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## **E-PORTFOLIOS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS: SUPPORTING LIFELONG LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY – ABSTRACT**

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Employability involves an approach to education that enables management of lifelong progression in learning and work. It is no longer sufficient to have, as a university focus, the forging of closer links between education and the world of work so that graduates are more likely to gain employment. The world beyond university, where graduates have to choose and consciously manage their work and personal lives, is complex. Occupational titles or categories no longer define work; personal skills, particularly highly developed inter-personal skills, attributes and independence within the ethical expectations of specific career choices do. So employability is a characteristic of lifelong learning in which the graduate is ultimately responsible for the development of work-related attributes and skills. However this will not happen in a vacuum. The task of integrating a range of promotional and career management skills into their subject-based courses has, or will become, part of the academic tutor's remit. Moreover both tutor and student need to understand that learning does not end with graduation. The conferring of a degree is simply a stage in a lifelong journey of knowledge.

For the University of Bedfordshire, this change of emphasis from the transference of knowledge and associated skills to the processes underpinning them which go beyond graduation has invited reconsideration of staff development. Academic tutors will be required to examine all aspects of their programmes to find meaningful and realistic ways of embedding vocational relevance, applicability and career orientation. This, together with engagement with the personalised learning agenda within both the curriculum and personal development planning, will be challenging for academics who may have in excess of 100 students in their teaching groups.

The University of Bedfordshire is committed to making full use of technology to meet the expectations of students, the academic body and employers. The development of e-Portfolios by both staff and students is seen as fundamental to evidencing personalised learning and personal development planning focused on employability and lifelong learning. Only by academic colleagues embracing the full implications of the employability and lifelong learning agenda will students acquire the personal skills, attributes and independence necessary for them to gain and retain fulfilling work through control of their own careers.

The current staff development review at the University of Bedfordshire mirrors that of the student curriculum with its greater emphasis on employability and personal development planning. Both students and staff will be trained and encouraged to use e-Portfolios. Academic staff compiling their own e-Portfolios will have a number of positive outcomes. Firstly, they will increase their own employability and opportunities of engaging with lifelong learning in a marketplace where e-competence and e-confidence is becoming an essential criterion for working at a university. Secondly, they will gain firsthand experience of the issues connected with constructing an e-Portfolio. Lastly opportunities to engage in evidence-based practice and related research will become manifest. The action research project to be presented at the conference will demonstrate how academic colleagues were introduced to the concept of ePortfolio. Analysis of their perceptions of ePortfolio collected before and after training will be discussed. Although the complete results of tracking colleagues' engagement with the technology over a year will not be available, initial conclusions and implications for future practice will be presented and discussion invited.

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