

CS Course Portfolio Assembly Instructions

Course portfolios are an important part of our documentation and assessment efforts towards accreditation. The portfolio is a file containing all material associated with a given course as taught in a given semester. It also includes representative examples of student work as well as self-evaluation on how to improve the course the next time it is taught.

Reviewing portfolios from previous semesters should be particularly useful (1) for faculty teaching courses for the first time, (2) reviewing what students have learned in prerequisite courses, and (3) improving continuity between how courses are taught by different faculty.

Assembly Procedure

The blank portfolio consists of several forms and blank folders, all packaged together within an attractive cardboard shell.

1. *Shell* – Be sure to label the shell with the course number, semester, and instructor so it can be appropriately filed.
2. *Course Information Form* – In the first week or so of the semester, fill out the course information form. Feel free to point to a course document (i.e. write “info in syllabus”) instead of rewriting it. This form is to be included in the ...
3. *Course Documents Folder* – Here put a copy of all printed documents describing the course material, such as syllabus, lecture schedule and course procedures, as well as the course information form described above.
4. *Homework Assignment Folder* – Place a copy of every homework / project description you assign. Also include any notes you may have about grading standards or answer keys for the assignments.
5. *Course Exams Folder* – Place a blank copy or (ideally) answer key of for every quiz, midterm, and final exam you gave during the semester. If you are paranoid that your final exam or answer key might somehow be made public, don’t include it.
6. *Good Student’s Portfolio Folder* – Include a xerox copy of all the work (homeworks, exams, and projects) turning in by a representative ‘A’ student. You can either select all the assignments from a single good student (probably easiest) or good examples of assignments from different students (probably better but a pain to do).
7. *Average Student’s Portfolio Folder* – Same as above, for a B-/C+ type student.
8. *Lousy Student’s Portfolio Folder* – Same as above, for a D/F type student.

9. *Lecture Notes Folder* – Place a printed copy of any lecture notes used for the semester, be they copies of transparencies, notes distributed to students, or the instructor’s personal notes not distributed to students.
10. *Course Survey Folder* – Include copies of any mid-semester or end-of-semester surveys you administered to students, if you have them. Such self-evaluation is a good thing. Include a brief comment as to your interpretation of the meaning of the results and how you acted accordingly.
11. *End of Semester Evaluation Form* – Fill out the end of semester form, including descriptions of your grade distribution and post-course self-evaluation. Put it in the course documents folder, and then return the completed shell to the either the undergraduate secretary or the accreditation czar.

Hints and Suggestions

- *Make a Good Faith Effort* – Don’t kill yourself if you cannot find some document that the instructions say you need for your portfolio. Try to collect as much as you can with a reasonable good faith effort. Plan your collection strategy for next semester so you can do better.
- *Religious Exceptions are Granted* – If there is a particular type of document you consider a sacred secret, such as final exam questions or private lecture notes, don’t include them in the portfolio. A good faith effort on the rest will suffice.
- *Let the TAs Help* – Probably the easiest way to get the portfolio assembled will be to assign a TA the job of assembling it (if you have a TA for your class). Appoint one TA as the responsible party at the beginning of the semester, and check to make sure they are taking it seriously. The instructor is ultimately responsible for getting the portfolio assembled.
- *Let Students Collect Their Work* – It might be easiest for either the instructor or TA to email a few students near the end of the semester and ask them to give you copies of all their course work for the semester. Offering some brownie points will probably help with compliance. Be certain to reassure these students that they are not being investigated and are not in any trouble!
- *Strive for Substance over Form* – It is intended that you will write your comments by hand in the spaces on the form. There is no need to typeset your answers. If you need more space just attach another sheet; if you have nothing to say don’t say it.
- *Take the Evaluation Component Seriously* – For these portfolios to have real value, faculty should study them and think about how they might improve the course the next time they teach it. I envision that 20-30 minutes of contemplation at the end of the semester is small enough to be non-intrusive yet long enough to potentially bare fruit.
- *Review the Portfolio from Last Time* – As you organize your class at the beginning of the semester check out the portfolio from (a) the last time you taught the course, and (b) the last time someone else taught the course. What did you/they do differently or wish they had done differently from what you had in mind?