

# ePortfolioPilot

College of Science and Engineering



Learning stickiness the hard way  
– the long way round

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# Implementing e-Portfolio Supported PDP – a Planning Guide for Practitioners



## Factors for successful implementation in ISLE

Very early on in the ISLE Project the following key factors for the successful implementation of PDP supported by an e-portfolio tool were identified:

- ➔ ■ Support/commitment from the institution
- Networking and sharing of practice between practitioners and institutions
- Flexibility allowed for different contexts/needs (avoiding one size fits all approaches)
- ➔ ■ Integration into ongoing learning activities
- ➔ ■ Relevant to the stage of learning
- ➔ ■ Regular activity, introduced at the beginning of the programme
- ➔ ■ Owned by students, who are involved in the development
- ➔ ■ Staff provide consistent advice and guide the reflective process (even those not directly involved)
- Focus on the process and not the tool, minimise paperwork
- Frequent and flexible access to the e-portfolio system

## But we didn't follow this advice...why?

- No clear University policy on PDPs - nobody "owns" ePortfolio as yet
- College Learning Teaching Strategy
- But some experience in other Colleges (Education, Medicine)
- Enthusiastic staff members (support staff and academics)
- Desperate for some experiences with ePortfolios in the College
- WebCT ePortfolio finally integrated into WebCT LMS
- Low risk assumption (only few students involved)
- Let's just try it out and see!





## CSE ePortfolio Pilots

Pilot	Course integration	Support
Biology first and second year course reps (BIO) - 27	None	Email by DOT explaining ePortfolio system, ePortfolio website
Chemistry 1B (CHE1B) - 200	None	Email by course lecturer, presentation in labs, personal meetings with students, ePortfolio website
Mechanical Engineering Practice 3 (ENGI3) - 70	None? Could have been used to prepare for applications for industrial placement	Demonstration during lecture (Daniela), ePortfolio website
Industrial Placement (ENGI4) - 40	Submission of monthly reports, close links to WebCT course (e.g. additional information, blogs)	Demonstration / tutorial in computer lab (Victoria), manual, email support (Victoria), ePortfolio website







**Portfolio Menu**

- Home Page
- My studies
- My life
- My career
- My showcase
- Calendar

Your location: **Home Page**

## WELCOME TO YOUR ePORTFOLIO

This area is your personal space for a number of things that can help you in studies. This space is divided into four areas: **My Studies, My Life, My Career, My Showcase.** [Learn more about how an ePortfolio works and how you could use it!](#)

<p><b>MY STUDIES</b></p> <p>Collect course work and reflect on what you have learned, how can you improve next semester?</p> 	<p><b>MY LIFE</b></p> <p>Build your own profile using the profiling tool, record your interests And track extracurricular activities</p> 	<p><b>MY CAREER</b></p> <p>Record meetings, internships, work placements, summer jobs ... keep your CV updated here.</p> 	<p><b>MY SHOWCASE</b></p> <p>Present your ePortfolio to employer share events with your peers, receive feedback from lecturers</p> 
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Information which may first seem unimportant may well have its use at a later stage, such as your participation in an environmental society, might be interesting for a future employer, even if you might need this four years down the line!

However, this is **YOUR** tool, you can use it in any way that you like and find useful...it can accompany you over the whole course of your studies and you find you use it for different reasons in different years...just try it out and see how you like it! Again, all the content, materials, links, area that you find in your course are just suggestions what could be part of your portfolio.

