

## Best Practices for Limiting Opportunities for Plagiarism in ePortfolio

Many students post their original work in electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) that they create on their own or in conjunction with course or program requirements. Helen Barrett, an early popularizer of ePortfolios, described the “two faces of ePortfolios,” putting an equal emphasis on both process (ePortfolio as workspace) and end product (ePortfolio as showplace). Posting work, however, may present an opportunity for plagiarism. These guidelines are intended to describe measures faculty and students can take to limit such opportunities and protect their work from unattributed appropriation.

An ePortfolio can serve multiple purposes and can be geared toward a range of audiences at different stages of its development.

- Working ePortfolio: a workspace for collecting rough drafts, notes, and coursework. At this stage, it is appropriate to keep the portfolio private.
- Review ePortfolio: to share particular items or documents with a select audience of reviewers. The portfolios may include a student’s own reflection on progress towards learning or professional goals. At this stage, faculty and student in the same class or working group may be invited to view the portfolio.
- Presentation ePortfolio: to showcase selected, polished work. At this stage, students may choose to share their portfolios more widely with an external audience.

### **Guidelines for Faculty**

If electronic portfolios are part of the requirements for your course, your program, or your departmental assessment plan, guide students in setting appropriate privacy levels for the portfolios. If you require students to post work from courses other than your own, encourage them to keep the portfolios private to limit opportunities for plagiarism that may occur if that work were to be made available publicly. You may also wish to do this if you reuse assignments from year to year.

You should be aware that Boston University has a license agreement with Turnitin, a software tool that helps identify and prevent plagiarism from internet sources. You can ask students to submit their work electronically to Turnitin to verify its originality. Turnitin checks the submitted work against its database of electronic sources and generates an Originality Report indicating the percentage of original work in the document and verifying that text from other sources has been properly documented. Note: if you will require students to use Turnitin, you should notify them both verbally and in writing that this will be a class requirement as Turnitin adds any submitted work to its database.

(See <http://www.bu.edu/tech/services/support/desktop/distribution/turnitin/> for more information about using this service.)

## **Guidelines for Students**

An electronic portfolio is an excellent tool for learning, as it provides a space for you to collect your work and reflect on progress towards individual learning or career goals. You may decide to create a portfolio for your own purposes, or you may be asked to create and maintain a portfolio for a particular course or program you are enrolled in. In any case, you should think carefully about how and when you would like to share your work with other viewers. Once you make your portfolio visible to the entire BU community or make it public on the internet, you allow a wide audience of viewers to forward the link to your work to others or to copy and use materials from the portfolio for other purposes.

For that reason, you should consider choosing the “private” setting for your portfolio as a default until you have had a chance to curate the portfolio contents. When you decide to share the portfolio, be judicious about selecting viewers (you can add individual students, professors, and advisors by selecting “Custom Permissions” in Digication), and think carefully about the contents of the portfolio before doing so.

If you wish, you can add a Creative Commons license to your portfolio that explicitly marks the work in the portfolio as your own intellectual or creative property and reminds readers of the portfolio that the work may not be shared without properly attributing it to you as the author. To do this, select “Create a Module” and then “Social”; Click on the “Creative Commons License” and “Add this Module.” The license statement on the portfolio not only stands as a reminder to readers that the work is your intellectual property, but it also adds machine-readable metadata to the suggested html that identifies work copied from the site as yours.