Frequently Asked Questions about ePortfolios

General Questions

What is an ePortfolio?

Short answer:
From P. Butler’s (October 2006) literature review of portfolios and ePortfolios:
“A portfolio is a collection of evidence that is gathered together to show a person’s learning journey over time and to demonstrate [his or her] abilities. Portfolios can be specific to a particular discipline, or very broadly encompass a person’s lifelong learning” (Butler, October 2006, p.2).
Source: A Review of the Literature on Portfolios and Electronic Portfolios

Long answer:
The ePortfolios of Mohawk graduates will be a curated collection of digital artifacts that demonstrate graduates’ abilities to communicate effectively, to collaborate productively, to think critically when solving challenging problems, and to participate meaningfully in college, community, and global initiatives. Artifacts that will be included in each graduate’s ePortfolio will include:

- graded assessments from the program of study;
- evaluations of experiential learning opportunities;
- individual reflections on learning; and
- a record of time and contributions to college, community, and global organizations.

For an ePortfolio implementation to be successful, the complete range of student growth must be presented, from academic achievements, to experiential learning, to extracurricular involvement so that the end result is a full showcase of that student’s learning, achievement, and experience while at Mohawk. More than this, the ePortfolio presents a process whereby a student can reflect on experiences and learn from them, within a quality pedagogical framework that has been thoughtfully constructed by teaching and learning professionals; Mohawk students will reflect on each ePortfolio artifact defining how the artifact illustrates how they have become more skilled as communicators, collaborators, critical thinkers, continuous learners, and responsible citizens. The end result is a digital record of a graduate’s professional and personal progress that can be shared with potential employers.
Why use an ePortfolio? What are the benefits?

- **Flexible:** An ePortfolio is an online tool that grows with the student – as a student gains new skills and builds new artifacts, these can be added to the ePortfolio. In addition, the student can create custom views of his/her ePortfolio to suit the intended audience – an employer, a professor, etc.

- **Accessible:** As an ePortfolio is online, it is readily viewable by anyone with an Internet connection and browser – however, the student can control who sees his/her ePortfolio. When the student graduates, s/he has a rich repository of learning artifacts that s/he can draw upon to showcase to future employers.

- **Individual:** The ePortfolio reflects an individual student’s learning journey; through the ePortfolio, the student has a holistic view of his/her learning experience that includes classroom learning as well as extracurricular involvement and also the student’s reflections each step of the way.

Why are we implementing ePortfolios at Mohawk?

In 2013, the Mohawk College Board of Governors adopted a set of Institutional Learning Outcomes. Mohawk College wants our students to graduate as capable communicators, collaborators, critical thinkers, who are capable of becoming both continuous learners and responsible citizens. After adopting these five institutional learning outcomes, the Vice President Academic was assigned the goal of developing an implementation strategy by March 2014 for providing each Mohawk student with an ePortfolio to store artifacts demonstrating his/her skills as communicators, collaborators, critical thinkers, continuous learners and responsible citizens. An ePortfolio allows a student to demonstrate that s/he is meeting Mohawk College’s five Institutional Learning Outcomes.

What are Mohawk College’s five Institutional Learning Outcomes?

Mohawk College graduates, upon completion of one, two, or three year programs, will be able to demonstrate their skills as:

1. Communicators
2. Collaborators
3. Critical Thinkers
4. Continuous Learners
5. Responsible Citizens
Communicators
They will communicate effectively with others of diverse backgrounds, values and personalities to develop meaningful relationships, share knowledge, manage conflict, solve problems, and foster positive change.

Collaborators
They will collaborate productively across networks to enhance knowledge, generate innovative ideas, resolve challenges and respond to change.

Critical Thinkers
They will use creativity and problem-solving skills to make informed decisions, assess risk, and take appropriate, timely action.

Continuous Learners
They will develop practical, occupation-specific knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as have the capacity to use learning technologies to stay current, pursue professional development, and personal renewal opportunities.

Responsible Citizens
They will apply personal, professional, and social practices to promote physical, economic, mental and emotional well-being, and also foster civic engagement.

Can I see an example of an ePortfolio showcasing the 5 Institutional Learning Outcomes?

Check out these student ePortfolios that showcase the 5 Institutional Learning Outcomes.

Award-winning ePortfolios 2014:
http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/academicplan/eportfolio/infoforstudents/ePortfolioAwardWinners.html

What should be added to an ePortfolio?