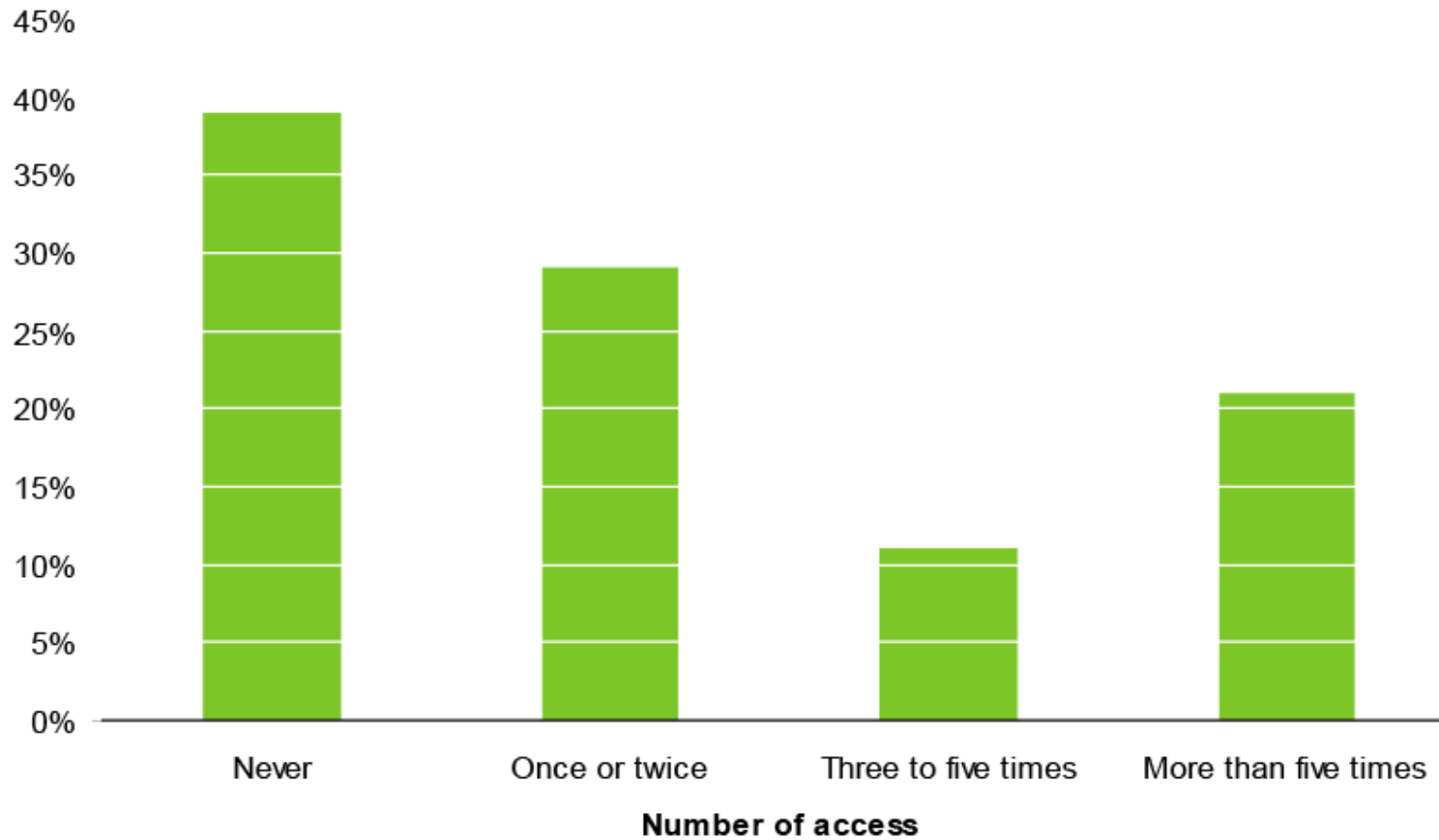
It is YOUR tool, so feel free to delete, modify and add any kind of content or tool. So far only you can access the portfolio, if you want to invite friends, to potential employers you must invite them to your portfolio. You can do this under "Guests" in your Options menu. If you need some help using the portfolio check out the [how to's](#) area!

For more info on how to use the ePortfolio click [here!](#)

