

THE PORTFOLIO APPROACH TO DOCUMENTING TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

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Table of Contents

1. **What is The Teaching Portfolio?**
2. **Purposes of the Teaching Portfolio**
3. **Uses of the Teaching Portfolio**
4. **Six Steps to Creating a Teaching Portfolio**
5. **Sample Items for the Portfolio**
6. **Statements on the Items for the Portfolio**
7. **Items Organized for the Portfolio**
8. **Support Data for the Portfolio**
9. **Select Bibliography**

What is The Teaching Portfolio?

The Teaching Portfolio is a factual description of a professor's major strengths and teaching achievements. It describes documents and materials which collectively suggest the scope and quality of a professor's teaching performance. It is to teaching what lists of publications, grants and honors are to research and scholarship.

Moreover, Teaching Portfolios provide documented evidence of teaching that is connected to the specifics and contexts of what is being taught. They go beyond exclusive reliance on student ratings because they include a range of evidence from a variety of sources such as syllabi, samples of student work, self-reflections, reports on classroom research, and faculty development programs. Portfolios are a step toward a more public, professional view of teaching; they reflect teaching as a scholarly activity.

Purposes of Teaching Portfolios

1. To gather and present hard evidence and specific data about teaching effectiveness for those who judge performance and/or
2. To provide the needed structure for self-reflection about which areas of teaching performance need improvement.

Four Major Uses of Teaching Portfolios in the Educational Community

- A. Teaching Practices
 - 1. Teaching Enhancement
 - 2. Introspection
 - 3. Professional Planning
 - 4. Revitalization
 - 5. Constructive Feedback/Interaction

- B. Personnel Decisions
 - 1. Promotion
 - 2. Tenure
 - 3. Annual Report
 - 4. Teaching Awards

- C. Salary Decisions
 - 1. Market
 - 2. Merit

- D. Career Decisions
 - 1. Position Searches
 - 2. Grant Applications

Six Steps to Creating a Teaching Portfolio

Step 1. Clarify Teaching Responsibilities.

Typically, this covers such topics as courses currently taught and those taught in the recent past, teaching-related activities such as serving as faculty advisor to student organizations, or advising individual graduate or undergraduate students. It is based on the exchange of memos between the department chair and the faculty member.

Step 2. Select Items for the Portfolio.

Based on the teaching responsibilities described in Step 1, the professor selects items for inclusion in the portfolio which are directly applicable to their teaching responsibilities. Note: If the teaching portfolio will be used for personnel decisions, then University, College, School, Division, and/or Department faculty review policies and procedures must be considered when selecting portfolio items.

Step 3. Prepare Statements on Each Item.

Statements are prepared by the professor on activities, initiatives, and accomplishments on each item. Backup documentation and appendices are referenced, as appropriate.

Step 4. Arrange the Items in Order.

The sequence of the statements about accomplishments in each area is determined by their intended use. For example, if the professor intends to demonstrate teaching improvement, such activities as attending faculty development workshops and seminars should be stressed.

Step 5. Compile the Support Data.

Evidence supporting all items mentioned in the portfolio should be retained by the professor and made available for review upon request. These would include, for example, letters from colleagues and students, original evaluations of teaching, samples of student work, invitations to contribute articles on teaching in one's discipline. Such evidence is not part of the portfolio but is back-up material placed in the appendix or made available upon request. Note: If the teaching portfolio will be used for personnel decisions, then University, College, School, Division, and/or Department faculty review policies and procedures must be considered when selecting supporting evidence. Colleges and universities will state which types of information are considered to be primary or supplementary forms of supporting evidence.

Step 6. Incorporate the Portfolio into the Curriculum Vitae.

Lastly, the portfolio is then inserted into the professor's curriculum vitae under the heading of "Teaching" or "Instruction." Departmental guidelines will determine its precise location in the C.V. in relation to the sections on "Research" and "Service." Note: Consult your University, College, School, Division, and/or Department faculty review policies because this step may not be required or encouraged.

Sample Items (Headings, Subject Areas) for the Portfolio
(Refer to Step 2)

1. Statement of Teaching Responsibilities and Objectives (including course titles, course numbers, student enrollments, and a brief description of the way each course was taught)
2. Statement of Teaching Philosophy
3. Contribution to University and Department Teaching Mission and Profession
4. Teaching Strategies and Methods
5. Classroom Techniques
6. Methods to Motivate Students
7. Syllabi, Reading Lists, Supplementary Reading Lists, Study Guides, Workbooks, Laboratory Activities, Assignments, Exams, and/or Handouts from Courses Taught
8. Statement on Classroom Standards
9. Peer Evaluations of Classroom Teaching and Teaching Materials
10. Student Evaluations of Teaching and Course
11. Unsolicited and solicited letters
12. Record of Supervision of Graduate Students
13. Records of Student Performances on Pre-Tests and Post-Tests
14. Measures of Student Achievement
15. Letters of Recommendation for Students
16. Videotapes of Classroom Instruction
17. Description of Efforts to Improve Teaching
18. Efforts to Assess Teaching Effectiveness
19. Special Teaching and Advising Awards
20. Teaching-Related Committee Work and Activities
21. Invitations to Teach from Outside Department
22. Teaching Goals for Next Five Years
23. Reflective Statement

Statements on the Items for the Portfolio (Refer to Step 3)

Sample 1:

Statement of Teaching Responsibilities

Following a discussion, my department chair and I exchanged memos on our agreement about my teaching responsibilities. A year ago I gave up an introductory composition course, which I had taught for several years, and began an elective seminar in advanced writing. A student term project involving field-work and library research is part of that elective course. I also teach a required course in speech communication and an elective course in creative writing. I judge the performance of students in speech communication largely on in-class presentations. Students in creative writing are judged on language and dramatic development in their writing. I also serve as academic advisor to about 20 communication majors.

