

Unit 10

Developing Your Teaching Portfolio

Objectives

- Understand the purposes of a teaching portfolio.
- Know what to include in your portfolio.
- Begin to organize materials for your portfolio
- Prepare or revise your curriculum vita.
- Determine how you will present your teaching materials.
- Plan alternate versions of your portfolio.

In this Unit you will learn how to create a personal teaching portfolio to present yourself as a thoughtful and unique teacher. If your institution requires academic portfolios that include sections on teaching, research and service rather than a portfolio that focuses on only teaching, you will find that the suggestions contained in this unit for developing a teaching portfolio can be used to develop corresponding sections on research and service.

Purposes of a Teaching Portfolio

Constructing a meaningful teaching portfolio requires a lot of work. The following are several reasons why you will want to create such a portfolio:

- *Improving your teaching.* The portfolio will provide a record of your development as a teacher. You can build on what has worked well for you in the classroom and show evidence of your versatility by noting how you changed those things that did not work out well for you.
- *Survival.* When Jim first began to work with students on constructing and revising teaching portfolios in 1994, he told students that having a well constructed portfolio would make them unique in their job search. Today you need a teaching portfolio to keep up with others in the job search, and later for salary and promotion decisions.
- *Recognition.* If (we hope, when) you are nominated for a teaching award, your portfolio will provide the necessary documentation to support your nomination. It can also be used as a source of documentation for annual reviews if required by your institution.

What is it?

A teaching portfolio is an *organized* collection of material that reflects *your ideas* about teaching and your *performance* as a teacher. The italicized words are particularly important:

- “Organized.” There should be a structure that enables the reader to use the portfolio to easily find information about your teaching. We will provide suggestions for organizing your materials.
- “Performance.” The portfolio should provide clear evidence of what you do in your teaching from planning through evaluation. We will discuss the kinds of evidence you can use.
- “Your ideas.” The portfolio shows who you are as a teacher; it is not enough simply to document your performance. A good portfolio will include a well-crafted teaching philosophy that tells the reader why you do what you do and shows your commitment to teaching and your students.

The remainder of this section contains our suggestions for creating and organizing the structure and contents of your portfolio. There are other approaches available both on the Internet and in books on teaching for structuring and developing content for your portfolio. For example, the best-known approach is that of Peter Seldin (2004; Seldin, Miller, & Seldin, 2010) which specifies that a portfolio should be about 7-9 pages long plus appendices. We prefer to organize the portfolio in sections that may vary in length from one to several pages. Both approaches have merit.

Many institutions are beginning to require that materials be stored and submitted electronically in which case the structure and headings for the portfolio may be pre-determined by the institution. Submitting your portfolio in electronic form will require you to scan paper

documents while allowing you to include digital videos of your teaching or student activities.

Some institutions require materials to be stored electronically with a printed summary of materials being submitted for rank and tenure decisions. Regardless of whether you are creating a digital or paper version of your portfolio, you will find the following suggestions for organizing materials useful.

Portfolio Structure

Consider the following structure in preparation for your first activity.

Your portfolio should contain a detailed Table of Contents that is related clearly to the contents of the portfolio. One way to do this is by numbering all pages in the portfolio as you would in a book. However, this reduces your flexibility in adding new materials to a hard copy because you would have to renumber everything when you teach a new course. Obviously this is not a problem for a digital version.

Your portfolio should include the following sections:

1. Personal information.

- Summary of your background, development as a teacher, and career goals. Your complete vita would go in an appendix.
- Description of teaching responsibilities.
- Philosophy of teaching.

2. Separate sections for each of the courses you have taught.

Some of your teaching experiences might have been as a lab instructor, discussion section leader, or independent study supervisor. Treat these types of experiences as if they were separate courses, as they often represent important mentoring and learning experiences for your students.

For each course provide:

- Rationale for the course. How does your course design follow from your philosophy?
- Syllabus.
- Assignments (e.g., term paper).
- Descriptions of how you measure student learning. Put examples of student performance in an appendix.

- Course evaluation data, summarized. Use multiple methods. More complete data may be in an appendix.
- Your self evaluation of the course.

3. Teaching development activities.

This section would include anything you have done to help yourself become a better teacher such as pursuing a teaching certificate program, involvement in professional teaching organizations, and attending conferences or workshops on teaching. Provide a description of each activity. Some materials might belong in an appendix.

