

In 2005, the Higher Education Authority of Ireland awarded Trinity College Dublin funding to produce a publication on teaching portfolios in Ireland. This handbook is the result of that funding. A collection of essays on and case studies of the various characteristics and uses of teaching portfolios and teaching portfolio programmes, this handbook provides an overview of national practice in portfolio development and use in Ireland, and evidences outcomes in terms of learning and/or achievement.

The primary objective of this handbook is to support learning and teaching centres, universities and institutes of higher education that are considering introducing teaching portfolios to evaluate, reward, accredit or reflect on teaching. The book achieves this objective by exploring the varying roles of teaching portfolios in higher education in Ireland, the range of approaches to portfolio programmes taken by universities and institutions, the challenges met along the way, and the outcomes achieved. Linked to our primary objective is the desire to support academic staff members interested in reflecting on or researching their teaching by using a Teaching Portfolio, whether for their own personal use, for pedagogic reasons or for their professional development. This collection is thus aimed at those charged with developing teaching and learning in higher education, as well as lecturers and those involved in third-level teaching who maintain or are interesting in beginning a teaching portfolio. It documents and analyses the impact of portfolios both on individual and institutional learning.

Structure of the Book

This collection is divided into three sections. Section One sets the scene for portfolio programmes and gives an overview of some of the key features of portfolios, including the teaching philosophy statement, the various portfolio models available and the notion of reflective writing, which is a new departure for many academics. Section Two pulls together a series of case studies from universities and institutes of higher education across Ireland, which explore the many approaches to teaching portfolios, teaching portfolio programmes and the development of reflective inquiry. Section Three presents the findings from the analysis and synthesis of the case studies within the handbook, which together represent a portfolio of practices. It examines institutional similarities and differences, and the challenges and successes of providing a forum for exchanging academic inquiries into teaching using teaching portfolios. Relatedly, Section Three also explores the relationships between course structure, delivery, reported effectiveness and institutional contexts, and the diverse teaching portfolio development models. Finally, this section looks to the future to reveal emerging directions and to prompt new inquiries in this field.

How to Use This Book

Of course, how you use this book depends on your purpose in reading it. You may choose to read from beginning to end or to browse through the contents list before choosing a pathway. If you are an educational developer charged with setting up a

programme on teaching portfolios, you might be advised to read Section One for an overview of the various models available before looking more closely at those case studies that most relate to the purposes of your proposed teaching portfolio. If you are a third-level teacher interested in reflecting on and documenting your teaching, you might like to read those case studies that focus on reflection; similarly, if you are thinking of applying for promotion or a teaching excellence award, you may prefer to read those case studies that document programmes with these goals. If you have never written a teaching philosophy statement, or are wondering what reflective writing is, then Section One may be a good place to start. However you use this book, I hope it will become a springboard for action for you; and I hope it leads you to partake in the ever-growing forum for lively, respectful debate and discussion into teaching and student learning.

Section One: Setting the Scenes

In Chapter One, I provide an overview of teaching portfolios, their goals and objectives as expressed by the authors in this collection. I note that a common goal is that portfolios should be used as a vehicle to stimulate teachers to think critically about their teaching, and discuss such issues as reflective practice, the development of communities of practice, and the role of the portfolio process in fostering integration between teaching and research. This chapter also calls for the support of our institutions to promote the teaching portfolio process as a means of cultivating scholarly exchange, and to encourage whole communities of scholars to share and critique dialogues about teaching in order to lessen the gap between how we teach and what our students learn.

Chapter Two provides an overview of different models for and approaches to developing reflective portfolios of teaching practices; it also discusses the use of reflective portfolios to assist academics who need to provide evidence for continuing professional development (CPD), accreditation or promotion. In this chapter, Jean Huges and Ivan Moore provide a helpful guide to the differences between teaching portfolios, reflective journals and reflective portfolios. Situating the use of portfolios within the context of current trends in professional development, the authors elaborate a model of professional teaching practice in higher education. They are also mindful, however, of the role of the institution in this. Indeed, they argue that, in the area of learning and teaching, quality improvement depends on individual teachers becoming reflective professionals, and HE institutions both promoting and providing support for professional practice and development in their educators: ‘The reflection and scholarship that form the key components of this model for professional practice require resources, time and support if they are to be undertaken seriously’.

