

# Portfolio Guidelines

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*to offer excellent face to face and online academic courses with the aim of providing students with a learning experience comprising of quality of teaching, learning facilities and a positive education experience.*

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## Purpose

The purpose of these portfolio guidelines is to provide students with clear, consistent, and supportive instructions so they can approach their assessment confidently and effectively. They clarify what a portfolio is, what it should include, and how it will be assessed, helping to reduce confusion and ensure fairness. Guidelines support independent learning by encouraging students to manage their time, think critically, reflect on their experiences, and solve problems. They also help improve the quality of submissions by offering structure, practical advice, and examples, which can lead to more thoughtful and well-presented work. By outlining expectations around referencing and originality, guidelines promote academic integrity and help students avoid plagiarism. In addition, they contribute to the development of transferable skills such as research, communication, and analysis, which are valuable in both academic and professional settings. Ultimately, portfolio guidelines help reduce anxiety, build student confidence, and increase the chances of success.

## Additional Information

Students are strongly encouraged to consult their tutor for clarification and support throughout the process of preparing their portfolio. Your tutor can provide valuable guidance on how to approach the different components of the portfolio, ensure that your work is on the right track, and help you understand the academic expectations involved. Portfolios will typically be assessed based on several key aspects: how well you demonstrate an understanding of the subject matter, your ability to apply knowledge to practical or realistic situations, the depth of your analysis and reflection, and the clarity and structure of your written work. By actively seeking feedback and guidance, and by taking time to plan and revise your portfolio carefully, you will improve your chances of producing a high-quality submission that meets the required standards. Taking a proactive approach by engaging with your tutor is an important part of achieving academic success.

# 1. What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is a structured collection of work that demonstrates your understanding, skills, and progress in a subject or across several areas. Unlike exams, portfolios allow you to engage deeply with course content, reflect on your learning, and apply your knowledge in meaningful ways. Think of your portfolio as your personal showcase – a place to present your research, critical thinking, reflections, and practical suggestions in a clear and organised format.

# 2. Structure of a Typical Portfolio

While your course may have its own specific instructions, most academic portfolios contain a mix of the following components:

## A. Research-Based Task

You will be asked to explore a topic using a range of reliable sources. Your goal is to demonstrate that you can:

- Investigate a subject independently,
- Identify and understand key issues or concepts,
- Present information clearly and logically.

Example:

Write a short report based on academic articles or official data sources such as:

- Google Scholar
- Statista
- OECD Library

## **B. Analytical Work**

You might be given a case study, scenario, or set of data to examine. This task will assess your ability to:

- Apply theory or knowledge to practical situations,
- Compare different approaches or solutions,
- Draw reasoned conclusions.

Example:

Analyse a real-world issue or organisation by drawing on theories or frameworks relevant to your course.

Useful tools for learning analysis:

- University of Reading - Critical Analysis Guide
- The Open University - Learning to Think Critically

## **C. Reflective Commentary**

Reflection encourages you to think about your learning experiences, how you've changed, and what you've gained. Reflective writing is usually written in the first person and includes:

- What you did or learned,
- How you felt about it,
- What you would do differently next time.

Example:

Reflect on your experience of working in a team, attending a workshop, or completing a project.

Useful guides:

- SkillsYouNeed – Reflective Practice



#### **D. Practical Recommendations**

Some portfolios require you to propose improvements, action plans, or policy changes. These should be:

- Feasible and realistic,
- Justified with reasoning and/or evidence,
- Clearly structured.

Example:

Make recommendations for improving communication in a workplace, engagement in a classroom, or inclusion in a digital platform.

Helpful resource:

- MindTools – Problem Solving Techniques

## **3. Presentation & Submission**

Your portfolio must be:

- Well-structured – Use headings, subheadings, and clear sections. Refer to the Academy's Assignment Guidelines for more information on font size, line spacing etc.
- Professionally written – Use correct grammar and academic language.
- Referenced correctly – Use Harvard style referencing.
- Submitted on time – Check the deadline and file format requirements (Word, PDF, etc.).

## **4. Tips for Success**

- Start early – Give yourself time to research, draft, revise, and reflect.
- Use a variety of sources – Combine academic, professional, and statistical information.
- Keep it original – Plagiarism is a serious offence. Use your own words and ideas.
- Ask questions – If you're unsure about the task, speak to your tutor early on.
- Proofread – Mistakes can affect your grade and make your work harder to understand.



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