A Student Guide to the Warwick Skills Portfolio Award

My Warwick Skills Portfolio Award

2015-16

Contents:	Page:
1. An introduction to the Warwick Skills Portfolio Award • What is the WSPA? • How to achieve the Award • The four key stages	2-4
2. Guidance on what to include in your reflective entries for the WSPA	5-7
3. Deadlines for the submission of portfolio entries	7-8
4. Eligible WSPA workshops & summary of workshop content	8-10
5. Action planning and reflection	11
6. Moodle and Mahara – signing up for the WSPA and setting up your online portfolio	12-16

Visit our website, and click on the link at the bottom of the page to enrol for the award: warwick.ac.uk/wspa

1. An introduction to the Warwick Skills Portfolio Award

This guide contains all the information you'll need to complete the WSPA. It sets out the purpose and requirements of the award; we've also included a step-by-step guide to setting up and compiling your online portfolio. We hope this guide will answer all your questions, if it doesn't and you can't find what you need online, then please email us at skills@warwick.ac.uk We may not be able to reply immediately, but we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

What is the WSPA?
The Warwick Skills Portfolio Award (WSPA) provides recognition that you have invested time in your personal skills development. As you progress through the award you will actively develop skills that will be beneficial to you in your personal life; will help you succeed in your studies, and are also highly valued by employers, as they are easily transferable to the world of work.

When you have successfully completed the award you will gain a University of Warwick certificate.

The WSPA gives you the opportunity to:

- Assess your strengths in different skill areas

- Identify which skills you would most like to develop

- Set yourself action points to help you improve and enhance those skills

- Put your action points into practice

- Reflect on your learning and progress and how you can improve further

- Learn how to talk confidently about the skills you have developed and how you could usefully apply them in different situations and contexts

How to achieve the award

The award is achieved through attendance at workshops, followed up by producing structured, reflective online entries, which involve action planning and reflection. To help you with this, you will also be allocated a personal coach who will comment on your entries and provide you with on-going support and feedback.

To read more about what we mean by 'action planning' and 'reflection', please see Section 5 of this guide.

Four key stages

To complete the award you will need to:

1. Attend the 'Getting Started' workshop
2. Enrol on the Moodle course and post your initial reflective entry
3. Attend three workshops, posting three reflective entries after each one
4. Write a final reflective entry, summarising your overall learning and development

The entries will be created in an online portfolio and each entry will be commented on by your coach. For guidance on what each entry should cover, see Section 3. Your coach will tell you if you need to add anything to your entries.

Here's some more information about each stage:

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1. Attend the Getting started workshop

During this workshop you will:

- do an audit of your skills;
- identify your strengths and weaknesses;
- think about skills that you would like to develop further;
- learn about the importance of action planning and reflection in relation to personal skills development;
- find out about the WSPA: what it involves and how to sign up for it;
- start to think about whether the WSPA is something that you would like to commit to.

After the workshop ask yourself:

- What did I learn from the workshop?
- Do I want to develop my skills further?
- If so, is the WSPA a good way for me to do it?
- Why do I want to participate?
- What do I hope to achieve?
- Can I afford the time?

If you think the WSPA's for you, do some further reflection: look back at the personal skills profile from the 'Getting started' workshop and make changes if necessary. Ask yourself:

- What are my key personal development goals?
- Which workshops will best help me to achieve these goals?
  (Read the workshop summaries in Section 4 to help you decide.)

- Can I fit in doing the WSPA with my other commitments? What would my ideal timescale be?
  (Work out how much time you have to complete the Award – this will depend on when you attended the 'Getting started' workshop. Look at the workshop schedule online. Try to plan your workshop attendance and online reflective entries around the other things you have to do – study and other commitments. Once you start a workshop you should try and complete all the entries within a 4-5 week period. Have a look at the deadlines for the submission of portfolio entries in Section 3).

2. **Make the commitment – sign up for the WSPA Moodle course and write your first reflective entry**

   If you have decided you would definitely like to do the WSPA, follow the link given to you in the 'Getting started' workshop, and follow the instructions. You will sign up for the WSPA in Moodle, and write your reflective entries in Moodle. Further explanation about this is given in Section 6.

   The contents of your first reflective entry will be a summary of your thinking about why you want to do the WSPA. Clear guidance on what to include is given in Section 2.