At Mohawk College, students should be adding artifacts to their ePortfolios that showcase how they are achieving Mohawk’s Institutional Learning Outcomes. Faculty may suggest exemplary artifacts that students should add to their ePortfolio. In addition, students will add reflections on their learning.
What kinds of artifacts should not be added to an ePortfolio?

Copyrighted artifacts created by someone other than the owner of the ePortfolio should not be added to the ePortfolio (unless permission to add the artifact has been obtained and/or it has been properly cited). Examples: YouTube videos, photos, etc.

It is not a best practice to add a scanned reference letter to your ePortfolio as it is an item created by someone else and, therefore, you do not own the copyright. In addition, there may be privacy concerns. If you must add a scanned reference letter for some reason, ask the letter-writer permission before adding a scanned copy. Similarly, to respect their privacy, you should not include the names or contact information of references you might normally provide following a job interview.

Can a student continue to access/update his/her ePortfolio after graduation?

Yes, Desire2Learn offers the student access to the MyDesire2Learn portal after graduation and the student can continue to access her/her ePortfolio there.

Is the ePortfolio public for all to see?

The creator of the ePortfolio has the option to make the ePortfolio public and create an expiry date for public viewing when sending the link to employers. The creator has full control over the availability of the ePortfolio on the Internet.

What is the difference between using LinkedIn and using Desire2Learn’s ePortfolio?

LinkedIn is a social networking site that allows students to showcase their résumé as well as add artifacts relating to positions they have held. In addition, it encourages building a network of contacts. Desire2Learn’s ePortfolio tool allows students to upload a range of artifacts that showcase how they are meeting Mohawk’s Institutional Learning Outcomes. As well, students can add reflections about what they have learned. The ePortfolio then showcases the students’ learning journey in addition to allowing students to upload résumé-type information as they can in LinkedIn.

Where can I find out more about ePortfolios?

Click on the link to view information about Mohawk College ePortfolios.

Check out this ePortfolio about ePortfolios!
Definitions and How-To Questions

What is an artifact?

In eLearn’s ePortfolio Tool, an artifact is a digital file that represents learning or an achievement. An artifact may be a document, graphic, audio file, Instructor comment, course grade item, video file, presentation, or other form of digital media. In a nutshell, an artifact is student work, usually from an assignment, that the student adds to his/her ePortfolio.

What is a reflection?

The reflection is the student’s thoughts about his or her learning as recorded in the ePortfolio. For example, the student may write about what s/he learned while doing the assignment, what s/he would do differently next time, the challenges, highlights or the lessons learned.

What is a presentation?

In eLearn’s ePortfolio Tool, a presentation is a custom website, usually with multiple pages and using a visual theme and customized layouts. Presentations provide a polished, professional way to demonstrate learning and accomplishments. It is the final end product ePortfolio that the student would develop for potential employers and to showcase how s/he has met Mohawk College’s Institutional Learning Outcomes.

Where can I learn how to create my own ePortfolio?

There is a widget in eLearn where you will find resources to help you get started with using the ePortfolio tool. Here is a list of resources to get you started:

Videos:

- ePortfolio: Getting Started
- ePortfolio: Adding Artifacts
- ePortfolio: Writing Reflections
- ePortfolio: Using Collections
- ePortfolio: Presentations
- ePortfolio: Submission
- ePortfolio: Keeping Your eP

INFOsheet:

- ePortfolios INFOsheet
Pedagogy Questions

Does a student create one ePortfolio in every one of his/her courses?

Each student will have his or her own ePortfolio. The student will place artifacts from one course or multiple courses into his or her ePortfolio during the semester. A student is able to create several different ePortfolio presentations.

Should the ePortfolio be introduced in first semester or last semester?

Ideally, the ePortfolio will be introduced in first semester so that the student can add exemplary artifacts and reflections to it throughout his or her learning journey at Mohawk.

Who grades the ePortfolio? How is it graded? How do we determine in which course the ePortfolio is graded?

The decision regarding in which course the ePortfolio is graded should be made by the program.

How many marks is the ePortfolio worth in a course?

The recommendation is that the ePortfolio be worth at least 10% so that the student is motivated to create an exemplary ePortfolio, but the ultimate decision rests with the program areas.

Who will support my students on how to create an ePortfolio?

Student support will be provided by:

- **The Library Tech Bar** - these are located at each campus and provide a range of technical support services to students.
- Online tutorials (videos and documents) are available in eLearn in the ePortfolios widget. Faculty are encouraged to add this widget to their course homepage and remind their students of its availability. See above (page 5) for the list of videos available.