

# EPICS-2 - Executive Summary

## Introduction

<http://www.epics.ac.uk>

EPICS-2 was a collaborative project which made a significant impact on the development of support for personalised learning, work-based learning (WBL), and life-long learning. This was an 18 month initiative, funded as part of the JISC e-Learning programme, ending March 2009. It built on the considerable success and deliverables of the EPICS project around technology, pedagogy and governance relating to ePortfolios and Personal Development Planning (PDP).

## Key Outcomes

The project deliverables are of relevance to the achievement of the vision for more flexible approaches to learning and teaching, personalised and life-long learning (see HEFCE revised e-Learning strategy, 2009).

Our case studies advanced understanding of ePortfolio/PDP; **embedding in the context of the curriculum** proved vital for engagement.

The project provides valuable insights into incorporating **blogging and social networking** into institutional systems and the interplay between these and the use of external sites in learning.

We developed a working model for the cross-institutional sharing of learning opportunities for **postgraduate researchers**, using XCRI-CAP, which is likely to have wider applicability.

Work on **interoperability standards for lifelong learning** complimented 2 JISC-CETIS projects, shaping national standards.

We learnt valuable lessons on technology & user acceptance from work on supporting learner-owned mobile devices (**JANET txt**).

The project contributed to the community of practice with **Regional Forum** events and other activities. EPICS-2 also contributed to the **JISC community**, working with other initiatives (COMPORT, Leap2a, XCRI, JANET txt, JISC RSC Northern & JISC InfoNet).

There are significant **continuity activities** with use of ePortfolios/blogs being rolled out beyond the 600+ learners directly involved in the project. EPICS-2 was also a building block for other innovative initiatives including **“Dynamic Learning Maps”** and **“ELLI in HE”**.

The **ePET portfolio**, including developments from EPICS-2, is now freely available to the JISC community.

## ePortfolios, Blogs and Social Networking



Blogs and elements of social networking were incorporated an existing ePortfolio ('ePET'), with integrated support for evidencing structured outcome/skill sets.

This was piloted in a range of programmes at Newcastle University, Gateshead College (JISC COMPORT project) and Sunderland University. Northumbria University also contributed a case study using the Blackboard portfolio.

High levels of engagement were seen in some programmes, with effective use of blogging to evidence professional standards and use of community areas for discussion. The project evaluation identifies factors which influence uptake and provide evidence that some learners found ePortfolios/blogs useful for reflection and staying in touch whilst on placements / WBL.

There was a distinction in some cases between more formal use of the institutional portfolio/blog for 'professional reflection' shared with tutors and peers and informal discussion limited to a sub-set of peers on external social networking sites. Professionalism was an issue raised in both contexts. Further details at [www.epics.ac.uk](http://www.epics.ac.uk)

## Personalised learning Pathways for Postgraduates



We developed a working model for sharing training opportunities for Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) amongst the 5 universities in the North East of England.

The aim is to widen the range of opportunities for PGRs (including part-time and distance PGRs). The model built on a broad consultation process involving the training providers and PGRs across the region.

## Executive Summary (cont.)

Outcomes of this work include:

- a “proof of concept” regional information hub which aggregates feeds of information from multiple training providers, presenting them to PGRs as a single navigable, searchable menu of events from across the region.
- Specifications for event feeds, based on the **XCRI** format and a **Web Service** to allow training and attendance records to be sent from a training provider and be imported into students’ ePortfolios or other systems.

## Regional Forum



The Regional forum was established in 2004 to share good practice and help develop capacity for PDP and ePortfolios in the North East. Forum events are open to those outside the project partners.

Five Forum events supported by the EPICS-2 project were hosted at the partner institutions.

## Life-long Learning

Newcastle University’s previous work on ePortfolio interoperability led to the EPICS-2 project being extended to allow us to take a lead role in the development of the emerging LEAP2a standard, through the PIOP project. Newcastle University has been able to successfully implement the LEAP2a standard in the ePET ePortfolio, and have taken a lead role in the further development and refinement of that standard.

## Mobile technologies for WBL



We researched a number of options to allow students to add content to their ePortfolio through mobile technologies, and successfully piloted a system using **JANET txt** that allowed undergraduate students at Newcastle University to add blog content via text message.

## ePET Portfolio

The ePET ePortfolio system has been updated during the course of the EPICS-2 Project. A refined version of this is now available as an online demonstration, or as a download on the ePET project website ([www.eportfolios.ac.uk](http://www.eportfolios.ac.uk)).

## Conclusions

The project undertook a range of activities to advance our support for personalised, work-based learning and life-long learning. The outcomes are of relevance to the achievement of the vision for more flexible approaches to work-based learning and life-long learning (see HEFCE revised e-Learning strategy, 2009) and the effective delivery of PDP (see revised QAA guidelines for PDP, 2009) .

## Publications

Cotterill SJ, Horner P, McDonald AM, et al. **A Blog for learning: blogs and social networking with explicit support for skills and learning outcomes, within an integrated ePortfolio.** Proc. ePortfolios, identity and personalised learning in healthcare education. p91-6, 2008 Newcastle. (ISBN 978-1-905788-66-2)

Edney M, Cotterill SJ. **Regional solutions for linking postgraduate training systems and ePortfolios.** Proc UK GRAD YNE Hub ‘eResearcher’ Conference, Durham, 2008

Horner P, Cotterill SJ. **Meeting the ePortfolio Interoperability Challenge.** Proc. ePortfolios, identity and personalised learning in healthcare education. p124-7, 2008 Newcastle. (ISBN 978-1-905788-66-2)

Cotterill SJ. **Learning with Web 2.0: hype or reality?** Proc. Festival of Learning 2008, Carlisle  
Horner P. Cotterill SJ. **The Holy Grail of the m-portfolio.** Proc ePortfolios 2008, Maastricht.

Cotterill SJ, White A, Currant B. **Using Web 2.0 to support PDP** PDP-UK, Centre for Recording Achievement, 2007, 12: 7-8.

Cotterill SJ, Horner P, Gill S, et al. **Beyond the Blog: getting the right level of structure in an ePortfolio to support learning.** Proc. ePortfolios 2007, Maastricht.

## Further Information & Resources

<http://www.epics.ac.uk>

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