3. **Attend 3 workshops and complete 3 reflections for each workshop.**

   In order to complete the requirements of the WSPA, you must identify 3 workshops that you would like to attend. You can attend them at any time you wish, as long as you can complete all the entries by the deadlines given. You might want to attend one workshop and complete all the reflective entries for that workshop before attending the next and repeating the process. Or, you might be half way through the process with one workshop and then attend another, which means you will be writing reflective entries for more than one workshop at any given time. How you do it does not matter, but each workshop will have its own deadlines and you must stick to these. See Section 3.

   You should try to stick to your original workshop choice, but in some instances it may be that you have to attend a different workshop. If this is the case, in your first reflective entry, you should say why you have made this change, and how your new choice of workshop contributes to your overall development goals.

4. **Write your final reflection**

   This should only be written and submitted once you have received feedback from your coach on your final entry of your 3rd workshop. What to include in your final reflection is clearly outlined in Section 2.

2. Guidance on what to include in your reflective entries for the WSPA

In section 6 you will be told how to sign up for the Moodle WSPA course and how to submit your reflective entries in Mahara. You will also find links to the Guidance on what to include in your reflective entries for the WSPA.

A copy of this guidance is also given below. You have to write 11 entries in total.

ENTRY 1

This is your initial WSPA reflective entry.

You should answer the following questions. (See also the Section 1 – Attend the Getting started workshop)

1.1 **What did you learn from attending the "Getting started on Skills development and the WSPA" the workshop?**
(Here you should briefly summarise what was covered in the workshop what you thought about it, and your key learning points from it.)

1.2 **Why have you decided to work towards the WSPA? What do you hope to gain from participating in it?**
(Here you should state your personal reasons for wanting to undertake the Award. These could be related to such things as the results of the questionnaires covered in the Getting started workshop; your strengths and weaknesses in various skill areas, your future career plans, etc.)

1.3 **What do you consider your key development goals? Which workshops do you think might help you to achieve these goals?**
(Here you might want to state more clearly the development goals that are most important to you, based on your reasons for wanting to take part in the WSPA, and to then identify some workshops that you think will be most helpful to you in achieving those goals. If you are clear about three workshops that you definitely want to attend, state them here; if you're not sure about all three you should try and state two that you definitely want to attend, and maybe two others that you think might be useful. You may also like to receive some feedback on your coach about your potential choices).

1.4 **What is your planned timescale for completing the WSPA?**
(Here you should refer to the timescales laid out in the Student's Guide to the WSPA and work out a timescale for completion that works for you).

ENTRIES 2 – 10

These should be the three reflective entries for each workshop and should cover the following points

Reflective entry 1: Initial workshop reflection
*(to be posted **within one week of attending the workshop**)*
    1.1 What did you learn from attending the .... workshop?
        (Here you should briefly summarise what was covered in the workshop, what you thought about it, and your key learning points from it, particularly in relation to your development goals)
    1.2 State two or three action points you would you like to set yourself as a result of attending the workshop.
        (Your points should be presented in a numbered list and should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound). They should be achievable within a 4-6 week timescale and during this time you should regularly reflect on your progress.)

Reflective entry 2: Interim workshop reflection
(to be posted between 1- 2 weeks after your initial reflection, (after you have received feedback from your coach))
    2.1 – First, if your coach has asked you to add or change something, you should do this
    2.2 – Next, you should describe your progress against each of your action points in turn
    (You should say what is going well, what not so well, why you think this is the case and any changes you think it is necessary to make to your action points to make them more achievable).

Reflective entry 3: Final workshop reflection
(to be posted between 1-2 weeks after your interim workshop reflection, (after you have received feedback from your coach)
    3.1 – First, you should describe how well you were able to progress against each of your action points in turn
    (Think about what went well, what not so well, and why.)
    3.2 – Next, you should summarise your overall learning from the workshop and the follow up work
    (That is, the implementation of your action points and your reflections on your progress).

3.3 – Finally, you should briefly state what you intend to do in the future as a result of developing your skills from this workshop
(What are the things you will carry on doing? Additional things you might like to try and do? General thoughts for the future?)

(Do be aware, if your coach is not satisfied with any of your reflective entries you may be asked to produce some additional ones.)

