Portfolio

Description   A portfolio is a collection of course-related work performed by the student. Written reflections in which students evaluate their own learning are central components when portfolios are used to assess course outcomes. Traditionally, portfolios are used to assess learning in the arts and humanities. However, they can be equally useful in just about any discipline. Broadly speaking, there are two types of portfolios – the all inclusive portfolio and the selection portfolio. When portfolios are stored and presented electronically they are called 'e-portfolios'.

1. The **all-inclusive portfolio** is a complete record of all the work a student has produced in a course or programme. It can include various assignments like papers, projects, homework, VCDs of presentations or performances, etc. Students should include a written explanation of the significance of each entry in the portfolio. Doing so will help them think about and critique their own work, leading to deep learning.

2. The **selection portfolio** is purpose-specific. When the purpose of a portfolio is to evaluate the achievement of intended learning outcomes, only the best work exemplifying outcomes will be selected for inclusion. If the purpose is to demonstrate all-roundedness, then work representing a broad range of accomplishments will be included. If the purpose is to illustrate the process associated with attaining a learning outcome, then multiple drafts or versions that represent a chronology of progress will be selected. Again, some form of written reflection is essential for the development of higher order learning. There should be a limit to the number of items in the portfolio, otherwise it may go overboard and become a marking nightmare.

Example   *English Writing Selection Portfolio*

The Writing Portfolio is a well organised, neatly bound collection of written work that both you and I can use to gauge your performance and effort in this course, and to gauge the progress you have made as a writer.

Assembling this Writing Portfolio will give you the chance to re-examine some of the assignments you did in this course, and to reflect on what you learned from them. Your in-depth, reflective comments, placed in the transmittal and in section introductions throughout your portfolio, will help me to understand precisely what you feel you have learned. Revisions of assignments will offer proof.

The portfolio is accompanied by a 2-3 page memo where you (1) reflect in detail on what you have learned about writing and about yourself as a writer during this semester. (2) Identify the pieces you have chosen to include in the portfolio and describe why you chose them: explain in detail how they represent your progress as a writer and your best work as a writer. (3) Explain your arrangement of writing assignments: how they are arranged, why they are arranged in this way and not another, and what effect on the evaluation process you hope the arrangement will achieve.

(Adapted from Kline, W.D. (1998). Portfolio assessment. Retrieved from: http://www.umsl.edu/~klein/PortfolioAssn.html)

What Outcomes   Portfolios can be designed to assess almost any intended learning

are Assessed?	outcomes. Because reflection is always built into the framework, they allow assessment of students' skills in critical thinking, judging, learning, interpreting and analysing information as well as their attitudes and value systems.
How Authentic is the Task?	• Portfolios are frequently kept and displayed by professionals in the art and design field. In fact, they are useful evidence of attainment for any discipline. • By building a professional portfolio during university years, a student has a ready and powerful employment search tool upon graduation.
What Kind of Learning is Promoted?	• More than anything else, portfolios help students to take individual responsibility for, and ownership of, their own learning. • It is also one of the best methods in developing lifelong learning skills (Strategic Objective 1). Lifelong learning is at its best when a professional can habitually reflect on his or her work performance in order to make continuous improvement.