

Chapter 5. Evaluating the Use of Online Course Portfolios for Assessment and Learning in the Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning Course

Participants: Carol Bowie, Gordon Joughin, Peter Taylor, Brad Young, Craig Zimitat

Mentor: John Bain

Griffith University

1. Executive Summary

This report describes the learning centred evaluation (LCE) of the use of an online course portfolio (OCP) as a learning and assessment tool in a Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning. Funding of this project by ASCILITE and CUTSD is gratefully acknowledged.

An eclectic-mixed methods evaluation approach was pursued and the Bain, Alexander and Hedberg (Bain, 1999) LCE framework was applied in the project. The OCP was evaluated across the following dimensions:

- effectiveness as an assessment tool and as part of the principal learning task in the course;
- value of the on-line nature of the assessment tool to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
- value as a tool for documenting and demonstrating learning and professional development for the course and the individual;
- value as a tool for enabling the learning processes and outcomes for the participants to be more 'visible' and accessible to staff and other participants;
- value as a tool to facilitate a collaborative reflective learning process; and
- as a way of experiencing incorporation of technology in teaching and learning processes from a student perspective.

Qualitative and quantitative evidence was collected from the 2000 GCFL participants and teaching team using focus groups, surveys (email and hardcopy), interviews, reflective writing and feedback documented in the participants' OCP. Analysis of the nature and content of the OCP as well as participant and teaching team perceptions of the learning processes, experiences, outcomes and environment informed the evaluators decision

making in recommending the following changes for the 2001 GCFL offering:

- A new online orientation to the online course environment including resources and tools, (intended to be completed before attending a face to face orientation session);
- Face to face sessions will be organised if the participant cohort are able to attend. Video and phone / audio-conferencing will be used as a strategies to support participants unable to attend face to face sessions; and
- Learning groups will still be encouraged (but not required) as we move into a Blackboard web environment in 2001. The facilities in the Blackboard environment should enhance communication between geographically dispersed learning group members. Peer review, interaction and engagement with peers and their work will still be compulsory.
- A new web publishing strategy that allows the GCFL teaching team to manage participant passwords and will not require ftp or telnet skills;
- Workshops for participants as required (rather than up-front in orientation) to support website development, in conjunction with a refocussing of the orientation program away from technological issues and back to academic engagement with the substantive course concepts, content and processes; Contact points will be setup for other web development and publishing support available at the University as well;
- Develop at least one model OCP from a past student's work and create a template for it (with their permission.)
- Confirm that the OCP submissions at the end of the semester will contain the four required sections of the OCP but expect that the OCP will be embedded and used differently within the individual subjects of the course.

2. Introduction

2.1 Project Overview

In this project we evaluate the use of an online course portfolio (OCP) as the primary assessment strategy in the first year of offer for a Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning. We examine the portfolio from staff and course participants' perspectives and analyse evidence presented in the portfolios to investigate its effectiveness as a learning and assessment tool in this context.

The Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning was designed to be able to be completed remote from campus. There are four subjects in the program: Foundations of Flexible learning, Designing for Flexible Learning, Implementing Flexible Learning and Project. Participants can enrol in one or two courses per semester but must begin with Foundations of Flexible learning in their first semester of enrolment and complete the Project subject in their final semester of enrolment. (Further details of the course structure are available in Appendix 5.1.)

2.2 An Online Course Portfolio

Teaching and professional portfolios have been used in higher education for assessing the quality of teaching for promotion and tenure review since the early 1990s (Edgerton, Hutchings, & Quinlan, 1991; Moore & Smith, 1994; Seldin, 1991, 1993) and for professional development (Burke, 1996; Dietz, 1996). At around the same time, assessment by portfolio was introduced and now is commonly used in accreditation courses in higher education for tertiary teachers, particularly at graduate certificate level.

Traditionally, in assessment, the teacher sets the assessment task and assessment criteria and the nature of the product or evidence required to demonstrate that the criteria have been met. Final judgement is made by the teacher as to whether the assessment criteria have been met and to what degree and awards a grade (Biggs & Tang, 1997, p80). The selection of materials for inclusion in a portfolio requires the student to become more actively involved in the learning process. The student must use higher level cognitive skills that require analysis and evaluation of their own work against the set

criteria to select the best package to present. They need to be sufficiently metacognitive to evaluate and judge the quality of their own work. The process of selection itself is a core element of the learning experience and is likely and intended to generate further triggers for research or activities.

For the Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning (GCFL) we decided to use not just a portfolio-based assessment strategy but an online version at course (not subject) level.

The course portfolio has been incorporated to pull together the learning experiences of participants across the whole program, no matter what subjects they are enrolled in or have completed. It is also intended to focus their attention upon what they have learned throughout the course and applied or contextualised to their particular teaching and learning environment or project.

The course portfolio in the GCFL is a document that is dynamic across the course and will provide a resource subsequent to course completion. Participants' progress towards achieving the course and subject objectives is assessed through evaluation of the course portfolio submitted at the end of each semester of enrolment.

The course portfolio in the Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning is also electronic. There are a number of reasons for this. One advantage of using an electronic format is to facilitate collaborative discussion of work in progress and over time between dispersed groups of learners. On-line interaction between peers, teachers and colleagues can enable and enhance discussion of the nature and quality of the learning processes and outcomes. The participants in the course develop their portfolio continuously. The course portfolio, if accessible to both the teaching team and the course community, gives both the teachers and the learners some indication of progress through the course.

Innovation Uniqueness

At the time that we were designing the GCFL course, we could not find examples of this type of strategy reported in literature. The closest example was the *Intelligent Portfolios for Professional Development* reported by Wilcox et al. (1997)

The intelligent electronic portfolio goes beyond assessment of teachers to a method of strengthening their professional development in the classroom. Adopted for teachers in a 3 year doctoral program, the intelligent electronic portfolio is a collection of artefacts, indicating competencies and skills, a place to showcase accomplishments and achievements, and a living working portfolio which makes learning visible. (Wilcox et al. 1997:p3)

These doctoral students had an exhibition of their portfolios once a year to other students and Faculty assessors. The focus for the visibility of learning was primarily for the individual throughout the development of the portfolio and then to peers and assessors at exhibitions and subsequently. The portfolio approach was integrated across sections of the course similar to the cross-subject use of the OCP in the GCFL. The students used web-based communication tools to support interaction with peers and professional communities. The descriptions of the electronic and learning environment do not indicate that the portfolio was web-based so we assume that only elements of this material (if any) would have been available online at any one time.

The GCFL takes the visibility of learning to another level: that of making the learning visible to the whole community (participants and teachers) across the whole of the development period and also enabling the community to learn as a group from that visibility. This requires that the portfolio is web-based and that participants will need to develop a range of appropriate skills. (This is discussed later for the GCFL.)

Other approaches to using electronic portfolios such as Lankes (1995), Backer (1997) and Jacobsen and Mueller (1998), included at least one element similar to the GCFL such as authentic experience of technology, visibility of learning and / or reflection for communities of learners and creating a resource for future use. These examples did not focus on changing core behaviours or facilitating professional development as does the GCFL and Wilcox et al. (1997). None of the literature found indicates that teachers took the approach of

embedding evaluation into the learning experiences of participants and as part of the portfolio.

