Teaching Portfolios at University of Galway

Guidelines and Requirements

Introduction

Teaching Portfolios are now well recognised within higher education as a means of:

- providing insight into an academic staff member's views, perspectives and philosophy of teaching and learning;
- demonstrating the individual's range of experience and approaches to teaching, feedback and assessment;
- summarising and reflecting on student and peer evaluations, and indicating how such are responded to;
- providing an indication of professional and scholarly activities relating to teaching, learning, course design, student support and assessment.

Evidence and examples are essential and are usually provided in an appendix whilst being discussed within the main body of the portfolio.

Teaching Portfolios are developed by many academic staff, who update them regularly to ensure that they are a form of 'living document' and as a means of embedding regular reflection and review into their professional practice.

Increasingly, however, they are being used for job applications, promotions and applications for teaching awards. In these cases, of course, evidence which is independently gathered or which illustrates the lecturer's standing within the teaching of their subject discipline can be particularly effective.

In short, the document demonstrates that the author takes a reflective, professional and academic approach to the teaching and learning dimension of their work.

Format

A variety of models of Teaching Portfolio exist, with considerable variation in the weighting of the various components. In general, for use as a personal reflection tool, then of course the choice of format should be one that best suits your needs and circumstances.

For formal purposes, where the portfolio is being submitted for review or consideration by a promotions or awards panel, then it is appropriate to agree a standardised, comparable and transparent structure. The model adopted in NUI Galway, following consultation and review of the promotions criteria, is an adaptation of our long-established framework that brings greater clarity to the requirements for each section.

The Teaching Portfolio should be structured as follows.

Section	
1. A Statement of Teaching Philosophy	Provides a description of the author's view as to the underlying principles upon which their approaches to teaching and learning are based; giving appropriate reference to conceptual frameworks or theoretical perspectives if appropriate.
2. Summary of Teaching Experience & Responsibilities	Summary, indicating the range of experience, levels of courses, and teaching & learning scenarios (eg project supervision, large and small class teaching, blended learning, postgraduate and undergraduate, etc). Experience of thesis examination, both internal and external and other similar assessment responsibilities should be included here.
3. Teaching Skills & Approach	Provide an indication (backed by appropriate evidence) of the level of skill, confidence and commitment to teaching; the selection of appropriate methods; the setting of expectations and challenge ?; the provision of formative feedback; coping with particular challenges; etc. Indicate here any Teaching Awards that may have been obtained.
4. Curriculum & Course Design/Development	Experience in the review and revision of existing programmes & modules and the design of new modules and programmes. Examples may include the incorporation of active learning methods and formative feedback; ensuring disciplinary currency; close alignment with the *Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy;* new modes (such as part‑‑‑time, online, blended, etc) and the use of accepted good practice within the discipline.
5. Student Support & Facilitation	Availability and approachability to students, providing advice, dealing with particular needs, mentoring and supervision, support of students on placement and in fieldwork and a clear commitment to student retention and success. This section should also include items related to the supervision and development of postgraduate research students.
6. Innovation & Leadership in Teaching & Learning	Indication of a leadership role within the development of new programmes (and their subsequent implementation); leading in the review of existing course offerings (sustainability, refining portfolio of offerings, etc); leading in the innovation of teaching and assessment approaches (including technologies and flexible learning

	programmes); ability to seek resources, collaboration and participation of colleagues and partners; special project funding or grants; active contribution to teaching committees; etc.
7. Professional Development & Scholarship	Attainment of appropriate professional qualifications (such as the PgCert in Teaching & Learning in HE, PgDip/MA in Academic Practice); publications and conference papers on teaching & learning (including textbooks); research or scholarship in teaching, in the discipline or higher education in general; dissemination of ideas nationally or internationally; mentoring and supporting colleagues; linking teaching and research.
8. Appendices	Summary of key pieces of evidence and samples of work.

Supporting materials and forms of evidence

In the complex world of contemporary higher education, particularly in institutions which span not just a range of disciplines but also which offer programmes at different levels (pre---undergraduate to post---doctoral) and in different modes (online, blended, face---to---face, part---time, etc), then there is of course a wide set of potential example materials and forms of evidence which may be available that captures activity in the areas covered in the portfolio.

As mentioned before, independent evidence naturally adds more weight to a case and where such is available it should be used. So also is information that indicates how an individual staff member's work compares with the norms of their particular discipline. In part, this also demonstrates awareness of the broader context, subject matter and disciplinary currency.