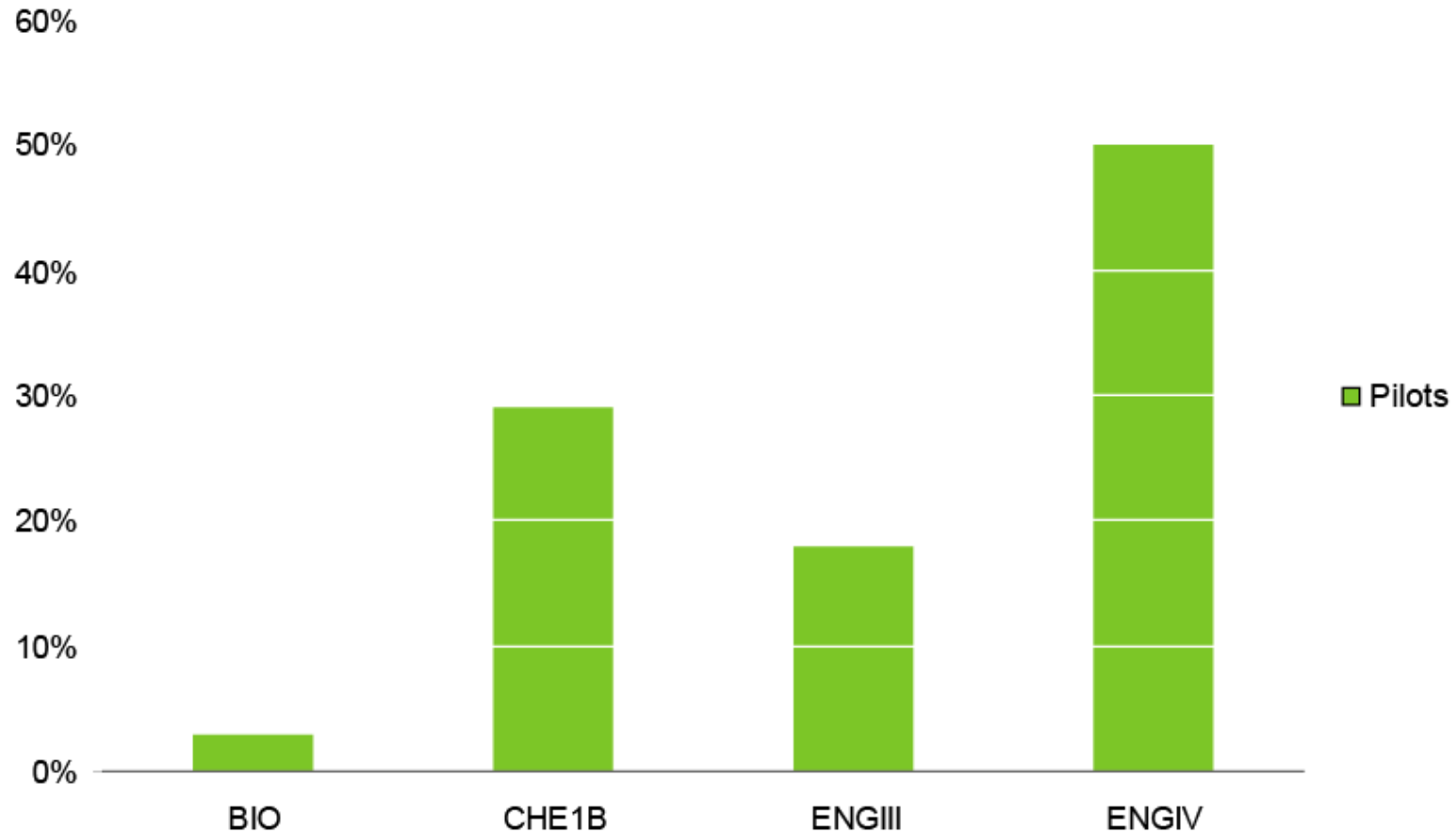
# Feedback

Pilot	Online questionnaires (BOS)	Focus groups
BIO	1	3
CHE1B	26	
ENGIII	8	4
ENGIIV	18	
Other	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>7</b>

