

Authentic Assessment

Portfolio



DEFINITION

A portfolio is a systematic collection of students' work that demonstrates their learning and growth. It can include artifacts (e.g., written assignments, project work, assessments) on learning activities that the student participated in, the tasks they accomplished, as well as the achievements they attained in a given period of time. Portfolios can also help monitor the development of students' learning by documenting students' self-reflections on their learning process.

There are various types of portfolios, but we can mainly classify them into showcase portfolios or developmental portfolios.

Showcase portfolios are those that only consist of the best work of a student. The products of learning are emphasized. Developmental portfolios refer to those that demonstrate and/or provide evidence of students' growth, progress, and any changes experienced in their learning. The process of learning is emphasized.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

To design a portfolio assessment, teachers should take the following steps:

1. Define and determine the purpose of the portfolio and who the audience will be.
2. Identify the learning outcomes of the portfolio.
3. Decide on the elements that students need to include in their portfolio.
4. Provide instructions to guide students in developing their portfolio, including for collecting and selecting information, reflecting and formatting, as well as for submitting the portfolio.
5. Develop the grading criteria for the portfolio assessment. Establish performance standards and provide examples of exemplary work.



BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

Benefits

- Using portfolios as an assessment method can encourage students to reflect on their learning.
- Portfolios allow students to document their learning, which may be useful for their future studies and careers.
- Portfolios allow teachers to assess students using a variety of assignments and activities, which can also be used to build up their final portfolio.

Challenges

- The preparation of portfolios is time-consuming. Additional guidance and assistance for students may be needed, especially if they are not familiar with portfolios.
- Students often need to compile and maintain their portfolios outside of class. It may be challenging to motivate them to do so.

CASE SAMPLE

Self-assessed portfolio assessment in Language Arts course at a private university in Lebanon

Design of the assessment:

Self-assessed portfolios were used in a language arts course. Throughout the course, students were required to conduct research and engage in various activities such as text analysis as well as materials development and practical reviews of four major language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and other sub-skills. Activities were undertaken individually, in pairs, or in groups. At the end of the course, students self-assessed and reflected upon all of the above tasks they worked on, the class presentations they took part in, and their classmates' presentations. Finally, students submitted a written reflection in which they were asked to comment on the course and the assessment method used.

How are students assessed?

Three rubrics were used for students to self-assess their work and portfolios. The first rubric was for the course's tasks and activities, prompting students to reflect on their (1) language use, (2) originality/interest, and (3) organization of each task. The second rubric was for assessing their own and their peers' class presentations.

This rubric's criteria included (1) language use, (2) originality, (3) organization/presentation, (4) use of appropriate exercises, and (5) an overall grade. The third rubric was for grading the overall presentation of students' portfolios. Students were assessed in terms of (1) content, (2) organization and presentation, (3) consistency and development, (4) originality and interest, and (5) their reflection and self-assessment.

The three rubrics used the same 5 performance standards to grade students across the respective criteria: unacceptable, superficial, apprentice, proficient, and distinguished.

Reference

Bahous, R. (2008). The self-assessed portfolio: A case study. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(4), 381-393.

TIPS FOR DESIGNING

- The design of portfolio assessments should provide students with adequate opportunities to reflect on their work.
- There are different types of portfolios; it is thus important for teachers to have a clear understanding of the characteristics of each type and select the appropriate one to be used for their assessment design. This will help ensure that the portfolio task is aligned with the learning outcomes to be achieved.