In her discussion of the use of electronic portfolios for assessment, Lankes (1995) suggests portfolios that are collated digitally for assessment can be submitted and stored via a CD Rom. This furnished the students with a portable CD Rom not only for accreditation in the course but also a portfolio of work for further study admissions. This also facilitated the management and storage of large amounts of information for large numbers of students at the school. The materials on the CD Rom included documents, audio and video files with a search facility for access. (It was not web based navigation.)

Backer (1997) had design students create a resume using Authorware that includes samples of their digital work that illustrates their skill development as well as their creative talents. This is written onto a CD Rom and is assessed for their course but also gives the students a portfolio for job searching. The primary visibility of learning here is for the individual and the teachers, not the community of learners. The learning in this community is primarily focused on the process of creating the product not the substantive individual content of the product.

Jacobsen and Mueller (1998) work with pre-service teachers studying educational technology. They required students to create and publish websites using html for one element of the assessment program. Exams were also held. The website consisted of a justification for the web design, all laboratory assignments and their technology implementation plan. All of the students indicated that they had visited all of the other students sites and learnt from their presentations, design and content. Some students indicated that they were concerned about the possibility of plagiarism due to this accessibility. However due to the relatively small size of the class and the 'public-ness' of the website to the whole group, teachers were less concerned. The students had mixed responses to the skill development required for creating html web pages and the time required to develop these skills. With this level of visibility of work to the whole class, the teaching team indicated that they observed the quality of the work

across the class improve. The GCFL has similar online visibility to this project but adds another level reflection on the learning for each of the participants in the online community.

3. Evaluation Plan

In the teaching teams' initial development of the course and discussions about the use of the online course portfolio we identified the primary dimensions of evaluation that we wanted to focus on for the first year of the course. These were the following:

3.1 Dimensions of Evaluation

The use of an on-line portfolio in the Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning was evaluated across the following dimensions:

- effectiveness as an assessment tool and as part of the principal learning task in the course
- value of the on-line nature of the assessment tool to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes
- value as a tool for documenting and demonstrating learning and professional development for the course and the individual
- value as a tool for enabling the learning processes and outcomes for the participants to be more 'visible' and accessible to staff and other participants
- value as a tool to facilitate a collaborative reflective learning process
- as a way of experiencing incorporation of technology in teaching and learning processes from a student perspective

As part of the ASCILITE CUTSD project, we developed an initial evaluation planning grid and associated time plan (in Appendix 5.2). This plan focuses on each of the dimensions above and identifies the audience or source of evidence appropriate for learning more about that dimension. Our strategy was to build our evaluation into the learning experience and process of participants and teachers as much as possible. That is, the evaluation strategies and tools were embedded into the teaching and learning processes with an intention of making learning more visible to each of these groups; and evaluative evidence where possible, was collected through processes that were part of or contributed to learning in the course. (See Appendix 5.2).

A summary of the methods and evidence collected for the participant cohort of 2000 is presented in the Table 5.1.

3.2 The Four Phases of the Learning-Centred Evaluation Framework

The approach taken in this project best fits with the eclectic-mixed methods-pragmatic paradigm described in the Handbook for Learning Centred Evaluation of Computer-Facilitated Learning Projects in Higher Education (Phillips, Bain, McNaught, Rice, & Tripp, 2000, p1.5). Consistent with this paradigm, the focus in this project is on practical issues within the GCFL. Using a range of evaluation methods, qualitative and quantitative evidence was collected to triangulate the experiences from various stakeholders' perspectives (primarily the teaching team and the participants, but also others. See summary in Table 5.1.).

The four phases of the Bain (1999) adapted Alexander and Hedberg (1994) learning-centred evaluation framework that underpins the overall ASCILITE CUTSD project include: Design, Development, Implementation and Institutionalisation. The focus and purpose of each these phases are described in the presentation of the LCE framework in Appendix 5.3. As this project reports on the first offering of the Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning, (GCFL), the way in which we have applied the LCE framework is described below.

Phase 1 Design

The design phase focussed on creating a course that was aligned with our brief and marketing information. The brief given to us defined the audience and required that we enabled completion of the course remote from campus. The design was also informed by our previous experiences of supporting learning in post-graduate awards in higher education studies.

Our approach was to articulate our course aims and then nest the subject aims within them. Then we designed a course and created a learning environment intended to enable participants to achieve these aims. The course was designed to model and allow our

participants to experience innovative practices in Flexible Learning.

Table 5.1. Methods and evidence collected for evaluation of the GCFL 2000 Online Course Portfolio.

	Method / strategy	Audience or source	Timing
1	Subject and Course Reflections in OCP (The structure of the OCP is described in Appendix 1) (Abbreviated: <i>OCP Subject and Course Reflections</i>)	Participants [11 participants over one and two year (5 and 6 respectively) enrolment patterns]	Ongoing throughout subject with final reflections at the end of each semester
2	Teaching team reflections (informal meetings) (Abbreviated: <i>TT Foc Grp</i>)	Teaching team (four team members)	Ongoing at team meetings
3	Formalised participant feedback - Online / paper surveys	Participants	Survey in Foundations of Flexible Learning semester 1 2000 paper and email end of semester (Appendix 4) email mid semester (Appendix 5)
4	Informal participant feedback - conversations face to face, phone and online (email, chat sessions, fora etc)	Participants	Ongoing
5	Outcomes of teaching and learning activities (TLAs) and assessment	OCP and participants perceptions of process and learning embedded in the OCP and activities	Ongoing
6	Webtrends statistics and participant website snapshots	Network usage and access information Record of participants website development	Ongoing
7	GCFL 2000 Graduates interviews (Protocol in Appendix 6. The interviews were conducted by our Research Assistant, Kim Clowes Doolan) (Abbreviated: <i>Graduate Int</i>)	Only participants who completed the course in 2000 were interviewed. (five graduates: three interviewed, two unavailable)	Late semester 1 and beginning of semester 2 2001
8	Teaching team focus group and reflection session (audio-taped and transcribed) Focus: Role of the OCP in assessment and facilitating participant (and teaching team) learning and development The session was facilitated by one member of the teaching team, Dr Gordon Joughin.	Teaching team	Late semester 2 2000

Our design was improved through cycles of reflection by the planning and teaching team and colleagues internal and external to Griffith University before the first offering of the course in 2000.

So we focused on the BAH elements of *Teaching for learning analysis* and *Specification of innovation* by

- describing and justifying the teaching/ learning/ assessment processes intended to bring about the desired learning outcomes;
- describing and justifying the proposed implementation, and indicating how it was

intended to facilitate the desired learning processes and outcomes.

Phase 2 & 3 Development and Implementation

During the first offering of the GCFL we undertook formative and summative evaluation as defined in the BAH framework:

- To determine whether the Online Course Portfolio (OCP) was functional in its context and accessible/ attractive to participants;

- To determine whether the OCP was influencing the learning processes as intended;
- To determine whether the desired learning outcomes were as intended; and
- To determine whether the OCP was educationally appropriate in its immediate context.

Our sources of evidence and methods of data collection are presented in our Evaluation Plan and associated time plan (Appendix 5.3) and summarised in Table 1. These are discussed in Results and Discussion under comments about achievement of the course and subject aims and the dimensions of evaluation listed earlier.

Phase 4 Institutionalisation

We have begun collecting information in this phase of the BAH framework and will continue to develop more systematic approaches to determining

- the robustness of the learning and its transfer beyond the immediate context of the innovation.
- the sustainability of the innovation in the context of the whole course.