# Access to the ePortfolio...



# 34 students accessed the ePortfolio at least once...

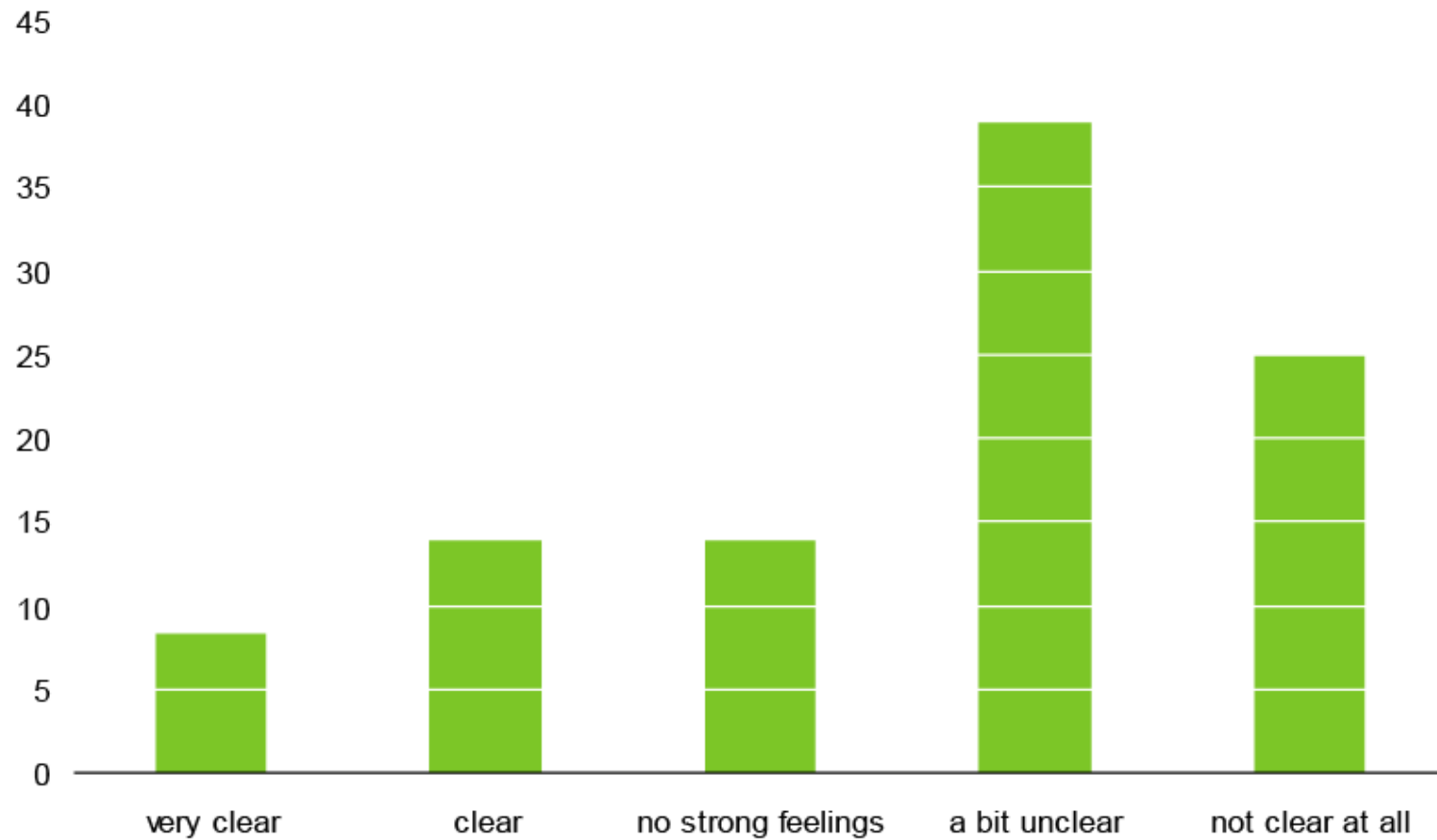


# Reasons for non-use of the ePortfolio

- The ePortfolio is unnecessary / a waste of time (7)
- Lack of knowledge about the existence of an ePortfolio / what an ePortfolio is: (6)
- Technical problems accessing it (5)
- Use of different applications, e.g. Facebook (1)
- Lack of knowledge of how to use ePortfolio (1)



# When you first used the ePortfolio, was it **clear** to you what to do?



# Definition of the ePortfolio

## **CHEMISTRY 1B - STUDENT:**

"You collect experiences, pictures, work, marks etc. of yourself that could be interesting for a future employer".



## **ENGINEERING III - STUDENT:**

"Facebook for academics. An opportunity to reflect on courses and experiences you have faced during your university career. It allows you to think more about what did and didn't work during study."



## **ENGINEERING IV - STUDENT:**

"A personal space to upload your work and get feedback on it"



# Usefulness of ePortfolio

	Did you find the portfolio useful?		Could you find the portfolio more useful in future?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
BIO			1	
CHE1B	1	3	7	1
ENGIII	3	1	5	1
ENGIV	1	15	3	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>

(Rest of students declared "no strong feelings" in this matter)



# No immediate benefit...

## **ENGINEERING IV - STUDENT:**

"It's a bit of a sledgehammer to crack a nut. For this industrial placement there's so much of it we don't use I really don't think it's worth the bother. Better just to submit reports by e-mail. In fact I'm doing that as well now anyway as my academic supervisor is unable to get onto his MyWebCT."



## **BIOLOGY - STUDENT:**

"Honestly, if it wasn't for these [focus group] meetings, I wouldn't have done it, in order to have something to say [about ePortfolios], I have had to use it..."

