Title of Case Study
E-portfolio use in the Kent School of Architecture

Summary of Case Study (c. 50 words)

'Architecture is about bringing things together in space, making sense of these things to the user and creating a unique experience in the process of doing so; in this way, a good e-portfolio is a small piece of architecture.' (T. Stonor 2008)

This case study details a joint project by the Kent School of Architecture and the University’s Learning and Teaching Unit. The project introduced stage 1 Architecture students to the use of e-portfolios (PebblePAD) to showcase their work and reflect on their design development.

The project employed a ‘student-led curriculum development approach’ (J Stephenson, M Yorke 1998) by first working with a stage 2 student to develop an example e-portfolio. The example e-portfolio was published to the web and used to inspire other students to develop their own e-portfolios. An unexpected outcome of the project was the external interest which resulted from the example e-portfolio.

Key Words

- E-portfolio
- Reflection and self-development
- Digital communication networking
Key Points of Good Practice

- The use of a local student-led example (a Kent student’s e-portfolio) http://www.pebblepad.co.uk/kent/viewasset.aspx?oid=1894&type=webfolio&pageoid=1895 was useful for the other students to see. This example is available on the web and has attracted a lot of national attention from: The UK Resource Centre for Women in Science Engineering and Technology (UKRC), Spacesyntax and, Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)

- Development of structures through the use of e-portfolios to support students’ reflection on their design development

- Collaboration between the Department of Architecture and the University’s Learning and Teaching Unit.

- Training students to use the e-portfolio software

- Use of e-portfolio software that is publishable to the web

Description of Implementation

The University of Kent’s School of Architecture was set up in 2005. It is a very fast growing school which now has approximately 320 undergraduates enrolled. At the end of stage 1 of the degree programme all students must submit a portfolio of their work for a public crit. The department worked with the University’s Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (UELT). Training students to use the software was done by a UELT learning technologist. UELT also provided curriculum development advice.

The e-portfolio was introduced to students as a non-compulsory element which students could do in addition to a physical portfolio. The aim of introducing the e-portfolio was to give students a tool which they could use to reflect on their design process and describe their personal development as well as show-case their work. The brief that students were given was to select highlights of their design work from throughout stage 1 to showcase their design development and narrate their personal development as a student of Architecture. The e-portfolio was non-credit bearing in the first year but the intention was to attach credit once the project was evaluated.

The first stage in implementation was to seek volunteer students who were willing to create an e-
portfolio which could be used as an example to show other students. One student, Rachel Thapa Chhetri, produced an excellent e-portfolio which she allowed the department to use as an example to show other students what an e-portfolio does, see appendix 1.

http://www.pebblepad.co.uk/kent/viewasset.aspx?oid=1894&type=webfolio&pageoid=1895 Students were given some freedom in how they put their e-portfolio together but typically they included an introductory page to say something about themselves and their motivations for studying Architecture. They then selected their own work to showcase some students arranged their work by the modules they had taken others by the skills they were developing, see appendix 2.

The outcome of the project so far is a small number of students (7) took up the opportunity to submit an e-portfolio of their first year’s work. Feedback from students has been sought via a focus group the students in this group were a mixture of those who had developed an e-portfolio and some who had not. Despite the low participation rate the feedback from students was very positive. Students expressed their desire to have portfolio development built into their whole degree programme. They suggested that they should be prompted to update it at the end of every module. All students who responded said that they would like the e-portfolio to be a compulsory element of the degree programme. A new communications module is being set-up which will have e-portfolios incorporated into the assessment from the beginning of the year. The students who did not develop an e-portfolio sighted the fact that the course is very demanding and they gave prominence to credit bearing assignments over non-credit bearing ones. All students agreed that the e-portfolio would be a useful addition to their employability skills.
Perceived Benefits

For Students ...
- The e-portfolio provides a vehicle for students to reflect on their work and on the crit of their work
- Enables students to remember and reflect upon their design development
- It enables students to easily communicate their work digitally
- It enhances students’ computer skills

For Teaching/Support Staff ...
- It is a way of recording and archiving students’ work
- Teaching students to use the software is very quick
- It frees up some teaching time: the software can be used to communicate with groups of students rather than on an individual basis

Issues/Challenges

For Students ...
- Although the software is easy to use it can be slow when uploading large files
- Motivating students to use the software when it is a non-assessed element of the module

For Teaching/Support Staff ...
- The e-portfolio was offered to students as a option as such it was not widely taken up
- It would be much more successful if e-portfolios were embedded into the curriculum and awarded marks
- Assessment of the e-portfolio is a concern
Enablers that helped the project to work

- One student, Rachel Thapa Chhetri, produced an excellent e-portfolio which she allowed the department to use as an example to show other students what an e-portfolio does. http://www.pebblepad.co.uk/kent/viewasset.aspx?oid=1894&type=webfolio&pageoid=1895
- The department was supported by the University’s Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (UELT) which provided curriculum development advice and e-learning support

Details of project evaluation (i.e. collection and analysis of student feedback). Please state any significant issues that arose as a result of the evaluation

The project was evaluated by conducting a focus group discussion with students (not all of the students had done an e-portfolio). The students were asked the following questions:

1. Was the software easy to use?
2. Was the training that you received adequate?
3. Do you think that developing an e-portfolio helps you to think about and see your design development?
4. Would you use the e-portfolio as a communication tool for example with prospective employers or to show-case your work?
5. Would you welcome e-portfolios becoming a compulsory element of your degree programme?
6. Will you continue to use the e-portfolio?
7. Do you have any other comments?