We are collecting evidence of the impact of the participant's learning and development in their immediate context and then across the university and then across the teaching and learning community in higher education. Presently, this is not collected systematically but we intend to begin to map this in the short term future. Graduate interviews (six months after course completion) were planned during the project and have now been included in this report.

3.3 Role of the Evaluators

The evaluators were the 2000 Course and Subject Convenors for the four subjects in the GCFL (Carol Bowie, Gordon Joughin, Brad Young, Craig Zimitat) and with Peter Taylor formed the course development team. Except for the participant interviews that were conducted by our Research Assistant, Kim Clowes Doolan, all data collection was performed by the teaching team / evaluators or contributed by the participants. Participants were aware that information / evidence would be used anonymously in the reporting of this project and subsequent publications.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Phase 1 Design

This section of the report describes and justifies the design intentions and philosophy of the GCFL. It also describes the intended role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the learning environment created for the first offering of the GCFL course.

Intentions and Course Philosophy

The teaching and development team initially spent significant time in designing and articulating the course level philosophy and outcomes in order to align the subject level teaching strategies, activities and intended outcomes with these. We focussed on the course as a whole experience and then designed the subjects to create learning pathways to support participants in achieving these outcomes.

The course was conceptualised to require participants to begin with the Foundations of Flexible learning subject and complete in the Project subject. (see Appendix 5.1, Figure 1 and 2) Participants then plan and negotiate with teaching staff, their own pathway through the elements of the other two subjects to reflect their developing project progress and document this in the *Course Plan* (see Appendix 5.1 Figure 3) in their Online Course Portfolio. This structure was intended to facilitate the development of cohort cohesion in the initial subject, Foundations of Flexible Learning, that would be the platform for the social interactions that were required throughout the course. The completion of the Project in the final semester of enrolment was intended to maximise the impact and application of the benefits of the learning and development achieved through participation in the other three subjects of the course. In 2000 and 2001, whilst the course was offered for the first two years, the subjects were offered two per semester. The subjects are scheduled for modularisation in semester 2 2001 for offering in the more flexible mode described above for 2002.

A project -based approach was also selected to enable learning to be continuously applied and embedded in the participant's particular context over the duration of the course. Cycles

of learning and applying in context followed by reflection and then engaging with further materials, peers, literature or experiences were deliberately built into the intended subject enrolment patterns and pathways across the course, as well as explicitly within the curriculum in each subject. Capacity was built in to all subjects for activities to be focused upon project intentions if participants wished to do so. Conceptualisation of the participants' projects began in Foundations of Flexible Learning and was progressively developed across the course. It was also intended that participants would make regular contributions to their course portfolio section *Project Plan* (see Appendix 5.1 Figure 3) over their entire period of enrolment in the course. It was envisaged that much of the material contributed to this section of their OCP would be generated through the teaching and learning activities (TLAs) that would also contribute to the section *Evidence of Learning Activities and Outcomes*. (see Appendix 5.1 Figure 3)

One of the primary reasons that we selected an Online Course Portfolio assessment strategy was to enable learning across the course as a whole experience to be visible to all staff and participants. Some of the other reasons for this choice were introduced at the beginning of this paper. The structure of the Online Course

Portfolio (described in Appendix 5.1 Figure 3) includes four sections: *Course and Subject Reflections*, *Evidence of Learning Activities*

and Outcomes, *Course Plan* and *Project Plan*.

The assessment criteria for the course portfolio were derived directly from the course objectives (Figure 5.1). That is, the participants were required to demonstrate progress against the course level objectives at each assessment point. (The subjects were graded as non-graded pass or fail.) To support participants in demonstrating this, maps of how the subject level objectives, teaching activities and strategies overlaid on the course objectives were included in the subject documentation. Examples of these maps are presented in Appendix 5.1 Figures 4,5,6. These maps were also intended to be examples (or templates) of ways that these sections of their OCP website could be organised.

The *Course and Subject Reflections* section of the portfolio (see Appendix 5.1 Figure 3) specifically informed the evaluation of the subjects and course as well as forming a final meta-level reflective learning cycle for participants at the completion of each subject or semester. (That is, participants contributed to this section of their OCP as they progressed through learning in the subject, as well as at the end of each semester.)

We designed the course to incorporate a range of type and depth of experiences of information and communication technologies (ICTs) used in teaching contexts. This ranged from experiences of different ICTs throughout

Figure 5.1. Course level objectives for the Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning (GIH302 GU 2000)

The Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning seeks to develop participants' expertise as flexible learning practitioners. It encourages practitioners to develop and apply their knowledge of

- learning, teaching, and curriculum design in their discipline,
 - the use of communication and information technologies and media, and
 - the use of other flexible learning strategies and processes,
- to design, implement and evaluate flexible learning in their subjects and courses.

Through active participation in this course, participants will:

- expand their knowledge of the theoretical and practical underpinnings of flexible learning and teaching practices in the tertiary education sector and in their own context;
- experience, explore, use and evaluate a variety of technologies that facilitate learning;
- develop a research- and practice-based framework that enables them to critically reflect upon their own teaching practice and their students' learning as a basis for the design, development and implementation of high quality, innovative flexible learning environments;
- develop the ability to evaluate and monitor use of flexible learning resources and the learning environment to effect changes that enhance student learning; and
- develop as professional educators and expand their professional network.

the course, (eg GU Online Subject Website and related facilities, email, online chat facilities, audio-conferencing, video communication etc.) to developing critically aware, in depth designs for implementation and evaluation using selected technologies in their projects or subjects.

For instance, we defined our initial expectations for publishing on the participants' OCP websites. We wanted all graduates of the GCFL to be able to understand how to and have experienced

- conceptualising the design of a website for a particular purpose; and
- publishing webpages; and
- creating webpages using a simple webpage editor such as Netscape Communicator.

We aimed to support and expected all participants to learn how (if they don't know already) to use Netscape Communicator to create new webpages, create links between webpages, and embed simple images and URLs as hotlinks. If participants wanted to focus on using the web and designing websites in more depth as part of their project then capacity to negotiate that with the teaching staff was available.

We created an online learning environment that contained

- The subject websites
- Each subject had a forum and chat facility available (used differently in each subject)
- Course email list that included the teaching team
- The Participants OCP Websites (and teaching staff websites)

An orientation face to face meeting was held each semester and then some face to face meetings were organised within subjects in negotiation with participants. Video taping was used as one strategy for participants who could not attend face to face sessions.

We defined our expectations and commitments, requirements and negotiation points (and processes), for communication and interactions explicitly with a model included in each of the subject outlines. For example the *Organisation and Teaching Methods* section and the *Subject Design Features* section from Foundations of Flexible Learning are presented in Appendix 5.1 Figure 7 illustrating the interaction and communication model and other communication tools and strategies adopted in Foundations of Flexible Learning.

4.2 Phase 2 Development and Phase 3 Implementation

This section will discuss the degree to which participants achieved the intended learning outcomes of the GCFL course and the dimensions of evaluation of the OCP (listed earlier). The dimensions of evaluation will be addressed under three main themes that arose through the analysis of the participant and teaching team perceptions and experiences. The first two areas are related and address the concept of the OCP as an assessment task and then the value of the OCP as a learning and assessment tool. The third relates to the use and effectiveness of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the course.