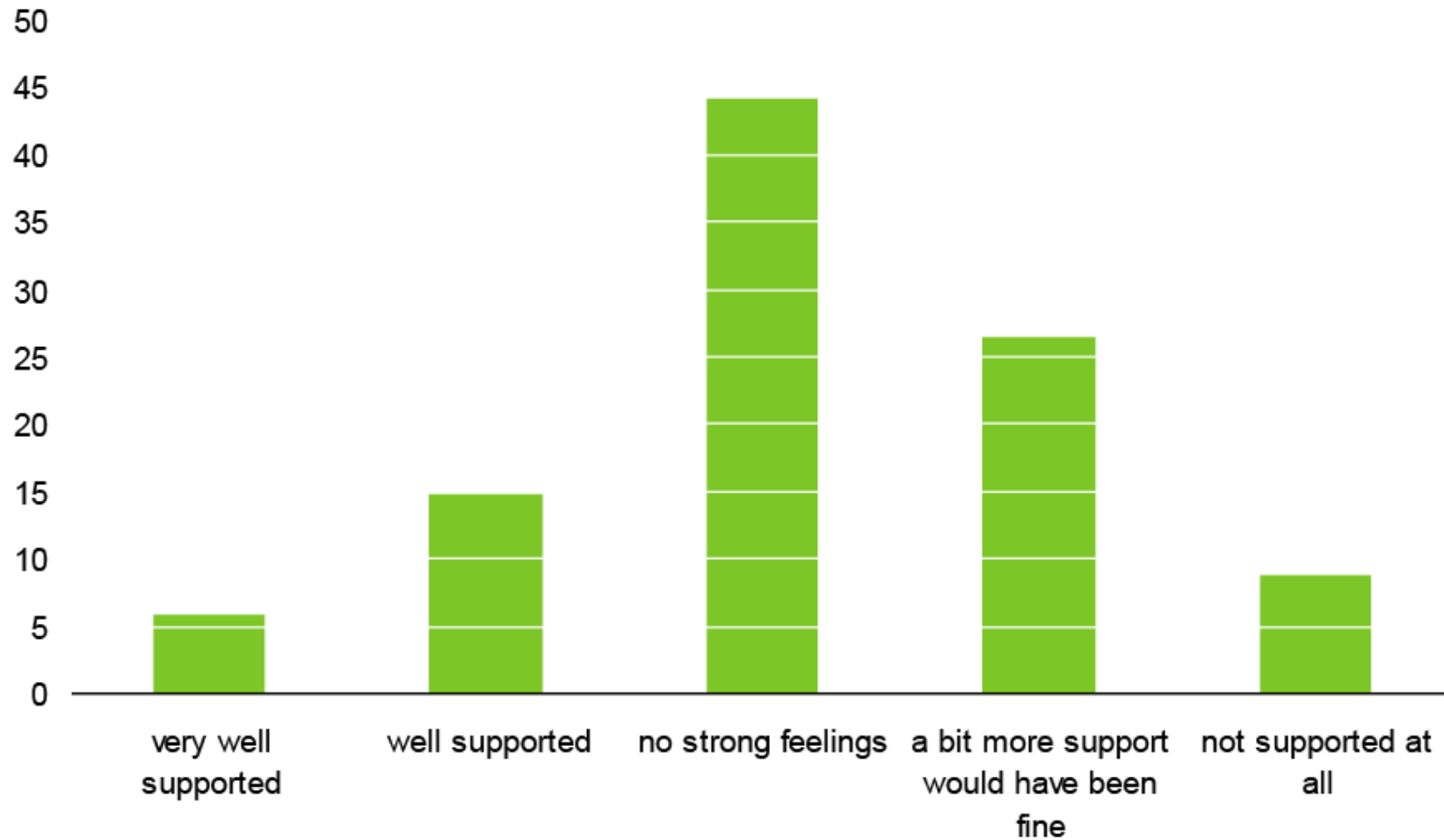


# Problems with layout, design and technical issues

- “Layout is a bit complicated, it could have a better user interface, the build/view tab is confusing, so many folders that are irrelevant” (BIO)
- “If it doesn’t look good its going to turn people off “ (BIO)
- “As it stands, ePortfolio currently feels like little more than a BETA test. I would prefer simplicity with stability and resiliency to shininess and options galore. Otherwise things get too confusing and chaotic.” (ENGIV)



# Did you feel well enough supported?



# Support improvements

## All

1. ePortfolio support website (78%)
2. One to one personal support (73%)
3. Peer support (60%)
4. Hands-on sessions (47%)
5. Handouts / manuals (38%)
6. Email (33%)
7. Demonstration (23%)