Indeed, since the purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate what might be termed 'reflective practice', then the inclusion not just of evidence of activity but also how one has responded to feedback, and the extent to which professional development has been embraced, are all valuable contributions both to the narrative sections and the appendices.

The following table provides some examples of the types of evidence or supplementary materials that a reviewer might expect to find (or find reference to) in a teaching portfolio. Of course, not all apply to all disciplines. It is important that statements you make in the portfolio about your teaching practice are backed up by the appropriate evidence, but it is also important to be selective in the amount of evidence that you provide.

Category	Potential Evidence/Data
Teaching Experience and responsibilities	Summary table of teaching experience, including range of scenarios, assessment types, etc – Note also particular constraints such as contractual terms, part-time work, etc.
Teaching Skill & Approach	• Results from, and responses to, student surveys • Standard module feedback • GSE (grouped student evaluation) • Other student feedback methods • PLT[1] (peer review) summary • Teaching Awards • External Examiner reports/comments • HoD/HoS or other references
Curriculum & Course Design/ Development	• Example teaching and assessment materials • Course Documentation • Quality Reviews • Accreditation approval • External Examinar reports • LTA checklist[2] • External feedback • Peer review
Student Support & Facilitation	• Surveys, questionnaires • List of responsibilities and examples of activities • HoD/HoS or other reference/endorsements • Other feedback (alumni, partner organisations, etc)
Innovation & Leadership	• Programme leadership and development, including for new and innovative courses/models and for review of existing portfolio of programmes. • Active role in teaching and learning committees, etc • Appropriate HoS, Vice-Dean (or similar) experience • Funding obtained for teaching innovations and development • Support indicating collegial and collaborative approach

Professional Development & Scholarship	• Attainment of
	   o Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching & Learning in HE
	   o PgDip in Academic Practice
	   o MA in Academic Practice
	• Active and continuing participation in professional development programmes and events (indicating outcomes where appropriate)
	• Publications related to teaching & learning
	• Conference presentations and organisation
	• Membership of appopriate professional organisations and networks

---

[1] This refers toUniveristy of Galway's "Partnerships for Learning & Teaching" scheme in which staff review each other's teaching and/or course materials.

[2] In other words, an indication that the course(s) meet the specific requirements of the *Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy*.

Further information and suggested reading

There are a large number of papers, books and other documents on Teaching Portfolios and related aspects, some of which are listed below. This is by no means a comprehensive or definitive list.

Baume, D. & Yorke, M. (2002), 'The reliability of assessment by portfolio on a course to develop and accredit teachers in higher education', *Studies in Higher Education*, **27**, 1, pp. 7–25.

Boyer, E. (1990), Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton NJ.

Dyrud, M.A. 1997, 'Portfolio assessment for promotion and tenure: Three assessment challenges', in Proceedings of the 27th Annual Frontiers in Education Conference, eds D. Budney & G. Bjedov, ASEE/IEEE Pittsburg PA. Available online at: http://fie.engrng.pitt.edu/fie97/papers/1426.pdf

Elton, L. 2001, 'Research and teaching: Conditions for a positive link [1]', Teaching in Higher Education, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 43–56.

Felder, R.M. & Brent, R. (1996), 'If you've got it, flaunt it: Uses and abuses of teaching portfolios', Chemical Engineering Education, **30**, 3, pp. 188–189.

Knapper, C.W. & Wright, A. (2001), 'Using portfolios to document good teaching: Premises, purposes, practices', New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 88, pp. 19–29.

Kreber, C. (2002), 'Teaching excellence, teaching expertise, and the scholarship of teaching', Innovative Higher Education, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 5–23.

McLean, M. & Bullard, J.E. (2000), 'Becoming a university teacher: Evidence from teaching portfolios (how academics learn to teach)', Teacher Development, **4**, 1, pp. 79–101.

Murphy, T., MacLaren, I., (2007), "Theory and Practice in the Development of Teaching Portfolios at NUIG", in O'Farrell (2007), "Teaching Portfolio Practice in Ireland: A Handbook", AISHE.

O'Farrell, C., (ed) (2007), "Teaching Portfolio Practice in Ireland: A Handbook", AISHE Publications, available online at: http://www.aishe.org/readings/2007---2/

Schön, D. (1983), The Reflective Practitioner, Basic Books, New York.

Seldin, P. (2004), The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions, 3rd edn, Anker Publishing, Bolton MA.