

Documenting Teaching Effectiveness: Creating a Teaching Portfolio Workbook

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What is a teaching portfolio?

As with other types of portfolios, a teaching portfolio is a compilation of materials reflecting your professional strengths as a teacher.

- Clear, concise and carefully selected factual documents (teaching evidence) which collectively convey accomplishments and teaching effectiveness to third party inspection outside the discipline.
- Documents the complexity and individuality of good teaching.
- There are two types of teaching portfolios. They assess teaching from two different perspectives and for two different purposes:
 - Formative: this is NOT a document for formal evaluation e.g. Promotion and tenure. This IS a document for self-assessment and reflection about what you teach, how you teach and why you teach. This is a TOOL for documenting your growth and development as a professional teacher. Commonly a self-identified challenge would be elucidated and the portfolio would reflect the steps taken to meet the instructional challenge and the successful end product(s).
 - Summative: this IS a FORMAL evaluation document used in employment, and promotion and tenure decisions. This portfolio reflects the accomplishments one has attained as a teacher. In this portfolio, one is a “finished” product, an accomplished classroom teacher.

Why develop a teaching portfolio?

Because of the increasing economic, social and political scrutiny, there is a need to document teaching effectiveness in the classroom. Portfolios are being used in promotion and tenure, hiring decisions and act as invaluable tools for developing teaching knowledge and skills. Because portfolios reflect the individual who creates them there is no one right method or technique for construction. There are suggested materials to include and tips on how to most effectively present your professional teaching document.

Selected References:

Seldin, P. (1993) *Successful use of teaching portfolios*. Bolton, MA.: Anker.

Seldin, P. (1997) *The teaching portfolio: A practical guide to improved performance and promotion/tenure decisions 2nd ed.* Bolton, MA.: Anker.

Websites:

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/class/edlf/589-07/sample.html> (University of Virginia)

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/PortfolioTools.htm> (University of Washington)

Choosing Items for the Portfolio

From: Seldin, P. (1993) Successful use of teaching portfolios. Bolton, MA: Anker.

Material from Oneself:

- Statement of teaching responsibilities including course titles, numbers, enrollments and a brief description of the way each course was taught.
- Representative course syllabi detailing course content and objectives, teaching methods, readings, homework assignments.
- Description of steps taken to improve teaching including changes resulting from self-evaluation, reading journals on teaching improvement, participation in programs on sharpening instructional skill.
- Instructional innovations and evaluation of their effectiveness.
- A personal statement by the professor describing goals over the next five years.

Material from Others:

- Student course or teaching evaluation data which produce an overall rating of effectiveness or suggest improvements.
- Statements from colleagues who have observed the professor in the classroom.
- Documentation of teaching development activity through the campus center for teaching and learning.
- Statements from colleagues who have reviewed the professor's teaching materials, such as course syllabi, assignments, testing and grading practices.
- Honors or other recognition such as a distinguished teaching award.

Products of Good Teaching:

- A record of students who succeed in advanced study in the field
- Testimonials from employers or students about the teacher's influence on career choice.
- Student scores on pre- and post- course evaluations.
- Items that Sometimes Appear in Portfolios
- Description of curricular revisions including new course projects, materials and class assignments.
- Self-evaluation of teaching related activities
- Contributing to, or editing, a professional journal on teaching the professor's discipline
- A statement by the department chair assessing the professor's teaching contribution to the department
- Invitations to present a paper on teaching one's discipline.
- A videotape of the professor teaching a typical class
- Participation in off-campus activities related to teaching in the professor's discipline
- Evidence of help given to colleagues leading to improvement of their teaching
- Description of how computers, films, and other non-print materials are used in teaching
- Statements of alumni on the quality of instruction
- Examples of graded student essays along with the professors comments on why they were so graded.

Steps to elucidating your Teaching Philosophy:

I learn best when...

The best teacher I ever had was....because...

The best class I ever had was...

I believe a classroom should....

As a student, I experience respect from a teacher when...

Developing consistency within your portfolio:

Can you find evidence of each item you state in your philosophy within your portfolio?

e.g. If you stated you believe in “fairness” do you have an example of rubrics or does your TCE score reflect that students believe they were treated with respect or what else contained in your portfolio “proves” your statement – you are looking for facts and evidence.

Can you find evidence of items contained within your CV that are reflected in your teaching?

How could you construct your portfolio so that a third party outside your discipline could “find” what you are claiming? How could you provide them a path that weaves all elements of the portfolio together?

Assessment of a Teaching Portfolio

As you review and reflect on the contents of your teaching portfolio, ask yourself the following questions. If an area doesn't convince you, describe what would convince you in detail.

1. Is the portfolio professional in appearance?
2. Is the portfolio well organized with numbered pages and a table of contents?

Would it be easy to find a specific item quickly?

Would it be easy to cross check a particular item? For example: The Teaching philosophy states the teacher values “fairness” where might you look to find evidence for “fairness”

3. Does the portfolio provide documentation of effective teaching?
 - a. Evidence that you vary approaches of instruction to meet the needs of diverse students?
 - b. Evidence that you think critically? (Remember Bloom's Taxonomy is there evidence of higher level thinking - application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation?)
 - c. Evidence that you apply theory to practice?

- d. Evidence that you apply your personal philosophy of teaching to your discipline?
- e. Evidence that you consistently develop teaching materials and strategies that support my goals?
- f. Evidence that you critically reflect on your teaching practices and thoughtfully consider the practices of others?
- g. Evidence that you thoughtfully and consistently seek teaching development i.e. continuing education, faculty development workshops, etc.?
- h. Evidence that you actively participate in the continuing growth and development of yourself and others in your field?
 - Do you offer to observe in a colleague's classroom?
 - Do you open your classroom to colleagues, faculty development specialists, etc.?
- i. In your *FORMATIVE* portfolio, do you show how you have grown and developed as an educator over time? (Are you a life long learner?)
- j. Within your appendix, do you have a complete example of a typical day in your class?
 - Syllabus, one complete lesson plan - what, how and why, what happened as a result, evidence of student work, an evaluation of the lesson for that day.
- k. If asked to provide non-written evidence of my teaching do you have a videotape, CD-ROM, display, etc. to provide to an outside evaluator?
- 1. If placed "on the spot" could you explain, describe and show why you would be the best applicant for a faculty teaching position?

Do you have letters from former department heads, supervisors and successful students to support your claims?

Do you have awards and/or certifications?