## Without ENGIV

1. Hands-on sessions (78%)
2. Handouts / manuals (75%)
3. Peer support (71%)
4. ePortfolio support website (67%)
5. One to one personal support (67%)
6. Demonstration (43%)
7. Email (36%)

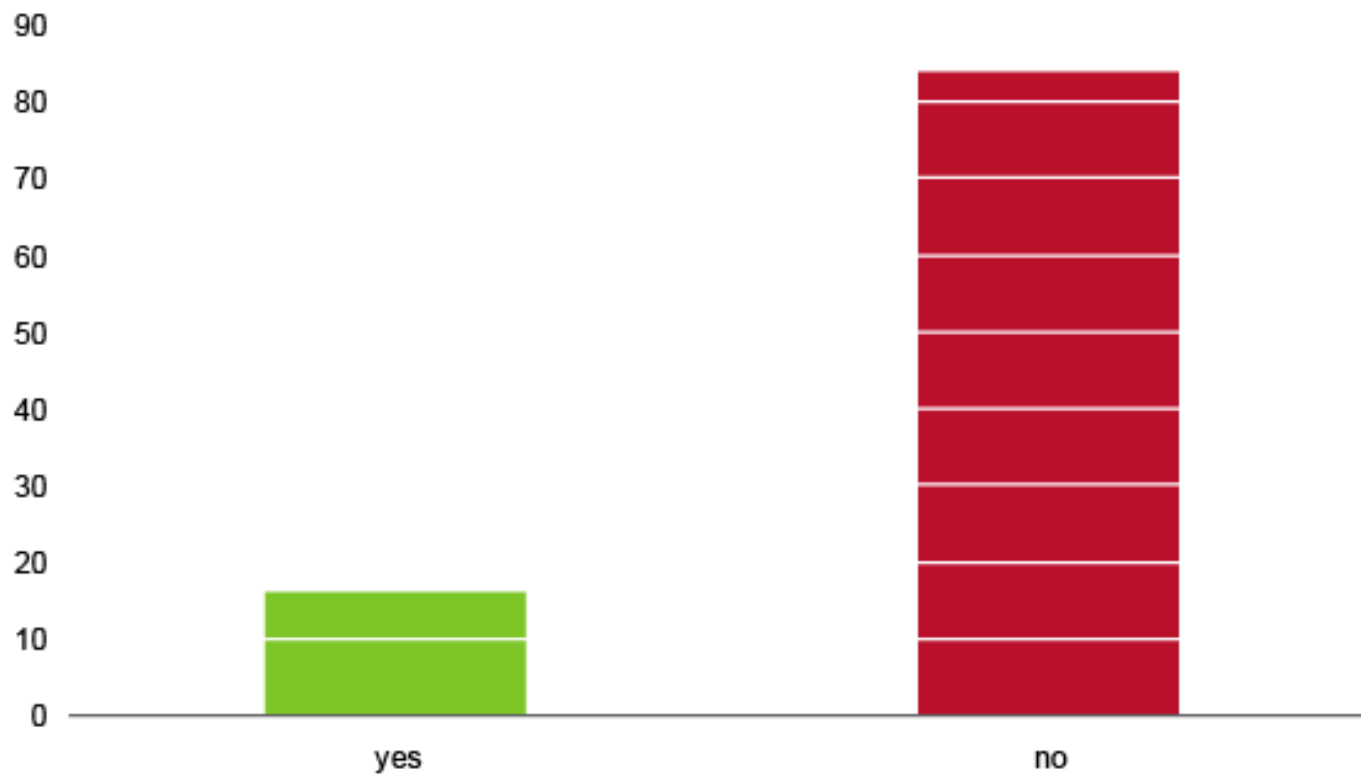


## But lots of ideas for future usage...

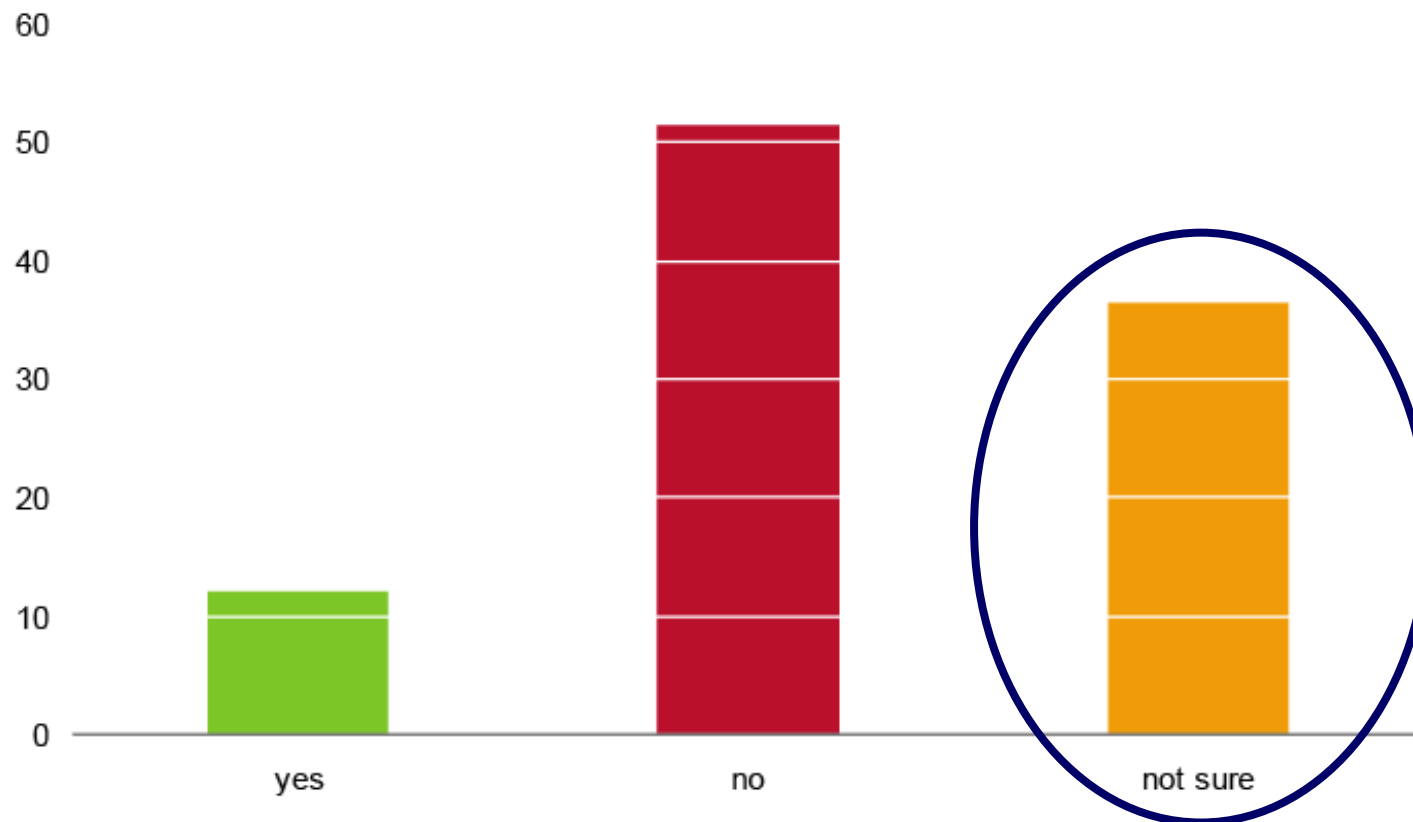
- encouragement through **IMECHE**, to keep some form of logbook during academic career,
- “you can **learn for your future**, e.g. write down notes after meetings and interviews, that sets you up for later life, you will have to keep minutes of every meeting” ,
- “It’s a good place to collect your thoughts as well as collecting additional information, such as from newspapers, TV, journals, website, I would use it like a **notebook**” ,
- “It helps you think about what you have done and how to later incorporate it into your **CV**” ,
- “it could help me **reflect** on how could this job help me later on, did I achieve what I aimed for?” ,
- “in first year, students are coming from a variety of background and what they to learn is **independence**, they are on their own, the ePortfolio might help them finding their independence” ,



# Should we make the ePortfolio compulsory to all students?



# Should the ePortfolio be more integrated into courses?



Big uncertainty about role of ePortfolio....

# & no assessment!

"If its assessed it goes out into and arena, where it can be viewed, and this can change the fundamental approach to how you use the tool". (BIO students)



"I think it should be a free thing, that people are allowed to use how they like....it is just a tool to help people and whether they access the help or not, it their problem. I don't think it should be assessed, otherwise people won't like it"



"If you are using it as a diary you might not want people looking at it, it limits you in how personal you can make it"



But isn't that what all students would say if you asked them to do something that is assessed?

