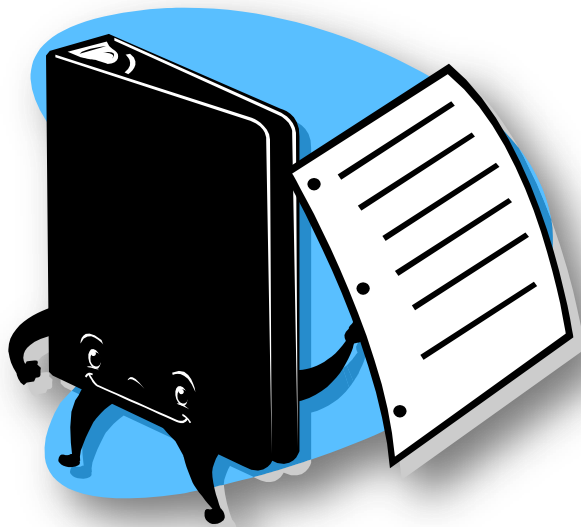


SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED...

(OR, HOW TO PLAN & ORGANIZE YOUR PORTFOLIO)



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SO WHY SWEAT THE DETAILS?

Your portfolio is a special document, something that probably takes one or two years to prepare for submission. It is a *collection*, and a *reflection*, of your work, and you as a student and career professional. It is something you will want to last, and *evolve* and grow with you for many years after you graduate, and it is a document you might want to share, in whole or in part, with a potential employer. It just makes good sense to produce the most professional-looking compilation possible!

OK, SO WHAT DO I NEED?

Well, since it will contain many valuable documents, you need an appropriate *container*, something that will both *protect* your documents and *showcase* them in a positive, professional manner.

START WITH A BINDER

A 3” binder is the ideal size; it will hold all you have and probably still have some room to spare, for future additions. Since a portfolio should continue to grow long after you have graduated, it just makes sense to get a good-sized one at the outset. There are numerous kinds. Some have zippers. Some have straps. Some have neither. The key is that it should be *new*, and not worn, torn, etc. Some binders have a transparent “window” on the front cover where you can insert a cover page if desired. Note: “Duo-tang” style containers and small, 1” flexible plastic binders are too small for a portfolio – avoid these. Get a 3”.



ADD SOME DIVIDERS

Your portfolio will contain a lot of very different pieces, so you need to partition it into different sections, for example “Work Samples” or “Reflections on Learning”, etc. Some dividers are “oversize” meaning they are wider than a typical 8 ^{1/2} x 11 page, and protrude further, making for ease of use. Dividers can be made of paper or plastic, and should offer some sort of labeling option.



GET SOME PLASTIC PAGE PROTECTORS

To protect your valuable documents from wear, dirt, tearing, and other damage, you need to use transparent page protectors to insert them in. You can buy these in boxes or in smaller packages. Some students have opted to pool their resources and share a large box, as they often are cheaper in larger quantities. One protector slip can hold a single page or even a multi-page document.



Now you have the “infrastructure” of your portfolio, the *container* where you’ll begin to insert significant pieces to chronicle your learning journey. You should have this set up early in your year, so that when new candidates for portfolio items appear, you can insert them into the appropriate section.

SHOULD I USE ORIGINALS OR COPIES?

That’s a decision you’ll have to make for each item. Both are quite acceptable. If you do chose to copy, ensure that it is a *good* copy, however, and not a smudgy or faded copy. If it is a small item like a little card, maybe consider enlarging it on a photocopier first.

