



PREPARING YOUR TEACHING PORTFOLIO

WHAT IS A TEACHING PORTFOLIO?

A teaching portfolio is a record of your professional development as a teacher. It illustrates your philosophy of teaching and your overall approach to teaching, student learning, assessment and your professional development.

“It includes documents and materials that collectively suggest the scope and qualities of... teaching performance. The portfolio is to teaching what lists of publications, grants and honours are to research and scholarship.” (Seldin, 2010: 3).

Typically, it is a personal record of your teaching experience and your reflective practice over your career (Ashwin *et al.*, 2015; Davis & Fitzpatrick, 2019; Sebolao, 2019). More importantly, preparing a teaching portfolio requires teaching beliefs and practices to be put under the microscope with the aim of rendering explicit knowledge, which may currently be implicit, and framing teaching itself as a source of scholarly enquiry (Boyer, 1990; Schön, 1995, Trigwell, 2021).

While your portfolio makes a case for who you are as a teacher, it should not be confused with a teaching CV. Good teaching portfolios are reflective documents, which provide a coherent narrative of the teacher’s professional journey. This narrative uses evidence, which clearly substantiates the commentary made about this journey and reflects on the impact that teaching has on student learning. Klenowski *et al.*, (2006) emphasise the importance of establishing the purpose of the portfolio; the impact of portfolio use on the approach to learning, to teaching and to professional development; the changes to professional practice brought about as a result of the learning; and the need to consider issues related to ethics and confidentiality.

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

Teaching portfolios have two specific purposes according to Mues & Sorcinelli (2000):

- A developmental *process* for reflecting on and improving one’s teaching;
- An evaluative *product* for personnel decisions such as tenure, promotion, or a teaching award.

It is a very useful document to have at various points in your career and will help you to focus on developing your skills and abilities as a teacher. It is a process which

encourages you to think about your teaching and to reflect on your approach to teaching and how this may have evolved over time. It also helps to reinforce your worth as an educator when reflecting on your teaching and related activities over the course of an academic year.

DEVELOPING YOUR TEACHING PORTFOLIO

In devising a teaching portfolio, the purpose will dictate content, e.g. who the audience (if any) will be, what it is required for, etc. This document refers to best practice when compiling a portfolio for award purposes or for formative development. Typically, an award-based portfolio should be reflective and should engage with the principles of the National Professional Development Framework for all Staff Who Teach in Higher Education (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education, 2016). This is Ireland's first framework to support the professional development of those who teach in Higher Education. It is underpinned by a set of core values and provides a structured outline of professional development activities for teaching and learning. Engaging deeply with, and reflecting on, this framework in the context of your own teaching will be highly beneficial to you in developing your portfolio.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A TEACHING PORTFOLIO?

When you are choosing materials and artefacts to demonstrate how your teaching has been effective, it is important to provide variety. Student Evaluations of Teaching are certainly valuable, but they are insufficient on their own (Hornstein, 2017). Therefore, they will need to be complemented with other evidence if you wish to provide a comprehensive overview of your teaching. Think about additional opportunities to gain feedback on your teaching, e.g. through engaging in peer observation of teaching and/or including comments from external examiners.

While teaching portfolios are unique to each teacher, the following five section headings should help direct you in terms of what to include, and should provide a helpful framework within which to document and reflect on your teaching:

1. Introduction: Statement of Teaching Philosophy
2. Teaching Performance and Effectiveness
3. Planning and Preparation
4. Assessment and Examination of Student Learning
5. Professional Development: Past, Present and Future

1. Introduction: Statement of Teaching Philosophy

The teaching philosophy is a statement about how you view teaching and your personal orientation towards teaching and learning within your academic discipline. In effect, this is the part of your portfolio where you present your ideological stance on teaching.

O' Farrell (n.d.) highlights a number of questions to reflect on when considering your teaching philosophy:

- What do I believe about teaching?
- What are my goals as a teacher?
- What demonstrates my desire to grow as a teacher?
- What are the opportunities and constraints under which I and others learn?
- Has my approach to teaching changed?
- What role do my students play in the classroom (listeners, participants etc.)?
- What teaching practices do I use and prefer? Why?

