

Portfolios

Nikki Walsh

DESCRIPTION

A portfolio is a selected collection of student work over a designated time-frame. The content of the portfolio permits the student to exhibit a range of work (often called artefacts) that may be as varied as audio clips, videos, drawings, photos, written work, and journals. This enables the student to engage in and be tested on a range of skills across a variety of tasks over a period of time. A portfolio can attract marks for completion of tasks, and application of knowledge, but can also require reflection and critical thinking.

Virtues

- Can be a highly engaging form of assessment for student and assessor
- Can be a portable sample of work to take forward as part of a larger portfolio of work, eg, job applications
- Can feel more creative, modern and applicable to the “real world” than other exam methods
- Can be a living document that the student uses to track their educational journey in a meaningful and satisfying way
- Can track not just what is learned but how it is learned, and how this informs the students future learning, especially with reflective journals
- Can impart a sense of progress, and competence, especially in a skill
- Formative assessment can be visibly built in to support summative ends

- May feel fairer and more representative of the student’s overall capability if the portfolio shows her work over a period of time.
- Permits a range of media/items to be incorporated to develop student’s skills on many levels, including communication skills, organizational skills, presentation, indexing, referencing,
- Permits a flexible and engaging use of different media, eg video blog, poster, written journal etc
- Encourages a mature approach to self-directed learning and time- management.

Drawbacks

- Guidance as to what will attract merit (and high marks) within the summative assessment must be communicated transparent and clear to the students, as this has the ability to be experienced highly subjectively by both student and assessor
- There is potentially a level of personal vulnerability for the student which means a low grade or fail may be damaging to their confidence
- can be lengthier and time-consuming to mark
- May involve more mini-deadlines and micro-management of students to ensure they are engaging regularly with building the portfolio
- Graded award of final marks for the summative assessment can be viewed as subjective/ arbitrary.
- However, a “pass/fail only” award can demotivate students and degrade their level of investment.

FURTHER READING

Baume, D. (2009) Supporting Portfolio Development
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/id295_supporting_portfolio_development.pdf

Gordon, P (2009) Using e-portfolio as a reflective assessment tool
<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/using-e-portfolio-reflective-assessment-tool>