

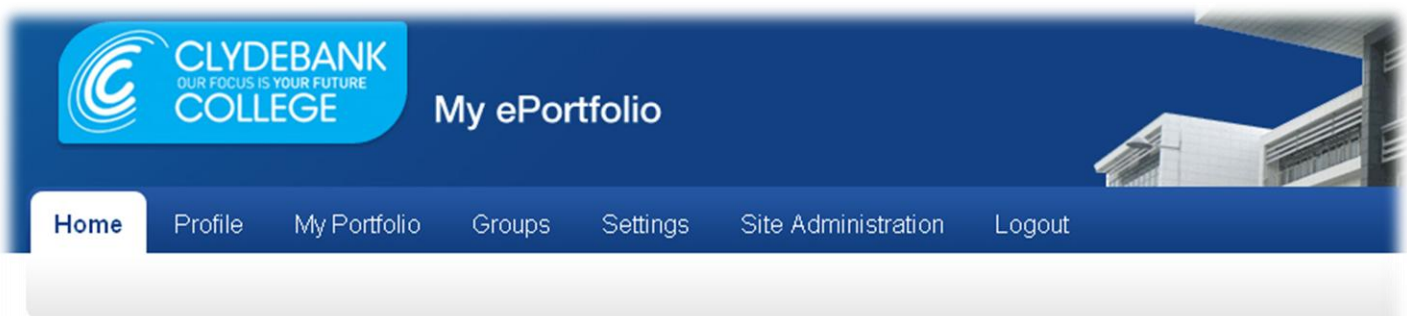
JISC RSC Scotland South & West Case Study @ Clydebank College

Using an ePortfolio system (Mahara) with Beauty Therapy Students

About the College and the context of the Case Study

The college has been offering vocationally relevant programmes of study to learners since 1965. Currently, over 10,000 learners study at the college each year. There is a wide range of vocational programmes available at the college from management to make-up artistry; catering to construction; business to beauty therapy and many more besides. The college prides itself in providing high quality learning opportunities to learners and welcomes systems such as e-portfolios (via Mahara) in terms of complementing existing methods of curriculum delivery and resource sharing.

Under the auspices of a Leonardo funded European project, VTCT Beauty Therapy Level 3 learners undertook a two week placement period in June 2010 within various beauty therapy establishments in Rimini, Italy. As well as acquiring valuable experience within various beauty therapy establishments in terms of techniques, practices and resources in a different European country, students would document their experience using an ePortfolio system which could be shared for other groups and contribute to their future studies. The Project received a Highly Commended award under the category of Learner Engagement at Scotland's Colleges Annual Awards 2010.



WELCOME TO MY EPORTFOLIO

Welcome to Clydebank College's ePortfolio platform Mahara.

The Challenge

Prior to undertaking the actual placement activity in June, 2010, one of the main challenges was to help students to overcome the language barrier and to this end a series of contextualised conversational Italian language classes were undertaken with the assistance of the college's Languages Department. Learners also had to become familiar with the ePortfolio system prior to the trip to maximise the benefits. This would ensure that any issues using the new software would be resolved before they went. The Learners attended a 3 hour Italian lesson every week for 12 weeks, undertook a vocal assessment at the end of the teaching and updated their own ePortfolio.

Italy Trip

Profile Information

Hello my name is Elizabeth Taylor and I am 19 years old. I currently attend Cheltenham College and study Beauty Therapy. I am one of the 10 lucky students that were picked to go on the Italy Trip and I am sooo excited. I think it is going to be great, we are going to learn so much about the Italian and their work environments.



- First Name: Elizabeth Helen
- Last Name: Taylor
- Email Address: ET.taylor01@new.cheltenham.ac.uk

Personal Goals

My personal goals are going to Italy to explore their culture and learn new things. There is a possibility of me potentially going abroad once I am qualified to work. I am extremely glad that I have this opportunity to go and hope this will give me a rough idea what it would be like.