Sample 2:

Personal Reflective Statement

The appendix contains a personal, reflective statement about what I teach and why I teach it the way I do. It also has a discussion of my teaching contributions to the department and my teaching plans for the next few years.

Sample 3:

Syllabi for All Courses Taught

The appendix contains copies of syllabi for all my current courses. The syllabi describe course content and objectives, reading assignments, and student evaluation procedures.

Sample 4:

Summaries of Student Course Evaluations

In each current course, student satisfaction continues to exceed 3.90 on a 5.00-point scale. Over three consecutive terms, the rating in my advanced writing seminar has averaged 4.20. It has averaged 3.95 in my speech communication course and 4.35 in my creative writing course.

Sample 5:

Appendix

Copies of all appendix materials and other printed items referred to in the teaching portfolio are on file and are available upon request.

Items Organized for the Portfolio (Refer to Step 4)

Sample 1:

Statement of Teaching Responsibilities
Syllabi, Study Guides, Laboratory Activities, and Exams for Courses Taught
Summaries of Course Evaluations by Students
Teaching Improvement Activities
Undergraduate Fellows/High School Summer Research Students
Reflective Statement and Closing Comments
Appendices

Sample 2:

Statement of Teaching Responsibilities and Objectives
Syllabi, Reading Lists, Assignments, Exams, and Handouts from Courses Taught
Description of Efforts to Improve My Teaching
Peer Evaluation of Both My Teaching and Teaching Skills
Student Teaching Evaluation Data from All Courses Taught for the Past Year
Videotapes of My Instruction
Measures of Student Achievement
Other Evidence of Good Teaching
Future Teaching Goals
Appendices

Sample 3:

Teaching Responsibilities, Philosophy, Strategies
Collaborative Scholarship with Students
Student Evaluations
Letters from Colleagues
Teaching Awards
Syllabi, Reading Lists, Assignments, Handouts, and Exams
Teaching Improvement
Teaching Related Activities and Committee Work
Letters for Students
Future Teaching Goals
Appendices

Support Data for the Portfolio (Refer to Step 5)

- A. Student/Peer Course and Teacher Evaluations, Support Letters
 - 1. Student Evaluations--Student course or teaching evaluation data which produce an overall rating of effectiveness or suggest improvements. (For a consideration of tenure at Bowling Green State University, documentation based on student evaluations is required and is considered to be one of two forms of "primary evidence." Peer evaluations are the other form of primary evidence.)
 - 2. Peer Evaluations--Statements from colleagues who have observed the professor in the classroom.
 - 3. Statements by alumni on the quality of instruction.
 - 4. Support letters from students (solicited and unsolicited).
 - 5. Support letters from peers (solicited and unsolicited).

- B. Actual Artifacts Produced in the Process of Teaching
 - 1. Representative course syllabi detailing course content and objectives, teaching methods, readings, homework assignments.
 - 2. Exams, Handouts/Assignments.
 - 3. Study Guides, Workbooks, Laboratory Activities.

- C. Outcome Documentation
 - 1. Results or analysis of pretests-posttests in a course.
 - 2. Evidence of students' long-term learning.
 - 3. Evidence of former students' success.
 - 6. Results of self-administered diagnostic student evaluations.
 - 7. Student scores on professor-made or standardized tests, possibly before and after a course, as evidence of student learning (pretests-posttests).
 - 8. Student essays, creative works, field-work reports, laboratory workbooks or logs and student publications on course-related work.
 - 9. Information about the effect of the professor's courses on student career choices or help given by the professor to secure student employment.
 - 10. A record of students who succeed in advanced courses of study in the field.
 - 11. Student publications or conference presentations on course-related work.
 - 12. Examples of graded student essays showing excellent, average, and poor work along with the professor's comments as to why they were so graded.

- D. Supplemental Student Assistance
 - 1. Supervision of independent study, honors projects, and undergraduate research
 - 2. Evidence of special interest in students
 - a. open-door policy
 - b. extra course learning opportunities
 - c. sponsorship of student activities
 - d. accompanying students to professional meetings

- E. Honors and Grants, Pedagogical and Curricular Development
 - 1. Teaching awards and recognitions

2. Instructional enhancement grants
3. Leadership roles in instructional enhancement projects
4. Evidence of professional interest in teaching
 - a. teaching improvement seminars, workshops, or conferences attended or conducted
 - b. auditing of colleagues' courses
 - c. teaching special groups, such as the gifted or disabled
5. Auditing courses to improve teaching techniques
6. Description of steps taken to improve teaching
 - a. including changes resulting from self-evaluation
 - b. reading journals on teaching improvement
 - c. participation in programs on sharpening instructional skill.
7. Published pedagogical materials
8. Unpublished pedagogical materials
9. Contributions to curricular development (descriptions or effects of innovations in teaching approach or course design; design or teaching of experimental units).
10. Contributing to, or editing, a professional journal on teaching the professor's discipline.
11. Participation in local, regional, state or national activities related to teaching courses in professor's discipline.
12. Special invitations because of reputation as a teacher.
13. Invitations to teach from outside agencies, to present a paper at a conference on teaching one's discipline or on teaching in general, or to participate in a media interview on a successful teaching method.
14. Invitations to other campuses to demonstrate effective instructional methods, or to participate in teaching/learning symposia.
15. A professional exchange with colleagues inside or outside the institution. The exchange might focus on course materials, or methods of teaching particular topics, or helping colleagues improve their teaching.

F. Other Items

1. Evidence of outstanding course preparation
2. Openness to team and/or interdisciplinary teaching
3. Contributions to interdisciplinary programs
4. Emphasis on student writing where not explicitly required

Select Bibliography

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