Mainstreaming the Doctoral Research Portfolio?

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The doctoral research portfolio has come to be considered a viable form of doctoral output in a graduate education field that has experienced spectacular growth and diversification since the early 1990s. It is often argued that, as a flexible form of doctoral production, the portfolio has the potential to evidence both textual products and graduate capabilities due to its capacity to accommodate a range of media forms and delivery contexts that address various scholarly and professional practice communities. At the same time, uptake of the portfolio in different doctoral programs has been more limited than the rhetoric of diversification might suggest and has remained largely confined to creative arts and professional doctorate programs. It has also not been well documented in the ‘mainstream’ literature on doctoral education. This paper argues that the idea of the portfolio is complex and difficult to implement. At the same time, pressures on the doctorate in terms of outcomes increasingly suggest a direction towards opening up the doctorate to embrace an increasing diversity of forms of production. Within this context the portfolio as an idea may become more useful in directing attention to more creative conceptualisations of the ways in which students may evidence doctoral achievement.