

THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO AND THE TEACHING PROFILE

Associate Professor Jackie Lublin

This document is for all academic staff who are interested in the continuous monitoring, evaluating and improvement of their teaching, and who may wish in the future to develop a case for the quality of their teaching for personnel decisions like promotion. It will also be useful for teaching staff in appraisal situations, and for any other purpose which involves a retrospective reflection on the individual's teaching quality and performance

What is a Teaching Portfolio?

There are no hard and fast definitions of these terms, and the literature uses them differently in different contexts. For the sake of clarity in discussion at CQU the following definitions have been adopted. A Teaching Portfolio is a comprehensive collection of documents and other artefacts which has been collected over the years. It is strongly suggested that you should begin collecting a teaching portfolio at the beginning of your teaching career, and that for promotion purposes you should be able to draw on at least three years' documentation of your teaching. A "collection" is meant in a quite literal sense: a large box is suggested, the contents of which might be reviewed every five years, say.

What is a Teaching Profile?

A Teaching Profile is the focused distillation of the appropriate portfolio material for a specific purpose, like an application for promotion or a Vice Chancellor's Award for Teaching. It contains the evidence to justify the statements you make about your teaching. For example, in a Profile for promotion you might say "I keep up to date with teaching in my field." You would then describe how you do this, using evidence where necessary and appropriate from the Portfolio. In the case of the Vice Chancellor's Award, you would need to justify your assertion that you are an outstanding teacher by illustrating how you are creative and innovative. You could do this both by reference to and by presenting evidence of your own teaching, and by the way you present the Profile itself.

THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO

What might a Teaching Portfolio contain?

Traditionally, evidence about teaching tendered for promotion has consisted simply of a listing of subjects taught. While this is informative and necessary in its own right, these days it is important to recognise that the qualitative and continuous improvement dimensions of teaching are also important in themselves, and must also be presented for personnel decision-making if valid and reliable judgements are to be made about teaching and about the comparative standing of candidates for promotion.

A diverse collection of material in a Teaching Portfolio will make for a rich basis for reflection and improvement, and for choice in putting together a Teaching Profile. So a useful conceptual approach to defining the contents of a Teaching Portfolio is that it should contain:

- a) quantitative, factual and descriptive material (e.g. lists of subjects taught, booklists etc.)
- b) qualitative evidence about your teaching e.g. student feedback results and your reflections on them, comments from peers concerning the adequacy and currency of a reading list, and
- c) a record of your scholarly and developmental activities in university pedagogy e.g. workshops on teaching and learning you have attended, articles you have written about your own teaching.

Quantitative and qualitative information is often intermixed, so there is no rigorous attempt to keep them in separate categories in this document. For example, you might institute an alternative approach to teaching in your subject but it would be expected that you could say why you did it and that you be able to provide evaluative data about it.

A. Factual and descriptive material

It is suggested that a Teaching Portfolio might contain:

1. A list of all subjects taught by you, with a clear indication for each of them of the degree of responsibility you had for

- statements of learning objectives;
- course design;
- learning resources e.g. booklists, printed notes, Web programs, use of IT, choice of teaching and learning formats;
- choice of assessment tasks, and reasons for these choices;
- marking/ grading procedures.

2. Where it was your responsibility, then you should keep examples of the above for each subject in your Portfolio. You should also keep examples of the class lists or marks

distribution, which together with worked and marked assessment tasks will help to constitute evidence of student learning in the subject

A note also needs to be kept for each subject concerning:

- size of the class i.e. was it a lecture course for 200 or a tutorial for 20?
- year level of the class;
- whether it was optional or compulsory for students;
- proportion of the class giving feedback if evaluative feedback was sought.

