An Introduction to Mahara ePortfolios
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Introduction – what and why?

ePortfolios are popular in both academic and professional contexts, mainly as a way for users to show evidence of achievement, e.g. graduate attributes, professional competency, or for assessment. An ePortfolio allows its owner to store documents and other media that may then be presented in web pages to selected users. The ePortfolio keeps everything private until the owner chooses to publish information within it, and helps the owner to manage content efficiently as the ePortfolio matures. Reflective learning, meta-cognition, and goal planning are also possible with guided use of ePortfolios.

Federation University uses an ePortfolio system called Mahara. This guide introduces you to the main functions of Mahara, and will help you achieve what most users need for getting started. This isn’t a manual, so it doesn't attempt to cover every feature or provide a comprehensive ‘how to’ for everything possible. ePortfolios, like their more traditional paper-based portfolio cousins, are highly individual creations and you will need to devote time and energy to creating something meaningful. If you are a student, you will need guidance on the purpose and structure of your ePortfolio from your teacher, lecturer or tutor. Your ePortfolio content, and the ways in which you present it, will depend on your own circumstances and objectives. You can create as many pages as you need for each audience and/or purpose.

New users of Mahara, and ePortfolios in general, are often concerned about privacy and portability. It is important to note that all information you put in your ePortfolio is completely private by default—you must take specific steps to share your information, which are described in this guide. When you leave Federation University, your Mahara ePortfolio doesn’t have to stay behind; it is portable. You can export your ePortfolio at any time and carry on developing it elsewhere.

In this guide, you will see how to:

1. Login to ePortfolios@FedUni
2. Update your profile information and profile page
3. Add and manage files and folders
4. Add and manage journals
5. Create and share ePortfolio pages and collections
6. Find additional help
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Login

1. Open your web browser and go to:

https://eportfolios.federation.edu.au

You can also access Mahara from:

- the footer in Federation University’s website
- via the link to ePortfolios@FedUni in Moodle, which will automatically log you in.

2. Enter your FedUni username and password in the Login block and click the Login button.

For any persistent login problems contact the ITS Service Desk on extension 9999 (03 5327 9999).

Technical requirements

You can access Mahara from any Internet connected computer or mobile device. You should update your preferred web browser to the most current version before using Mahara. There are sometimes problems when using Microsoft Internet Explorer, and we recommend Firefox or Chrome browsers for desktops.

You must allow cookies and Javascript in your web browser for Mahara to function correctly. These are usually turned on by default.
The first page you see after logging in is called your **Dashboard**. You can configure some of the contents and layout of this page; we’ll do this later.

Just below the FedUni logo in the top-left corner, there are several tabs that you use to navigate Mahara. Rolling over a tab will reveal more links below it. The tabs are:

- **Dashboard**: this will bring you back to this Dashboard page from anywhere in Mahara.
- **Content**: this is where you can enter and edit profile and resume information, and add files and journals.
- **Portfolio**: this is where you can create pages for sharing with others.
- **Groups**: where you can form your own user groups and interact with other users of the system via discussion forums and shared pages. We won’t be looking at groups in this introduction to Mahara, but you are welcome to experiment.
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In the top-right corner are links to:

- **Settings**: you can generally leave these as they are.
- **Inbox**: where your notifications are held. By default, these are also sent to you via email.
- **Logout**: always remember to logout when you’ve finished editing your ePortfolio if you are using a shared computer.

You can find other users in the system by using the **Search users** box at the top of the page. Enter a name or part of a name and press the Enter/Return key on your keyboard.

On the right of the page are a number of blocks with information. The number and type of blocks you see will depend on your context (whereabouts in the system you currently are).

In the screenshot above we can see that there was one Mahara user online at that time. Click on a user’s name to access their profile page. Every user has a profile page that is accessible by all other users of ePortfolios@FedUni, and you can also make this page open to the public.

**You should only place minimal information on your profile page, for privacy reasons.** A typical profile page is shown below.

![Profile Page Example](image)
Context sensitive help

Mahara gives context-sensitive help, anywhere you find the information icon.

Click the icon to see help information that is specific to your context. An example is below.

![Context sensitive help example]

Update Your Profile

You should keep your profile information in Mahara current, as this can be used in multiple pages (including your profile page) later. Perhaps the most important feature of Mahara is that any information you enter or upload is completely private until you choose to make it available to others in pages you create and share.
Edit profile information

1. Click on the **Content** tab. This will take you to the **Profile** area where you can update your profile information (except your Student ID, first name and last name, which are locked).

