

Case study: Angus College



SVQ Design and Draughting qualification - how using E-equal Paperless Portfolio has improved productivity and provided greater working flexibility and better assessment practices.

E-equal has become an integral tool in the assessment of Angus College's SVQ Design and Draughting candidates who operate in a global workplace including Russia, the Middle East, the Far East, as well as offshore in the North Sea. Using E-equal and complimentary online technologies, candidates have been able to complete their studies with Angus College at a distance.

During this course candidates produce hundreds, sometimes thousands, of large scale CAD drawings. Within a paper-based portfolio these A0 and A1 drawings were printed out at full size for assessment. This had huge implications in terms of practicality, cost, time and use of resources. Paper based portfolios of huge drawings are difficult to compile, manage, assess and verify; work can only ever be available in one place at a time, they are cumbersome to view and difficult to get a complete picture of the candidates portfolio.

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Using E-equal, candidates upload their drawings into an online file store as they are completed. E-equal stores evidence against qualification standards in any file format. This means an assessor can view electronic versions of these drawings immediately and give feedback from any global location. Since the introduction of E-equal, all work carried out by these students is now in electronic format only. No work is printed out for assessment. This process has obvious 'green' advantages.

The use of audio and video via new technology such as mobile phones, digital cameras, USB dictaphones and the like has brought new methodologies of evidence gathering to the work-based learning assessment process. Such

evidence is easily accommodated by E-equal and is more valuable and easier to compile than traditional paper based documentary evidence.

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Such flexibility has dramatically increased the speed of the assessment process for candidates and assessors. For the assessment team it has led to a faster processing of candidates work. The consistency of portfolios means that their workflow is more streamlined and they have more control over the work that has been produced. In addition, there is a constant quality control over all assessment processes which means that all participants in assessment can have a critical view.

Being able to use E-equal from almost anywhere in the world means that no matter where a student is they can work on their portfolio, receive help, motivation and feedback from their assessors; and also from their peers through use of the in-built Forums.

This flexibility was demonstrated when an Angus College candidate moved to Sakhalin Island, off the coast of Japan, to work. They were due to complete a Professional Discussion with their assessor before they left but this did not take place.

Previously, the assessment team would have to wait months until the candidate returned to Scotland. This delay would render the other evidence that had been gathered out-of-date. The whole qualification would have to be re-assessed.

However, because Angus College had implemented E-equal Paperless Portfolio, the Professional Discussion was able to

take place online using Skype. This recorded conversation was then uploaded into E-equal as valid evidence which could be assessed by the portfolio team.

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As most students are very comfortable using a computer, it is easy for them to quickly feel involved and motivated to complete their portfolio. As the assessors pointed out "To young people, using a computer is second nature" and "Nobody young uses paper".

The positive response to using E-equal by the candidates and the assessment staff at Angus College together with the increased number of qualifications that have been taken

in the application has proven beyond doubt that it has been a successful implementation of e-portfolio technology. From an initial pilot of 15 students they now have Design and Draughting candidates numbering into the 100's using E-equal exclusively for evidence gathering and competency based assessment.

By their own admission, Angus College assessors were initially resistant to the introduction of an e-portfolio. However once they had been introduced to E-equal Paperless Portfolio, learned how to use it and adapted their assessment practices, they haven't looked back. E-equal's ability to give almost instant feedback, motivation and guidance to students has changed the face of competency assessment in this area.

The strengths of E-equal Paperless Portfolio

E-equal was designed to be easy to use. The creation of paper portfolios is a time consuming and debilitating task. E-equal takes away such laborious processes replacing them with a much more elegant, simple-to-use system that guides candidates, assessors and all the participants in the work-based assessment process, through the building of a portfolio.

E-equal's strength is its simplicity. A candidate only needs to learn a few basic skills – how to upload their evidence, how to attach it to an appropriate place in the portfolio and how to interact with their assessors. This leaves them free to collect evidence without the need for a paper exercise taking up their valuable time. Students are very quickly in full control of their own portfolio and can see and understand the aims of their qualification standard. Therefore they can contribute easily with useful and appropriate evidence.

The system enables lots of contact time between candidate and assessor, encouraging a higher level of feedback, which in turn motivates them to work harder. Being able to see their portfolio progressing serves as its own form of motivation.

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E-equal is being used in many other colleges, multi-national companies and private training providers across the world. Angus College is just one example of the changing face of competency assessment through E-equal Paperless Portfolio.