Aims of the GCFL Course: Participant Perceptions and Teaching Team Observations

The aims of the GCFL course (Figure 5.1) were perceived to be met for the 2000 graduates interviewed and the OCP reflections from all participants during 2000 indicated a high level of success. For example one of the participants in the course in semester one described the outcomes they had experienced as including the GCFL Foundations of Flexible Learning subject aims and more:

This unit has enabled me to:

- *understand the organisational pattern of a web-based unit and begin to envisage that different pattern for units for which I have some responsibility in writing and editing for distance education purposes;*
- *integrate several theoretical frameworks relevant to my research and teaching context with the framework for flexible learning presented in this unit;*
- *become familiar with a range of relevant literature and sources for further research;*
- *develop my own theoretical framework for understanding teaching and learning processes;*
- *experience a unit being taught via the web (with all its flexibility and constraints);*
- *work directly to a web-based format as required by the Course Portfolio component; and*

- *reflect anew on flexible learning practices in my own context and possibilities in this regard for the future.*

(OCP Course and subject reflections)

Graduates and participants indicated that they now approached thinking about teaching for learning in their role and context in a different and more informed (by experience and scholarly engagement) way:

I think it is just having more of an overview of the whole process of teaching and learning. I have got a better understanding of that, I think before I probably would have concentrated on what my own little area is, but I now see the bigger picture

(Graduate Int)

This course has changed my thinking immensely - because I am a part-time academic teaching post-graduate ("adult learners") students, I have previously not paid much attention to the learning environment. Also, I never looked at the course I teach, from a learners perspective. In addition, in my other role as a [role name], I will make decisions having now the insight to consider different perspectives: teachers, learners and learning environment.

(OCP Course and subject reflections)

Flexibility

Participants' experiences of being a 'student' in a flexible learning environment were different and in most cases indicated an initial (by the teaching team) struggle in understanding what to do and how to participate in the online GCFL course. But this changed over time as indicated by the following two quotes. The first is from the reflections section of a semester 1 2000 participant and the second is from the interview of a graduate, six months after completing the course. They illustrate development of confidence and skill in participation and engagement with and understanding of the course's aims and intentions.

I felt I was floundering a bit earlier in the semester, when there were no instructions available as to activities. I'll admit it -- while I like to work alone, I

also like to have clear, carved-in-stone instructions on the work I'm expected to carry out.

I have always studied as a full-time student with weekly classes with teaching staff. The transition to flexible delivery was difficult at first. I was unused to finding all the material before me on a web page with the decision as to when to complete tasks largely my own. It was very unlike my earlier degrees. But I have come to appreciate the freedom and flexibility, especially when working full-time. To be able to log online, print out what I wish for the next task when it suited my schedule is extremely useful. but once I realised what it was about also that I had a lot of control over how I was going to do my study, but even more so I kept relating everything back to my own work what I did here in the [workplace named]. As soon as I starting doing that I didn't have a problem with the rest of the course materials. Anytime we were asked to do something or I was doing any reading or any tasks, I just kept relating it back to my current work situation. I also decided, as I said, what I wanted to get from it, and I made sure I worked that out as I was going through the course.

Application to Participants' Particular Contexts

Participants demonstrated that they were able to expand their knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of flexible learning and teaching practices in general and in their own contexts. This was evident in their development of design frameworks, and application of these in a design exercise in Designing for Flexible Learning as well as in their projects. They confirmed that the project was a useful vehicle for achieving this contextualisation to their work as one participant comments in their semester one OCP reflections:

I have found the concept of an ongoing project to be extremely helpful with my own learning. It gave me something to refer to when I was learning about new concepts. I frequently asked myself "How would this apply in my project?". I need to apply what I am learning, and the project allowed me to do that.

It challenged them to take a 'bigger picture' approach to their work and renewed personal enthusiasm or 'freshness', as another participant reflected in their OCP:

Another course related benefit that I have experienced is a paradigm shift toward seeing and discussing learning programs in terms of their potential for flexible design. Now that I have a working definition of flexible learning, I am beginning to think and see possibilities in my working environment rather than solely focus on more traditional learning and teaching methods. This new paradigm adds a new dimension to my potential processes and outcomes, which ultimately brings a well appreciated 'freshness' to my working role.

Framework Development and Justification

One of the outcomes of the course stated in the aims is that participants will develop a more informed framework of understanding that will enable them to critically reflect upon their own practice in their particular context. One way in which participants demonstrated development of this framework was through articulation of teaching philosophies and development of concept maps with a set of associated activities in Foundations of Flexible Learning, as this participant describes:

*The subject content was fascinating. Understanding the process learners are experiencing, having to develop Teaching Philosophies and therefore understand and articulate my thoughts on teaching - now supported by scholarly readings - and tying all this into Concept Maps of learning and teaching with all the stresses and challenges and expectations this encompasses, and following this through to produce a Futures Scenario has been a fascinating and stimulating learning experience for me.
(OCP Course and Subject reflections)*

In Foundations of Flexible Learning, generally three versions of these types of documents were developed by participants, following subsequent cycles of interaction with learning groups, teaching staff and/or peer- and self-review. Change in these documents was clearly visible in OCPs to participants and teaching staff, as one of the teaching team reflects upon

in the teaching team focus group, semester 2 2000:

I could easily see against our course objectives that students had met the reflective practice. I could see where they modified things and the quality of things in the second and third draft. I got satisfaction from actually seeing what I wanted them to do overtime. Not that that happened with all of them, but I could see that that was visible (in their OCP).

One of the outcomes of developing a more informed personal framework of understanding that we (the teaching team) expected to see in participants development over the course was an increased confidence and sense of personal agency in designing curriculum and justifying choices and approaches in teaching for learning. These first semester participants' OCP reflections illustrate new levels of understanding, confidence in justification and application in their personal and School context were already opening up:

.... The course so far has been a steep learning curve, even though some of what I've had to produce in my work is related to ideas and thoughts that have already been floating around in my mind. Not that I'm an educational genius, far from it. It's more that I've been made to put these vague ideas and views together in a coherent, articulate form. For example, I'm sure everyone has a basic philosophy behind the way they teach, but it was surprisingly difficult to get it from the brain and onto paper -- it was a useful exercise to have to produce a written form of my teaching philosophy, backed up by the readings. The SWOT analysis was also useful, as it led me to think about things that need to be kept or changed in order to improve the flexible learning activities of my School.

In general the course was interesting in the sense that a totally different world has opened for me. The jargon is different, the way of thinking is different, the goals seem to be different. I found it useful to see the way that teaching is systematically approached. In a way, some of the things learnt, I did already for many

years, others were totally new. After the course I feel more secure in what I do and have incorporated already, much into my teaching. I feel more secure, because - whether my old practice or newly acquired - it appears justified, legalized as opposed to "common sense".

Professional Networking

One of the aims of the course is to enable participants to expand their professional networks within their workplace, within their institution and professional communities. The immediate value of internal institutional networking is indicated for one graduate in the following quote:

.... because I had more dealing with academics in different settings and there were a couple of other lecturers or (name) would get together, or even just reading their comments in the forum and stuff, you get a bit more of an idea of their perspective and where they're coming from and I think that's helped professionally as well, that you are kind of understanding what they are trying to do. I think that it probably helped as well to have that broader knowledge of their setting as well, not just my own. I enjoyed it, I enjoyed the contact with other lecturers, I still see them...some of them around campus and stuff. I have met a lot of different people. It might prove even more useful because we are getting restructured in this division So I might find that next year this might be even more useful to me because I might be working more with them and this has given more of an understanding of what they do be one of those very fortunate opportunities experiences that I did that might pay off dividends for my work next year (Graduate Int)

Further comments on the achievement of this aim will be addressed later under *Phase 4 Institutionalisation*.

