The eFolio

Learners' Manual

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Introduction to the eFolio

Welcome to the eFolio, which is designed to help you or your team be the center of a conversation about your learning. Advisors and your friends advise and help you to reflect on your knowledge and skills, set goals, and produce high quality work. The eFolio is a workspace as well as an electronic portfolio.

Figure 1. www.learningcentral.org

All users log in at the same home address, which is www.learningcentral.org (Figure 1). Your log in name is your full first and last name (e.g. Mary Gibson) or a short name that you will find in your profile (e.g. often "mgibson" or "maryg" but it may vary). The password is the word given to you by your eFolio Administrator, which you can then change at any time by editing your profile.

Depending on how many eFolio sites you are a part of, the first screen will show you all of the site names where you can work. For this users guide, we'll use a log in at a test site where you can experiment.

To log in at www.learningcentral.org

1. Using a web browser (Firefox is recommended) navigate to www.learningcentral.org
2. Type your user name into "Member Name" (for the test site, type " test learner")
3. Type your password into "Password" (for the test site, type "plp")

A list of sites appears, along with a "Log Off" button. It is important to log off so that other's work does not get mistaken as yours!

Figure 2. A single log in can provide entry to mutliple sites and roles.

When you select a site name from the list (e.g. "eFolio Test Site" in Figure 2.) you then see the eFolio Home page for that site, which shows you the two primary areas in the site - that is, your own eFolio folder and the Participants List (Figure 3). There is also a place for you to give us feedback about the eFolio, which helps us improve the application.

In what follows, we go right to work inside your eFolio folder! The organizing metaphor for the eFolio is the "action research" cycle - a well-known set of four stages that many people find useful: **Planning** (setting out goals), **Doing** something (like making artifacts), **Studying** (looking at what you've done), and **Acting** (deciding, publishing, sharing what you found).

Figure 3. The eFolio Site Homepage for Learners

Your Personal Page

Selecting the folder icon "Open My PLP" (Figure 3) brings you to your own personal homepage (Figure 4). This address can be saved as a bookmark in your browser, so you can jump right to work at any time!

Figure 4. Your Personal Homepage in the PLP

Edit Your Personal Page

Selecting the "Edit" button next to "My Home Page" in the top menu bar brings up an input form that lets you design your own page.
Figure 5. Editing Your Personal Homepage

There are three ways to design your page: Plain Text, HTML, and providing a link to another web page (in case you already have a homepage that you have built). Here's how:

1. First type a title for your page. (e.g. "Welcome friends!")
2. Choose one of the three types. Figure 5 is "Plain Text."
3. Type a greeting or message in the Plain Text Box.
4. If you want, select "Add an image to my Home Page" and browse your own computer for an image to upload. Decide how to display the image from the drop down list.
5. Submit your design, or cancel and start over.

Plan: Assessment and Goals

Self Assessment

The first step in building a collection of work (for many people) is to Plan, which has two essential parts - taking stock of what you want and need, and making goals. The eFolio has "Self Assessments" and "Goals" to help you plan.

Figure 6. Self-Assessments

Selecting Self Assessment brings up a list of surveys that you have taken, along with any comments left by your advisors and friends. Selecting "Take a Survey" on the Self Assessment page shows you a list of all the available surveys, which you can take at any time, and as often as you want. You and your advisors can talk about the results of your surveys and make connections to your goals for learning and work. Underneath each goal in the list, a record is kept of your conversations for future reference.

The surveys come from your eFolio site (created by your site's eFolio Administrator), so if you have an idea for a new survey that would help you and others learn, be sure to talk about that with your advisors. Your good idea might help other learners to discover more about what they are good at and what they need and want to learn.

From your strengths, needs and aspirations come your Goals for learning.

Figure 7. Your Goals for Learning.

Goals

Selecting Goals brings up a list of (guess what!). There is a "New" button at the top of the list, which you select to add a new goal to the list. Your advisors and friends can leave comments about your goals, and you and they can discuss how the goals fit with your strengths, interests and needs as well as how they fit with any requirements of your learning program (the Standards).

Making a New Goal

Selecting "New" brings up an input form for making a new goal (Figure 8). Making a goal has four steps:

1. Name your goal. This title is the "handle" for the goal.
2. Select the standards the goal will help meet.
3. Describe how you plan to meet the goal.
4. Submit the goal.

Figure 8. Making a new goal.

When you submit a goal and then select its name from the Goals list, you'll see what your advisors and friends will see (Figure 9). When they look at your eFolio, they see the title of your goal in the bold bar at the top, then the standards that you selected, then the description of your plan for meeting the goal. A comment button is available for them to "talk" to you about the goal, and they can also "Subscribe" (meaning that they will get email about this goal whenever someone leaves a comment about it).
Figure 9. Viewing a Goal

Comment on a Goal

You and your advisors can have discussions about each of your goals. This creates a record of progress or change in your ideas that can be useful in reflecting on what and how much you have learned. The comment button appears whenever you select any goal (or work), as does a button to allow your advisors to "subscribe" (have email sent to them about your goal discussions) to your goals.