4. Other relevant information.

This section might include descriptions of awards you have won, newspaper articles about your teaching, and abstracts of relevant research articles on teaching that you have published (with complete articles in an appendix). If you have videotapes of your teaching, describe them and how the reader could obtain them.

Activity:

- First, get a container (e.g., large bag, box, file drawer) and put all of your potential portfolio stuff in it. The point is to find what you already have and get it in one place. One of Mary's colleagues keeps a file folder on his desk in which he puts any materials as he receives them that he might consider using in his portfolio. He also has a file folder on his computer in which he inserts copies of emails and other electronically received materials that might be useful in the portfolio.
- Second, get a 3-ring binder with index tabs, and an electronic storage device such as a USB flash drive on which to store and organize finished items. Consider keeping both a

hard copy and an electronic copy in the event a document or electronic storage device is lost.

We will now focus on developing the different sections of your portfolio. At the end of this Unit you will find a checklist that can be used to track your progress.

Personal Information

Summary of your background. This is a brief story of your development as a teacher. What or who got you interested in teaching and academic life and in your discipline? If you already have teaching experience, say a little about that. The purpose is to add life to your portfolio. You might conclude this section with a statement of your teaching career goals. Consider your audience carefully for this story and other items in your portfolio. Readers may be put off if your language is too informal or your format is unusual (e.g., poetry). See Appendix A at the conclusion of this unit to see a version of the background section of Jason's teaching portfolio. Use Jason's as one example, but develop your own format to communicate your personal evolution as a teacher.

Activity:

Write a draft summary of your background. Ask peers and your mentor for comments on your draft, and consider their suggestions as you revise the draft.

Curriculum Vitae. The CV is a standard document that every academic person submits when applying for jobs or promotion, but there are right and wrong ways to write it. The

[jobsearching website](#) contains examples and templates for writing your CV. The following list contains our recommendations:

- Do not include marital status, birth date or age.
- If you are applying for a position where teaching will be your primary responsibility, then put your teaching experience in the most prominent position in your vita before your research and other professional experiences.
- For each position you have held related to teaching, briefly describe your teaching responsibilities. For example, Teaching Assistant responsibilities can range from clerical duties (e.g., paper grading) to having full responsibility for teaching a class.
- Under Publications include only items actually published or “in press” in peer-reviewed journals. Use APA, MLA or the style appropriate for your discipline carefully when listing publications. Include separate sections for articles submitted and in preparation, book reviews, invited comments, and conference posters and presentations rather than lumping these things together under the Publications heading.
- Restrict “honors” to college and graduate school academic honors unless the honor relates directly to the position being sought. Being an Eagle Scout or Most Popular Delta Gamma will not be impressive.
- Either list your references (no more than four) or indicate that they are “available on request.” Be sure you have asked individuals for their permission to use them as references in advance. Include at least one person with direct knowledge of your teaching as a reference.

Activity:

Write or revise your vita. Ask someone with experience in hiring faculty to review it.

Teaching Responsibilities. This is an expansion of the teaching experience section of your CV. Describe each of your teaching experiences. For graduate students, include assistantships held; responsibilities for laboratories, independent studies or discussion sections; and clubs or groups supervised. The purpose of this section is to tell the reader what you did on your own as opposed to what you were told to do.

Activity: Write a description of your teaching responsibilities.

Philosophy of Teaching. This is the keystone of your portfolio. In Unit 2 you wrote the first draft of your philosophy. If you have not completed Unit 2, you will want to do so now before proceeding with the remainder of this unit.

Activity:

Review the most recent version of your teaching philosophy. We strongly encourage you to take at least an hour to review this statement, reflect on it, and then revise it. Be sure that it does not contain any spelling and grammatical errors. Potential employers will be interested in both the content and style of this statement.

Teaching Experience . Prepare separate sections for each of your courses. You will want to emphasize those courses where you have had full responsibility for all aspects of the course. However, some of your teaching experiences may have been as a lab instructor, discussion leader, or independent study supervisor. At this time in your career, we suggest that you present these experiences as courses. You might also include your design for a course that you have not yet taught, but that you expect to teach in the future.

Recall our definition of a teaching portfolio: an organized collection of material that reflects your ideas about teaching and your performance as a teacher. For each course include available materials (performance) and your reflections on those materials.

Activity: Select one course to use as a beginning for this section. Collect all your materials from that course. Each course should have at least the items noted below. Prepare all the items noted below for your selected course.

