Supervising the Completion Of An ePortfolio For Assessment. Proposed Best Practice Guidelines[1]

1 Roles

1.1 EPORTFOLIO PROJECT TEAM

A team will typically consist of a group of academic supervisors. The number of supervisors is dependent on the number of students requiring supervision. It is advisable to limit the number of supervisors in order to support consistency and reliability during the assessment process. The team is responsible for supervising students through to completion of their projects.

One member of the team will act as the ePortfolio Project Co-ordinator (EPC)

The team will also include an external examiner to the Institution

A Technical Support Person (TSP) will be assigned to the team. The TSP will be required, in liaison with the ECP, to set up/customise the platform being used to meet the needs of the project. Their role will also be to create and provide technical instruction and support to students and supervisors for the duration of the project. Students and supervisors will have the capacity to contact the TSP directly ('rules of engagement' determined by TSP) with any questions/issues directly related to the platform and its use.

1.2 ePortfolio Project Co-ordinator (EPC)

Each department (or alternative) will have an ePortfolio Project Co-ordinator (EPC) who plays a crucial role as the leader of the supervisory team with overall responsibility for the compilation, administration and direction of the project. The EPC must be internal to the department to which the project is assigned and be able to offer guidance and advice on procedural, academic and other issues directly associated with the project.

It is advisable the EPC also engages in the supervision of students. This provides for essential knowledge and understanding of the process of supervision and the needs and issues that may arise during it. Such knowledge and understanding will be used by the EPC to inform

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[1] The following proposal has is based on the experiential knowledge of the team of ePortfolio supervisors at the Department of Nursing and Healthcare Sciences IT Tralee.

future changes to the project and identify any further education and training needs of students and supervisors.

Communication with supervisors on a scheduled and ad-hoc basis will form a key part of their role. This communication will be centred on supporting supervisors during the supervision period and addressing any issues directly related to the project and/or the supervision process. Fostering peer support through a series of scheduled meetings will be facilitated by the EPC Compilation of results and engagement with internal (supervisors) and external examiners through the formal processes and procedures of the institution is their responsibility.

Communication with students in relation to the administration and co-ordination of the project will be the remit of the ECP e.g. any changes to guidelines, supervision arrangements etc. Addressing questions by students in relation to meeting the project guidelines/standard expected is not the role of the ECP. The ECP, in these instances, will direct the student to their supervisor.

Reviewing overall performance by students and evaluating student and supervisor experiences during the project will be undertaken by the EPC. Evaluations will be used by the EPC to plan and further develop the ePortfolio project in the future.

In order to ensure the ePortfolio platform being used fulfils its purpose and is without technical issues communicating directly with the TSP at the outset, during and on final evaluation of the project, will be central to their role.

1.3   Academic Supervisors

Academic supervision applies where a lecturer has responsibility for a student for individual facilitation and academic support in relation to the development of an ePortfolio.

The role of the supervisor during the supervision period relates to facilitating a student's completion of the ePortfolio in accordance with the guidelines related to it and the standard expected (as indicated in a Rubric for Assessment, QQI Award Standards etc.), rather than assessing if the ePortfolio has achieved the standard; this comes after the supervision period ends and the work is finally submitted. Therefore the academic supervisor will not indicate the academic grade the ePortfolio is likely to earn; this is an assessment function and not a supervisory one.

It will not be the function of the academic supervisor to address any technical issues/problems raised by the student during the supervision period, this is the role of the TSP, and therefore the supervisor will direct the student to the TSP accordingly.

The role of the supervisor will be as follows;

1. To offer advice and encouragement and sometimes caution and challenge to the student during the time working together.
2. To establish with the student the appropriateness and feasibility of content/elements/evidence (artefacts) to develop/include.
3. To help the student to develop critical thinking and other academic skills to fulfil the project guidelines and achieve the standard expected.
4. To facilitate the student to critically reflect on experiences that have the potential to lead to significant learning that can be documented/used within the ePortfolio.
5. To pose relevant questions to facilitate a student's development and learning rather than telling the student what to do.
6. To help the student to deepen their understanding of the complexity of factors which influence their role.
7. To provide constructive feedback.
8. To maintain brief but succinct records of supervision meetings.
9. To assess the final work of the student in accordance with the Rubric for Assessment and enter a grade for consideration at examination board.
10. To engage in the internal and external moderation procedures of the Institution in relation to their students' final submitted work.
11. To liaise with the ECP in relation to any issues raised by students related to the project in general or with the project guidelines or with any issues arising from their experience of supervision.

