



## Documenting Teaching Effectiveness

Why document your teaching?

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Costs, benefits, return on investment

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How to document teaching effectiveness

- Documentation without evaluation (of which “reflection” is a component) is just a pile of paper that doesn’t “say” much about your effectiveness.
- Start keeping records early on, on a regular basis. Schedule journaling into your week. Documenting is time consuming but becomes less so when it is a habit.
- Look into Classroom Assessment Techniques as a way to know both what your students are thinking and learning, and as a way to help you document the teaching and learning process.
- Build student consent to release use of their work to you into your courses from the start.
- Use a variety of techniques. For starters, consult the Peer Review Handbook. See Step 3 of Creating a Course Portfolio in this handout.
- Work with another faculty member or in a group. Meet regularly. Make a schedule.
- Get external reviewers for your documentation. Allow plenty of time for this and include their comments in your documentation.
- Consider the Course Portfolio as a vehicle for documenting your teaching



### Creating the Course Portfolio

1. *Formulate an organizing principle: Connects the elements of the portfolio and helps you choose from among your documents*  
Example 1: How you use course themes to make a course accessible to young students  
Example 2: How and when do students make the transition from focusing on doing and tradition to abstract thinking and critical questioning?
2. *Document the course design: Syllabus plus commentary about why the course is the way it is*
3. *Document what actually happens as the course unfolds*
  - Videotaped class sessions
  - Peer observations of class
  - Handouts
  - Audiotapes of conferences with students
  - Emails, listserv and threaded discussions
  - Reports from student group work
  - Copies of lecture notes
  - Overheads
  - Exams and quizzes
  - Readings
  - Study guides
4. *Select the best evidence: Criteria*
  - Would the entry address a pressing issue or intriguing problem you were facing? (This is where your focusing question(s) or organizing principle comes in)
  - Would the entry help you summarize or reflect on a new teaching strategy or technique that you might want to try again in a future semester?
  - Would the artifact provide evidence of student achievement, reflection, or evaluation?
5. *Document student learning: Portfolio without evidence of student learning is not useful*
  - Should you include the best work of the best students, follow one student's progress, choose from a spectrum of student performance? Show all the students' responses to one exercise?
  - Selection criteria depend on the discipline, on the purpose of the course and what you are trying to illustrate about it.
  - Look at a variety of course portfolios to see how others dealt with selecting and organizing student evidence.
6. *Tie the elements together with your reflections throughout and as a final essay*
7. *Get external reviewers to comment on your portfolio and include their comments*

#### Resources

- *The Course Portfolio*, Pat Hutchings, Editor, 1998, Association for Higher Education, available in the CELT Library. (Source used in preparing this handout)
- Peer Review of Teaching Project: Making Visible the Intellectual Work of Teaching  
<http://www.unl.edu/peerrev/exampleList.html>
- Visible Knowledge Project. Web-based poster sessions of course portfolios undertaken by participants.  
[http://lumen.georgetown.edu/vkp/profiles/dsp\\_posters.cfm](http://lumen.georgetown.edu/vkp/profiles/dsp_posters.cfm)
- Peer Review Handbook <http://www.ipfw.edu/celt/PRHndbk.pdf>



My notes for the New Fac orientation

Why document your teaching?

- You don't want to rely on student evaluations of teaching.
- Make visible the intellectual work of teaching.
- To learn more about teaching and learning theory or pedagogy.
- Show how your courses connect to the mission of the department, your school, and the university.
- Show how your course design and materials reflect your commitment to these missions
- Show how your materials and teaching practices relate to student learning.
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Consider creating a Course Portfolio for one course over a period of two semesters or two times taught. The idea is to make explicit and to capture the intellectual process of trying things out, responding to students' needs and expectations, evaluating the results, balancing all of this against the requirements of your program or the profession for which you are preparing the students to enter. This process is most of the time lost, yet this "grappling" with the complexity of college teaching is a major task for which a teacher at IPFW is paid.