ENTRY 11:

This is your final WSPA reflection. It should be completed by the final WSPA deadline and in any event not more than 2 weeks after your coach has signed off all 3 final reflections from your chosen workshops. Your final reflection can either be a 1-2 minute video or a written assignment (750-1000 words). Either way it should include the follow points:

- A summary of your overall learning and development as a result of taking part in the WSPA
- A reflection on what went well, what not so well and action points for the future
- Your own personal highlights of taking part in the WSPA

3. Timescales and deadlines for the submission of portfolio entries

- You can start the award as soon as you have attended the 'Getting started on skills development and the Warwick Skills Portfolio Award' workshop. This will be available from week 1 of the Autumn term (week commencing 5 October 2015).
- You should register for the WSPA and submit ENTRY 1 **within a week** of attending this workshop.
- You can attend your three chosen workshops anytime during Term 1 and the first 8 weeks of Term 2. (It is your responsibility to plan out a personal schedule of workshop that works for you. Do be aware that towards the end of Term 2 there will be fewer workshops available).
- After you have attended each workshop you should submit your reflective entries as follows:

Initial reflection	Within 1 week of attending the workshop
Interim reflection	Between 1-2 weeks after posting your initial reflection, but **after** your coach has given you feedback on your initial reflection
Final reflection	Between 1-2 weeks after posting your initial reflection, but **after** your coach has given you feedback on your *interim* reflection

- **It is important that you keep to the above deadlines, so that the coaches have sufficient time to respond to entries. If you do not respond within the timeframes given above you may find that you are blocked by the Moodle/Mahara system from**

being able to submit your next entry. This effectively means that your attempt to gain the WSPA will be suspended until this can be resolved.

- You should submit your final WSPA reflection not more than two weeks after your coach has signed off all 3 final reflections from your chosen workshops.
- The final deadline for the submission of the final reflection and your WSPA portfolio as a whole is **Sunday 1st May 2016.**

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4. Eligible WSPA workshops & summary of workshop content

It is important to note that most, but not all, of the Undergraduate and Masters Skills Programme workshops can be used towards the WSPA. There are 7 eligible workshops and all last for 3 hours. They will be run on different days and different times throughout the Autumn and most of the Spring term. (Check online for the most up-to-date schedule.) All these workshops are focussed on developing and applying transferable skills that will not only be useful to students during their time at Warwick, but also develop key employability skills, highly valued by employers. These workshops are:

- Academic study skills
- Becoming more assertive
- Delivering effective presentations
- Effective learning strategies
- Leading a group project
- Organising yourself and your time
- Working in a team

PLEASE NOTE: You must sign the register at all workshops you attend – failure to do so will mean that your attendance will not be recorded, and this could mean that you cannot receive the Award. Please note too that it is important that you attend for the WHOLE of the workshop – it is not acceptable to leave early.

Workshop content

Academic Study Skills

The aim of this workshop is to provide students with the skills to cope confidently with the demands of academic study at University. It is suitable for anyone who would like to improve their note-making and reading skills, in order to be able to manage their academic workload as efficiently as they can. It focuses on ways of effectively developing the key academic skills of reading and note-making, through increasing reading speed, reading with more understanding and making notes more effectively, from both written and aural material. It also introduces the importance of critical thinking, and will equip students with strategies to engage more critically with academic literature.

Becoming more assertive

The aim of this workshop is to provide students with the skills to act assertively in a wide range of contexts, both academic and personal. These include speaking up for oneself in difficult situations, feeling confident to make contributions in seminars, volunteering to take the lead in a project, challenging other people's ideas and opinions. It focuses on definitions of assertive behaviour and the issues and fears connected with it; it looks at the relationship between communication (verbal and non-verbal) and assertiveness; it considers how to use a range of assertive techniques; and provides opportunities to practise behaving assertively in a safe environment. It links well with the 'Organising yourself and your time workshop.'

Delivering effective presentations

This workshop is intended to develop students' skills to deliver oral presentations in a confident, professional manner. It focuses on both the verbal and non-verbal skills required to deliver presentations successfully. It guides students through the main stages of a presentation from the initial planning and preparation, through to its realisation. It explores the different factors that makes presentations successful, and considers various techniques for delivery, including overcoming nervousness or 'stage fright'. It is experiential and provides students with plenty of opportunity to practise their skills.   It is suitable for all students who have to make presentations, for example either as part of their course, or as a member of a society exec, or in many other situations.