2. Click on the **About me** link and use the text editor to enter an **Introduction** and format it how you like. Enter more information in the **Contact information**, **Messaging**, and **General** areas or come back to them later. Remember to click the **Save profile** button at the bottom of the screen when you have finished.
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You can come back and edit your profile information at any time, and it remains private until you choose to publish it on a page and then share the page. You can also upload profile pictures that can be displayed wherever you choose. Refer to the Mahara manual for more information.

Résumé

The Résumé area is similar to your Profile area, and you can store all the information that may be useful to potential employers or others. Remember that all of this information remains private until you choose to put it in a page and share it. The advantage of storing this information in the central Résumé area is that later on you can pick and choose which aspects to display in an ePortfolio page rather than having to copy and paste text to various pages. It also means that when you update your resume, you don’t have to update it in multiple places.

Some users prefer not to use the Résumé area, and simply upload a Résumé/CV and cover letter Word or PDF files.

Profile page

Your Profile page is a special page that can be viewed by all other users of ePortfolios@FedUni. You may also choose to have this page accessible to anyone on the Internet. You cannot delete your Profile page but you can control what information appears in it, including any profile information you have already entered into the system. **Do not disclose too much personal information in your Profile page.**

1. Click on your own name in the top-right block on the Dashboard. This will take you to your Profile page, and show you what other users can see about you.
2. On your Profile page, click the 'Edit this page' button at the top-right.

3. The **Edit content** tab is highlighted. You will see a large pane that gives a preview of your page, and a column to the left with available 'blocks' to drag into your page. To put one of these blocks into your page, click on one and hold down the mouse button while dragging it into your preview pane. Make sure you can see the move icon before you click and drag. Try this with a text box.

Alternatively, you can click on the block name and choose a position in the pop-up window.
4. Once a block has been inserted into the preview pane, you will usually be asked to configure it.

For the text block, enter a title and some content, format it as you like, then click the **Save** button.

5. The block will now appear in your Profile page’s preview pane. To edit an existing block, click on the gear icon 🛠️ that appears in the top-right corner of each block in the **Edit content** view. To delete a block, click on its trash icon 🗑️.

6. You can move blocks around the preview pane by dragging and dropping them by their headers (where the title is). When you see the move icon ✨ you can click and drag a block to a new position.

7. Click on the **Personal info** category to see a list of other block types you can drag into your page. This will include your resume and profile information that you have previously entered.

8. Click the **Display page** link at top-left or the button at the bottom to see how your page will look. Your page is automatically saved.
Add and Manage Files and Folders

To create a meaningful ePortfolio you’ll need to add files. These files may help you provide evidence and could be in various formats such as documents, slideshow presentations, images, audio and video. Mahara lets you upload almost any type of file you’ll need to include in your ePortfolio, organize them in folders, and add them to pages you can share. You can add the files before you create pages to put them in, or add them on the fly as you create pages. Here we’ll consider doing it in advance.

Add files and folders

1. From the Dashboard, click on Files under the Content tab.
2. Before you can upload a file, you must agree to the copyright statement by clicking on the tick box above the statement. You must check this box first!

3. You will now be able to click the Choose Files button and browse for the file you wish to upload. When you have successfully uploaded your file a message will appear towards the top of the screen, similar to this one:

4. Alternatively, after agreeing to the copyright statement, you can drag and drop a file or files from your computer to the area that states ‘Drop files here to upload’. You can also upload an archive/zip file and ‘unzip’ it in your Files area; this is useful if you have lots of files to add.
5. Create a new folder by entering its name and clicking the Create folder button.
You can also add files directly from Moodle to ePortfolios@FedUni, anywhere you see the 'export to portfolio' link next to a file. These files, such as assessment submissions or feedback documents, will be imported into a Mahara folder called 'incoming'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>SIZE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>images</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19/02/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incoming</td>
<td>Files imported from other networked hosts</td>
<td></td>
<td>20/01/2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Manage files and folders
Before you add a lot of files to your ePortfolio, spend some time thinking about a useful folder structure. You may want to structure your folders so that documents are in one folder, audio in another and so on. Or you may prefer to have folders that represent different aspects of your work and academic life, such as by course code or research topic. Once you have a folder structure in place, it can be time-consuming to rearrange it if you have added lots of files.

1. Go to your Files area. To see a folder's contents, or to add a file to that folder, click on its name.

2. Once in a folder, to move back up the folder structure, click on the Parent folder link (or up icon ➧) or use the breadcrumbs to navigate back up (in the example below, click on Home).
3. Move a file or folder into another folder by clicking the icon or thumbnail to the left of its name. Then choose where to put it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>SIZE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misc</td>
<td></td>
<td>14/01/2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td>14/01/2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viewfiles</td>
<td>Files from copied pages</td>
<td>17/02/2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cute-surprised-cat.jpg</td>
<td></td>
<td>159.2K</td>
<td>26/02/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EmptyDoc.docx</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14/01/2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Delete a file or folder by clicking the trash icon on its far-right 🗑️.

