Designing a Portfolio Assignment

In deciding how to use an online portfolio, consider the following topics and questions.

Defining the Purpose and Audience

- *What is the purpose of the portfolio in relation to your learning objectives? What role does the portfolio play in the course as a whole?*
- *Is there a specific audience for the portfolio? If so, are there specific design aspects students might want to consider?*
- *Will students be reviewing one another's portfolios? Is the portfolio intended to be public on the web?*

Portfolios have different purposes. The type of portfolio you choose will depend in part on your targeted learning objectives. The purpose of the portfolio in your course should be clearly defined at the start and clearly communicated in your course materials.

The list below describes different types of portfolios and their purposes. Any of these portfolios can be used for assessment purposes by overlaying performance criteria and evaluating work in relation to these criteria.

Showcase Portfolio

A showcase portfolio is simply a portfolio used to show one's best work. Items are selected to represent one's highest level of achievement in regard to particular knowledge or skills. The traditional artist's portfolio is an example. Portfolios created for a job interview would also fall into this category.

Progress Portfolio

A progress portfolio is used to demonstrate the development of knowledge and skills over time. The artifacts in the portfolio represent a range of experiences or instances and are typically organized to show improvement in performance.

Process/Product Portfolio

The process/product portfolio is used to show stages in the development of one particular project. A writing portfolio, for instance, might include initial ideas for a piece, background research or short sketches, multiple rough drafts with comments and changes, and a final draft.

Reflective Portfolio

A reflective portfolio is used to document personal responses to artifacts or experiences. This type of portfolio may resemble a journal or scrapbook, though the items within it usually cohere in some way. An artist, for instance, might use such a portfolio to document the development of his or her individual style and influences on his or her work. Students could also use a reflective portfolio to make connections between course material and service learning experiences, or to document learning in study abroad.

Teaching Portfolio

Teaching portfolios present a portrait of oneself as a teacher. They may present achievements as well as development or growth. These portfolios may include course syllabi, statement of one's teaching philosophy, assignments and examples of student work, and course evaluations

Structuring the Portfolio

- *Who will design the structure of the portfolio (number and layout of pages, page elements, artifacts, etc.)? You? Your students?*
- *Will you require certain items to be in the portfolio? Or will students self-select some or all of the items?*
- *What elements in the portfolio are essential to its success?*

In its most basic form, a portfolio is simply a collection of work, usually accompanied by commentary that explains the purpose of the collection and the reason for including particular items. The particular artifacts to be included in the portfolio may be designated by you, the instructor, or
selected by students; many portfolios are a combination of teacher-selected and student-selected work.

UW-IT's e-portfolio solution allows two options for portfolio creation:

1. You can design a model Google Sites portfolio and invite students to copy it and use it as a guide in developing their own portfolio.
2. You can ask students to design a Google Sites portfolio on their own.

Whichever option you choose, you (or your students) may want to do some preliminary sketches of an organizational layout. How many artifacts will be featured? What are the natural divisions of accompanying text? What kind of information will be needed to orient a reader to the purpose and content of the portfolio? These sketches will help you and your students make decisions about number and organization of pages in the portfolio.

Clarifying Objectives And Goals

- *What do you want students to know and be able to do at the end of your course?*
- *How might students use a portfolio to demonstrate what they have learned?*
- *Almost all portfolios are persuasive documents; what is the argument or case you want students to be able to construct through a presentation of artifacts? How will their commentary on those artifacts help to structure that argument or case?*

Be sure to design a portfolio assignment that will draw out evidence of student learning related to your course objectives. Let students know early on if they should collect certain artifacts/kinds of artifacts to illustrate their knowledge and skills. As you plan your course, think about designing class activities and/or assignments so that students will create or collect essential artifacts and develop the skills they need to create a strong, persuasive portfolio.

- *How will you integrate the e-portfolio project into your curriculum and your instruction?*

Help students to see the connection between what you are doing in class and what they are being asked to do in their e-portfolios. Some instructors ask that students complete a page in their portfolios before a specific class as preparation for discussion. Others may use a portfolio assignment as a way to extend classroom activities, or to reflect on learning over the quarter. Where appropriate, make mention of the e-portfolio assignment throughout the course, and engage students in discussion about the content (not merely the requirements) of their portfolios as they develop them.

Assessing Learning

- *Will you assess students' portfolios? If so, what criteria will you use?*
- *How will you communicate these criteria to your students before they begin working on the assignment?*
- *Will you give a single grade to the portfolio as a whole, or will you assess its components separately?*
- *How will you evaluate the organization of the portfolio and its visual design?*

Portfolios can be excellent tools for both formative and summative assessment, and they provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning. Think about how you will assess the portfolio as you are writing the assignment instructions. Consider how each component of the portfolio—artifacts and commentary, organization and visual design—will provide evidence of student achievement in relation to your learning objectives.