4.3 The Concept of an Online Course Portfolio

Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences of the First Course Offering

The teaching team had discussed and articulated what we understood by the OCP for inclusion in the course accreditation and development documentation (See Appendix 5.1 Figure 3 Course Portfolio description and requirements). However, participants indicated frustration whilst developing a strategy of approaching and conceptualising the 'portfolio' style assessment, as well as a perception that the OCP was embedded differently in each of the subjects.

The teaching team began to investigate this by reflecting upon their own perceptions of the OCP and the reasons for selection. Table 5.2 is a summary of notes from one of our teaching team review sessions (sem 1 2000) where we were reviewing and articulating the purposes and processes that the OCP was intended to support.

This overview and review discussion of our reasons for selecting the OCP served to confirm and highlight a number of things. First, we expected that participants would experience a level of confusion about the portfolio task mainly due to unfamiliarity with this type of assessment strategy. For example one subject convenor looked for this frustration or confusion:

.... I like the chaos, because that indicates to me that they're thinking through things, they don't know where they're going and they've got to make some decisions and choices and justify them. And I look for that, but I don't look for no confidence in having a go I don't want to remove that meta-level of making choices, from the course at this point yet. (TT Foc Grp)

And another responded:

I know they survived the portfolio, the anxieties they experienced, in relation to Foundations, and they've come out of that, making very positive statements. (TT Foc Grp)

Table 5.2. Teaching Team reflections on Why an online course portfolio?

<p>Online</p> <p>“Visible” development of portfolio, project development, our participation ‘authentic’ experience for participant cumulative — revisable — additive — achievable in response to the course brief — worldwide and off-campus participation dynamically shareable and inspectable by participants and staff publishing for an ‘audience’ (confidence, competence, nature of content and interaction) availability of ‘resources’ for learning</p>	<p>Course</p> <p>flexibility - over time across subjects - own goals - course and subject goals cohesion across ‘course’; not 4 elements cumulative learning groups</p>
<p>Experiences of Technology</p> <p>as a student as a curriculum designer as a manager/administrator of IT supported environment</p>	<p>Portfolio</p> <p>practice based course/subjects - evidence based - demonstrate development - individual contents - reflection in action progressive peer & staff reviews articulating where participant/work fits in the “whole course” picture: critique, rationale, scholarship, contextualisation</p>

One participant, during the first semester of the course, reflected in their OCP that:

There was much confusion as to exactly what was required we did not fully understand the Course Portfolio until the meeting in week 11 I then decided upon my interpretation of the requirements, and that is what I have produced.

After graduating, the same participant commented that:

*..... As I said, for me the portfolio was everything I was putting up on that web site I found it useful except for as I said I think a lot of people have difficulty with the concept of a portfolio, they are not really sure what should be in there, it is up to you to work out what goes in, its up to you to evaluate it, its up to you to decide how you are going to structure it is supposed to be one of those evolving things and that you can see that record of what you have been doing.
(Graduate Int)*

Secondly, although we had defined a specific structure of four sections for the portfolio, and talked at length amongst ourselves (teaching team) about the role and nature of the OCP, we

had indeed conceptualised and implemented it differently in each of the subjects. One convenor observed that “*the portfolio notion was operating across the course*” but that, “*it was working in quite markedly different ways*”.

They continued explaining that:

*.... the folio itself, was a document and in some ways would be a synthesis of all their experiences and everything in the course. the portfolio was a document, with reflection saying I really learnt this piece, and you can see how I’ve changed from this point to here, hyperlink, to that point there, hyperlink. And so the website was really just a body of supporting evidence, a reservoir, to draw upon for the portfolio.
(TT Foc Grp)*

This included diversity in the nature, number and timing of when documents were being included onto participants’ OCP websites. The diversity of approaches is described in Table 5.3. For example, for Foundations of Flexible Learning it was recommended that all documentation was archived to participants’ websites, including copies of successive versions of documents created throughout the subject and peer review processes were

Table 5.3. Intended approach to OCP implementation used in each subject in 2000.

Subject	OCP application
GIH7101 Foundations of Flexible Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • four elements required in the OCP structure - (1 Course reflections; 2 Course plan; 3 Project progress and report; and 4 Evidence of learning activities and outcomes.) • peer review process required for the submission of the OCP • high level of reflection required • outcomes of subject activities - guidelines given as to how might be used in OCP • high level of flexibility in what can be presented and how • website design is required to structure / restructure the OCP • Activity Log used in subject to make progress through subject visible but can also be used to structure OCP • Subject / course aims map indicates how activities and outcomes of subject might be used to demonstrate progress against course aims and objectives. This can also be used to organise the website structure.
GIH7102 Designing for Flexible Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of meeting course objectives • A design framework • An informed articulation of the elements of the framework • Application of the framework to a design activity • Note: Evidence needs to include evidence of reflection and reading. Evidence will be found in specific documents (eg 'my design framework') and within online discussions on the Forum • Participation in a peer review process with online documentation • Participation, including leadership, in online discussion on the Forum. (Evidence of reflection and reading is presented within this participation)
GIH7103 Implementing Flexible Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three views of technologies and the issues and strategies associated with their implementation form the primary contribution to the OCP • Participation in a peer review process of the three assessment pieces submitted as part of the OCP (including the Forum) • Regular reflections and developmental evidence throughout the progress of writing the reviews and engagement with the literature • Evidences the flexibility and the cumulative aspects of the OCP as a model of practice as a feature throughout the course
GIH7104 Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information about project plans and milestones • regular progress reports and reflections on progress • peer review of activities and discussion • final project report • portfolio revised to include achievements in semester

documented and added to participant's OCP websites. (For example, at least three updated versions of teaching philosophy statements are created in Foundations of Flexible Learning and peer review comments and responses are also included.) Alternatively, in Designing for Flexible Learning and Implementing Flexible Learning, discussions and reflection from participants were contributed to the subject Forum and considered part of the OCP for assessment.

In the teaching team focus group and reflection session later in the year we wrestled with the concept of 'consistency'. What did we really want to be consistent about the OCP across the subjects? What level of flexibility of choice

did we want to offer? What skills did we really want participants to have or to experience with respect to website development? We decided upon the following changes for the course for 2001.

Changes for 2001

We agreed that in each of the four subjects for 2001 we would emphasise that the four sections of OCP must be completed at the end of each semester of enrolment. We confirmed that the descriptions in the subject outlines were consistent and also consistently applied in each of the subjects. We expect that it is likely that students will perceive and experience that we will use or embed the OCP

differently in each of the subjects for learning but that OCP assessment at the end of each semester will be structured and required to be consistent across the course.

We decided to seek the permission of at least one past student to develop a model portfolio from their OCP website materials. From this we planned to develop a template for this model OCP website. We also planned to develop other models and templates from other students work in the future, adding at least one per year. In the future, all students enrolled in the GCFL would be able to access each others' OCP websites, irrespective of their enrolment patterns or year of commencement. Thus 'real' work will be accessible as alternative models, at all stages of their enrolment.

4.4 Value of the OCP for Learning and Assessment

The following dimensions of evaluation are discussed in this section of the report:

- effectiveness as an assessment tool and as part of the principal learning task in the course;
- value of the on-line nature of the assessment tool to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
- value as a tool for documenting and demonstrating learning and professional development for the course and the individual;
- value as a tool to facilitate a collaborative reflective learning process.