Effective learning strategies

This workshop focuses on a range of skills and techniques to enable students to learn and study more effectively. It is linked to the content of other workshops such as Academic Study Skills and Organising yourself and your time. It helps students reflect more deeply on how they learn so that they are better able to develop strategies that work for them. It considers:

- the different stages of the learning process and how students can motivate themselves to get into the right state of mind for learning;

- how to devise study strategies which take advantage of students' preferred learning styles and preferences

- ways to develop techniques for remembering, understanding and recalling acquired information;

- the differences between deep and surface approaches to learning and their implications for academic performance and achievement

It is particularly suitable for students interested in exploring and applying a wide range of techniques and approaches to learning, in order to fully exploit the wide range of learning materials and opportunities available to them whilst at Warwick.

Leading a group project

This workshop focuses on the main factors involved in successfully leading a student-led group project. It considers the main stages in planning and delivering a successful project and some key tools and processes that can aid a project's successful completion.   It looks at the role of the project leader, and different models and approaches to leadership. It also considers different styles of leadership; the strengths and weaknesses associated with them,

and explores students' preferred leadership styles and ways of developing a repertoire of different leadership skills. There is an opportunity to practise different styles via role play. This workshop is suitable for anyone interested in developing their leadership skills and taking on leadership roles whilst at Warwick and beyond. It links well to the 'Working in a Team' workshop.

Organising yourself and your time

The focus of this workshop is how students can organise themselves, their work, and their time effectively, in a way that suits their values, priorities, and personality, and enables them to combine a range of academic and social activities. It is aimed at anyone who would like to make the most of their time at Warwick, whilst striving to achieve a healthy work-life balance. During the workshop a number of different strategies and suggestions are considered to help students with their time management, including:

- what 'steals' their time and what they could do to manage time more effectively;
- how to prioritise activities;
- how to plan work to meet deadlines;
- how to organise their work and their workspace;
- how to make time for family, friends AND study

It links well with the 'Becoming more assertive' workshop.

Working in a team

This workshop focuses on the main factors involved in successful team-working. It considers the importance of teamwork and active group participation in all aspects of life, and students are asked to reflect on good and bad experiences of working in a team and why some teams are able to achieve more than others. It considers a key theory in relation to team development; looks at the theory and practice of how teams function and develop; each student's preferred role in a team, and how to contribute to successful team-working. Students will have the opportunity to participate in a group activity and reflect on what they have learnt. This workshop links well to the 'Leading a group project' workshop and is suitable for anyone who is involved in group work activities either as part of their course, or as part of their extra-curricular activities.

5. Action Planning and Reflection

Throughout the award you will be focusing on **action planning** and **reflection**, to help you develop your skills most effectively. These concepts are covered in the 'Getting Started on Skills Development and the WSPA' workshop. Here's a quick reminder of some key points:

Action planning

SMART action planning is a good way of helping you to achieve long term goals. Through this process you will commit to making a series of small steps that are focused on developing a particular skill – this will enable you to make changes in a manageable way, so that you are more likely to continue to work towards your goals.

SMART action points are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound.

Throughout the WSPA you will be asked to set yourself SMART action points after attending each optional workshop. These should relate to the content of the workshop and be related in some way to achieving your personal development goals. Your action points should be achievable with a couple of weeks of regular, moderate effort.

Reflection

Reflection is an important skill for personal development and can take several forms; some people choose to reflect in their mind, others prefer to write down their reflections, or even draw a picture.

However you choose to reflect, the important thing is that you get into the habit of doing this – reflection helps you to avoid making the same mistakes repeatedly, and means that you look at your experiences from a different perspective. Reflection often involves asking yourself questions such as:

- What went well?
- What went less well?
- What have I learned from this experience?
- What would I do differently next time?

Your online portfolio for the WSPA is made up of written reflections and provides you with one model of the reflective process. It provides you with questions to answer at each stage helping you to structure your writing and encouraging you to be reflective, rather than descriptive.

6. Moodle and Mahara – signing up for the WSPA and setting up your online portfolio

We will be using two different learning platforms for the award, one to help us to manage the work and one to allow you creativity in your reflective process. The learning platforms are:

myPortfolio/mahara – This is the platform where you will be **creating your reflective entries**. These entries will be then be submitted via Moodle.

Moodle – This is the learning platform that we will be using to manage the award. The Moodle course **contains instructions** on how to complete the award; it also is the area where you will be **submitting your work.**

As a student, what do I need to do?

