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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.

e-Portfolio

Designing a Portfolio Assignment

Helping Students Create Successful Portfolios
(<https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/web-tools/e-portfolio/helping-students-create-successful-portfolios/>)

Online Portfolios: Practical Tips for Teaching
(<https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/web-tools/e-portfolio/online-portfolios-practical-tips-for-teaching/>)

Planning Effective Online Portfolios with CommonView and UW Google Apps
(<https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/web-tools/e-portfolio/planning-portfolios/>)

Teaching With e-Portfolios: Technology Tips
(<https://itconnect.uw.edu/learn/tools/web-tools/e-portfolio/teaching-with-e-portfolios-technology-tips/>)

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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.