5. Edit a file or folder by clicking the pencil icon on its right 🖋️. Enter a short **Description** to help you and your ePortfolio viewers identify the contents of the file or folder more easily later on. You can use **Tags** separated by commas to help you search for content when you need it later. You can also change the **Name** of the file, if necessary. Click the `'Save changes' button when you’ve finished editing.

---

**Storage quota**

Every user has a file storage quota. You can see how much of your quota you have used by checking the Quota block at right in your Files area. Videos or large presentations with multimedia
content can use up your quota quickly. You can use other web services such as YouTube and embed your content from there, so that you don’t use up all of your ePortfolio quota too quickly.

Create and Manage Journals
A journal is like a blog—a place where you can keep reflections, observations, or other timely information for yourself or for others to see. You can keep as many journals as you like in Mahara, and publish all or parts of their content in your ePortfolio pages.

Create a journal
1. Go to Content > Journals.
2. Click the Create journal button. If you cannot see this option, make sure Multiple journals is switched Yes in your Settings.
3. Give your journal a Title, an optional Description, and optional Tags, then click the Create journal button at the bottom of the screen.

New journal: Journal settings

Title
My Work Placement

e.g. MM's Nursing Practicum Journal.

Description
I am keeping this journal during my work placement at Swan Hill. It will be completely private but I will share some parts of it in a page with my supervisor for assessment purposes.

4. Your Journals area will now show the new journal to which you can add entries.

Journals

My Work Placement
I am keeping this journal during my work placement at Swan Hill. It will be completely private but I will share some parts of it in a page with my supervisor for assessment purposes.

New entry
5. Add an entry to your journal by clicking on the **New entry** button. Do this each time you have something new to add to your journal. Your journal entries remain private until you put them in a page and then share that page.

6. Give your new entry a **Title**, enter the main body of text for the **Entry**, and add some optional **Tags**.

**New journal entry in journal "My Work Placement"**

```
Title
My first day

Entry

```

7. **Add a file** as an attachment to the journal entry if necessary.

8. Choose whether to save the entry as a **Draft**. If saved as a draft it will not be displayed in any page that you share. You can edit and publish any draft entry later.

9. Choose whether to **Allow comments** on your entry. This option only applies if you publish your journal or individual journal entry to a page and then share that page with others.

10. Click the **Save entry** button at the bottom of the screen when you have finished creating or editing your entry.

11. A message will let you know that your entry was saved successfully.

**Export content from Moodle**

You can export files, forum posts, glossary and database entries, and more from Moodle to your Mahara account, anywhere you see the ‘export to portfolio’ link in Moodle. Exported files will be sent to your ‘incoming’ folder in Mahara, whilst all other content exported in ‘Leap2a’ format will be sent as a new journal.
Create and Share an ePortfolio Page

You learned earlier how to edit your Profile page. Your Profile page is just one of an unlimited number of ePortfolio pages you can share with others. The main reason for creating different pages is that you can share them with different target audiences. For example, you may create a page that contains information relating to a research paper you are writing and choose to share this page with your research associates. You may have another page, or several pages, containing information and evidence relating to your continuing professional development. This page might be kept completely private until you are required to share it with your supervisor for promotional purposes. The information stored in your ePortfolio can be repurposed for different audiences by creating pages with different sharing permissions. A page can be completely private, open to the world, or anything in-between.

Create a page

1. Go to Portfolio > Pages. Everyone in Mahara has at least two pages: a Dashboard page which only you see when logged in, and a Profile page which is shared with everyone else at FedUni.

2. Click the Create page button.

3. Enter a Page title, optional Page description and optional Tags, then click the Save button.
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4. You will be taken to the Edit content area, where you will see a preview pane similar to the one you see when editing your Profile page. Drag a block or two into the preview pane and configure. You can move blocks around by dragging them to new positions, as previously described.

5. Click the Display page link at top-left or the button at the bottom of the screen to see your page as others would see it.

6. If you wish to share your new page immediately, click the Share page link when you have finished editing Share page.

Share your page

Now that you have created a page you can choose to share it (edit access). This is where you decide who exactly can see your page, and when. By default your page is completely private, so you will need to tell Mahara who should be able to see it. In the example below "My first page" is shared with the public (anyone on the Internet who has a link to this page) with no time limit.
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You can edit access to any of your pages by navigating to **Portfolio > Shared by me**.

1. Make sure the relevant page is selected for sharing from your list of pages. Click on the Search icon to see a list of your pages or begin typing its name in the search box.

2. **Share with Public** by choosing that option from the drop-down list.

