Portfolios and E-portfolios
Definitions and Types

Definitions

A *portfolio* is a collection of exhibits or artifacts that provide evidence to an evaluator of the attainment of a standard of competency, performance, or quality. An *e-portfolio* is an electronic display of such evidence. E-portfolios vary in sophistication from simple web pages to portfolios generated through sophisticated software programs such as Task Stream.

The *subject* of a portfolio is who or what is to be evaluated. The subject of a portfolio can be a student, a faculty member, a course, an organizational entity such as the accounting department, an academic program, a student services program, an administrative program, or the institution itself.

The *evaluator* is the person or group reviewing the portfolio to determine whether standards have been met. There may be one or more evaluators.

Standards of competency, performance, or quality can be *explicit* or *implicit*. In many cases the evaluator(s) communicate explicit standards to subjects before portfolio construction begins. These standards guide portfolio construction. In other instances, especially when it is the general public that is evaluating, the standards are implicit. The subject is required to make inferences or even guesses about the expectations of potential evaluators and to construct a portfolio with these perceived expectations in mind.

Examples of explicit standards are:

    a. Learning outcomes stated in an academic program's annual institutional effectiveness plan.
    b. Learning outcomes included in a course syllabus.
    c. National or regional accrediting agency standards.
    d. Standards in an evaluation rubric.

Examples of implicit standards are:

a. Standards of potential employers inferred from a sample of job descriptions or help wanted advertising.
b. Expectations of potential students and parents as inferred from most frequently asked questions, results of national student and parent surveys, and other miscellaneous sources.

Student Portfolios

A student portfolio is typically constructed in response to both explicit and implicit standards. If a portfolio is a graduation or course requirement, then it is most likely that faculty members have set forth specific criteria for the portfolios and will use these criteria for assigning student grades. The same portfolio or a modified version thereof may also be used to satisfy implicit standards of potential employers, graduate schools, or business or social networks.

Course Portfolios

A course portfolio designed to demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes for institutional effectiveness will be comprised of specific assignments accumulated during the course's duration. Some assignments may be graded according to an instructor-defined rubric or an accrediting agency standard. Multiple choice or short answer tests may be scored according to percent correct on the whole test or on different parts of the test which in turn address separate and distinct learning outcomes. Each course comprising a program may have certain assignments that are tracked for the program as a whole through a course-embedded assessment design. These assignments will be reported again in the academic program portfolio as one of several assignments designed to measure the same learning goal.

Faculty Portfolios

A faculty portfolio may provide evidence to support tenure and promotion decisions . The standards addressed are explicit university and college standards. Evidence such as the following could be presented:

a. A collection of course portfolios demonstrating attainment of student learning outcomes.
b. A bibliography of research and scholarly writings with attachments or web links to the complete works.
c. Recordings of musical and theatrical performances.
d. Visual displays of artistic works.
e. A summary of university service with possible web links to such products as advisory group reports, minutes of committee meetings, etc.

A faculty portfolio may provide evidence to demonstrate that the faculty member is qualified to teach the courses assigned. Explicit standards will be SACS requirements, national accrediting agency standards if applicable, and university and college standards. Evidence such as the following would be needed.

a. A written summary explaining the connection between education, experience and courses taught (Faculty Qualifications Form).
b. A detailed resume.
c. Transcripts of completed degrees or a listing of courses completed taken from the official transcript,
d. Copies of relevant professional certificates, and
e. Course syllabi.

Academic Program Portfolios

An academic program portfolio may have multiple purposes and therefore multiple evaluators. Some standards may be explicit and some implicit. For this reason a master portfolio will probably need to be "tweaked" to address standards that may differ from one group to another.

An academic program portfolio designed to provide evidence of *institutional effectiveness* will address explicit standards according to a rubric. Evaluators will likely be administrators such as deans, institutional effectiveness staff, and peer faculty on assessment advisory committees. Course embedded assessment and portfolio assessment are common methods for assessing program outcomes for institutional effectiveness. E-portfolio software such as Task Stream makes tracking of both types of assessment much more manageable than is the case when paper documents need to be organized and maintained over several years. Thus, it is likely that a program's institutional effectiveness portfolio will import or link to information from both course portfolios and student portfolios.

Additionally, an academic program portfolio designed to satisfy some *national accreditation agency standards*, e.g., NCATE, will need to address a wealth of very specific standards in addition to the university's institutional effectiveness standards.

An academic program portfolio designed for *parents, students, or donors* will provide information that will enable these groups to evaluate the program according to their implicit and frequently not well-articulated standards. The institutional effectiveness program portfolio will be an excellent starting point but detail and jargon may need to be laicized or omitted. Additional information about student life, curricular requirements, admission standards, and other items will also be required to supplement the portfolio designed to demonstrate institutional effectiveness.

Administrative Unit/ Student Services or Administrative Program Portfolios

Portfolios designed for organizational units, student service programs, and administrative programs probably will be designed to document institutional effectiveness although these portfolios may also have multiple purposes. In the case of portfolios designed for institutional effectiveness, there will be

explicit standards explained in a rubric. Evaluators will be department heads, vice presidents, and institutional effectiveness staff.

University Portfolio
The university portfolio will be designed for demonstration of the university's institutional effectiveness in all its academic programs, academic support units, student services programs, and administrative units. As such, it will consist of an analysis and summary of assessment of each program and unit according to pre-defined rubrics.   It will contain links to academic, student services, and administrative units and program portfolios which in turn will frequently contain links to lower level portfolios such as course and student portfolios.