

SUSS grads have e-portfolios to showcase their skills

Such learning records that go beyond grades are a powerful tool in job hunt, say experts

Sandra Davie
Senior Education
Correspondent

The pioneer batch of 160 full-time degree students graduating from the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) next month will have more than degree scrolls and result transcripts to show their prospective employers.

They will have electronic portfolios detailing their learning experiences through the four years at the

university. The e-portfolios, kept by the students from day one, include not only their reflections on the courses they have taken, but also the valuable skills they have gained from their co-curricular activities, overseas stints, community service projects, as well as job internships.

Every SUSS student is required to undertake a community service project and work attachment before graduating.

The students will also each receive an enhanced transcript that goes beyond their grades for all the

course modules they took. The grades also cover each of 18 other generic skills and competencies, including their ability to communicate, both verbally and in writing, their knack for thinking globally, and their problem-solving skills.

Through the years, their professors would have assessed them on these skills through various means, including their class presentations, written work, teamwork and participation in class.

SUSS officials said students will be encouraged to keep updating their e-portfolios even after they graduate, as they acquire new skills and knowledge at the workplace or through continuing education.

SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat

said: “The e-portfolio is in line with our university’s mission of providing lifelong learning. Our alumni can use their e-portfolio to map and track their own learning and personal development. If made available to us, we can continue to engage them and customise courses as well as service-learning opportunities for them – long after they’ve graduated.”

SUSS officials explained that if given access, they will use the e-portfolios to keep track of the career development of their graduates. They will also suggest relevant courses that the graduates can take up at the university to upskill or upgrade their knowledge in fields related to their chosen careers.

Recruitment consultants and employers agreed that the e-portfolio and enhanced transcript is a powerful, up-to-date and convenient way for job applicants to present their capabilities and achievements.

Mr Alan Lim, who owns a business development firm, said that when hiring millennials, he studies their online presence.

“The e-portfolios are detailed blogs of their university experiences and they will be very useful when making hiring decisions.”

SUSS graduates and students interviewed said they thought of the e-portfolio as “extra work” initially, but later realised how useful it can be. For instance, instead of a student describing a project and what

he gained from it, he can include video clips.

SUSS accountancy graduate Amanda Chiam, 22, who started working as an auditor at KPMG Singapore recently, had included videos of the Gobi Desert Challenge she undertook with her university mates.

She said: “Writing the e-portfolio forces you to reflect on what you have gained from taking up a course or certain activities. For my service e-learning project, I co-founded a volunteer group with Pertapis to provide weekly tuition and mentorship for kids from disadvantaged homes.

“When documenting my experiences, I realised how much I gained from the whole exercise.

“I got to understand and interact more with the Malay community and I gained many skills, including organisation skills from running that project and being able to rally volunteers to run the programme.”

Her group received the Pertapis Outstanding Volunteer Award for two years running, in 2016 and last year.

SUSS student Serene Tan, 19, said it “adds to the pressure” to be assessed by her professors on skills such as teamwork and creative thinking. “But it has forced me to pay attention to developing these other skills as well,” she said.

sandra@sph.com.sg

EXERCISE IN REFLECTION

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SUSS ACCOUNTANCY GRADUATE

AMANDA CHIAM, on the electronic portfolios that students at the university have to keep from day one to detail their learning experiences throughout their undergraduate years. For her service e-learning project, she co-founded a volunteer group with Pertapis to provide weekly tuition and mentorship for kids from disadvantaged homes.