

Background

Employability is the ability to gain, maintain and secure new employment. To build a successful career, students should have the qualifications, appropriate transferable skillsets, and the ability to demonstrate their knowledge and professional competencies in an appropriate manner. In 2013, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), now Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), launched 20 graduate attributes (GAs) under five categories: “Enterprising”, “Engaged”, “Enquiry-Based”, “Expert” and “Effective”. Seven GAs (Excellent Communicators, Active Team Players, Motivated Self-Starters, Collaborative Workers, Ethical, Emotionally Intelligent, Work Based/Related Learners) were prioritised by the TU654 (DT425) Programme, Higher Certificate in Science Pharmacy Technician Studies, through a project involved with the internal and the external stakeholders. These prioritised GAs were integrated into the curriculum and diverse activities & assessments were subsequently designed and implemented in order to enhance students learning experience and practice.

Aim & Objectives

The overall aim of this contribution is to demonstrate that it is scientifically and practically feasible to establish an integrated ePortfolio approach to assess students’ learning for specific learning outcomes and help them to develop and practise their employability skills across the diverse aspects within a programme. This aim is achieved by the following objectives:

- Designing dedicated modules (Professional Development e-Portfolio for Pharmacy Technicians) with the prioritised GAs being the focus of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy.
- Integrating high impact activities and diversified assessments (student-centred/driven, authentic, learning with communities, ethical debate, pharmacy related integrated case-study, work-placement reflective blogging, etc) to enhance their learning experience, though participation, documentation and reflection.
- Fostering digital literacy by facilitating the establishment and development of an ePortfolio for the pharmacy technician students throughout the two-year study to show-case and reflect on their learning journey and strengthen their professional employability skills.
- Embedding sustainable and innovative workshops as appropriate and necessary support, including personality identification and communication, handling conflict at workplace, resilience, career preparation and planning, etc.

Key Steps, Main Findings and Examples of Students’ ePortfolio with Assessments

Prioritised GAs from the Original 20 DIT GAs				
Active Team Players*		Effective Communicators*		
Collaborative Workers	Motivated Self-Starters	Emotionally Intelligent	Ethical	Work Based Learners
*Top priority				

Figure 1. Prioritisation of graduate attributes (GAs) as for pharmacy technician graduates by external stakeholders (n=48)



Figure 2. Establishment of professional development ePortfolio module and module mapping: competencies & assessment