3. If you need to share your page only with particular users in the system (e.g. team members or a teacher) choose the drop-down option **Share with Users**. Then search for the user you wish to share with. Repeat this step for each individual you need to share with.

4. When you finish editing access to your page, click the **Save** button at the bottom of the screen. Individual users will receive a notification to say you have shared a page with them, with a link to the page.

5. If you need to submit your ePortfolio page or pages as part of a Moodle assessment, refer to your course instructions for how to do that in Moodle.

6. If you need to share your page confidentially with someone outside FedUni (who doesn’t have an account at ePortfolios@FedUni) use the Secret URL method described below.

**Secret URL**

A secret URL (web link) can be used to share your page/s with people outside of FedUni. With this method, you don’t need to share your page with the public for outsiders to gain access. A secret URL is practically impossible for a person or search engine to guess.
To obtain a secret URL for your page:

1. Go to **Portfolio > Shared by me** and choose the **Pages** tab. You can edit access to any of your pages from this screen.

2. Click the Secret URL icon to the right of the page you wish to share secretly.

3. Click the **New secret URL** button to create a new secret URL for this page.

4. A secret URL will be displayed. Copy this URL by clicking on the Copy icon and to give to your external audience.

**Inform your audience**

Once you have created a page and set up sharing through one of the methods above, you may need to send the URL (web link) to your audience, by email for example. There are three general sharing scenarios:

1. If you have shared your page with the public, logged-in users or your institution (FedUni), you will need to get the required URL by opening your ePortfolio page in **Portfolio > Pages**. Click on the name of your page and it will be displayed in the browser. The URL that appears in the browser’s URL bar is what you need to copy and send to any intended viewers. A typical URL looks like this:


   Only the numbers at the end should be different.
2. If you have shared your page with individual users, friends, or a group, they will receive a notification from ePortfolios@FedUni that you have shared a page with them. The notification will contain the URL, but you can also get this URL using the method described above.

3. If you have used the Secret URL method, you can only get the URL by clicking on the Secret URL button as described previously.

Create an ePortfolio Collection

A Mahara Collection is similar to a small website; you can choose which pages to add to your collection and have navigation (links) between them. All pages in a collection have the same access permissions, and a page can only belong to one collection at a time. If you need to have a page in more than one collection Copy a page first, in Portfolio > Pages.

Create new collection

1. Make sure you have at least two pages to put into a new collection.

2. Go to Portfolio > Collections and click the New Collection button.

3. Enter a Collection name, optional Collection description, and optional Tags. Leave Page navigation bar set to Yes, then click the Next button at the bottom of the screen.

4. Drag pages from the left-hand box to the right-hand box to add them to this collection.
5. Edit the order of pages in the collection by dragging them or clicking on the arrows.

6. Click the **Done** button at the bottom of the screen when finished. You can come back and edit the collection at any time.

7. Edit access to the collection as you would for a single page. All pages in a collection will share the same access permissions.

**Other Mahara Settings and Preferences**

**Dashboard page**

Your Dashboard page is what you see when you first login to Mahara. Nobody else can see this page, and you can configure most of it as you wish.

To edit your Dashboard page, browse to **Portfolio > Pages**. Your Dashboard page always appears at the top of your list of pages. Edit and save your Dashboard page as you would with any of your other pages, as described earlier. Note that different content blocks are available to the Dashboard page, compared with Profile page, standard pages and Group pages.
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Settings and notifications
You can change a number of account options that will affect your experience in Mahara. To change these settings, click the Settings link or icon at the top-right of your screen. This will take you to your Settings (General) page. Most of the options here are self-explanatory and have help available via the information icon.

In your Settings (Notifications) tab, you can change the way you receive messages from Mahara.
For each of the activities listed you can choose:

1. Inbox: notifications will stay in your inbox in Mahara, which you can access via the envelope icon at top-right. The number next to the icon is the number of unread messages there.

2. Email: every time an activity occurs, you will receive an email. This can become overwhelming in busy environments.

3. Email digest: you will receive one email each day, listing the activities and links relevant to you in the previous 24 hours.

Note that if you select either of the email options, notifications will still arrive in your Mahara inbox, but they will be automatically marked as read.

Further Help
You can get further help with ePortfolios@FedUni by:

1. Looking for answers and/or asking questions in the ePortfolios@FedUni user help forum. There is a link to the forum under Links and Resources once you have logged in.

2. Contacting ITS Service Desk. Phone (03) 5327 9999 or email servicedesk@federation.edu.au

3. Referring to the official Mahara user manual. There is a link to the manual under Links and Resources once you have logged in.

4. Contacting CLIPP. Phone (03) 5327 6151 or email clipp@federation.edu.au