

Since there has been no formal assessment of portfolios until now, the Academic Development Centre has used the following criteria to provide developmental feedback to staff members building portfolios. Once peer assessors of teaching portfolios are appointed (nominations are going to be invited at the next round of Faculty Boards) assessment criteria will be workshopped further and communicated to the University community.

Proposed Criteria for Evaluating the Teaching Portfolio

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Introduction

At Rhodes, the requirement that staff on probation should build a teaching portfolio is one of the strategies which has been introduced in order to assure quality in teaching and learning.

The common sense understanding of a portfolio is that of a folder or file into which one puts “best” work. In order to assure quality, however, a portfolio has to *enhance and develop* teaching as well as document it. This is particularly true in the probationary phase of employment. The portfolio therefore has to function as more than a “container” into which information about teaching is inserted since it has to provide a means through which lecturers can *reflect* on the strengths and weaknesses of their practice as educators. This process of reflection then allows those aspects of practice which need to be developed to be identified. The following three elements have been identified as important in facilitating this process of reflection.

A statement of teaching responsibilities

A statement of teaching responsibilities discusses the courses, modules, classes or groups the lecturer teaches and, importantly, describes the way she goes about this teaching.

A statement of teaching philosophy

Every act of teaching rests upon some sort of implicit theory of learning. If a lecturer provides hand-outs, uses the overhead projector in her classes or divides the class up into groups for discussion during the lecture period, she does so because she believes these actions will contribute to her students’ learning. A statement of teaching responsibilities therefore has to be accompanied by a *statement of teaching philosophy*. A *statement of teaching responsibilities* says “This is what I do”. The *statement of teaching philosophy* says “This is why I do what I do”. It is not expected that the statement of teaching philosophy will refer to specific theories of learning in any technical way but simply that the portfolio builder attempts to uncover the assumptions on which her practice rests. The statement of teaching philosophy does not have to be separated from the statement of teaching responsibility since describing what one believes leads naturally into a description of what one does and vice versa.

A statement of how others experience the teaching

Information about how others experience a lecturer's teaching is gained through evaluation. The Rhodes policy on the evaluation of teaching and courses requires that portfolios should contain a minimum of one student evaluation and one peer evaluation. It is not enough, however, to simply present these evaluations in the portfolio in an unmediated form. In order to further the process of reflection, the portfolio builder needs to "make sense" of the evaluations in the light of both what she does and why she does it and, importantly, outline the way in which she is going to respond to these evaluations in her future teaching.

Criteria for evaluating portfolios

The following template was used to evaluate this portfolio:

C O N T E N T	<p>1. Is there a statement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What the lecturer does (i.e. is there a description of courses and methods/approaches used to teach those courses?) ▪ What the lecturer believes "good" teaching to be (i.e. does the portfolio contain a "philosophy of teaching"?) ▪ The way in which others have experienced the lecturer's teaching (i.e. is there evidence and a commentary on that evidence?)
P R O C E S S	<p>2. Is there consistency between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What the lecturer believes; ▪ What she does; ▪ How others experience what she does?
D E V E L O P M E N T	<p>3. If there is inconsistency, has the lecturer reflected on this and shown that she has made an effort to manage that inconsistency?</p> <p>If students have made comments and suggestions, has the lecturer reflected upon them and either provided reasons why they should not be incorporated into her teaching or outlined how they will be built into future work?</p> <p>Is there evidence of innovation and "original" practice?</p>

The first question in the template relate to the *contents* of the portfolio and is intended to check whether or not the elements identified as key to the process of reflection are indeed included.

The second question relates to the process of reflection itself. Ideally there should be "fit" between what an educator believes, what she does and how others experience what she does. A lecturer, for example, may use the overhead projector because she believes students need to see key points in written form as this reinforces what she says and thus helps learning. Students, however, may complain that there is too much information on transparencies and they cannot copy it down. In this case there is clearly a lack of consistency between what the lecturer *does* and how students experience what she does.

The third question relates to the process of developing practice. In the example above, an obvious way to manage the inconsistency between what the lecturer believes, what she does and how others experience what she does would be to put less information on the transparencies or to supply students with copies of the transparencies. There might well be other ways of managing the inconsistency, however, and some of those ways might be innovative and original. What is all important, however, is that the inconsistency is *managed*.

From the above explanation, it will hopefully be seen that a portfolio which simply complies with content requirements is not as strong as a portfolio in which the portfolio builder has tried to get “fit” between the three content elements. Similarly, a portfolio which identifies lack of consistency but does not manage that lack is not as strong as a portfolio in which the lecturer develops ways of managing the “problems” which evaluations have revealed.

Responses to individual portfolios have been made within this framework.