The remaining two dimensions are discussed in the following section that addresses themes related to ICTs.

Online Nature of OCP and Effectiveness as an Assessment and Learning Tool

One of the participants reflected upon our assessment strategy in the course, in this way: *.... if the foundations aim was to ... encourage us to think about our teaching philosophies and to expand our theoretical understanding of principal learning, then yes I think that we did achieve that aim. How did they do it? Well, I guess they...I mean it is the old story as we learned in the course, students are guided by assessment and so they achieved in making us do particular activities that*

made us reflect and find out more about our philosophies and do some reading and so on. It has restimulated my philosophy of teaching, my understanding of things like deep learning, surface learning. I didn't think that was really important so there is stuff that we were reading in the subject was very relevant to my experiences in life and that was really good, it was very stimulating and I was able to apply it to my teaching from that point of view, so that was great. (Graduate Int)

A number of the sections of this report have already discussed how and to what degree participants had achieved progress against the course aims and how they illustrated and documented this in their OCPs. But in the teaching team focus group and reflection session, one of the teaching team raised the following question: *'Are they going through the processes that we think they are going through. Are they carefully selecting A or B, or are they just going, oh, do B. We're making assumptions that they are carefully selecting the most appropriate evidence to demonstrate the achievements of the intended outcomes.'* One of the other teaching team members indicated that they had observed participants being selective in their contributions to their OCPs for assessment but their reflective statements had not indicated why they had made these selections or contributions. There was *"just identification, not an articulation as to why they chose them, or why and how that met the criteria."* The teaching team decided to build exploration of this into future evaluation programs.

Value for Documenting and Demonstrating Development and Learning

As mentioned earlier, (in *Framework Development and Justification*) one of the teaching team *"could easily see where they (participants) had modified things and the quality of things in the second and third draft."* (TT Foc Grp) The OCP was effective at making this learning and development over time visible to the teaching team and the participants (individually and collectively) if documentation had been archived progressively.

Another way in which the teaching team had conceptualised the OCP was as being a

resource or archive of work across the course and for future application by each participant after graduation from the course. Contributions would be continually made in a way that suited the individual and would correspond to the way in which they participated and engaged with the course. We anticipated then, that at the end of each semester, participants would then 're-design' or design a new navigation path through this material or archive that was consistent with the OCP structure of four sections for assessment. This was easy to do practically as it is an online resource, which by its very nature, facilitates multiple navigation paths.

The value of the OCP as an archive of material that is in an online format is demonstrated by the following graduate's comments:

I found it useful because I had a collection of everything that I could then draw back on to use for something further down the track. It was useful because in second semester some of the stuff, for the actual implementation of a small part of your project, I had to rely on stuff that I had done in subject in design. So I could just go back and find it and link it back and forth or you know copy and paste, change it as you did you know, but the basics were there so I kind of liked having that as a record. Knowing my own filing system at my desk, I may not have done that, I might have started from scratch again for a couple of things, not realising I have already covered this before, I don't need to do this. So that is how I used it.
(Graduate Int)

One of the teaching team commented upon the effectiveness and efficiency of having electronic records to access about students progress and previous feedback:

I found it useful to actually have it electronically, because I work from that directly, and then print out the bits I wanted to take home and give feedback on, it made me give feedback electronically, rather than hardcopy, so I found myself doing it twice over, and I was taking it home, copying from those notes, and then sending it back electronically, but that would help me anyway, because I

could just write what I wanted on the thing and then re-write it in a way that would be understandable to them and would make sense it also made that very easy for me to keep track of and records of. And that helped me working with different people online I could go back to their file, see who they are, and develop comments quite quickly whereas previously, we would have done that hardcopy
(TT Foc Grp)

They perceived that the quality of the feedback given to participants improved but their practices in terms of record keeping and workload changed. Visibility and thus the potential for learning and improving feedback increased but so did the total time spent on the task by the teaching team member.

Facilitating Collaborative Learning - Learning Groups

Participants were not 'required' to participate in learning groups in the course, however they were required to participate in peer review and interaction and engagement with colleagues and their work. One of our intentions in creating learning groups was to facilitate the development of 'comfortable' groups to support peer review and interaction processes and professional networking. Learning groups were not required to meet face to face but could interact online and via email.

All of the participants committed themselves to a learning group but some operated more successfully than others. Some responses were about preferring to work alone rather than in groups and others were about a perceived loss of flexibility:

As I mentioned at the group meeting in Week 11, I'm not a "group work" person -- I prefer to work alone. The concept of learning groups is ok if these groups have fixed times to get together and talk (ie during a set class time), but our group has found it extremely difficult to get together to carry out the work expected of it. In my view the idea of having to organise a time in your diary for group discussion defeats the purpose of flexible learning.
(OCP Course and subject reflections)

Some frustrations have included expectations of compulsory involvement in a learning group given my predilection and familiarity with independent work, and the logistics of being involved in a learning group given the technology issues and the geographic spread of learning group members.
(OCP Course and Subject reflections)

In semester 1 2000, there was a face to face orientation session followed by primary management of the subjects by electronic communication. A minor number of face to face meetings of the whole course cohort took place. Participants indicated that more face to face interaction to develop 'rapport' with others would facilitate the initial creation of learning groups and the online community:

.... learning groups appear to be most effective when their beginnings are based on face-to-face meetings where rapport based on personalities and mutual interest has been established. I believe our Learning Group would have been stronger had more time been allocated to its establishment initially. That said, my Learning Group was a positive entity – a small group of supporters from within the larger collective of students
(OCP Course and subject reflections)

Most participants found that the interactions with learning group members were useful:

I guess the key thing I learnt was that I was not alone navigating in uncharted waters. The sharing of information from peers and learning group was invaluable as a learning tool in that I obtained different perspectives of issues from others. One that comes to mind is the manner in which we shared Concept Maps and helping each other develop our maps into something meaningful.
(OCP Course and subject reflections)

One participant expressed frustration at not getting past the 'What do we do?' questions with their learning group to the 'What do you think about this and how does it impact you and your students in your environment?' questions:

...I was part of a learning set and had a few meetings but I didn't find them

that useful because we didn't actually get down to work, we spent our time discussing, what exactly we had to do for a particular assessment piece, and we all had different ideas about that I guess what I found was that in the learning set it tends to be more mundane, you know what it is we have got to do, it wasn't actually discussing ideas and we needed to get beyond the more concrete I am not sure how that could happen, I'm not sure how to make that happen.
(Graduate Int)

Changes for 2001

The teaching team decided to continue with the concept of learning groups as being recommended but not compulsory. Peer review and interaction and engagement with peers and their work will still be compulsory but it does not need to occur within a learning group. We decided to make some changes to enable group members to interact and communicate more effectively online; to encourage and better support the creation of groups, including, negotiating more face to face meetings with participants across the semester.

A range of new online tools was available for learning groups to use for communication in 2001 as Griffith University implemented Blackboard (online learning software). One of the facilities available in the Blackboard system is 'group pages'. This tool allows the subject convenor to allocate secure sites to particular groups of students (and/or staff) that contain chat rooms, digital drop boxes, discussion forums and group email lists.