In Chapter Three, Orison Carlile and Anne Jordan present the theories and principles that inform the practice of reflective writing in portfolios used in the development of higher education professionals. The authors define reflection as intentional and ‘usually directed towards enhanced understanding of and continual improvement in learning and teaching practice’. This reflection is ideally guided by learning and teaching theory, as well as by the experiences of and feedback from peers and students:

When teachers turn their reflection into *reflective writing*, they commit themselves to paper or screen, drafting and crafting accounts of learning and teaching experiences and subsequent analysis of these. In other words, reflective writing is characterised by a narrative framework that transforms it from mere description into a personally and publicly meaningful account of messy and multifaceted experience.

This chapter explains the importance of such an activity in the context of contemporary higher education. It then offers an overview of key thinkers and theories in the area of reflection and reflective writing, and concludes with some guidelines for reflective writing and a methodology for its assessment aimed at academic developers and also academics who wish to know more about reflective practice.

Chapter Four, the final chapter in this section, examines the role of the teaching philosophy statement in teaching portfolios. The authors, Joseph Coughlan and Marian Fitzmaurice, state that drafting a statement helps teachers to understand why they teach the way they do and provides an opportunity to reflect on personal values, to make explicit the goals and beliefs that underpin practice, and to interact with the literature on learning and teaching in higher education. Despite the many definitions available in the literature, the authors note that there is a lack of research on how to develop teaching philosophy statements and on their effectiveness. The purpose of their chapter therefore is to guide university teachers (experienced teachers as well as novices) through the process of writing a teaching philosophy statement. It provides a structure as well as working questions to provoke and encourage this process, and these are underpinned by a consideration of why it is important to have a written teaching philosophy statement. This is followed by an overview of influential models, and included throughout are excerpts from teaching philosophies (their own and those of others) as exemplars to trigger teachers' personal reflection.

Section Two: Case Studies—A National Overview of Practice in Ireland

Section Two consists of a series of case studies from various universities and institutions of higher education in Ireland documenting and analysing their approach to teaching portfolios. Contributors were asked to consider the following questions when writing their case studies:

- What are the objectives of your portfolio development?
- How did it come about?
- What does it aim to do?
- How is the Portfolio constructed? What does it value? Why?
- What challenges did you meet and how did you overcome them?
- What were the outcomes of your portfolio development within your Institution?
- Has the introduction of portfolios had any unexpected outcomes (either for individual learners or more widely at local/departmental/institutional level)?
- Do you have any plans for future development?

Although the focus on these questions has encouraged common themes to develop, the vast differences in approaches to teaching portfolios, their uses and objectives have also become clear. Undoubtedly, this has led to a rich collection and those of us involved in running programmes will learn from each other's approaches, from the challenges we have faced and the successes we have achieved. At the same time, this diversity of approaches and experiences should also provide a useful toolkit for those universities and institutes who are yet to establish portfolio programmes, and who will look to this collection for guidance.

Chapter Five begins this section with a case study by Nona Lyons, editor of a seminal collection of articles on teaching portfolios, *With Portfolio in Hand: Validating the New teacher Professionalism* (1998). Here Lyon writes as the Visiting Research Scholar at the National University of Ireland Cork, although for the past six years she has worked with many colleges and universities in Ireland in the areas of reflective inquiry and reflective teaching portfolios. In this case study, she addresses the problems she sees facing today's college teachers, illustrating them in relation to University College Cork and how that institution's faculty have responded and begun to create a history of their own practice. She examines data from interviews with faculty and suggests a set of hypotheses to test several implications of ongoing inquiries into reflective portfolios, including the possibility of integrating research and teaching through sustained portfolio inquiry.

Chapters Six and Seven focus on portfolios for reflection. In Chapter Six Jean Hughes charts the introduction of teaching portfolios in Dublin City University (DCU). In it she describes some pre-portfolio research, describes the eventual approach chosen, and analyses the challenges and outcomes of the two programmes run to date. In an honest account, Hughes describes how the programme has had to overcome difficulties in timing, in structure, and in the choice of portfolio model. The case study also describes the positive outcomes that are emerging, such as a peer-mentoring process and a reflective network that is extending beyond academics to create a university-wide community of practice.

In Chapter Seven, Orla Hanratty and Ciara O'Farrell also describe a programme for the creation of reflective teaching portfolios for professional development, this time at Trinity College Dublin where the programme has been run and modified numerous times since 2004. This case study describes the programme's theoretical grounding and how this theory is implemented in practice. The authors outline the day-to-day running of the programme, its emphasis on critical reflection, mentoring and peer review, and the challenges of encouraging a forum where honest and respectful intellectual pedagogic debate and lively reflective dialogue can occur.