2 Resources

The success of supervising an ePortfolio project as a means of assessment is dependent on how well it is resourced. Resources identified as critical for success are as follows;

2.1 Technical Training and Support

Essential at the outset and during the supervision period. Supervisors will require to be knowledgeable on the platform being used, its features and navigation. It is advisable to determine at the outset exactly what a supervisor needs to know in order to tailor training accordingly and determine the hours required to deliver such training. It is advised at the outset, and given their role as outlined, that a supervisor will need to know the following;

a. How to open the platform.
b. How to find and open a student' submitted draft and/or final work for feedback/final assessment.
c. How to populate feedback/comment boxes.
d. How to send feedback/comments.

This will have a training hour requirement of 1.5hours. Technical support required during the supervision process will be determined by the individual supervisor according to their needs and relayed directly to the TSP.

2.2 Supervision hours

The hours required by a supervisor to supervise a student to completion will be commensurate with the credit weighting of the module to which the ePortfolio attached. It is suggested that 1hr per 5 credits is assigned. For example, a 10 credit module with an ePortfolio as an assessment strategy will assign 2 hours supervision per student.

2.3 Project Guidelines

2.3.1 Content guidelines

Critical for consistency during the process of supervision and assessment, unambiguous structured content guidelines will be required. Supervisors (and students) require to know *exactly* what students are required to demonstrate/achieve/complete within the ePortfolio.

It is suggested that guidelines are prescriptive for students who are creating an ePortfolio for the first time. This serves to facilitate the student to be 'walked through' the process and may serve to dissipate any anxieties related to the project. If a student is required to incrementally develop an ePortfolio; a student may require to complete an ePortfolio for each year of their programme, the level of prescription within guidelines maybe lessened as they progress, allowing for greater creativity and ownership of the process.

The content; what the student is required to populate/create/demonstrate within the ePortfolio, is dependent on the learning outcomes for the module to which the ePortfolio may be attached, professional/regulatory requirements, anticipated employer requirements etc.
The EPC will be responsible for determining content requirements and liaise with the TSP in customising the platform to accommodate these requirements.

2.3.2 Supervision guidelines

Guidelines directing students on the parameters and requirements within the supervisory relationship will accompany the content guidelines. At a minimum these guidelines should;

a. Provide general information. For example when supervision begins and ends, amount of supervision to be provided etc.
b. Outline the supervisor's role and responsibilities.
c. Outline the student's role and responsibilities.
d. Set deadlines for submission of draft and final work for feedback. It is advisable that students submit draft work for feedback at scheduled points during the supervision period. These dates should be determined by EPC in liaison with supervisors.

2.3.3 Rubric for Assessment

A rubric for assessment will form part of the project guidelines. The rubric will require to be multidimensional mirroring the multidimensional quality of an ePortfolio. The rubric will make obvious the marking criteria being applied to final submissions so that supervisors (and students) know what is expected. A rubric may also contribute to the reliability of the assessment process.

2.3.4 Policies Guidelines and Protocols

Essential to an ePortfolio is the requirement for students to critically reflect on their work/practice experiences in order to reveal their learning, personal and professional development. Such experiences may be centred on experiences with others; colleagues, patients, mentors etc. and may disclose personal details, unsafe work practice, personal/welfare issues or raise concerns for others etc. Project guidelines will include the institutions relevant policies and guidelines regarding reflective practice, for example, 'A Code of Ethics for Reflective Practice' 'Student Disclosure Policy'. Such policies and guidelines will support the supervisor (and student) in directing the student and taking the appropriate action.

3 Evaluation

At the end of the supervision period, supervisors will be facilitated to evaluate their experience of supervision as a part of t teaching and learning quality assurance procedures. Students will also be invited to evaluate their experience of supervision. Evaluation pro-forma will be developed and circulated by the EPC. Results from evaluations will be used by EPC to support any changes to the supervisory process going forward.