4.5 ICTs: Technology Barriers and Communication Scaffolds

The following dimensions of evaluation are discussed in this section of the report: value as a tool for enabling the learning processes and outcomes for the participants to be more 'visible' and accessible to staff and other participants; as a way of experiencing incorporation of technology in teaching and learning processes from a student perspective.

Visibility and Accessibility

The visibility of learning and development has been introduced earlier in reference to the

value of the OCP for Documenting and Demonstrating Learning and Development. 'Change and development' was clearly visible over time to the teaching team:

*.... I could see, even if I came back three or four weeks later where they've started from, where they've gone, and where they're now presently at, and they could see that, and whatever changes were used they could then write about how they've changed. Which took it to the next level so they identified that that's a change, but they haven't articulated what that change is and how it occurred. Which is what I wanted them to do in the course reflection
(TT Foc Grp)*

Participants developed skills in web publishing as the course progressed, as this participant indicates:

*When I enrolled in this course, I had a vague idea that I might become more familiar with using a computer to aid learning. So far this course has far exceeded these expectations. I have certainly become more familiar with using the computer: I have learned how to manage a web-page, create links, up-load files, and have begun to experiment with different "looks" - though I have not had time to fully develop skills in creating visually stimulating web pages.
(OCP Course and subject reflections)*

A workshop on website development and publishing was run at one of the sessions at the face to face orientation program in semester 1 2000. But participants left that program with a focus on a 'technology' hurdle:

*When we did orientation they took away the picture from that day that the 'technology' of how to do this, was more important than the scholarly engagement of what we wanted them to do and we need to change that perspective.
(TT Foc Grp)*

One of the teaching team also indicated in one of the mid-semester teaching team meetings that "I found myself focussing on the technology issues too - I needed to kick start the focus on the substance of the subject again."

Participants also indicated that they had significant network access issues. Passwords were not working and support for this problem was not easy to access. There were also a number of network changes during the first month of the course that changed directions about ftp and telnet protocols given to participants in orientation week for web publishing and created confusion.

*I was unprepared for the length of time it took to overcome the technological problems which were partly due to my naivete. (My password didn't arrive for about six weeks Tracking down the person able to assist was the next hurdle) In the early weeks I felt that I was on a steep learning curve in two subjects – computer technology and Foundations.
(OCP Course and Subject reflections)*

*..... in hindsight one of the biggest handicaps was the technology I spent hours and hours trying to get my things across, trying to learn how to do websites and I think if there is one big drama in the whole thing, then it is that. the amount of reading would be fine if we would not be investing our time in doing the websites. So, the balance between what you are doing is not right.
(Graduate Int)*

Participants indicated the value of being able to 'see' each others sites. One of the graduates explains how they used the subject websites:

*Well, I used the subject web site to get all the information you had to be doing, particularly for what reading had to be done, what questions had to be answered, that kind of thing. Working out the assessment, also the resources, often there were links off to other resources, so I would go look at a few of those and come back. That is pretty much how I used the subject web site.
(Graduate Int)*

I would often look at what the other students were doing, particularly when it came to interpretation, if I wasn't sure of something, because we had access to the others I would kind of use that as a bit of an idea or a bit of a guide. It was just a helpful kind of

look to see what the other students were doing, particularly how they were applying it because they had different situations to what I was applying it to. (Graduate Int)

Authentic Experience of Technology as a Student

Most of the participants had not experienced learning online themselves so the experience was new. Experiencing flexible learning for the first time, highlighted some 'pot holes' and proved to be valuable for most participants in semester 1 2000:

This is not to say that I have found this course to be 'smooth sailing'. I have generally found it to be a frustrating learning experience. In taking a positive perspective, it has been a useful learning experience in that I am more aware of the potential difficulties that learners can experience when embarking on a flexible learning program. I now believe that I have a greater understanding of potential 'pot holes'.
(OCP Course and subject reflections)

The lack of structure in content was initially challenging. However this is the real situation of flexible learning, learner-based education, and to experience learning in the manner which many of our future students will be learning, will benefit me in my work environment.
(OCP Course and subject reflections)

More sympathetic to students experiences, participants now plan support more explicitly in their own courses as one of the graduates explains about their new course design in 2001:

...yeah, we (GCFL course) needed a couple of workshop I think. People like me needed a couple of workshops to start with right at the beginning before we get too far behind. in fact I did that myself when I introduced in my subject and it was all Blackboard and in the first week oh the second week, I gave every single student who came to a workshop, an hour long workshop and I made sure they understood everything. There was an option for them to have another workshop in week four which nobody

took so So that was learning from my (GCFL) experience because I knew students might want to learn that... (Graduate Int)

The same graduate also enjoyed the creative experience of designing a website:

It was of great value in that I learned how to...I mean I found it was a lot of fun, you know learning how to use the technology and make colours and make it look pretty and all that sort of stuff. I was still very naïve and unsophisticated, I could see other people get this portfolio to a much more advanced and...but I did enjoy, I really enjoyed creating the portfolio and doing all the things, that was really fun. Yeah, so that was very valuable.
(Graduate Int)

Learning about Web Design through Experience

Through learning to create and publish websites, participants were also practically learning about the constraints on site content and design, managing a website and student access issues. Whilst learning about creative possibilities for website design, they were tempering that with their own experiences as an online learner and website developer:

..... so I realised that particularly for students working from home with perhaps not such quick downloading, I needed to keep things not quite as complex as I would have liked to have made them. At this point in time it is probably not a good idea to include videos and various other things because they take too long to download and they may not have sound anyway and so I...I got not quite so creative ...
(Graduate Int)

The exercise of creating the OCP for presentation at the end of each semester illustrated to participants, the power of being able to have many different pathways for navigating through the same materials on the one website.

But once I realised that I had already been collecting it all, actually my data was part of it, it was just then trying to get some overall kind of structure to it,

*to kind of make it make sense for somebody else
(Graduate Int)*

This design / re-design process of websites was visible across the participants' sites in the website snapshots we were taking each week. One convenor indicated in the teaching team focus group session in semester two, that one participant took a chronological approach initially, presenting each weeks materials as they completed them. This was similar to another participant who *"did the same sort of thing as well, she compiled stuff as she went along, and then reorganised the whole thing to re-present the front end in terms of how to drive through the portfolio."* (TT Foc Grp)

Changes for 2001

We decided to create a new orientation program with face to face and online components. (Our intention was that the online component would be completed before attending the face to face session.) There would be a face to face session to introduce participants to each other, the teaching team and the subjects with no web publishing included. We will develop an online orientation program to introduce participants to the Blackboard environment, online tools and where to begin with the online materials. During semester one, we will offer support for web page development as required (on one to one basis if possible) and whenever participants were ready to begin publishing online. Information about other courses on web publishing and training support services available to staff at Griffith University will also be given to participants.

We commissioned a new web publishing process for the participants' websites for 2001, designed to remove the need for management of passwords (for publishing only) through the central university services. This new system enables the teaching team to manage password allocation and changes for the OCP websites. This no longer requires ftp or telnet processes, simplifying the publishing procedures considerably for the participants. The subject website access passwords will always be controlled by the university centrally however it is expected that with new systems in place in 2001 this should be less of a problem.

5. Institutionalisation

5.1 Transfer of Learning to Workplace

Some of the transfer of learning in the course to participants own contexts is evident in their OCP and their interactions throughout the course. For example, one participant indicated the effect on her immediate work team:

Email 23 June 2000

Basically this is the email that you asked me to send about how the course has had effects on me, my (work) team etc.