It is important to distil your beliefs about teaching down to their essence. As your teaching philosophy is a personal statement, it should be presented in the first person. It is also a good idea to elucidate at this point how long you have taught for, and your specific context of teaching, e.g. the discipline within which you teach.

As you develop your teaching portfolio, it is useful to think about how your teaching philosophy is reflected in your practices, and how you are illustrating that. It is important to provide specific examples, which illustrate how you apply your teaching philosophy in your practice.

2. Teaching Performance and Effectiveness

Highlight and discuss the key disciplines that you teach and describe your delivery strategies, evaluation of the quality of teaching and how you would describe the teacher/class relationship.

- ***Versatility, amount and level of teaching***
 - Clearly outline your teaching roles and responsibilities, including course/module titles, and whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate etc. (best presented in a table).
- ***Range of teaching strategies and quality of teaching***
 - How do you teach and/or enable learning in your modules?
 - Why do you elect to use these strategies, and how do they impact on student learning?
 - How do you evaluate and reflect on whether these strategies have been successful?
- ***Teacher/class relationship***
 - What sort of classroom dynamic do you aim to develop?
 - How and why do you do this?
 - What evidence do you have that you have been successful?

3. Planning and Preparation

Describe the teaching and learning methods you employ and the teaching materials you use (case studies, handouts, visual aids, labs, etc.)

- ***Teaching and learning methods***
 - How do you develop and facilitate an effective learning experience for your students?
- ***Teaching materials***
 - What is the rationale behind the materials you use in class?

4. Assessment and Examination of Student Learning

Describe your approach to assessment and discuss any innovative assessment strategies or materials which you have developed:

- **Assessment strategies**
 - What range of specific assessment strategies do you use?
 - How do these strategies complement the learning outcomes of your module or course?
 - What impact does assessment have on your students?
 - How do you provide feedback for your students?
- **Innovation in assessment**
 - Have you designed new and effective methods of assessment?
 - Can you include anonymous samples of students' work to exemplify your innovations in assessment approaches?

5. Professional Development: Past, Present and Future

This section gives you an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss how your teaching has developed during your career and your plans for future professional development. A brief closing section could include your thoughts about the experience of preparing the portfolio and how it has affected your teaching practice, or any concluding remarks you consider appropriate.

Include detail on activities that demonstrate your commitment to professional development, or that demonstrate the regard that your professional peers hold for you. For example, you might include information on the following:

- Invitations to teach elsewhere (as guest lecturer)
- Publications in pedagogical journals
- Publications of student textbooks or teaching software
- Leadership in team teaching, contribution to the development of teaching within the University or elsewhere
- Professional service to other Universities (as external examiner, subject expert or adviser/consultant)
- Teaching appointments such as visiting professorships/lectureship
- Participation in third level teaching and learning training or workshops.

FORMAT OF THE FINAL PORTFOLIO

It is useful to approach your portfolio as you would any piece of academic writing in terms of presentation. Ensure that you include the following:

- Title page and table of contents.
- Headings and subheadings that clearly signpost the material for the reader.
- References from the literature, where appropriate, that support your pedagogical approaches.
- Evidence to support every statement on your approach or contribution to teaching, including clear signposting to appropriate and relevant material in Appendices.

You may also submit your portfolio electronically using an e-portfolio platform of your choice. Please ensure that the external panel are provided with any necessary passwords to ensure full access. The format of the e-portfolio may vary compared to the format outlined above, depending on the platform used, e.g. you might consider a separate tab for each of the sections.

NOTES

- Phase 1 portfolios must not exceed 1500 words in length and phase 2 portfolios must not exceed 4,000 words in length (excluding Appendices).
- Supporting evidence can be included in Appendices, but this material must be relevant, appropriate and clearly signposted.
- Since the portfolio is a narrative, make sure that all supporting evidence included in the portfolio (e.g., quantitative results of SET evaluations) is incorporated into the textual flow of the document and/or that the relevant and appropriate supporting evidence is clearly signposted to the Appendix.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING ON TEACHING PORTFOLIOS

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