





TALK

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Overview

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## SELECTED LINKS | TEACHING PORTFOLIO | Overview

UCAT aims to provide faculty and GTAs with a practical and self-reflective guide for developing their teaching portfolios.

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### WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

As an academic, you might prepare different types of portfolios, including the course portfolio, the professional (scholarly) portfolio, and the teaching portfolio. The materials provided here focus on the teaching portfolio.

**Course portfolio:** includes information specific to a particular course, including syllabi, course materials, and sample assignments, along with an explanation for the rationale behind the assignments, and a discussion of how your teaching methods and course materials help students learn.

**Professional portfolio:** a collection of documents that you might submit as you go through the promotion and tenure process. This type of portfolio would include all of your work as a scholar, including your research progress, your teaching experience and accomplishments, and your record of academic service.

**Teaching portfolio:** describes and documents multiple aspects of your teaching ability. Teaching portfolios are prepared in one of two basic formats:

- *summative portfolios* are created for the purpose of applying for an academic job or for promotion and tenure within a department.
- *formative portfolios* are created for the purpose of personal and professional development.

Because your teaching experience changes as your career progresses, it is a good idea to periodically update your portfolio(s) in order to keep current with your progress, and to give yourself a regular opportunity to reflect on your teaching. At some point in your career, you may find that you need to keep a summative as well as a formative portfolio, because they serve different purposes. However, note that summative and formative portfolios may share several materials in common.

Some people describe a teaching portfolio as a place to summarize your teaching accomplishments and provide examples of classroom material. Others describe it as a mechanism and space for reflecting upon your teaching. And for the rest of us, it can be described as a space to do both.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE PORTFOLIO

There is considerable variety in portfolios' formats, but an effective portfolio should be well-documented and highly organized. The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) suggests that a teaching portfolio should be structured, representative, and selective.

#### Structured

A structured portfolio should be organized, complete, and creative in its presentation. Some questions for you to think about might be: Is my portfolio neat? Are the contents displayed in an organized fashion? Are the contents representative for the purpose that it is intended?

#### Representative

In addition to attending to structure, a portfolio should also be comprehensive. The documentation should represent the scope of your work. It should be representative across courses and time. Some questions for you to think about might be: Does my portfolio portray the types and levels of courses that I have taught? Does my portfolio display a cross-section of my work in teaching?

#### Selective

The natural tendency for anyone preparing a portfolio is wanting to document everything. However, if a portfolio is being used either for summative or formative purposes, careful attention should be given to conciseness and selectivity in order to appropriately document



one's work. Peter Seldin (2004) suggests limiting the contents of a portfolio to ten pages. We suggest that you limit the contents of your portfolio to what is required by the reviewer while also keeping the purpose in mind.

#### Key Functions of a Teaching Portfolio

- collect evidence of your teaching ability
- a context for your teaching
- summary data on your teaching in a simple, readable format
- focus on quality, not quantity
- organized and its various sections relate to each other
- an ever-changing, living document
- allows for self-reflection
- provides an opportunity to be unique, and showcase your personal style of teaching
- the process of creating one is generally much more important and meaningful than the end product

#### Why Create a Portfolio?

The teaching portfolio can serve many purposes, including:

- reflecting on your goals as a teacher
- assessing your teaching strengths and areas which need improvement
- documenting your progress as a teacher
- generating ideas for future teaching/course development
- identifying your personal teaching style
- using elements of the portfolio to promote dialogue with fellow teachers
- considering new ways of gathering student feedback
- gathering detailed data to support your goals
- collecting multiple sources of evidence that document the implementation of your teaching goals and their success

One would use a portfolio during the academic job search, promotion and tenure process, and for personal and professional development.

#### Portfolio in the Job Application Process

In a job application process, you can use your portfolio in several ways. For example, you could do one or two of the following:

- make it an appendix to your curriculum vitae
- provide a table of contents of portfolio materials, listing all as available on request
- bring it to your job interview and refer to it as needed
- make it an additional item in your application materials, which is referred to elsewhere (e.g., in a 2-3 page required teaching experience summary)

#### What is the Content in a Portfolio?

Because a portfolio describes and documents the abilities of a unique individual, no two teaching portfolios look alike. A portfolio can include a number of different types of documents. Those which you may choose to include will depend on your purpose for creating a portfolio; the type of teaching you have done; your academic discipline; and your portfolio's intended audience. Click [here](#) for a list of items that are appropriate for inclusion in the teaching portfolio.

In spite of the variation that exists across portfolios, the following materials are often included:

- statement of teaching philosophy
- description of teaching experience (responsibilities)
- course planning artifacts: sample course syllabi, lesson plans, assignments, exams
- evidence of teaching effectiveness: summary of student feedback, department evaluations
- teaching awards and recognition
- professional development efforts

A table of contents is an important tool in organizing the various sections of your portfolio. Click [here](#) to see examples of Tables of Contents.

Some of the above sections, such as the statement on teaching philosophy, are strictly narrative (reflective). Others consist of a set of materials that are supplemented by a narrative or rationale that explains what they are. The following questions should be answered in the narrative component:

- Why did you include (item) in the portfolio?
- How did you use (item) in the classroom?
- How do you know that (item) was effective--e.g., what did your students learn as a result of incorporating (item) in your teaching?
- How has your teaching changed as a result?
- What have you learned about yourself as a teacher?

To be effective, a teaching portfolio must be more than a mere compilation of teaching documents that are interspersed with random pages of reflection. "[A teaching portfolio] includes documents and materials which collectively suggest the scope and quality of a professor's teaching performance . . . . The portfolio is not an exhaustive compilation of all of the documents and materials that bear on teaching performance. Instead, it presents selected information on teaching activities and solid evidence of their effectiveness."

(Seldin, 2004, p. 2)

### How Should You Get Started In Creating Your Portfolio?

The following is a list of some general strategies:

- Start as early as possible.
- Plan well and systematically collect data.
- Develop a good filing system.
- Regularly sort through, organize, and update information.
- Involve others as consultants and contributors.

#### References

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