Syllabus. This document shows how you plan your teaching. Apply what you learned in Unit 3.

Rationale for the course. Explain how your course design (syllabus) is related to your teaching philosophy. This is an important link that is missing from many portfolios. Show that your philosophy is something that you actually use to guide your teaching. For example, if your philosophy stresses critical thinking, your course objectives and assignments should reflect that. Your attendance policy may show that you value responsibility or freedom to choose. Your rationale should make these connections clear to the reader of your portfolio. That reader will then have a greater understanding of your philosophy statement.

Assignments. Include copies of your assignments such as papers and projects. Explain how these assignments are related to your course objectives.

Measures of student learning. Describe your assessment methods, but do not include entire examinations unless you have designed something innovative. Explain why you use these methods to measure student learning.

Other materials. Include copies or descriptions of demonstrations, exercises and handouts in an *organized* fashion under this category. Differentiate those materials or activities you created from those you borrowed. Briefly explain why you use these materials,

Evaluation Data

In this section you will document your teaching effectiveness. Your evidence will be more convincing if you use multiple methods of evaluation. If you have not used multiple evaluation methods in the course you are working with now, make sure to do so in the future. Review Unit 8 for details on different evaluation methods.

Student ratings. Describe briefly the tool used to obtain student ratings. For example, you may have used a departmental form on which students circle numbers on a 5- or 7-point scale. Present the average (mean) for each item and standard deviation (if available), and include the number of students responding out of the number enrolled in your course.

Quantitative ratings are useful as an easy summary of student opinion and comparison to previous performance, but they provide minimal information about how to improve your teaching. You also should have qualitative comments from students. Write a summary of the student comments to include in this section of the portfolio. Present criticism as well as praise, and give the reader a fair idea of the dominant opinion. If the number of students is not too

large, consider putting all comments even if you consider them unfair in an appendix to your portfolio.

Observations. Include a written summary of comments from peers, mentors or teaching center staff who have observed your teaching. Ask individuals who observe your class to write a letter that you might include in your portfolio. If your class was videotaped, include a summary of the review. You may want to provide a video sample of your teaching.

Examples of student performance. Student learning is the gold standard for measuring your effectiveness as a teacher, but it can be difficult to demonstrate student learning in a portfolio. The following are suggested ways you might use to demonstrate student learning:

- Compare quiz or exam scores before and after you implemented a change in your course.
- Present an example of a typical student's project or paper on which you have written comments. This shows how you use feedback to facilitate learning.
- Ask students to write self-evaluations of their learning.
- Include student presentation materials or publication resulting from independent study projects that you coordinated or collaborative activities with students.

Components of the type just describe would be placed in an appendix.

Self-evaluation. Include your reflections on what went well in this course and what you would want to change. Comment on the evaluation data provided and how you might respond to the evaluation data. If you taught this course more than once, discuss how your teaching has developed. Relate this information to your teaching philosophy statement.

Activity: Collect all your evaluation data for this course and organize it. Write your self-evaluation.

Teaching Development Activities

In this section you will include anything you have done to help yourself develop as a teacher, including completing this program. For each item describe the activity, present materials (or examples), and state what you learned and how you used what you learned.

Examples of items that might be included are:

- Completion of a teaching center certificate program, including a list of the seminars you attended and a description of the certificate requirements. You might also include general contact information for the teaching center. As director of a teaching center, Mary was contacted often by representatives of search committees interviewing candidates who had received the teaching certificate offered through the teaching center.
- Conferences or workshops on teaching that you attended.
- Involvement in professional teaching organizations.
- Completion of a graduate course on teaching within your discipline or in higher education. Consider including the course syllabus and samples of your completed assignments in an appendix.

Activity: Add these items to your portfolio.

Other Relevant Information

In this last section include relevant information and materials that do not fit in the earlier categories. Such items might include descriptions of teaching awards you received, letters from students (with permission) about your teaching, abstracts of research on teaching, etc.

Activity: Add any relevant information to this section.

Your Completed Portfolio

Congratulations! You have completed the contents of your teaching portfolio. Assemble all your materials in your 3-ring binder. Label the tab dividers to correspond to major sections in your table of contents. Add a title page: "Teaching Portfolio of John Q." Your portfolio should look good; professional but not glitzy.

You should also have an electronic version in a format that is easy to revise. Putting your portfolio on a website or storage device that can be easily replicated makes your information accessible to potential employers.

