

## **PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Dianne Long  
Cal Poly State University  
Can Luis Obispo, California**

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### **Portfolio Assessment**

A portfolio is a collection of a person's works. In the academy, the portfolio is regarded as a folio of academic writings, of student work that reflects performance over time. These portfolios of student performance and products have gained the attention of educators, as authentic evidence of learning and are considered attractive alternatives to testing and other traditional evaluation approaches.

Jossey-Bass recently published a number of helpful publications on assessment, outcomes, and portfolio assessment. These resources are noted below.

*Portfolio Assessment: Uses, Cases, Scoring and Impact*, edited by Trudy W. Banda, San Francisco: CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

*Hallmarks of Effective Outcomes Assessment*, edited by Trudy W. Banda, San Francisco: CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

*Community College Assessment*, edited by Trudy W. Banta, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

*Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education*, Barbara E. Walvoord, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004

There are a number of earlier works, however, those starting out with portfolio assessment may wish to start with these recent collections and to consider other references noted.

This writing comes from an advocate's point-of-view. No doubt there is an outlay of time and skill to create portfolio systems as there is to create test banks and other assessment approaches. However, the benefits are significant.

The discussion centers on the use of portfolios to assess learning at the class level, at the general education program level, and at the Political Science Program level. Secondly, a sample listing of colleges and universities using this technique is provided with some explanation of the way portfolios are used for assessment.

### **Using Portfolios to Assess Student Learning at the Class Level**

These collections usually include finished work such as papers and projects, but can include drafts and proposals. It is useful to add student self-assessments or reflections as well. These can be used for understanding individual student abilities or alternately the abilities of some sample of students. Individual student strengths and shortcomings can be identified as well as program strengths and shortcomings at a later time.

As in any other educational endeavor, it is important that each class have clear learning objectives specifying the concepts and skills students are expected to accomplish in the class. From these statements of attainment, rubrics can be constructed providing students the guidelines for submitting work for self-reflection and for instructor assessment. A number of short essays may be assigned, or alternately various phases of a longer project submitted for comment. It should be clear that only finished work is graded, and draft work or 'work in progress' is there for comment.

- Student Portfolio/Instructor Comments: Students submit essays or phases of a project with general criteria and instructor comments.
- Student Portfolio/Student Self-assessment/Instructor Comments: Student chooses Work samples with self-assessment and faculty comments, both using same criteria or rubric

- Student Portfolio/Student Self-assessment/Instructor Assessment but no grading (as in strengths, weaknesses, suggestions, etc.) until final product as in thesis project

At Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo portfolios are used in lower division and upper division courses using rubrics to provide a commentary on draft work and some essays and to grade final papers. Note that students keep papers in a folio, but it is also easy to prepare e-mailed papers in data files too.

At the graduate level, students keep best work and use the folio to work with the internship coordinator to locate placements and to develop career strategies. At the thesis level, students provide drafts of work with both self-assessment and instructor assessment until a final draft is graded. Note that the use of portfolios is at the discretion of individual faculty and is not program-wide. Both students and instructors must agree on criteria at the beginning of the development of collections, and the students must carry the responsibility of maintaining the folio. With e-mail, it is easy to establish folios for each student and to assess a number of works or to sample works at a later date. If setting up data file of this kind, it is recommended that the graded rubric be attached to each product. The advantage of portfolio assessment is that they ensure that the focus and content of the assessment are aligned with the class learning goals.

### **Using Portfolios for General Education**

Some colleges and universities gather samples of student work from a number general education classes to see how well students are achieving goals. Using a small sample of student work is recommended when first beginning to try out a rubric. A discussion by faculty outside of those who are directly teaching the course is valuable to discern whether or not learning objectives are being met. Feedback can be provided to those teaching general education courses.

Many may be initially resistant to use portfolios because they think that the effort is overwhelming. However, the gains are many. The portfolio as artifact helps to keep learning goals in focus and to communicate both goals and progress to students and others who

need to know what is learned in classes from disciplines having common goals.

### **Using Portfolios for Program Level Assessment**

Political Science departments typically gather statistics related to grade distribution, retention and graduation rates, and possibly student success on the GRE, LSAT, GMAT, and the like. However, faculty can access portfolios if such systems are in use and sample work to assess how a student cohort has progressed to master understandings and skills. At Cal Poly, a required Senior Project is in place for every student. This graduation hurdle is a demonstration of what the student has learned in the undergraduate program. Senior projects are available on CD in the department office. Projects can be randomly sampled by faculty, with each read in pairs and scored to determine fit with objectives set for course of study chosen by the student (International Relations, Law and Society, etc.) Faculty can comment on student strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations on curricular changes. It is suggested that an honorarium be provided to faculty readers for this task.

They can be valuable techniques, or they can use a lot of time and effort with little gain. A number of institutions are using portfolios today for institution-wide assessment, however this paper suggests starting small and growing from the experience. The strategy contained here is to shift the responsibility for developing portfolios onto students as well as some of the assessment of what students have been able to achieve.

### **Scoring and Rubrics**

Scoring and development of rubrics have debates regarding validity. Do they measure what they are supposed to measure? At best they are proxy measures of what students know. However, they do approximate reality and institutions continue to use scores to reflect what students know. Simple rubrics can be developed that guide students on the concepts to be explained and illustrated and the clarity of presentation. Expertise in scoring and development of rubrics takes practice.

