ASCILITE 2026

The Future is Connection:

Collaboration, Creativity and Compassion in a Digital Society

Artefact or evidence? Clarifying what counts in programmatic learning portfolios

Rebecca Scriven
Edith Cowan University

Australian higher education is moving toward programmatic assessment, a shift given further impetus by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency's (TEQSA) 2023 discussion paper on assessment reform in the age of artificial intelligence. This calls for a systemic approach to program assessment aligned with disciplines and qualifications, rather than one confined to individual units (Lodge et al., 2023). Within this shift, the digital portfolio has become a mechanism for evidencing achievement across whole degree programs. Portfolios in this context typically hold a growing accumulation of materials such as assignments, placement records, project outputs, and reflective writing. As students collect artefacts across a program, the portfolio becomes a means of making their learning visible over time, reframing assessment as an ongoing process of meaning making rather than a series of isolated judgements (Baartman & Quinlan, 2023). This poster argues that the value of a portfolio depends less on the volume of material it holds than on a distinction that is often assumed rather than made explicit: the difference between an artefact and evidence. An artefact is any product or record of student activity: an assignment, presentation, a reflection. It becomes evidence only once interpreted against a stated outcome or standard, connecting the artefact to the claim is meant to support (Baartman & Quinlan, 2023). Without this connection, a portfolio functions as a repository of activity rather than a demonstration of learning.

This distinction carries weight in programmatic assessment, where judgement is distributed rather than concentrated in a single task, and students and academic staff track development across a program of study. A set of specified standards is defined for each level of the program, which students must attain by the end of each phase. High-stakes decisions at these milestones are made by a panel weighing multiple, longitudinal artefacts against a program's stated outcomes. This shift improves the defensibility and transparency of judgement while making learning visible over time (Baartman et al., 2022). Treated simply as collection points, portfolios risk becoming unwieldy and meaningless. When the artefact-evidence distinction is built into portfolio design, teaching and staff development from the outset, it offers a mechanism for students and programs to make cumulative, defensible claims about learning and graduate capabilities.

This poster presents a framework distinguishing artefact from evidence, developed through curriculum transformation work at an Australian university moving toward programmatic learning. It sets out three conditions under which an artefact functions as evidence: alignment to a named outcome or standard, an explicit reflective or interpretive act connecting the artefact to that outcome, and a level of specificity that allows a marker or reviewer to assess the claim rather than merely acknowledge the artefact's existence. The framework is intended as a practical reference point for curriculum designers, staff, and students working with portfolios in programmatic contexts.

Delegates are invited to discuss how this distinction might apply, in their own programmatic curriculum work, where it breaks down in practice, and what it asks of the human relationship between student and assessor.

Keywords: learning portfolios, programmatic assessment, artefact, evidence, curriculum transformation

References

Lodge, J. M., Howard, S., Bearman, M., Dawson, P, & Associates. (2023). *Assessment reform for the age of Artificial Intelligence.* Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/assessment-reform-age-artificial-intelligence-discussion-paper.pdf

Baartman, L. K. J., & Quinlan, K. M. (2023). Assessment and feedback in higher education reimagined: using programmatic assessment to transform higher education. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, 28*(2), 57–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2023.2283118

Baartman, L., van Schilt-Mol, T., & van der Vleuten, C. (2022). Programmatic assessment design choices in nine programs in higher education. *Frontiers in Education, 7*, Article 931980. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.931980

Scriven, R. (2026, Nov 29 – Dec 2). Artefact or evidence? Clarifying what counts in programmatic learning portfolios [Poster]. In Cochrane, T., Narayan, V., Poole, T., Lai, P., Lake, P., Moore, O., & Li, L. (Eds.), *The Future is Connection: Collaboration, Creativity and Compassion in a Digital Society*. Proceedings ASCILITE 2026. Brisbane (pp. 58–59). https://doi.org/10.65106/apubs.2026.3269

Note: All published papers are refereed, having undergone a double-blind peer-review process.
The author(s) assign a Creative Commons by attribution license enabling others to distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon their work, even commercially, as long as credit is given to the author(s) for the original creation.

© Scriven, R. 2026