3. A list of PG students you have supervised/ are supervising together with thesis topics and status of the candidatures.
4. Changes and innovations in teaching you have made; you need to keep a written record of these and include reasons for the changes, and a discussion/ evaluation of the results.
5. Materials you have developed, including Web-based materials, if not already covered.
6. Use of Information Technology (IT). Document this, particularly if you were an early user in your unit, and include evaluative material about your use of it..
7. Every year or so you might commission a video recording of one of your classroom teaching periods which, together with your written reflection, you would lodge in your Portfolio.
8. A listing of your teaching development responsibilities in your Department e.g.
 - subject/ program co-ordination
 - curriculum review and/ or development
 - mentoring less experienced staff
 - QA processes for teaching
 - membership of teaching committees
 - teaching leadership
 - teaching administration
 - liaison between teaching and industry
 - teaching policy development

together with any responsibilities you have undertaken in the above areas outside the university.

B. Qualitative material

Your Teaching Portfolio should contain some or all of the following:

1. Student feedback:

Irrespective of other university requirements, you should survey your classes at least every second year, and should keep the results for at least five years. It is worth attending to the results when you first receive them, and noting in writing how you interpret them, what you will do as a result, and eventually whether you did it and what the outcome was. This is much better done immediately after the event rather than in retrospect perhaps several years later. The actual figures should be of less interest to a Promotions Committee than your reflection in writing on them and on your actions taken as a result of that reflection.

2. Solicited comments from colleagues and other appropriate people about e.g. the appropriateness of learning objectives, the adequacy and currency of reading lists, the appropriateness of the use of IT, the standard of examining and the award of grades.

3. Comments from your Head of Unit in their capacity as your supervisor and as the person responsible for the maintenance of quality teaching in the unit.

4. Comments from educationists about the appropriateness and effectiveness of learning formats and of the congruence between learning objectives, teaching methods and assessment.

5. Unsolicited comments in writing from past students and colleagues about your performance as a teacher. (It is not considered a good idea to solicit comments from current individual students, either PG or UG).

6. Written comments from colleagues invited to sit in on your classes.

7. Your written critique of your own video performance every year.

8. Case study accounts of how you encourage life-long learning habits in students, and any other graduate attributes endorsed by CQU.

9. Case study accounts of how you give feedback.

10. Case study accounts of how you encourage active involvement by students in their learning.

C. Scholarship in teaching/ professional development/ recognition

Your Teaching Portfolio should contain some or all of the following:

1. The results of research you have carried out on your teaching, and your comments on this.

2. Publications about teaching, both refereed and non-refereed e.g. a column or article in a university newsletter.
3. A note of the most important books, articles etc. you have read and sites you have visited, including a short note to yourself about the most important ideas you found there.
4. Courses on university teaching and learning you have attended, both within the university and at national and international level.
5. Courses and workshops you have conducted on university teaching and learning.
6. Qualifications in teaching and learning which you hold. Your membership of professional societies concerned with university teaching, and conferences you have attended.
7. Invitations to present as an exemplary teacher both within and outside the university.
8. Grants gained for teaching development.
9. Formal recognition for teaching excellence.

Using your Teaching Portfolio to develop your teaching

While you may not need to use the contents of your Teaching Portfolio for promotion purposes perhaps more than six or seven times in your career, it can be used continuously throughout your career to aid your development as a teacher - indeed, this may be its most important long-term use.

Ideally, you would accumulate all of the above material in your portfolio over the years, and you would keep a reflective journal on your teaching . The benefits of doing this, in whatever format and at whatever frequency you choose are well stated thus:

"Reflection is a process of reviewing and thinking critically about our activities and the world around us. It goes beyond describing what we do, to thinking about why we do things, whether they have gone as intended, why we think they worked well or didn't and how we might do them differently next time. Recording these reflective thoughts can help us to crystallise our understanding of experiences, make connections between different aspects of our work and identify possible improvements. Recording personal reflections has the added benefit of documenting learning over time through recognition of the changing nature of our reflections." (UTS Evaluation Guide, 1998, p 16)

If you undertake such reflection on your teaching, in writing, say every couple of years, there will be benefits both to your insight into and development as a teacher and to the richness of the material you are able to produce for a Teaching Profile for whatever purpose.