Alternate Versions

At the beginning of the unit, we stated three primary purposes of a teaching portfolio: improvement, survival, and recognition. Having versions of your portfolio of different lengths will help you better meet these purposes.

The complete version includes all your materials for all courses and other experiences, with your commentary developed over time. You should have this version in your three-ring binder or electronically on your computer or your storage device. This long version includes all your materials and allows for a central place to make additions and revisions over time.

A portable version of your portfolio includes basic information (e.g., philosophy, vita) and a sample of materials. You might store it in a thinner binder, an electronic storage device or a website. The purpose of this version is to provide a condensed version that can be easily reviewed by potential employers and search committees. Finally, a brief 2-3 page summary of your philosophy and the contents of your portfolio can conveniently be sent to places where you want to attract interest in your teaching. In the next unit, we will discuss the “hook, line, and sinker” approach to landing a job. This brief version is part of the hook.

Final Advice on Constructing a Teaching Portfolio

The following tips come from two sources: Maria Lynn (1994) and Barbara Linneweh-Heine (1994), who constructed teaching portfolios as graduate students, and Peter Seldin (1997), who has written extensively on this topic.

1. Don't procrastinate; just do it.
2. Appearance matters; make it look good. You need both substance and style.
3. Make it user friendly with a detailed table of contents and tabs in your hard copy or links in an electronic version.
4. Proof read carefully. Many readers will be put off by careless use of language.
5. Get feedback from experienced faculty.
6. Stay current with your portfolio. Keep it up to date and do not let your ideas become stale.

Please see Appendix 10C for a checklist to help you chart your progress in completing your teaching portfolio.

References

- Linneweh-Heine, B. J. (1994, August). Building a teaching portfolio. in J. H. Korn (Chair), Teaching for Success--Influencing search committees and seeking awards. Symposium presented at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, CA.
- Lynn, M. (1994, August). Teaching portfolio--Costs and benefits. In J. H. Korn (Chair), Teaching for Success--Influencing search committees and seeking awards. Symposium presented at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, CA.
- Seldin, P. (2004). *The teaching portfolio: A practical guide to improved performance and promotion/tenure decisions*. (3rd ed.). Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company.
- Seldin, P., Miller, J. E., & Seldin, C. A. (2010). *The teaching portfolio: A practical guide to improved performance and promotion/tenure decisions*. (4th ed.) Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Appendix 10A

Sample background section of teaching portfolio

History. For my first class as a teacher of record, I was merely handed a sample syllabus, given the textbook, and offered the best of luck for an excellent semester. There was no instruction or accountability for my work in the classroom. Teaching was seen as an afterthought to my clinical work and research, and the only part of my graduate training that was seemingly undeserving of instruction or supervision. Through extensive reading and teaching experience at a number of institutions of higher learning, my philosophy of teaching has evolved. With this evolution has come a greater appreciation for my role as an educator in this society.

Immediately upon arriving at Auburn University, I consciously strived to be accountable for my work in the classroom. I had the pleasure of having discussions with colleagues pertaining to developing critical thinking in students, refining my presentation skills, and handling difficulties that commonly arise when teaching. I developed a research program pertaining to the teaching of psychology in which I sought to better understand the relationship between student textbook use, pedagogical aids, and learning. It was not long before I was presenting at a couple of regional conferences. I even published a journal article pertaining to teaching in a well respected journal. In time, I became an active member of the American Psychological Association's Division 2, The Society for the Teaching of Psychology. In getting to know members of this organization, I got to rub shoulders with some really good teachers, get tons of tips on issues that continue to challenge me in the classroom and even made some friends along the way. In short, my journey as a teacher of psychology has been a truly fulfilling professional and personal experience.

Appendix 10B

Sample Quantitative Summary of Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness

[Note: Results often are presented as means, which obscures the shape of the distribution. Having the number of responses out of the total N and percentages is more descriptive.]

Jason F. Sikorski, Ph. D.

Quantitative Feedback Summary

Two sections of XXXXXXXXXXXX

Spring XXXX

Were you provided with a course outline or syllabus at the beginning of this course?

Yes = 33/33 100%

Was an explanation of course attendance policies given at the beginning of the term?

Yes = 32/33 96.97%

Uncertain = 1/33 3.03%

Were the title and catalog description of this course consistent with the course content?