Do: Work

Perhaps the heart of the eFolio is getting work done, and getting good feedback from others that helps you improve your work. The "Work" tab brings you a list of all your work, which can be sorted in a number of ways - by folders that you create, by date of creation, by date of the last activity on the work, and by either "Draft," "Ready for Feedback" or "Complete" status.

Figure 10. Work Discussions

The **Draft** status keeps the work private to you. **The Ready for Feedback** status allows your advisors to see the work and leave comments on it. The **Complete** status allows the work to be used in electronic portfolios. You are in charge of moving your work into these various levels, which you do by "Editing" the work. We'll show you this below. First, let's make a new work.

Work: Creating a New Draft Work

Selecting the "New" button on the Work Discussions list brings up an input form for creating a new work. At its simplest, creating a new work would just require two steps.

1. Enter a short "Subject" description, title or name for the work. This will be the handle for the work. (e.g. "My Masterpiece")
2. Either type or paste the work into the big box and submit it, or better yet, select "Upload a file to this Work" and then Browse your computer or network, find a file and then submit it. If you do this latter option, you might consider putting a longer description of the file into the big box.

Figure 11. Creating a New Work

If you have created folders (or if your program has created folders for you to use), those will appear in the new work input form and you can assign the work to one or more of those folders. Or, you can always come back to the work at a later time to do that. The general process is to create a new work and then manage that work by "editing" this record over time. The edit button appears whenever you select the work (Figure 12).
Figure 12. A Work Record

Work: Ready for Feedback

When you are ready for feedback from your advisors, edit the work and change its status to "Ready." When you do this, additional decisions about the work need to be made (Figure 13).

1. Select which standards you feel your work helps demonstrate. This step may be optional in some programs, but we think that the purpose provided by standards is a critical feature that helps guide your work.
2. Select which of your advisors you'd like to hear from about this work. That's right, you decide who is best for giving you the feedback you need to improve.
3. If your program uses "Rubrics" (scoring guides for giving reliable structured feedback) then select a rubric that you think best fits your work and its needs, or choose "feedback only." "Feedback Only" gives advisors a blank sheet. Your advisors will help you decide which rubric is best, so you can always "take a risk," choose one, and ask them to let you know what they think about it.
4. Ask your advisors for *specific* improvement information. (Don't ask "Is this OK?" but rather, "Is my main idea clear? Did I address everything I needed to? I like the creativity I achieved, but does it communicate to you?)

Figure 13. Asking for specific feedback when ready.

Linking your work to standards means thinking about the connections inherent in your work. You may have made a drawing, for example. That drawing or "artifact" is evidence of potentially many areas of knowledge and skills. It certainly represents your skill in drawing and art, but perhaps its also represents your approach to work. Perhaps the subject of the drawing is illustrating a historical or biological fact, or your ability in abstract and creative thinking. So you see, the "standards" that the piece might represent are to some degree a matter of the meaning you would like to place on your work.

This assignment of meaning helps your advisors give feedback that is directed to helping you reflect on those connections as well as giving you validation that you indeed have chosen standards for which they as advisors can verify a connection. Their feedback turns your assignment into interpretive evidence! They give meaning back to you that you can use to show others that you have addressed and met standards.

Crucial in the process of asking for feedback - even more basic than assigning standards - is describing to your advisors what specific information you are looking for. The more specific you are, the better their advice will be. When you are satisfied with the work and would like to receive formal evaluation, you can change the "Rubric" from "Feedback Only" to a scoring tool of rubric for evaluation.

Evaluate Work

When "Feedback Only" is selected, an open-ended input form is provided (Figure 14.) Advisors can attach an "exemplar" piece (an example piece that illustrates their feedback), or they can just type their comments in the box and submit it. You and your advisors can then hold a documented conversation about the feedback, providing more evidence of thinking and problem-solving about your work.

Figure 14. Open-ended feedback form

Figure 15. Goal Matrix

Study: Goals and Work

Goal Matrix

As you create goals or work, each one is added to a matrix view available under the "Study" tab. We named the tab "Study" to indicate that these views help you step back to review your plans and work collection. The Goal Matrix (Figure 15) shows your goals down the left-hand side. Next to each goal, a column displays the number of comments that have been made on that goal. The standards you've said relate to those goals are displayed across the top of the matrix. Check boxes appear to help you analyze your whole plan. Selecting any goal take you to the goal and its discussion. Selecting any Standard takes you to an analysis of that standard, showing the goals and work underway related to it.

Work Matrix

Figure 16. Work Matrix

The Work Matrix operates like the Goals Matrix, with the addition of a column showing the status of either "Ready for Feedback" or "Complete."

Act: Electronic Portfolios

We named the purple tab "Act" to illustrate that the "action" you take based on all the goals and work you have done is the next step in learning. This is the tab where you build as many e-portfolios as you wish, for as many different purposes and audiences as you have. You might build one for your teachers and advisors, one for the public, one to please just yourself, one to get a job, or to show to a review team for certification, graduation or promotion. There are two methods for building electronic portfolios in the PLP: By Standards and By Folders.

