, and what resources did you use?
3. What have you learned?
4. How is what you learned relevant?

ePortfolio-izing an Assignment – some agreed-upon best practices:

- Make posting ePortfolio artifacts mandatory, not optional (i.e. part of the student's grade). We learned this with Tiger Mail, and some have already experienced it with ePortfolio – participation is dependent upon the teacher requiring its use.
- Re-write assignments making sure that the artifact created by the student will be suitable for online posting.
- Re-think some assignments and add a multimedia component: graphics, audio, video
- Have "ePortfolio Assignments" require some or all of the following:
  - Write a summary of the assignment in their own words to place the assignment in a context
  - Do whatever is required by the Assignment
  - Add a visual or aural component
  - Write a reflection based on specific questions posed by you
- Post your assignment files as "protected PDFs" in Blackboard. You might also want to post assignment files as "protected PDFs" in an Epsilen Access Key protected Folder, or in a Group Drop Box
- Give students clear **artifact submission instructions** - tell students:
  - the consequences of submitting someone else's work
  - to include their name, course, section, teacher as part of the submitted artifact;
  - that the submitted artifact should include an abstract of the original assignment to provide context for all those who view it
  - to use a word processor to write the abstract, then copy & paste to ePortfolio
  - to use a word processor to write their reflection, then copy & paste to ePortfolio
  - how to name each artifact - so you do not get 25x "Assignment 3s", etc.
    Use names *like*: "EN101D4-SP08-JDoe-Assignment3"
  - if it's a writing assignment, submit artifacts as Adobe .PDFs – *this could reduce plagiarism*
  - where and when to get assistance from an ePortfolio student Mentor
  - where to post artifacts - name the Folder, or the Group Drop Box, etc.
  - not to post class assignment artifacts to "public" spaces
  - which tool to use if they want you to view the artifact – Group Drop Box, or Protected (Access Key) Folder
- Consider how Blogs (individual journal entries), Wikis (team or group creations), and Discussion Forums (individuals weighing-in on specific topics) might enhance an assignment
- Ask a series of questions designed to elicit a quality **reflection**. Some possibilities are:
  - What factors / prior knowledge enabled you to do well on this assignment?
  - What actions did you take, what choices did you make, and what resources did you use to complete this assignment?
  - What have you learned from this assignment?
  - How is what you learned relevant to: this course, your education, your life, the world?