# Course integration?

- “It could benefit some courses, but it all depends on how it is integrated, and to what extent, to what purpose and so on. It could be a hindrance in some, and a real benefit in others...It’s hard to judge as not all courses even use WebCT, integrating this into some courses would make this difference even bigger/more annoying.” (ENGIll)



## So what's the result of all this?

- Nobody (or nearly nobody) got hurt
- ENGIV were the only students who really had to use it and verbally assaulted Victoria

*"I have had some problems most months when trying to submit reports, but this seems to be the worst one yet. Was any testing done on the system before it was put into use? I hope it will not be used in ANY future courses unless it has been thoroughly tested and proved to work flawlessly."*

*"I would be happier if I could simply email my work to my supervisors and forget about this unnecessary and fussy tool."*

*"....not one have I heard say what a great idea it was to create this ePortfolio system"*

- We learnt our lessons
- Involved staff got more enthused and passionate to get it right the next time
- Discussion started about appropriateness of tool used
- Report that can be disseminated – hard data to undermine our "feelings"



# Recommendations

- Closer integration into curricula / pastoral support / regular activities
- Incentives for doing it!
- More guidance, more support, more discussion around PDPs, reflection etc.
- Staff needs to be convinced as well and have own ePortfolio, to be able to sell it to students!
- Make ePortfolio tool simpler and more user friendly
- Solve technical problems
- Link to other initiatives, e.g. employability / careers and the curriculum, graduate attributes, accreditation, reflective practice, teaching portfolio / reward for teaching



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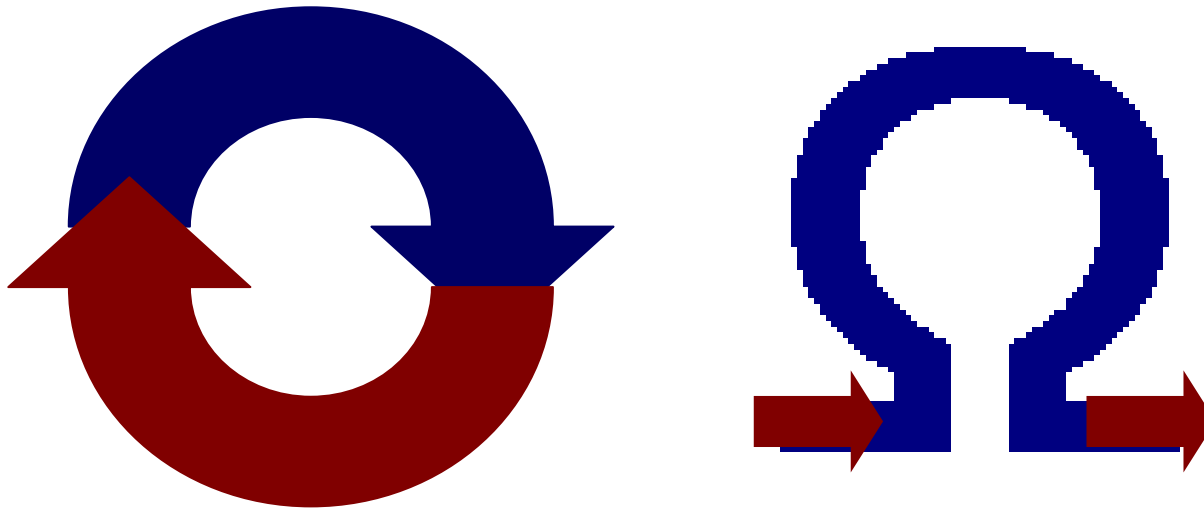


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  - Focus on the process and not the tool, minimise paperwork
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# The long way round....



# Next steps

- Most likely change tool
- Continue pilot approach in different schools
- Application for funding to evaluate pilots
- Involvement of Director of Studies and peers
- Collaboration with employability consultant
- Work on institutional support
- Continue making mistakes and learning from them
- Enthusiasm is still there!



## Sums it all up...

- “I think it has potential, but I don't believe we fully understand this potential as fourth years (getting old). What I would suggest is that by pumping it to the first years and second years, you could easily get it up and going to be a great tool. But remember the more elaborate it is the more chance for a bug or failure. When there is a failure then we give up! Also staff need to support it. There is no point in ePortfolio if staff say can you email it to me as well!” (ENGIV student)



**ANY QUESTIONS?**



## Contacts and further information

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- Victoria Dishon, [v.dishon@ed.ac.uk](mailto:v.dishon@ed.ac.uk)
- ePortfolio report:  
<http://www.scieng.ed.ac.uk/Itstrategy/eportfolio.html>

