

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENTS

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

By the end of this module, you should be able to define a portfolio assessment, distinguish between its two types, identify the benefits and challenges of using portfolio assessments, and know that there is a “what-who-how” framework that you can use to design them.

KEY CONCEPTS

Portfolio Assessments

Portfolio assessments are not a type of assessment item, but rather a compilation of student work. Portfolio assessments ask students or teachers to collect work products that show growth over a specific period of time.

There are two main types of portfolio assessments: “instructional” or “working” portfolios, and “showcase” portfolios. Instructional or working portfolios are formative in nature. They allow a student to demonstrate his or her ability to perform a particular skill. Showcase portfolios are summative in nature. They include samples of a student’s best work to demonstrate mastery at the end of a unit of study, semester or school year.

Portfolio assessments offer several benefits.

- Portfolios are a rich source of information about student learning.
- Portfolios are versatile.
- Portfolio assessments can build students’ self-confidence and “self-appraisal” skills through the opportunity they provide for students to reflect on and celebrate their accomplishments.

Portfolio assessments also come with challenges.

- Portfolio assessments can be time-consuming to design and score in a consistent and unbiased manner.
- Portfolio assessments also involve a great deal of logistical planning and organization.

How to Use a What-Who-How Framework to Design Portfolio Assessments

Portfolio assessments involve a great deal of detailed logistical planning and organization. You can use the first two steps of the assessment blueprint and a simple “what-who-how” framework to think at a high level about how to develop a portfolio assessment.



What

- What pieces of student work will you include in the portfolio to document students’ mastery of the standards and skills you will assess?
- Will you include any student reflections on the selections? How will you incorporate them?
- Have you made sure that these assignments are clearly aligned with the relevant standards and skills?
- What guidance will you offer students if they select artifacts for their portfolios?

Who

- What decisions will students make about their portfolios?
- How will you include students throughout the process to determine and understand the objectives and process of the portfolio?

How

- When and how will you or the student place each piece of student work into the portfolio?
- How might you use written procedures and project logs to stay organized?
- When and how will you check in with students to review their project logs and help them manage the process to collect work products for their portfolios?
- How will you score the individual components of the portfolio? How will you score the portfolio as a whole?
- How will you ensure that you are all on the same page about the purpose and plan to implement and score your students’ portfolio assessments?