The following are examples of criteria that could be used to evaluate portfolios. The specific criteria you use will depend largely on the purpose of the portfolio assignment.

1. Completeness: Did the student provide evidence of the knowledge and skills targeted in the portfolio assignment?
2. Quality of evidence: What is the quality of the evidence students included in the portfolio?
3. Rationale: Did the student adequately justify their selected artifacts as evidence of the targeted knowledge and skills?
4. Visual design and readability: Do the colors/font choices/headers/images, etc. contribute to a clear hierarchy of information and support the purpose and theme of the portfolio?
5. Overall quality: What is the quality of the portfolio overall? Does it make a coherent statement or argument in relation to the portfolio's purpose?

Rubrics are commonly used to evaluate portfolios. Rubrics provide descriptions of different levels of achievement in relation to specified criteria. For example, the holistic rubric below describes four levels of achievement in relation to the overall quality of a portfolio (adapted from Skawinski & Thibodeau, 2002):

Level	Description
Distinguished	Evidence selected shows a high degree of understanding, knowledge,

	and/or performance; rationale provides a developed and convincing explanation for inclusion; portfolio overall is well-written and well-designed, presents a coherent and compelling case of achievement.
Proficient	Evidence selected shows an acceptable degree of understanding, knowledge, and/or performance; rationale provides a clear and acceptable explanation for inclusion; portfolio overall is well-written and well-organized, presents a coherent case of achievement.
Emerging	Evidence selected shows a moderate degree of understanding, knowledge, and/or performance; rationale may be incomplete or inconsistent, provides an underdeveloped explanation for inclusion; portfolio overall shows effort at organization but is not yet a fully developed case of achievement; quality of writing is inconsistent.
Unacceptable	Evidence selected shows minimal degree of understanding, knowledge, and/or performance; rationale provides little and/or irrelevant explanation for inclusion; portfolio overall is not yet organized to present a case; quality of writing interferes with ideas. May be too little to assess.

Regardless of the method you use to evaluate student portfolios, it is important to share your assessment criteria with students early and often. Sample portfolios that illustrate successful (and perhaps unsuccessful) finished products can also help students understand what is expected of them and what constitutes quality work.

https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/catalyst-web-tools/e-portfolio/designing-a-portfolio-assignment/

Online Portfolios: Practical Tips for Teaching

This guide outlines practical tips you may find helpful as you set up a portfolio project.

Creating and Distributing E-Portfolios

The Portfolio tool offers three options for portfolio creation:

- Instructors, advisers, or mentors can design model Google Site portfolios that students copy and modify to suit their needs.
- Students can create their own portfolios.

Design a Model E-Portfolio

In this option, the instructor designs a model e-portfolio and allows students to copy the site to their own UW Google Site accounts. Instructors may choose whether or not they want students to be able to see each others' e-portfolios for peer review.

Pros:

- This option allows students to build a portfolio using the instructor's model as an example. It does not require that all students use the same structured portfolio.
- Students can make multiple copies of the model portfolio, enabling students to create, for example, several career portfolios for different jobs.

Cons:

- Working off a model may limit the diversity/creativity of the students.

Have students Create Their Own Portfolio

In this option, students design their own Google Sites e-portfolio. Students share their work with the instructor by submitting their Google Site URL to the course CommonView page.

Pros:

- Gives students maximum control over the structure and design of their portfolios. All aspects of the design reflect students' individual performance in regard to the assignment.
- Does not require the instructor to design a portfolio.

Cons:

- Individual differences in creativity and design may distract from a focus on content when evaluating student work.
- Guidelines and sample portfolios may be especially important in this instance to help students understand the instructor's expectations.

Instructing Students About Creating an E-Portfolio

Provide students with instruction on how to use Google Sites to create an e-portfolio. A simple demonstration in the computer lab, followed by “hands-on” training may be especially helpful for students who consider themselves less technically proficient. While many practical questions may be answered at the start, keep in mind that additional questions may arise along the way as students attach more complex artifacts and publish their pages, for example. You can also refer your students to the Google Sites Help Documentation.

Allow yourself time to become familiar with Google Sites. This way you will be able to understand particular concerns or questions students may raise.

Using Portfolios In a Large Class

Because portfolios take time to review, you may wish to have them due only once during the quarter if you are using them in a large class. Many instructors have found that portfolios work well as a summative evaluation at the end of the quarter.

https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/catalyst-web-tools/e-portfolio/online-portfolios-practical-tips-for-teaching/

Teaching With e-Portfolios: Technology Tips

There are a number of ways you can use technology throughout your course to ensure a smooth integration of e-portfolios in your instruction and help students develop relevant technical skills.