THE TEACHING PROFILE

What might a Teaching Profile contain?

No two Teaching Profiles will be the same. It is up to you to choose what to present to a Promotions Committee, bearing in mind what is currently required (see current documents for candidates for promotion). You should play from your strengths as a teacher, properly documenting them from your Portfolio.

You will of course provide the quantitative material concerning your teaching. The basic question you should be prepared to address is: How do you know that you are an effective, superior or even outstanding teacher, and how do you demonstrate it? In order to evaluate your worthiness as a teacher, Promotions Committees are almost certainly going to be interested in the following qualitative and developmental aspects of your teaching role

1. Your philosophy of teaching and learning - you should be able to produce 1000 words on this;
2. Your approach to the supervision of PG students, in 500 words perhaps;
3. Your strengths as a teacher;
4. Innovations in teaching you have initiated;
5. Where teaching is defined in the widest sense, what others say about your teaching,
students
colleagues/ peers
HoD
outside experts
educationists
6. What you have done in response to student feedback;
7. How you keep up to date with teaching in your field;
8. How you encourage the generic attributes in students;
9. What self-development as a teacher you have engaged in
10. What leadership roles you have taken on;

11. What recognition you have achieved as a good teacher.

Your Profile for a Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award will be different from that for promotion. You will need to provide the basic quantitative material, but the committee will be more interested in your philosophies of teaching and learning and the innovative ways you have implemented them for the benefit of student learning. Doing the traditional thing well – ie lecturing, tutoring and demonstrating well – is an expectation of all teachers, so an outstanding teacher will need to show more than this: they will need to show insight and creativity in teaching and learning based on theory, and will need to be explicitly reflective on their own practice.

Further reading:

Gibbs, G. (1989) *Creating a Teaching Profile*. Bristol: Technical and Educational Services

Seldin, P. (1991) *The Teaching Portfolio*. Anker Publishing Co, Bolton Ma

Shore, B.M. et al (1986) *The Teaching Dossier*. Revised edition, Canadian Association of University Teachers, Montreal.

UTS Evaluation Guide.(1998) Sydney: Centre for Learning and Teaching, University of Technology Sydney.

UTS A Development Program for New Staff: Guidelines for Participants.(2000) Sydney: Institute for Multi Media and Learning, University of Technology, Sydney.

Murdoch University: Guidelines for presentation of a Teaching Portfolio:
www.murdoch.edu.au/hr/traindev/teachportfolio

University of Western Australia: Creating a Teaching Portfolio
www.csd.uwa.edu.au/portfolio.html

TEACHING PORTFOLIO:

A comprehensive collection, made over the years, of documentary evidence about all aspects of your teaching

WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

- a) To keep a historical record of your development as a teacher;
- b) To monitor, evaluate, reflect on and improve your teaching;
- c) To produce a Teaching Profile for specific purposes eg for a promotion application.

TEACHING

Writing learning objectives and outcomes

Choosing materials – booklists, Web sites, lab experiments, textbooks, etc

Choosing learning formats

Classroom performance

Being available to students

Choice and design of assessment tasks

Marking/ grading

Giving feedback

Supervising post-graduate students

Role-modelling a professional in action

WHAT SHOULD A TEACHING PORTFOLIO CONTAIN?

1. Quantitative, descriptive and factual material
2. Qualitative and reflective material
3. Evidence of scholarship in teaching and development as a teacher

What are your main achievements in teaching?

What evidence do you have for these?

How do you know you are teaching well?

What evidence do you have for this?

In order to teach well you will need:

- Knowledge about best practice in teaching at third level, including knowledge of best practice in assessment, gained by having read the influential texts eg Biggs 1999
- To be up to date with the scholarship of teaching and learning at third level, gained by reading the journals, attending conferences.
- To monitor your own performance as a teacher.
- To conduct research into your own teaching.
- To be open minded, prepared to change and innovate.