Figure 3. Programme ePortfolio

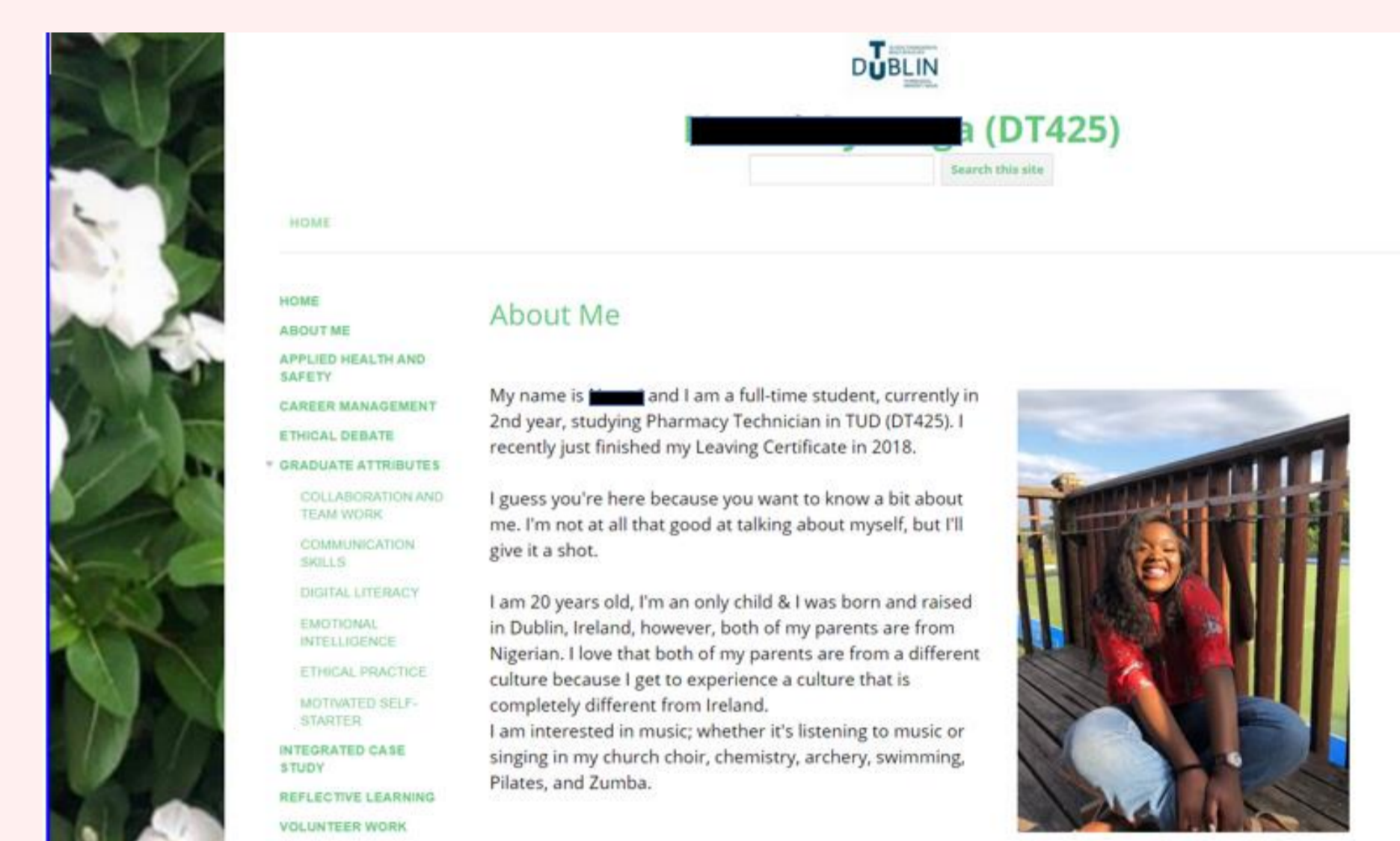


Figure 4. Example of student ePortfolio set-up

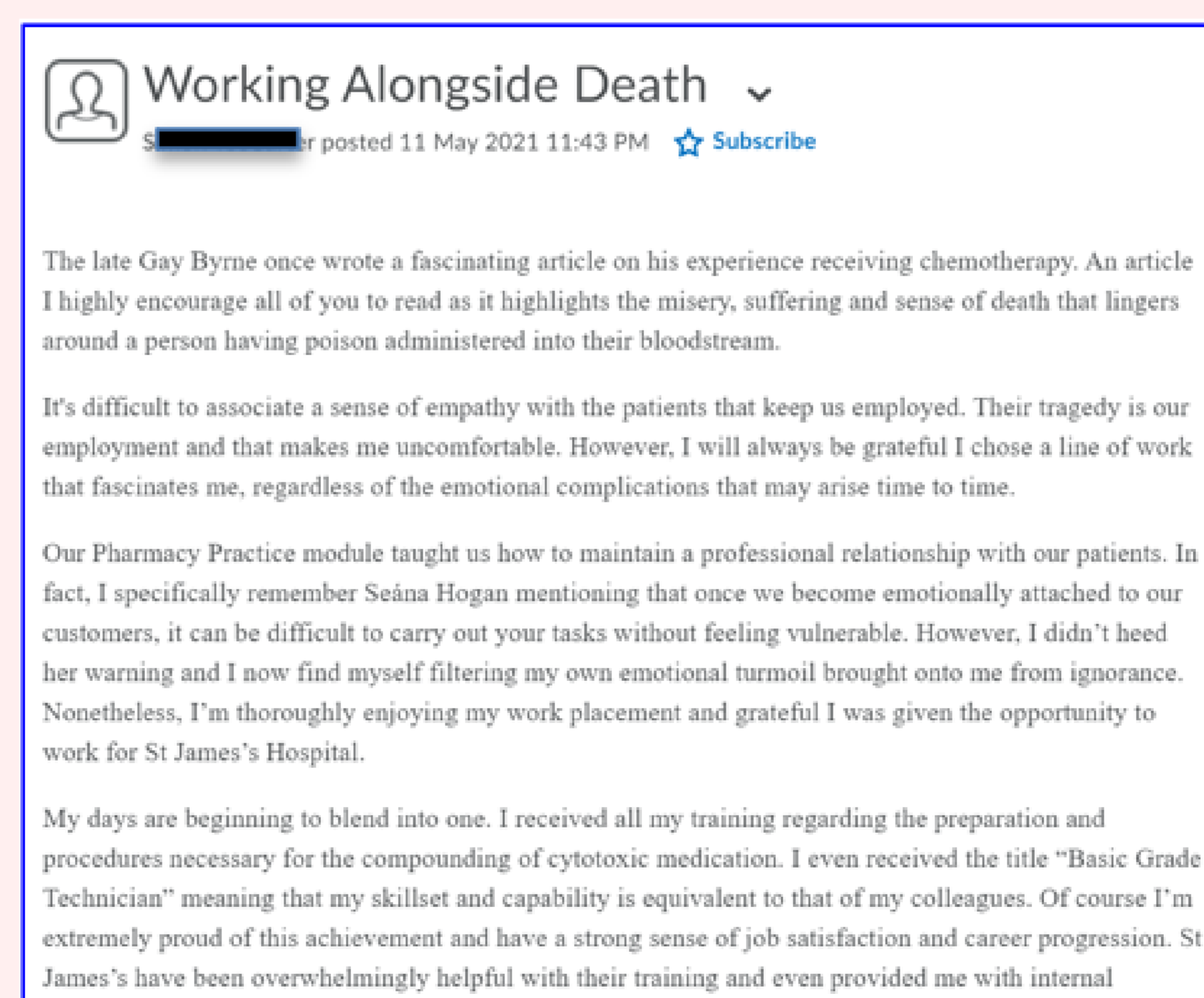


Figure 5. Example of student’s placement reflective blog

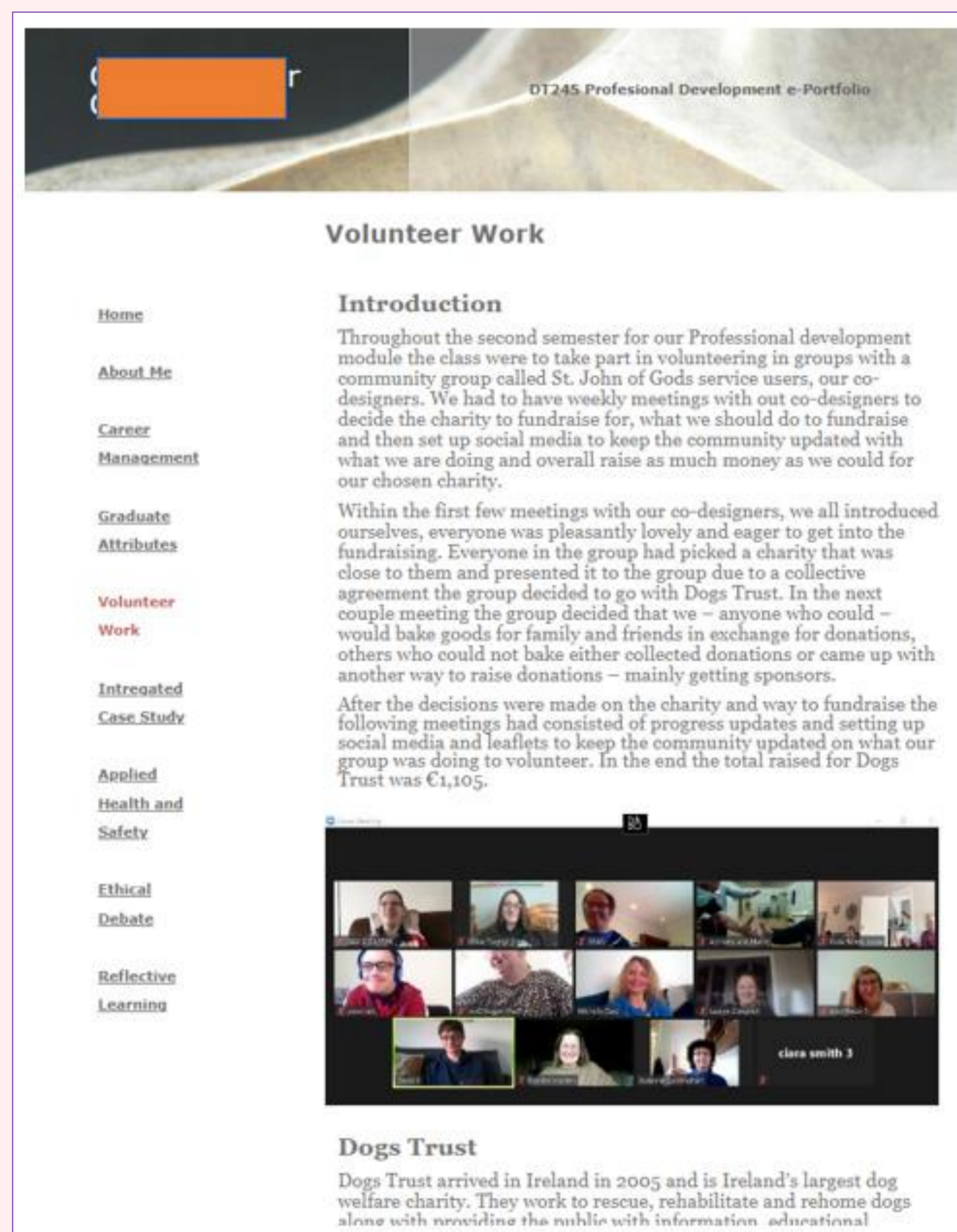


Figure 6. Example of reflective report of a community learning activity

Perspectives

- Prioritisation of graduate attributes, assessment mapping & design and appropriate workshops/trainings (e.g. reflective writing, personality identification, etc.) are the key drivers to having an effective and contemporary assessment strategy.
- Developing a collective programme ePortfolio is a great way to create a collaborative and reflective team culture for the programme, and showcase the effectiveness of ePortfolio to students.
- Varied assessments can have more acceptance and engagement from students who are likely to support their academic progress. There is a strong case for adopting a more collaborative and integrated approach as an alternative to traditional assignment.
- ePortfolio is an appropriate and evidence-based (can even be high impact) learning and assessment approach promoting student’s engagement and enjoyment throughout the course of study and beyond as a life-long learners.

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