Outcomes:

Team now meet on a regular basis for feedback and to discuss issues

Set of readings have been distributed to the team

We have had many discussions on what is learning, teaching, what the outcomes we are really trying to achieve, different learning environments

Have begun the process of moving modules into the GFLS style of framework

Overall we all feel better about what we are doing and where we are headed.

Other kinds of transfers from learning in the course include applying strategies and processes experienced within the course to their context:

Email June 2000 Question to

participant: What did you learn through participation in the subject that you have applied in your own context?

Email Response by participant:

This is a very difficult question. The answer is lots! When we learn, we can never un-learn. As a human, when something is convincing, we learn and own it and as such use it. Examples:

- A scheme like the critical path, though mine is slightly different, but definitely inspired in the Critical Path scheme as seen in Foundations, ... and students like it.*
- Using key questions (as the ones provided for this document) to help students unlock the guesswork cycle and into production mode.*

- *Matching different TLAs (teaching-learning activities) for different things that need to be learnt.*
- *To (more than ever) align assessment with course goals (I always did, but now I feel more secure doing it).*
- *To better express what is expected.*

The aims of the GCFL course include developing professional networks and a sense of confidence and personal agency in communicating about flexible learning and teaching for learning. To this end we encourage participants to attend conferences and seminars and participate in committees and working parties both internal and external to Griffith University. One 2000 GCFL participant has presented a paper at the 2000 HERDSA conference. Another has been elected to Academic Committee of the University for 2001 and has proactively participated in discussion of flexible learning issues in the deliberations of that committee. (One of the teaching team members is also on Academic Committee). Further investigation of this *Institutionalisation* phase will be pursued in future evaluation of the GCFL. In particular, interviews of graduates approximately six months after completing the course will be continued.

6. Conclusions and Future Plans

*.... So as educators I think that's been very valuable learning experience from the point of view to having an extended dialogue, normally, it just doesn't happen in other courses.
(TT Foc Grp)*

Because of the ASCILITE – CUTSD project funding, we were able to justify, through external recognition of this work as ‘funded’ research, a higher than normal time allocation to this project. Creating a working team across a course is no mean feat, especially across two different elements of the university, based on two different campuses. We were committed to the project as a team but that didn’t help us find common times in diaries! This work will continue in the future as the foundation of the evaluation program for the GCFL is now in place. It will also inform the modification of the GCFL course intended to be undertaken in semester 2 2001. As a consequence of the feedback from participants and reflection by

the teaching team, we will implement the following (already discussed above) in 2001:

- A new online orientation to the online course environment including resources and tools, (intended to be completed before attending a face to face orientation session);
- Face to face sessions will be organised if the participant cohort are able to attend. Video and phone / audio-conferencing will be used as a strategies to support participants unable to attend face to face sessions; and
- Learning groups will still be encouraged (but not required) as we move into a Blackboard web environment in 2001. The facilities in the Blackboard environment should enhance communication between geographically dispersed learning group members. Peer review, interaction and engagement with peers and their work will still be compulsory.
- A new web publishing strategy that allows the GCFL teaching team to manage participant passwords and will not require ftp or telnet skills;
- Workshops for participants as required (rather than up-front in orientation) to support website development, in conjunction with a refocussing of the orientation program away from technological issues and back to academic engagement with the substantive course concepts, content and processes; Contact points will be setup for other web development and publishing support available at the University as well;
- Develop at least one model OCP from a past student's work and create a template for it (with their permission.)
- Confirm that the OCP submissions at the end of the semester will contain the four required sections of the OCP but expect that the OCP will be embedded and used differently within the individual subjects of the course.

NOTES

1 Terminology

We determined to use participants for those who were enrolled and undertaking the GCFL course. This was both to recognise that they were more sophisticated learners than undergraduate students and also to differentiate between the participants in the course and the students that they were interacting with in their specific contexts.

There are four *subjects* in the *course*. So *course* refers to the whole GCFL and *subject* refers to one of the four units that make up the GCFL.

2 Abbreviations

LCE framework	Bain (1999) adapted Alexander and Hedberg (1994) evaluation framework
GCFL	Graduate Certificate in Flexible Learning
GFLS	Griffith Flexible Learning Services
GIHE	Griffith Institute for Higher Education
Int	Interview
OCP	Online Course Portfolio
TLAs	Teaching and learning strategies
TT foc grp	Teaching team focus group

7. References

- Alexander, S., & Hedberg, J. G. (1994). Evaluating technology-based learning: Which model? In K. Beattie, McNaught, C., and Wills, S. (Ed.), *Interactive multimedia in university education: designing for change in teaching and learning*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.
- Backer, P. (1997). The use of portfolios in professional education: A multimedia model of instructional methodology. ERIC ED 408 356.
- Bain, J. (1999). Introduction to special issue on learning centered evaluation of innovation in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 18(2), 165-172.
- Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (1997). *Assessment by Portfolio: Constructing Learning and Designing Teaching*. Research and Development in Higher Education, 79-87.
- Burke, K. E. (1996). *Professional Portfolios: A Collection of Articles*. Australia: Cheltenham: Hawker Brownlow Education.
- Dietz, M. (1996). Using Portfolios as a Framework for Professional Development. In K. E. Burke (Ed.), *Professional Portfolios: A Collection of Articles*. Cheltenham (Australia): Hawker Brownlow Education, pp. 49-56.
- Edgerton, R., Hutchings, P., & Quinlan, K. (1991). *The Teaching Portfolio: Capturing the Scholarship in Teaching*. Washington, DC.: American Association for Higher Education.
- Jacobsen, D., & Mueller, J. (1998). Creating a collaborative electronic community of education scholars Paper contributed to the

Teaching in the Community Colleges Online Conference (3rd, Kapiolani Community College, April 7-9 1998). Available: <http://leahi.kcc.hawaii.edu/org/tcon98/paper/jacobsen.html>.

Lankes, A. (1995). Electronic portfolios: A new idea in assessment. ERIC Digest Clearing House on Information and Technology, Dec 1995(ED 390 377).

Moore, B., & Smith, B. (1994). *Guide to Valuing and Evaluating teaching in the University of South Australia*. Adelaide: University of South Australia.

Phillips, R., Bain, J., McNaught, C., Rice, M., & Tripp, D. (2000). *Handbook for Learning-centred Evaluation of Computer-facilitated Learning Projects in Higher Education*. Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development Project. Available: <http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/projects/cutds99/handbook/handbook.htm>.

Seldin, P. (1991). *The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotional/Tenure Decisions*. Boston, MA.: Anker Publishing Co.

Seldin, P. (1993). *Successful Use of Teaching Portfolios*. Bolton, MA.: Anker Publishing Co.

Wilcox, B., Tomei, L., & Manner, B. (1997). *Intelligent portfolios for professional development*. ERIC, ED 408 250.

8. Acknowledgments

This project was supported by funding from ASCILITE, CUTSD and GIHE, Griffith University.

Project Contact

Carol Bowie
Griffith Institute for Higher Education
Griffith University, Nathan Q 4111
c.bowie@mailbox.gu.edu.au

Project team

Carol Bowie, Peter Taylor, Craig Zimitat
Griffith Institute for Higher Education

Gordon Joughin, Brad Young
Griffith Flexible Learning Services

Mentor

John Bain
Faculty of Education, Griffith University

9. Appendices

To conserve paper, the Appendices to this report are only available at

<http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/projects/cutsd99>