Academic Goals

My academic goals are to complete my DVD Level 3 and move on to HND level and to hopefully achieve a HND grade before I complete my course.

Career Goals

My future plans are to successfully complete the full four years of my course fully. When I finish college after four years when I am qualified I am going to work in a salon for a year to get myself some experience and then apply to go on the cruise ships and possibly end up working abroad and even opening up my own business.

Personal Skills

My skills personally are: determination I am determined to succeed in anything that I put my mind to. I am confident in what I am doing and courage to try something new.

Academic Skills

The academic skills which I could bring to everything which I have learned in college and all my knowledge of Beauty Therapy and hope it will help me when I am there.

Work Skills

I have quite good work skills and some experience in dealing with customers. I am excited about seeing what the work environments like in Italy.

Italian Flag



Italian class



Work Placement Blog

- Friday 25th June in Work placement Blog on 26 June 2010, 9:49 PM
- Thursday 24th June in Work placement Blog on 26 June 2010, 9:13 PM
- Wednesday 23rd June in Work placement Blog on 26 June 2010, 9:29 PM
- Tuesday 22nd June in Work placement Blog on 23 June 2010, 8:55 PM
- Monday 21st June in Work placement Blog on 21 June 2010, 3:21 PM
- Friday 18th June in Work placement Blog on 21 June 2010, 2:51 PM
- Thursday 17th June in Work placement Blog on 16 June 2010, 10:06 PM
- Tuesday 15th June in Work placement Blog on 16 June 2010, 10:04 PM
- Monday 14th June in Work placement Blog on 16 June 2010, 13:03 PM

With essential input and support from the Learning Technologist at this stage, the e-portfolio system Mahara was deployed in order to acquaint the learners with the features and potential advantages of using this system.

The learners continually updated their e-portfolio either from home or as part of a group session that was set up by the Learning Technologist. The benefits derived from using Mahara at this stage were evident in that learners were able to share their views on the language programme undertaken and effectively contribute to each others learning experience.

Another challenge was to find appropriate time slots during the placement period for learners to update their e-portfolios and WiFi Access was also an issue that had to be considered. Although the learners were undertaking beauty therapy tasks, the culture and operational practices in Italian beauty salons differed from those in the UK (e.g. different opening / closing times from UK establishments / preparation of clients prior to treatments). Time slots to do this, therefore, had to be carefully planned and subsequently effectively managed as learners weren't working in the same establishments and sufficient time had to be allocated by college staff to all learners for e-portfolio updating purposes.

The Activity

10 students aged between 16-25 years traveled to Rimini, Italy to enhance their vocational skills within their existing educational training programme in Beauty Therapy Studies. The group worked in beauty salons in Italy, completed an e-portfolio, using Mahara, of their experiences used for assessment, and utilised the Italian lessons that were part of the pre trip preparation.

All students travelling went through a selection process and were subsequently trained in using Moodle and Mahara e-portfolio. As a condition of the project the students had to:

- complete an e-portfolio.
- attain an acceptable level of Italian language skill.
- do a presentation of their experiences and work.

A post evaluation of the project will be undertaken by an independent centre, involving follow up interviews with all staff members and partners.

The Outcomes

Upon completion of their placement, the learners were more confident in undertaking I.T. related activities in other aspects of their studies and were eager to share their experience of their placement via the e-portfolio platform with other beauty learners.

The learners also developed a sense of responsibility for updating their e-portfolios on a regular basis and this was further encouraged by the positive feedback they received from their peers in terms of their e-portfolio content.

The four capacities of the “*Curriculum for Excellence*” could easily be applied to these learners in that, as a result of undertaking this activity they have become more confident individuals, effective contributors, responsible citizens and successful learners.

The longer term benefits are being realised in that the retention of these learners onto the HN programme in the current session has been achieved with the subsequent positive outcomes in terms of the resultant Performance Indicators.

The Impact

The range of evidence gathered regarding the placement activities via the Mahara system was extensive and could easily be transferred into a different vocational setting. Media such as video clips and photographs enhanced the evidence gathering process in addition to providing a rich evidence source.

