

Strategic Decisions

The decision to use ePortfolios occurs at several levels, depending on who takes the initiative: teacher, student, IT department, faculty, etc. In any case, the decision will concern the institution in question and will depend on several different considerations.

What benefits can one expect, what type and range of ePortfolio is best suited, what steps need to be taken and what kind of human resources are necessary to implement the ePortfolio-system?

Deciding to use ePortfolios does not only mean choosing an appropriate electronic tool, but also implies a view of teaching as a holistic, complex activity. Students take on responsibility for their learning, under the guidance of teachers who may need to adapt their role towards more consulting and less directing.

Working with ePortfolios means entering a dynamic process that may include several different uses of ePortfolios, e.g. learning, reflecting, assessing, collaborating, displaying achievements, etc. This means that ePortfolios are an activity as well as a product.

Whatever solution is decided on, it needs to be followed up by support and coaching to make it successful. It is important to make sure that all people involved understand what is expected of them and what the advantages of this approach to learning and teaching are.



ePortfolio – Top Arguments



- Identity: The use of ePortfolios can contribute to the building and development of an institution's special interests, competences and networks.
- Marketing: ePortfolios bear the name of an institution and are a visible sign of its commitment to modern education.
- Personal Development Planning is facilitated.
- Presentation: ePortfolios serve well as a presentation-tool for individuals and institutions.
- Equality aspects: ePortfolios enable students to achieve personal high quality results according to their abilities.
- Metacognitive skills: the process-oriented documentation of knowledge and learning in ePortfolios fosters the development of metacognitive skills.
- Research based learning is encouraged.
- Building communities: ePortfolios encourage the exchange between peers and with lecturers and advisors.
- Qualifications Framework: An ePortfolio is a well-suited tool to support the *Qualifications Framework for Swiss Higher Education*.

Teaching the ePortfolio Way

Teachers using ePortfolios monitor the process, advise their students and inform about expectations and terms of use (student responsibility, assessments etc.).

The approach to ePortfolios can vary strongly: from single study programme to whole study. Consequently, also the types of activities chosen vary in nature and scope.

- Students are responsible for organizing their ePortfolios, teachers are responsible for giving the necessary information and explanations about using the ePortfolios.
- Reflection is necessary to assure continuity and successful development of the students' learning.
- ePortfolios can bridge several courses and allow for a larger overview and integration of earlier learning.
- Using ePortfolios for assessment allows for formative as well as summative assessment.
- In the beginning, teachers may profit from being coached while getting to know the advantages and pitfalls of teaching the ePortfolio way.

For more details, see the leaflet *Teaching the ePortfolio way*.

IT Department

To make the introduction and use of ePortfolios a success, it is crucial that the technical implementation is well-planned. Therefore it is strongly recommended to establish a directory board for this type of project.

Among the many considerations that need to be taken into account, the main points are the following:

- An ePortfolio environment is not an LMS.
- Ownership of data is with students.
- Key Issues: security, performance, legal regulations.
- Technical support is necessary.
- ePortfolio-content has to be exportable/importable.
- Basic functionality has to be provided according to a specified level.
- Linking of LMS and ePortfolio is important.
- Open interface to the personal learning and working environment of students is necessary.

You will find more information online at www.eduhub.ch