Portfolios by Standards

Selecting "...by Standards" brings up a list of any portfolios you have that have been created by Standards (Figure 17). You can either open the portfolio inside the eFolio or open it in a new window.

Figure 17. Portfolios by Standards

Sharing Portfolios with the Public

The "Open in New Window" is provided so that you can give a public address to anyone, anywhere, and they can view your portfolio without needing a password. To obtain the public address, simply select the "Open in New Window" option and then look in your browser's location or address area to view and copy the address. You can book mark the address in your browser. You can also prepare a web page that links to the portfolio, or capture the portfolio with an application such as Acrobat, which then allows you to edit the portfolio as if it were a web site.

For portfolios that are meant for only your advisors' eyes, don't give out the public address of the portfolio provided by the "Open in New Window" selection.

New Portfolio by Standards

To build a new portfolio by Standards, select the "New Work Collection" button. This brings up a page of directions (Figure 18). We call portfolios by other names - work collections, slide shows - but these all mean the same thing, a collection of works that have been completed and that you want to display to others. Creating a new portfolio is easy:

1. Name your portfolio. (e.g. Graduation Portfolio, My Best Pieces, Certification Review Collection, My Family Vacation)

2. Select the collection of standards you want to display. (The example has only one set of standards. You may select more than one if available)
3. Select the color scheme. (We have more choices on the way!)
4. Press the "Generate a new Slide Show" button.

The new portfolio joins the list that you can see by selecting "...by Standards" under the purple tab.

Figure 18. Creating a New Portfolio by Standards

Portfolios by Folders

Creating portfolios "...by Folders" is as easy as "...by Standards." Folders are created by both the Site Administrator (on behalf of your program, for example to provide you with required elements in your portfolio) or by you. You can make as many folders as you like, and work can be placed into as many folders as needed. This allows a single piece of work to be in several folders at once - one of the great advantages of an electronic portfolio.

You might have a single folder where you place your favorite essays, called "Essays" and another folder for your "Science" works, and a third for your "Drawings." A single work - a detailed drawing of a plant you found in the Yucatan accompanied by a short reflective essay on where you found it. - might be placed in all three folders. At the same time, that work can be related to several standards!

New Work Collection for Folders

Figure 19. Creating a New Portfolio by Folders

Selecting the "New Work Collection" button brings up a page of directions and a simple input page (Figure 19) for creating a new portfolio by folders:

1. First, name your portfolio. (e.g. My Artwork, Design Samples)
2. Select one or more folders in which work resides (The example shows two folders available)
3. Choose a color scheme (more options are coming!)
4. Press the button labeled "Generate a Folders-based Portfolio."

HINT: You can create a folder for "all of your work" or use folders like dividers in the collection.

This completes the tour of the eFolio work area, which is accessed from the "Open My PLP" button on the eFolio Learner Homepage (Figure 3). Next we'll show you how to find other people and manage your own account in the eFolio, including adding and removing advisors.

Participant List

Selecting the "Participant list" button on the learner homepage (Figure 3) brings up the All Participants List (Figure 20).

Figure 20. All Participant List

The main screen fills up with a list of all the participants in the site. Next to each person's (or group's) name, appears a **profile**, which is a link to basic information like address, phone numbers, contact and other information. To the right of each name in the list appears a **folder** if the name is a Learner, otherwise that space is blank. Continuing to the right, if the participant has an email address in their profile, it appears on the screen, followed by the roles played by that participant in the site. A name can have more than one role associated with it.

On the the left side of the registration area under the word "Participants" is a list of options for viewing the participants.

Learners Alpha (Figure 21) not only alphabetizes the learners, it also shows a summary count of the work going on in the portfolio areas, listed by number of works in **Draft**, **Ready for Review**, **Complete**, and the **Total**.

Figure 21. Learners Alpha shows a quick view of portfolio work.

Learners by Advisor displays assigned and unassigned learners sorted by Advisors, along with the same links mentioned earlier.

Figure 22. Learners by Advisor shows advisors' groups.

Advisors Alpha displays the email, organization and **Competency Area** (Figure 23) of the Advisors, all of which are editable from the participant profile icon to the left of each name. The Competency Area is presented so that Learners can contact and request specific help on goals or work related to an Advisor's area of expertise.

Figure 23. Advisor Alpha lists contact and competency information.

Figure 24. Advisors by Learner shows who is working with a portfolio.

Advisor by Learner sorts the participant list by the learners and shows the Advisor or Advising Team working with the learner. When the eFolio is being used as a team tool, this list shows all the members of the team.

To Add(or Remove) an Advisor to your PLP

1. Find your own name on the participant list.
2. Select the profile icon to the left of your name
3. Choose "Assign Advisor" (or Remove Advisor) from the list of actions
4. Select an advisor to add
5. Submit the form.