Learners felt that using the ePortfolio system did contribute positively to their learning experience. Learners now have more experience in recording, organising and planning work, sharing and reflecting on experiences and collaborating with lecturers and other learners. One student gained employment as a result of the project.

The External Verifiers for the VTCT Beauty Therapy course had access to the ePortfolio system and were very comfortable with it.

The project provided an opportunity for the learning technologist to work directly with teaching staff and a group of students to enhance his own skills. In addition a new e-portfolio system was introduced, and this project used as a pilot before offering e-portfolio developments across other curricular areas. An opportunity for teaching staff to enhance their teaching and learning skills by involvement in e-learning through direct access to the skills and support of a dedicated e-learning technologist was a benefit and resulted in a successful cross college project involving the International Manager, Quality and Performance Enhancement Manager and the Head of the Faculty of Sport and Wellbeing.

In addition the Mahara Project received a Highly Commended award under the category of Learner Engagement at Scotland’s Colleges Annual Awards 2010.

Lessons Learnt

Importance of thorough preparation cannot be over emphasised viz:

- gathering intelligence regarding: placement companies; geographic / distance / travel considerations to placement establishments; opening hours; services offered / expectations of establishment re: role of learner
- determining other inputs required from peripheral departments (e.g. language support)
- enabling learners to utilise the e-portfolio system prior to commencement of placement in order to become fully acquainted with e-portfolio features

The screenshot shows a student's ePortfolio page for an 'Italy Trip'. The page is organized into several sections:

- Italy:** Features a small image of the Italian flag.
- About Me:** A bio for Victoria Fulbrook, an 18-year-old student at Clydebank College, currently studying SVQ Level 3 Beauty Therapy. It includes a short paragraph about her trip and a list of details: First Name: Victoria, Last Name: Fulbrook, Country: United Kingdom, Display Name: Victoria Fulbrook, Occupation: SVQ LEVEL 3 STUDENT, Industry: BEAUTY THERAPY, and Email Address: vfulbrook01@hmc.clydebank.ac.uk.
- Academic Skills:** A short paragraph expressing hope for learning new skills and working in a salon.
- Personal Goals:** A short paragraph about wanting to get a placement while still at college.
- Academic Goals:** A paragraph stating the student's plan to move to HNC at Clydebank College and improve practical skills, communication skills, and confidence.
- Italy Class Pictures:** A list of photos from the trip, including 'ItalyFlag.gif', 'picture 1', 'picture 2', 'picture 3', and 'picture 4', each with a date and time.
- Italy Class 1:** A photo of a classroom setting.
- Work Placement Blog:** A list of blog entries with dates and times, such as 'Friday 25th June in work placement on 25 June 2010, 4:48 PM'.
- Speaking Italian:** A small video player titled 'Victoria...nook.mp3'.
- Italian Lessons Blog:** A list of blog entries with dates and times, such as 'Week 14 in Victoria Fulbrook's Blog on 10 June 2010, 9:31 AM'.

- Need for clear identification of co-ordinated time slots for learners to update e-portfolios whilst on placement

Future Developments

There are a number of areas for development at the college based on the experience of using ePortfolios in the context of the VTCT Beauty Therapy Project. They are outlined below:

- Courses currently encouraging the use of Blogs have had guidance notes and templates provided and it's felt that something similar for Mahara would be useful. In addition some guidance on creating multimedia artifacts would be helpful and enable learners to use images, video and audio alternatives to text based Blog posts.
- Mahara would be an excellent mechanism for class reps to document their activities associated with that role which could be accredited towards their Personal Development Units.
- The ePortfolio is of particular interest for students on placement, social care, health care subjects, work placements and media and communications for uploading digital media.

Useful Links

www.employersandyoungpeople.org

www.youngscot.org

www.ltscotland.org.uk

<http://moodle.clydebank.ac.uk>

<http://moodle.clydebank.ac.uk/mahara>

www.jisc.ac.uk

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