Instruct Students In How to Create an e-Portfolio

If possible, try to teach in a classroom equipped with a computer and projector (or check out these technologies) so you can show example e-portfolios and other online materials in class.

Students always benefit by seeing one or more example portfolios and/or a portfolio that outlines suggested content for each page, including relevant questions and prompts to help students develop that content. If you create an example portfolio using UW Google Sites, students can copy the example to their own Google Sites account to use as a starting point for their own portfolios.

Whether your students will be using UW Google Sites or some other web tool to create their e-portfolios, provide instruction in how to use the tool for this purpose. A simple demonstration in the computer lab followed by "hands-on" training may be especially helpful for students who consider themselves less technically proficient. While many practical questions may be answered at the start, keep in mind that additional questions may arise along the way as students attach or embed more complex artifacts or experiment with visual designs, for example. You can also refer your students to the Google Sites Help Documentation.

Allow yourself time to become familiar with UW Google Sites (or your selected tool for e-portfolio creation). This way you will be able to understand particular concerns or questions students may raise.

Help Students Develop Technical Skills

There are a small number of technical skills that can make a big difference when creating e-portfolios and using Google Sites. These skills can support students' creativity while reducing feelings of anxiety or frustration related to technology. Knowing how to scan documents and resize images before uploading them to a Google Site, for instance, will make the work of adding artifacts efficient. Some students may also want to embed videos; knowing how to do so—as well as when their content may be restricted due to copyright or privacy issues—is another important skill. Understanding the difference between Google Sites' templates and themes will also be helpful for you and your students. To learn more about using Google Sites, please see Google Sites Help and Google Sites Forum.

Help Students Develop Design Skills

The visual design of an e-portfolio plays an important role in its readability and whether or not it succeeds as a compelling, unified whole, supporting the message the portfolio was intended to convey. Help students think through the choices they have related to visual design and the effects of those choices. In general,

- An effective portfolio has a clear hierarchy of information. Section headings and groupings of artifacts with commentary should be logical and easily understood.
- Repetitive elements, both within a page and between pages, help make a portfolio unified. Consistency in fonts and font sizes for headers/body type, background colors, and formatting options contribute to a unified look and feel.
- Readability is crucial; the elements in a portfolio should contrast well. For example, dark colored fonts on dark backgrounds and light colored fonts on light backgrounds make for poor readability.
- Graphics and images, where included, should complement the purpose of the portfolio. They should clearly relate to the text and illustrate the themes or intended message of the portfolio.

These and other principles of design can be discussed with your students using example portfolios or web sites.

Use And Encourage a Broad Range of Technologies

Think broadly about the range of technologies you can use, or encourage the use of, in all of your teaching practices. For example, when students receive feedback on assignments electronically (from you or peers), rather than in handwritten comments, they can easily cite this feedback in their e-portfolios. You can also share (or have students explore) a range of digital strategies that can be used to emphasize or explain significant features of their artifacts: e.g., highlighting or commenting in a text document; scanning an image and annotating it as a pdf; creating a slide show of photos or video stills of significant moments in a process or event. They can then reference these highlighted or annotated features in their writing and describe how they demonstrate evidence of learning.

In addition, if students create documents and other files (presentations, drawings, etc.) using UW Google Apps, they can embed these files directly in the pages of their site, rather than including them as attachments only. Assignments that ask students to use a range of media will also allow them to practice their design skills and to assemble more dynamic portfolios.

https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/catalyst-web-tools/e-portfolio/teaching-with-e-portfolios-technology-tips/

Online portfolios: *http://www.gettingsmart.com/2016/01/10-tools-to-create-online-student-portfolios/*

Portfolio and writing: *https://classroom-assessment-theory-into-practice.wikispaces.com/Assessing+Primary+School+Writing*

Assessment - Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio assessment is a term with many meanings, and it is a process that can serve a variety of purposes. A portfolio is a collection of student work that can exhibit a student's efforts, progress, and achievements in various areas of the curriculum. A portfolio assessment can be an examination of student-selected samples of work experiences and documents related to outcomes being assessed, and it can address and support progress toward achieving academic goals, including student efficacy. Portfolio assessments have been used for large-scale assessment and accountability purposes (e.g., the Vermont and Kentucky statewide assessment systems), for purposes of school-to-work transitions, and for purposes of certification. For example, portfolio assessments are used as part of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards assessment of expert teachers.