Firstly you need to enrol yourself in the WSPA Moodle course! The first time that you visit the course, you will be presented with an enrol button, click on the button to enrol yourself and gain access to the contents of the course.

Now you can see the course you can start working your way down the sections.

Below the big blue arrow you will see a word document entitled 'Getting started – Submission template'. Download these and answer the questions. Then upload your submission. This is your first entry.

What's next?

Have a read through the 'What next' section, this is where you can find out what needs to be done to complete the award.

Creating Your Portfolio

▶ Create your portfolio using MyPortfolio!

Instructions on how to use myPortfolio for the WSPA award are included in the following section, as well as some great tutorial videos. You are going to be using MyPortfolio to present your reflections from each of the workshops that you attend, this will include an initial, interim and final reflection. You will need to **create one page for each for each workshop that you attend**.

Click on the myPortfolio button to begin.
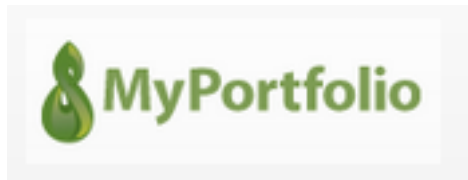
In the bottom right of the page you will see a login button, this uses the same login details as Moodle. Click it and you will be taken straight in.

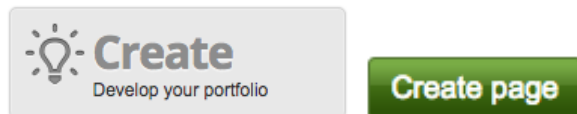Now that you are in myPortfolio you can begin creating your reflections! Click the 'Create' button on the front page, and then choose 'Create page'.

The next screen that you are presented with is where you name your new page, something like 'Workshop 1 – By John Smith' would be a good example. Press save when you are finished.

Now you can edit your page. MyPortfolio works by dragging and dropping components on to your page. Click and drag a text component onto the page to start using it. When you are finished adding your components press done.
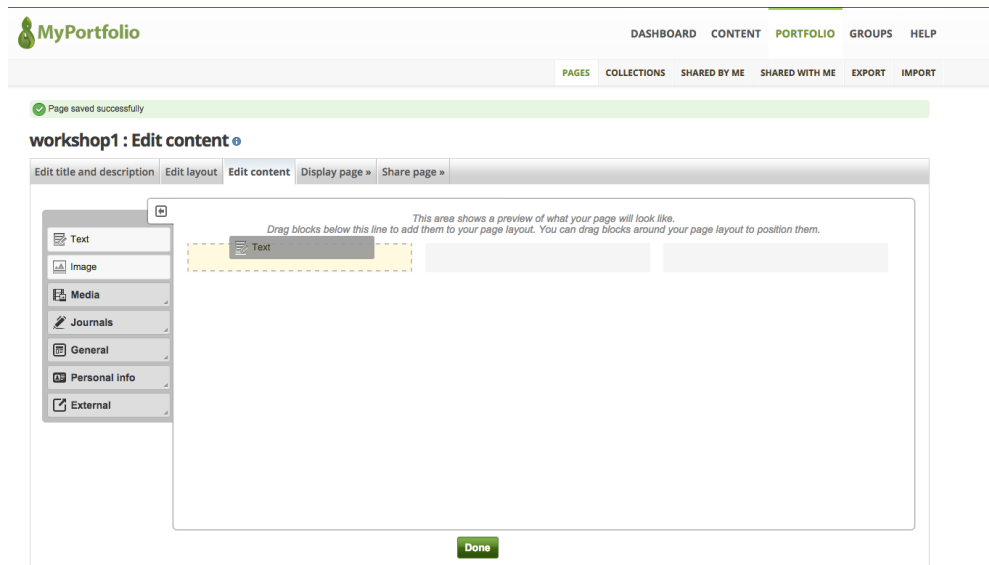
Submit your reflections

Once you have created your reflections using myPortfolio you can submit them for review by coach via the Moodle course.

Click on the 'Submit your reflections' collapsed column to expand it.