The responses can be summarised as follows:

1. All students said that they found the software easy to use
2. Students found the training useful some said they would have liked a follow up session or more tutor feedback on their portfolio
3. All students responded positively to this question they particularly commented on the advantage of being able to update the portfolio being able to view all their work at once and being able to keep track of their development
4. All students saw the communication value of the e-portfolio not as a replacement of a physical portfolio but as a easily portable addition
5. All students, even those who had not done an e-portfolio responded positively to this question. They suggested that it be a compulsory, assessed element of the programme and they were keen for it to be built in to the whole programme rather than just one module.
6. All students said that they intend to continue to use the e-portfolio but that they would welcome being prompted to do so by tutors because
of the time pressures of their degree programme non-compulsory elements are not prioritised
7. Students used this question to emphasise their enthusiasm for the use of e-portfolios

**Possible improvements/enhancements (suggested by the case study provider)**

This project would have reached more students had it been embedded into the curriculum. The department is planning to this for the next cohort of S1 students.

**Points of advice for others who may wish to replicate the techniques used**

Students need to see immediate tangible benefits for engaging with the initiative i.e. marks. The software needs to be easy to use.

**FURTHER READING**

### Relevant publications by those conducting the case-study

- April 2007 Learning Development in Higher Education Network (LDHEN) annual conference ‘Students’ engagement with PDP software’ [http://www.alдинhe.ac.uk/bmth07.htm](http://www.alдинhe.ac.uk/bmth07.htm)
- PDP UK, Issue 15, Dec 08 - A year in the life of an e-portfolio

### Publications in the research literature


### Cross references to other materials/resources in the topic area

- E portfolios for the 21st Century [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/events/archive/230408_eportfolios_for_the_21st_century](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/events/archive/230408_eportfolios_for_the_21st_century)
- Personal Development planning e-portfolios [http://www.kent.ac.uk/ue/elt/ced/themes/personal-development/e-portfolio.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/ue/elt/ced/themes/personal-development/e-portfolio.html)

• Any supporting materials in relation to this study that would help others i.e. examples, supporting data, charts and graphics etc. should be attached as separate files.
Completion of the CEBE Case Study Template

The case study should be written according to the following template headings, using the points listed as a guide:

• **Title**
  A short and explicit title (not metaphorical/poetic) appropriate to a case study i.e. reflecting exactly what is being reported on, in a way that would enable a reader to understand the focus and decide whether or not to read it.

• **Key Points of Good Practice**
  A succinct list of bullet points which highlight issues of good practice exemplified in your case study submission.

• **Description of Implementation**
  [please ensure that this section is written such that departments elsewhere can take the central elements from your practice]
  A brief description of what you actually did. What sort of activities and interaction occurred? Brief details of assessment methods used, support & training required and timescales for undertaking the work/implementing the technique.

• **Perceived Benefits** (for students & teaching support staff)
  What are the impacts? How do students and teachers benefit, how will the lessons learnt from your activity be embedded in local curricula? From your perspective, what are the strengths of the work. What were the reactions of others involved?

• **Issues/Challenges** (for students & teaching support staff)
  What problems/issues have arisen and how have you addressed them. How might any difficulties encountered be avoided in future?

• **Enablers that helped the project to work**
  Were there strategies and tactics that facilitated the work? Are there approaches that are particularly successful in promoting participation?

• **Details of project evaluation** (i.e. collection and analysis of student feedback)
  What methods are used for evaluating the project.
  What evidence can be provided to demonstrate the success of the technique/method, e.g. student/teacher/employer feedback, peer review, formative and summative evaluation, literature search etc.
  Were there changes to attitudes and practices as a result of the work? Has the work been published or peer reviewed elsewhere in whole or in part?

• **Possible improvements/enhancements**
  What was learnt from this?
  What might be done differently in future?

• **Points of advice for others who may wish to replicate the techniques used**
How can the work/method be replicated or adapted to different contexts, either geographically or in respect of other fields/disciplines. What is flexible or core and what is optional, flexible or situation specific. What is the key advice you would give to someone who has decided to adapt this method/procedure/way of organising etc. Hot tips and things to look out for.

- **Further Reading**
  Relevant references to published articles/web sites either written by yourself or others that describe the method/technique highlighted.

- **Details of Support Materials**
  Attach as a separate file(s), any details in relation to this study that you think would help others i.e. examples, supporting data, charts and graphics etc.

**Style and presentation**
- Text should be in Times-New Roman 10 point font
- Text should be aligned to the left (not justified)
- There should be 2 spaces after a full stop
- Hyphens should not be used to break words at the end of a line
- The write up should be written in a user-friendly manner, rather than as a piece of 'academic work'
- The language should be understandable for a British audience. Words and phrases of foreign origin should be italicised, unless they are in common use as English idioms
- Use '-ise' instead of '-ize', e.g. emphasize, but '-yse' instead of '-yze', e.g. analyse
- Supporting materials i.e. Tables and Figures should be provided as separate files.
- References should be listed in full at the end of the study using the Harvard referencing style guide HSL-DVC 1, see: http://www.shef.ac.uk/library/libdocs/hsl-dvc1.pdf
  Electronic references should be cited using Harvard Guide HSL-DVC 2, see: http://www.shef.ac.uk/library/libdocs/hsl-dvc2.pdf