Chapter Eight examines the development of teaching portfolios as NUI Galway. In this case study, Timothy Murphy and Iain MacLaren emphasise the portfolio as the central tool in the development of a reflective approach to teaching, but they also highlight its ability to develop a focus on teaching among staff who perceive themselves primarily as academic researchers. NUI Galway requires portfolios for promotion applications, teaching excellence awards and postgraduate qualifications in third-level teaching, but the authors argue that without attention to several practical and theoretical issues, such schemes are in danger of becoming an

administrative obligation. This case study focuses on a pilot study of a pragmatic portfolio model developed to help staff readily document their experience and highlight their approaches to learning and teaching.

Chapters Nine and Ten also focus on teaching portfolio programmes that form part of a professional development programme. In Chapter Nine, Geraldine O'Neill describes academic staff engagement with teaching portfolios in University College Dublin's Graduate Diploma in University Teaching and Learning. In this case study, the author describes how the programme aims to develop self-directed, lifelong learners and to promote reflection on their teaching and student learning. The teaching portfolio is the chief assessment method and the author describes this process as well as delineating its construction and objectives. UCD's Teaching and Learning Centre also supports academic staff in creating portfolios for promotion applications, and this case study documents the challenges of and the tension between these different portfolio purposes.

In Chapter Ten, Roisin Donnelly and Marian Fitzmaurice document the role the teaching portfolio plays in the Postgraduate Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching at Dublin Institute of Technology. Here the authors outline the objectives and structures of portfolio development. They also explain how their teaching portfolios are used for both summative and formative purposes. The portfolio is summative in that each module of the Certificate is formally assessed through the design and development of an individual teaching portfolio; it is formative in its emphasis academic staff chronicling their growth as learners and enhancing their understanding of practice.

In Chapter Eleven, Nyiel Kuol and Sarah Moore describe the use of student feedback in preparing and presenting teaching portfolios at the University of Limerick. In particular, this case study explores the reflective strategies used by a group of higher education teachers who were nominated for UL teaching excellence awards. In this case study, the authors note that very little structured research exists on using student feedback as part of the portfolio construction process, and they advocate more challenging and structured ways of interpreting student feedback for this purpose. They also raise some interesting questions about whether teaching portfolios should contain both teaching failures and successes, and suggest that more guidance and encouragement is needed before teachers adopt a diagnostic or improvement-orientated approach to their teaching.

Our final two chapters in this section return to University College Cork. Chapter Twelve expands on some of the themes we see percolating through many of the other case studies. This case study offers us three perspectives. Marian McCarthy explores the role of mentoring in a university context, an important aspect of some programmes in portfolio development. She describes some of the themes that have emerged from her experience in mentoring, and charts the journey of a small teaching support group that eventually found its niche within the support structure of teaching portfolio seminars. Bettie Higgs charts the process involved in setting up an award for Teaching Excellence in UCC and its accompanying programme. She also writes of her experience in developing a reflective portfolio as part of an accredited course with the Open University in the UK, and documents the role

portfolio-building programmes have played in UCC within the context of creating and maintaining a scholarship of learning and teaching. Áine Hyland's perspective heads up this chapter with an honest and cogent account of the political challenges she met in introducing a range of initiatives to support learning and teaching; of the unnecessary tension that exists between research and teaching; and of the necessity of recognising, valuing and rewarding excellence in teaching and learning. She sounds a challenge to university 'change agents' to be 'eternally vigilant' in promoting and foregrounding learning and teaching so that the experience of the learner is optimised.

Finally, in Chapter Thirteen Carmel Halton and Nona Lyons study the use of a portfolio as a means of reflective inquiry, and document how the portfolio has become a mandatory aspect of professional development in a Masters of Social Science (MSocSc) programme at University College Cork. In this case study, the authors describe how the reflective portfolio is used to document the research process in this Masters degree (where experienced social work practitioners investigate real problems of practice arising within the context of their employing agencies), while simultaneously engaging in a reflective documentation and interrogation of each step of the process. They point to the development of a culture of reflective inquiry, and argue that the portfolio aspect of the programme is especially significant because it allows both the research and the reflective process to be documented, and helps participants make connections between research and practice.

Section Three: Common Themes and Way Forward

In Chapter 14, Jacqueline Potter reflects on the case studies within the handbook to consider the features of the diverse practices in place across the Irish higher education sector. This chapter explores the common features of teaching portfolios and portfolio programmes that support learning and development of third level educators and examines institutional similarities and differences, and the challenges and successes of providing a forum for exchanging academic inquiries into teaching. Finally, this section looks to the future to reveal emerging directions and to prompt new inquiries in this field.

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