Yes = 31/33 93.94%

Uncertain = 2/33 6.06%

Was a written explanation of grading policies distributed at the beginning of the course?

Yes = 33/33 100%

Did your class begin and end at the schedule time?

Always = 27/33 81.82%

Generally = 6/33 18.18%

Were any classes in this course ever cancelled?

Never 13/33 39.39%

Only rarely and 20/33 60.61%

With an Explanation

The time in this class was worthwhile

Strongly Agree = 27/33 81.82%

Agree = 6/33 18.18%

The methods of instruction have helped me understand the material

Strongly Agree = 29/33 87.88%

Agree = 4/33 12.12%

Major points in this class were made clear

Strongly Agree =	29/33	87.88%
Agree =	4/33	12.12%

The instructor has been available to me for individual consultation

Strongly Agree =	31/33	93.94%
Agree =	2/33	6.06%

It was possible for me to make comments, ask questions, or express ideas in class

Strongly Agree =	31/33	93.94%
Agree =	2/33	6.06%

Class meetings have been intellectually stimulating

Strongly Agree =	28/33	84.85%
Agree =	2/33	6.06%
Disagree =	3/33	6.06%

Reading the assigned material has helped me understand this subject

Strongly Agree =	23/33	69.70%
Agree =	7/33	21.21%
Disagree =	3/33	9.09%

Exams and out of class assignments have helped me understand this subject

Strongly Agree =	26/33	78.79%
Agree =	5/33	15.15%
Don't Know =	2/33	6.06%

** 93.94% agree or strongly agree that exams and out of class assignments have helped them understand the subject

My work for this class has been graded fairly

Strongly Agree =	26/33	78.79%
Agree =	6/33	18.18%
Disagree =	1/33	3.03%

The number of exams and other graded assignments have been sufficient to evaluate my progress

Strongly Agree =	25/33	75.76%
Agree =	7/33	21.21%
Disagree =	1/33	3.03%

My experiences in this class make me want to learn more about this subject

Strongly Agree =	24/33	72.73%
Agree =	4/33	12.12%
Disagree =	2/33	6.06%
Strongly Disagree =	2/33	6.06%
Don't Know =	1/33	3.03%

I would rate the quality of instruction in this course is high.

Strongly Agree =	30/33	90.91%
Agree =	1/33	3.03%
Disagree =	2/33	6.06%

I would rate the overall quality of this course as high

Strongly Agree =	26/33	78.79%
Agree =	5/33	15.15%
Disagree =	2/33	6.06%

Appendix 10C

Checklist of Progress

___ Get a 3-ring binder with tabs for your hard copy. You want this thing to look good.

___ Set up a folder with subfolders on your computer or storage device such as a USB flash drive to store an electronic version of your portfolio.

___ Create a detailed table of contents.

You probably will complete this after you have organized your other sections. Make the table of contents user friendly. Readers should easily find what they are looking for in the tabbed sections or through links in the electronic version.

Personal information.

___ Summarize your background, development as a teacher, and career goals.

___ Prepare a curriculum vitae. You can find examples [here](#).

___ Describe your teaching responsibilities.

___ Write or revise your philosophy of teaching.

Courses

Create separate sections for each of the courses you have taught or are teaching. For graduate students, some of your teaching experiences will have been as a lab instructor, discussion section leader, or the like. At this time in your career, treat some of these experiences as if they were courses. For each course provide:

___ Rationale for the course. How does your course design follow from your philosophy?

___ Syllabus.

- ___ Assignments (e.g., term paper).
- ___ Descriptions of how you measure student learning. Include examples of student performance in an appendix.
- ___ Other course materials.
- ___ Course evaluation data, summarized. Use multiple methods. Include more complete data in an appendix. Indicate if a video is available.
- ___ Your self evaluation of the course. Include what went well and what you would change in the future. If you taught the course more than once, include information on how your teaching developed.

Teaching development activities.

This section includes anything you have done to help yourself become a better teacher.

- ___ List conferences you attended or workshops on teaching. Provide a description of the activity and say what you learned. Some materials might belong in an appendix.
- ___ List your involvement in professional teaching organizations.
- ___ Indicate if you completed a teaching center's program and include details of the program.
- ___ Include information on any graduate courses on teaching in your discipline or in higher education that you have completed.

Other relevant information.

This section might include descriptions of awards you have won, newspaper articles about your teaching, and abstracts of relevant research articles that you published (with complete article in appendix).