## Electronic Portfolios

Electronic portfolios abound on the web:

- Institutional portfolios can be found at Urban Universities Portfolio Project site <http://www.imir.iupui.edu/portfolio>
- Faculty portfolios can be found at University of Nebraska-Lincoln's site <http://www.unl.edu/peerrev/>
- Kalamazoo College experimented with on-line portfolios <http://www.kzoo.edu/pfolio>

## Portfolio Assessment in Political Science: University Projects (D. Long, Cal Poly)

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University	Program/ Contact / Function	Mandatory/ Volunteer	Requirements	Notes	Links
<b>Truman State University</b>	<p><b>Portfolio Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To give educators feedback on their programs/courses to evaluate methods and program</li> <li>• To allow students reflection on college careers</li> </ul> <p>Dr. Karen Smith, Director of Portfolio Project Phone: 660-785-6033</p>	<p>M after 1999</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work demonstrating critical thinking,</li> <li>• Work demonstrating interdisciplinary thinking</li> <li>• Work reflecting historical analysis</li> <li>• Work showing scientific reasoning</li> <li>• Item demonstrating aesthetic analysis</li> <li>• Work/experience personally satisfying</li> <li>• Cover letter reflecting personal changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes about 5 hours to complete</li> <li>• Faculty evaluators and assessment committee</li> <li>• Duration: 1999-<i>present</i></li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://assessment.truman.edu/components/portfolio/index.htm">http://assessment.truman.edu/components/portfolio/index.htm</a></p> <p><a href="http://assessment.truman.edu/almanac/2006/CH16.pdf">http://assessment.truman.edu/almanac/2006/CH16.pdf</a></p>
<b>Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville</b>	<p><b>Wing Portfolio Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve learning</li> <li>• To generate campus discussion</li> <li>• To engage faculty scholarship and peer review</li> </ul> <p>Douglas Eder, Undergrad Asses &amp; Prog. Rev. deder@siue.edu</p>	<p>V</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus for each class student takes</li> <li>• All exams taken/returned</li> <li>• All papers written/returned</li> <li>• A survey of student</li> <li>• Study log/essay on focused topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duration: 1994-2000 cohort</li> <li>• 2001-<i>present</i> cohort of 250-300 students until graduation</li> <li>• students followed during college career</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.siue.edu/~deder/assess/portwing.html">http://www.siue.edu/~deder/assess/portwing.html</a></p>
<b>University of Delaware:</b>	<p><b>Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment (DAPA)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To document educational activities of children with cognitive difficulties in grades 2 - 11</li> <li>• To examine: instructional settings, students interactions with peers, student choices and plans general education standards</li> </ul> <p>Center for Disabilities Studies <a href="mailto:dapaonline@udel.edu">dapaonline@udel.edu</a> Phone: (302) 831-1052 Fax: (302) 831-4690</p>	<p>M as required of the No Child Left Behind act of 2001</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements under construction</li> <li>• Currently being evaluated by parents/teachers/administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around 1000 students annually</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.udel.edu/cds/dapa/">http://www.udel.edu/cds/dapa/</a></p>

<b>James Madison University</b>	<b>Adult Degree Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess experiential learning portfolios for Adult Degree Programs</li> </ul> <p>Phone: (540) 568-6824 Fax: (540) 568-2589  <a href="mailto:adult-degree-program@jmu.edu">adult-degree-program@jmu.edu</a></p>	M for adult degree program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of learning equated with certificates, "reference" letters, documents or student products/performances</li> <li>Evidence of job or volunteer experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Began in 1974</li> </ul>	<a href="http://edtech.jmu.edu/bis/homepage/PortfolioAssessment.htm">http://edtech.jmu.edu/bis/homepage/PortfolioAssessment.htm</a>
<b>Quinnipiac University</b>	<b>Portfolio Assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students able to submit credit from courses outside their institution, that increases their learning</li> <li>To enhance student learning</li> <li>Courses evaluated by university staff (2)</li> </ul> <p>Admissions: 203-582-8600</p>	V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Description of a credit-bearing college course, that fits student knowledge</li> <li>Personal narrative that describes your learning</li> <li>Documentary evidence that supports student claim that they have knowledge reflecting what was learned in course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convenient way to earn college credit</li> <li>Cost effective</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x2142.xml">http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x2142.xml</a>
<b>University of Maine at Augusta</b>	<b>Portfolio Assessment</b> <b>APL (Assessment for Prior Learning)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A standardized process to evaluate prior experience for college credit</li> <li>College equivalent learning must be <i>measurable, theoretical and applied, and generalized.</i></li> </ul> <p>Phone: 207 621-3000</p>	V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application</li> <li>Request for credit</li> <li>Personal narrative</li> <li>Detailed work experience</li> <li>Statement of relevant knowledge</li> <li>Job performance eval</li> <li>Faculty interview</li> <li>Letters of rec. (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 credits maximum (BA), 15 (AA)</li> <li>Takes several</li> <li>Fee based on number of credits months to complete</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.uma.edu/portfolioassessment.html">http://www.uma.edu/portfolioassessment.html</a>