Click on the appropriate workshop submission.
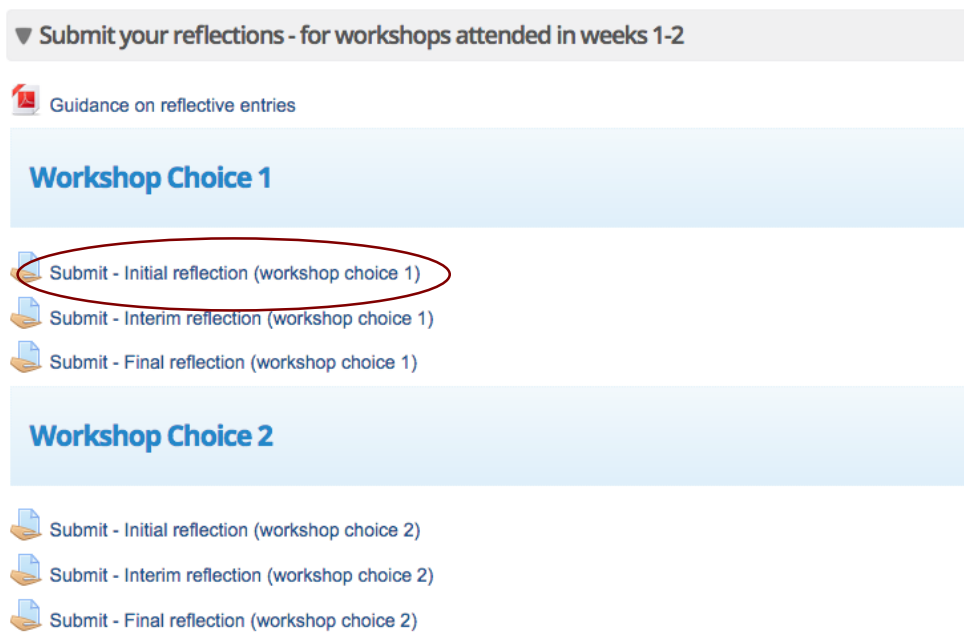
Once in the submission page you can select the myPortfolio page that you want to submit for review.

Your coach will comment on your myPortfolio pages and suggest any changes and ammendments that they recommend you make to your workshop reflections.

Final Submission

Once you have submitted all of your workshop reflections and acted upon your coach's feedback you are ready for the final submission.

The submission process here is the same as before only this time you will be submitting a 'collection' or myPortfolio 'pages'.

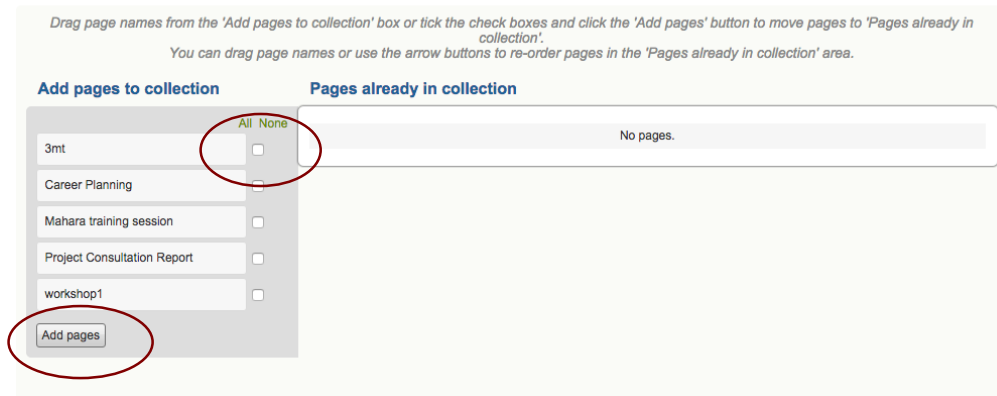To **create a collection of pages in myPortfolio** click on Portfolio across the top bar, then select collections.
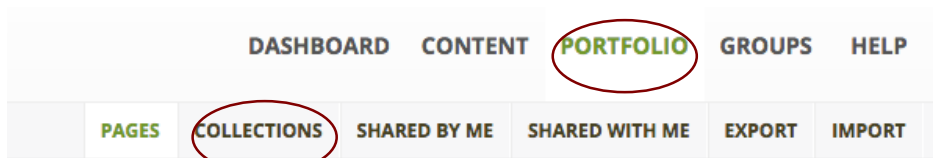
Select New Collection and give your collection a meaningful name.

Now you can select which of your pages you want to add to the collection by selecting the tick box next to the page name and clicking add pages.

You have now made your collection for your final submission.

Good luck with your WSPA award!