



PORTFOLIOS

Rubric for Assessing the Use of Portfolios for Assessing Program Learning Outcomes

Criterion	Initial	Emerging	Developed	Highly Developed
Clarification of Students' Task	Instructions to students for portfolio development provide insufficient detail for them to know what faculty expect. Instructions may not identify outcomes to be addressed in the portfolio.	Students receive some written instructions for their portfolios, but they still have problems determining what is required of them and/or why they are compiling a portfolio.	Students receive written instructions that describe faculty expectations in detail and include the purpose of the portfolio, types of evidence to include, role of the reflective essay (if required), and format of the finished product.	Students in the program understand the portfolio requirement and the rationale for it, and they view the portfolio as helping them develop self-assessment skills. Faculty may monitor the developing portfolio to provide formative feedback and/or advise individual students.
Valid Results	It is not clear that valid evidence for each relevant outcome is collected <u>and/or</u> individual reviewers use idiosyncratic criteria to assess student work.	Appropriate evidence is collected for each outcome, and faculty have discussed relevant criteria for assessing each outcome.	Appropriate evidence is collected for each outcome; faculty use explicit criteria, such as agreed-upon rubrics, to assess student attainment of each outcome. Rubrics are usually shared with students.	Assessment criteria, e.g., in the form of rubrics, have been pilot-tested and refined over time; they are shared with students, and student may have helped develop them. Feedback from external reviewers has led to refinements in the assessment process. The department also uses external benchmarking data.
Reliable Results	Those who review student work are not calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way, and there are no checks for inter-rater reliability.	Reviewers are calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way <u>or</u> faculty routinely check for inter-rater reliability.	Reviewers are calibrated to apply assessment criteria in the same way, and faculty routinely check for inter-rater reliability.	Reviewers are calibrated; faculty routinely find that assessment data have high inter-rater reliability.
Results Are Used	Results for each outcome are collected, but they are not discussed among the faculty.	Results for each outcome are collected and discussed by the faculty, but results have not been used to improve the program.	Results for each outcome are collected, discussed by faculty, and used to improve the program.	Faculty routinely discuss results, plan needed changes, secure necessary resources, and implement changes. They may collaborate with others, such as librarians or Student Affairs professionals, to improve student learning. Students may also participate in discussions and/or receive feedback, either individual or in the aggregate. Follow-up studies confirm that changes have improved learning.
If e-Portfolios Are Used	There is no technical support for students or faculty to learn the software or to deal with problems.	There is informal or minimal formal support for students and faculty.	Formal technical support is readily available and proactively assists in learning the software and solving problems.	Support is readily available, proactive, and effective. Tech support personnel may also participate in refining the overall portfolio process.

How Visiting Team Members Can Use the Portfolio Rubric

Portfolios can serve many purposes besides assessment; in fact, these other purposes are actually much more common. Portfolios may be compiled so students can share their work with family and friends. They may be designed to build students' confidence by showing development over time or by displaying best work. They may be used for advising and career counseling, or so students can show their work during a job interview. The first thing a team needs to do is determine that the portfolios are used for *assessment*, and not for another purpose.

Conclusions about the quality of the assessment process should be based on discussion with relevant department members (e.g., chair, assessment coordinator, faculty, students) and a review of the program's written portfolio assignment. Two common types of portfolios are:

- Showcase portfolios—collections of each student's best work
- Developmental portfolios—collections of work from early, middle, and late stages in the student's academic career that demonstrate growth

Faculty generally require students to include a reflective essay that describes how the evidence in the portfolio demonstrates their achievement of program learning outcomes. Sometimes faculty monitor developing portfolios to provide formative feedback and/or advising to students, and sometimes they collect portfolios only as students near graduation. Portfolio assignments should clarify the purpose of the portfolio, what kinds of evidence should be included, and the format (e.g., paper vs. e-portfolios); and students should view the portfolio as contributing to their personal development.

The rubric has five major dimensions and a fifth dimension limited to e-portfolios:

1. **Clarification of Students' Task.** Most students have never created a portfolio, and they need explicit guidance. Questions. Does the portfolio assignment provide sufficient detail so students understand the purpose, the types of evidence to include, the learning outcomes to address, the role of the reflective essay (if any), and the required format? Do students view the portfolio as contributing to their ability to self-assess? Do faculty use the developing portfolios to assist individual students?
2. **Valid Results.** Sometimes portfolios lack valid evidence for assessing particular outcomes. For example, portfolios may not allow faculty to assess how well students can deliver oral presentations. Judgments about that evidence need to be based on well-established, agreed-upon criteria that specify (usually in rubrics) how to identify work that meets or exceeds expectations. Questions: Do the portfolios systematically include valid evidence for each targeted outcome? Are faculty using well-established, agreed-upon criteria, such as rubrics, to assess the evidence for each outcome? Have faculty pilot tested and refined their process? Are criteria shared with students? Are they collaborating with colleagues at other institutions to secure benchmarking (comparison) data?
3. **Reliable Results.** Well-qualified judges should reach the same conclusions about a student's achievement of a learning outcome, demonstrating inter-rater reliability. If two judges independently assess a set of materials, their ratings can be correlated. Sometimes a discrepancy index is used. How often do the two raters give identical ratings, ratings one point apart, ratings two points apart, etc.? Data are reliable if the correlation is high and/or if discrepancies are small. Raters generally are calibrated ("normed") to increase reliability. Calibration usually involves a training session in which raters apply rubrics to pre-selected examples of student work that vary in quality, then reach consensus about the rating each example should receive. The purpose is to ensure that all raters apply the criteria in the same way so that each student's product would receive the same score, regardless of rater. Questions: Are reviewers calibrated? Are checks for inter-rater reliability made? Is there evidence of high inter-rater reliability?
4. **Results Are Used.** Assessment is a process designed to monitor and improve learning, so assessment findings should have an impact. Faculty should reflect on results for each outcome and decide if they are acceptable or disappointing. If results do not meet their standards, faculty should determine what changes should be made, e.g., in pedagogy, curriculum, student support, or faculty support. Questions: Do faculty collect assessment results, discuss them, and reach conclusions about student achievement? Do they develop explicit plans to improve student learning? Do they implement those plans? Do they have a history of securing necessary resources to support this implementation? Do they collaborate with other campus professionals to improve student learning? Do follow-up studies confirm that changes have improved learning?
5. **If e-Portfolios Are Used.** Faculty and students alike require support, especially when a new software program is introduced. Lack of support can lead to frustration and failure of the process. Support personnel may also have useful insights into how the portfolio assessment process can be refined. Questions: What is the quality and extent of technical support? Of inclusion in review and refinement of the portfolio process? What is the overall level of faculty and student satisfaction with the technology and support services?