

Using ePortfolios to Mapping Social Work Graduate Competencies

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Abstract : Higher education is changing globally and there is increasing pressure from professional social work accreditation bodies for academic programs to demonstrate how students have successfully met mandatory graduate competencies. As professional accreditation organizations increase their demand for evidence of graduate competencies, strategies to document and recording learning outcomes becomes increasingly challenging for academics and students. Studies in higher education have found support for the pedagogical value of ePortfolios, a flexible personal learning space that is owned by the student and include opportunity for assessment, feedback and reflection as well as a virtual space to store evidence of demonstration of professional competencies and graduate attributes. Examples of institutional uses of ePortfolios include e-administration of a diverse student population, assessment of student learning, and the demonstration of graduate attributes attained and future student career preparation. The current paper presents a case study on the introduction of ePortfolios for social work graduates in Australia as part of an institutional approach to technology-enhanced learning and e-learning. Social work graduates were required to submit an ePortfolio hosted on PebblePad. The PebblePad platform was selected because it places the student at the center of their learning whilst providing powerful tools for staff to structure, guide and assess that learning. The ePortfolio included documentation and evidence of how the student met each graduate competency as set out by the social work accreditation body in Australia (AASW). This digital resource played a key role in the process of external professional accreditation by clearly documenting and evidencing how students met required graduate competencies. In addition, student feedback revealed a positive outcome on how this resource provided them with a consolidation of their learning experiences and assisted them in obtaining employment post-graduation. There were also significant institutional factors that were key to successful implementation such as investment in the digital technology, capacity building amongst academics, and technical support for staff and students.

Keywords : accreditation, social work, teaching, technology

Conference Title : ICSW 2019 : International Conference on Social Work

Conference Location : Zurich, Switzerland

Conference Dates : September 16-17, 2019