

The scalable record: an e-Portfolio from individual to workforce

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The NHS Education for Scotland (NES) e-Portfolio is a web-based system that supports assessment, reflective practice and competency development for a rapidly expanding diversity of health professionals across the NHS. The ePortfolio grew out of a successful Scottish pilot for trainee doctors, and subsequently rolled out across UK Foundation Schools and a growing number of Medical Royal Colleges.

Objectives

Although the software has been customised for over twenty user groups, it has remained imperative that NES ePortfolios developments simultaneously meet core common functions across groups but also can be customised for specific group requirements. To meet these demands three separate research strands have been employed to ensure that users' (individuals, deaneries or national groups) requirements are grounded in the best evidence available.

Methods and findings

From the first (2005) pilot, usage statistics, e-surveys and focus groups have been employed to shape system improvements, enhance functionality and meet the monitoring and planning requirements of training providers and regulatory bodies. This research has been both internal (eg just under 70% of reflective entries were shared with an educational supervisor thereby suggesting a dynamic supervision relationship where the ePortfolio supports ongoing learning and development in a training context)¹ and external (eg the British Educational Communications & Technology Agency study² found that "e-portfolios support lifelong learning when institutions across all phases work together in a regional approach to make the learner's pathway relatively straightforward and share the knowledge they are gaining from current implementation").

After initial scoping work around topics of effectiveness in postgraduate portfolios, research identified a wide range of primary studies with little attempt to synthesise core findings. NES commissioned a systematic review on the topic, and examined the migration of portfolios to the electronic medium as a subsidiary question. Amongst the findings there is good evidence that if well implemented, portfolios effectively further both personal and professional learning, particularly if the learner receives regular feedback from a mentor³.

Finally an internal research stream continues to determine whether the data entered into the e-portfolio is meeting appropriate standards of use, and to produce information which informs continued delivery of a high quality educational service. A more detailed appraisal of the type and complexity of the data entered into the e-Portfolio to date has suggested the requirement for a two-phase approach to this analysis. Phase I will involve an in-depth audit of the 07/08 Scottish Foundation trainee data to comprehensively answer the following questions:

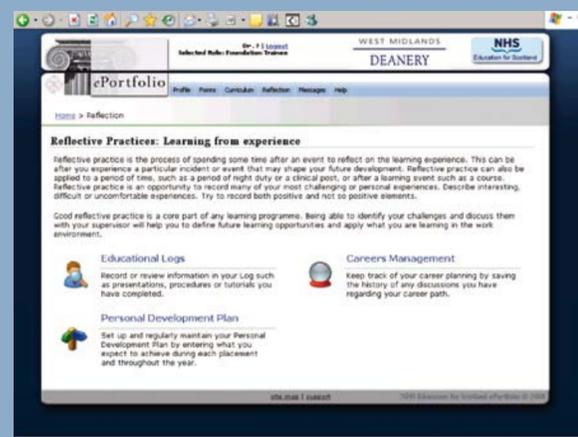
- 1) Have Foundation Trainees and support staff met nationally agreed portfolio requirements?
- 2) Have Foundation Trainees used e-portfolio learning tools adequately (Presented Evidence)?
- 3) How does certificate of performance status (satisfactory or unsatisfactory) correlate with quantifiable aspects of the assessment tools?

Phase II will build on these findings through a prospective research programme exploring the educational implications of Foundation Trainees' learning processes in relation to their preparation for specialist training and continual delivery of sound patient care.

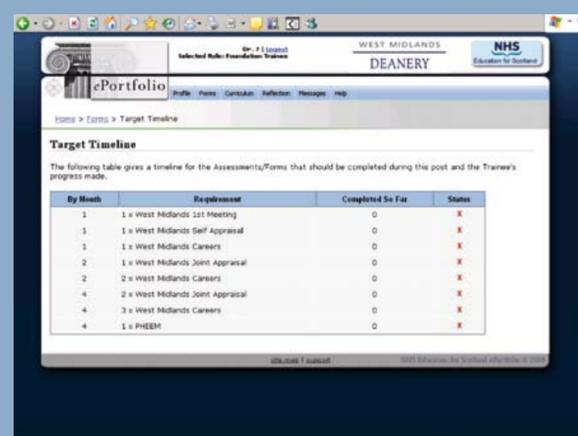
Conclusions

Not only does this system accommodate the mobility of healthcare professionals but it supports workforce planning and quality assurance by providing a rich source of data about process and activity. Phase I results are expected in autumn 2008, and will be used to inform the ongoing implementation of foundation programmes in Scotland and in particular the assessment tools used to support their delivery. Phase II research will provide a national picture of ePortfolio use and impact, and results will be of particular interest to postgraduate deaneries, regulatory and quality assurance bodies, and the wider medical education community.

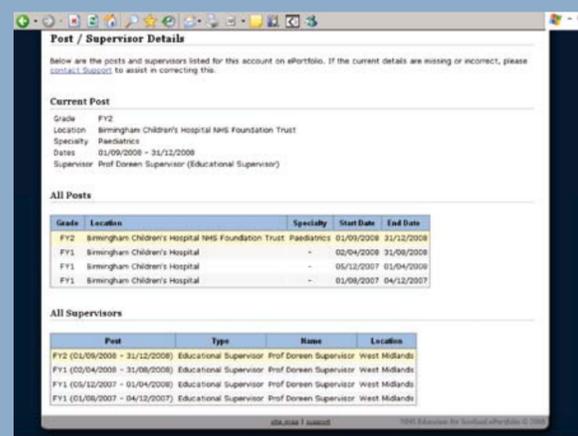
www.nhseportfolios.org



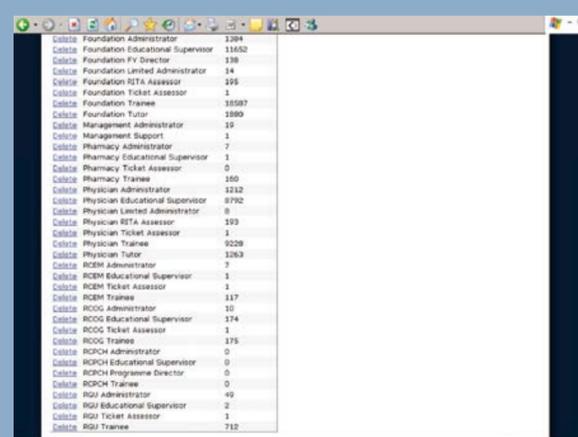
Reflective practice guidelines



Example target timeline for one region



Record of posts and supervisors



Number of ePortfolio users by role

References

1. Watson M, Beggs K, Haig A & Tochel C *Outcomes and evidence in junior doctor training - can an ePortfolio add value?* 13th Ozzawa International Conference on Clinical Competence (2008)
2. BECTA *Impact study of e-portfolios on learning.* (2007)
3. Tochel C, Haig A, Hesketh A, Cadzow A, Beggs K, Colthart I, Peacock H. *The effectiveness of portfolios for assessment and education.* Best Evidence Medical Education (BEME) Collaboration (in press 2008)