The Development of Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio assessments grew in popularity in the United States in the 1990s as part of a widespread interest in alternative assessment. Because of high-stakes accountability, the 1980s saw an increase in norm-referenced, multiple-choice tests designed to measure academic achievement. By the end of the decade, however, there were increased criticisms over the reliance on these tests, which opponents believed assessed only a very limited range of knowledge and encouraged a "drill and kill" multiple-choice curriculum. Advocates of alternative assessment argued that teachers and schools modeled their curriculum to match the limited norm-referenced tests to try to assure that their students did well, "teaching to the test" rather than teaching content relevant to the subject matter. Therefore, it was important that assessments were worth teaching to and modeled the types of significant teaching and learning activities that were worthwhile educational experiences and would prepare students for future, real-world success.

Involving a wide variety of learning products and artifacts, such assessments would also enable teachers and researchers to examine the wide array of complex thinking and problem-solving skills required for subject-matter accomplishment. More likely than traditional assessments to be multidimensional, these assessments also could reveal various aspects of the learning process, including the development of cognitive skills, strategies, and decision-making processes. By providing feedback to schools and districts about the strengths and weaknesses of their performance, and influencing what and how teachers teach, it was thought portfolio assessment could support the goals of school reform. By engaging students more deeply in the instructional and assessment process, furthermore, portfolios could also benefit student learning.

Types of Portfolios

While portfolios have broad potential and can be useful for the assessments of students' performance for a variety of purposes in core curriculum areas, the contents and criteria used to assess portfolios must be designed to serve those purposes. For example, *showcase portfolios* exhibit the best of student performance, while *working portfolios* may contain drafts that students and teachers use to reflect on process. *Progress portfolios* contain multiple examples of the same type of work done over time and are used to assess progress. If cognitive processes are intended for assessment, content and rubrics must be designed to capture those processes.

Portfolio assessments can provide both formative and summative opportunities for monitoring progress toward reaching identified outcomes. By setting criteria for content and outcomes, portfolios can communicate concrete information about what is expected of students in terms of the content and quality of performance in specific curriculum areas, while also providing a way of assessing their progress along the way. Depending on content and criteria, portfolios can provide teachers and researchers with information relevant to the cognitive processes that students use to achieve academic outcomes.

Uses of Portfolios

Much of the literature on portfolio assessment has focused on portfolios as a way to integrate assessment and instruction and to promote meaningful classroom learning. Many advocates of this function believe that a successful portfolio assessment program requires the ongoing involvement of students in the creation and assessment process. Portfolio design should provide students with the opportunities to become more reflective about their own work, while demonstrating their abilities to learn and achieve in academics.

For example, some feel it is important for teachers and students to work together to prioritize the criteria that will be used as a basis for assessing and evaluating student progress. During the instructional process, students and teachers work together to identify significant pieces of work and the processes required for the portfolio. As students develop their portfolio, they are able to receive feedback from peers and teachers about their work. Because of the greater amount of time required for portfolio projects, there is a greater opportunity for introspection and collaborative reflection. This allows students to reflect and report about their own thinking processes as they monitor their own comprehension and observe their emerging understanding of subjects and skills. The portfolio process is dynamic and is affected by the interaction between students and teachers.

Portfolio assessments can also serve summative assessment purposes in the classroom, serving as the basis for letter grades. Student conferences at key points during the year can also be part of the summative process. Such conferences involve the student and teacher (and perhaps the parent) in joint review of the completion of the portfolio components, in querying the cognitive processes related to artifact selection, and in dealing with other relevant issues, such as students' perceptions of individual progress in reaching academic outcomes.

The use of portfolios for large-scale assessment and accountability purposes pose vexing measurement challenges. Portfolios typically require complex production and writing, tasks that can be costly to score and for which reliability problems have occurred. Generalizability and comparability can also be an issue in portfolio assessment, as portfolio tasks are unique and can vary in topic and difficulty from one classroom to the next. For example, Maryl Gearhart and Joan Herman have raised the question of comparability of scores because of differences in the help students may receive from their teachers, parents, and peers within and across classrooms. To the extent student choice is involved, contents may even be different from one student to the next. Conditions of, and opportunities for, performance thus vary from one student to another.

These measurement issues take portfolio assessment outside of the domain of conventional psychometrics. The qualities of the most useful portfolios for instructional purposes–deeply embedded in instruction, involving student choice, and unique to each classroom and student–seem to contradict the requirements of sound psychometrics. However, this does not mean that psychometric methodology should be ignored, but rather that new ways should be created to further develop measurement theory to address reliability, validity, and generalizability.

See also: **ASSESSMENT, *subentries on* CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT, DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT.**

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