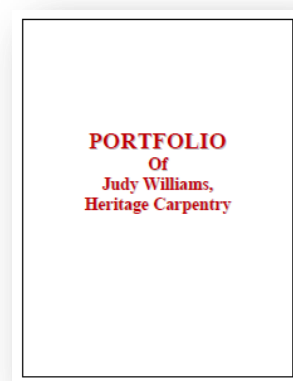
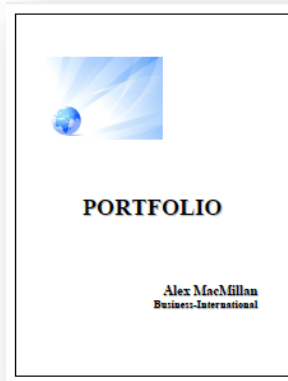
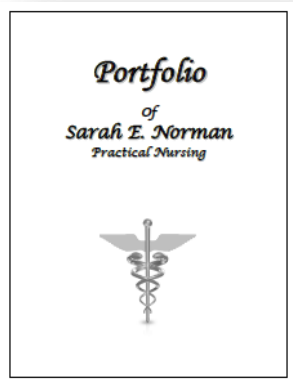
WHAT ABOUT AN ELECTRONIC VERSION?

If you have the technical competency to use various software apps to complete an e- portfolio in lieu of or in addition to your paper version, by all means do so. Do discuss it with your instructors first, however. You will need to be able to scan documents, etc. to make this work. It’s not for everyone, but it can work!



SO WHAT GOES FIRST?

Start with a cover or title page. This can go on the front cover if the binder has a window. Otherwise it should be the first sheet visible when it is opened. If you have a windowed cover, you can repeat the page as the first inside item as well. The cover should be uncluttered, well-formatted, and pertain to your field of study. Avoid personal, family pictures, etc. – This is your *Business, Nursing, Carpentry, CCA*, etc. portfolio. Graphic elements are optional, and are fine if not overdone. Think “professional.” The next page would then be a type of “Table of Contents” page, but without actual page numbers, since a portfolio is a collection of many unrelated, non-sequential documents. Some students have found a colour-coded style of Table of Contents to be very effective, with the TOC entries corresponding to the divider tab colours.



SO WHAT ABOUT “SECTIONS”?

The actual naming of the sections isn't as crucial as what each section is *for*. A section used for reflective pieces could be called “Learning Narratives,” “Reflections on My Learning” or something else, as long as it makes sense to you and also to someone else given your portfolio to examine. However, you *should* have sections for the following, with appropriate names for easy identification.

Introduction (or Personal Profile, etc.)

This might include a brief one or two page intro of you, your program, and how it all came to be and where you want it to go. This shouldn't be an autobiography, but rather a personal reflection on you as a student in your chosen program.

Some typical items to include in this first section then, might include:

- Introduction
- Mission and vision statements
- A goals statement
- Maybe a learning styles inventory
- Perhaps your letter of acceptance

Professional Profile (or Academic & Career, etc.)

This usually includes an up-to-date resume, references list, maybe a sample cover letter, a skills inventory and any other related documents.

- Resume
- Cover letter and/or letter of introduction
- List of references
- Skills inventory
- Letters of recommendation

Work Samples

This obviously would contain a good variety of samples of your work. “Cherry pick” the very best stuff you have! This should be a fairly “chunky” section with lots of good evidence of your learning & skills.

- Papers, reports, written assignments
- PowerPoint slide shows (print-outs)
- Tests and quizzes
- Evaluation sheets
- Work-term evaluation documents
- Photos of your work or of you *at work* (important: include *captions* with these, to explain the images)

Learning Narratives (or Reflections on My Learning, etc.)

This section would include those very important reflective pieces where you were asked to look back at a learning experience, and to “tell the story” of your learning as it related to that event. Typical reflectives are often written for or after:

- Work-terms, clinicals or co-ops
- Group or individual assignments
- Field trips or other special events
- Tests and exams
- Guest speakers
- Personal inventories (personality, learning style inventories, etc.)

The sky is the limit, really. You can look back at and reflect on pretty much anything if you learned from it. The key is to first *identify* the event or piece, *explain* what it was and why it was assigned, etc. and then most importantly, *discuss* what you learned from it and how that new learning might be useful going forward. Your instructors will explain this in more detail in class.

Documentation

This can be a *big* one, as it encompasses any kind of document that helps tell the story of your learning journey. Some students choose to subdivide it into subsections or even have different sections and not use “Documentation”. As long as they make logical sense, that’s fine. Some possible candidates are:

- Degrees, diplomas and certificates
- Letters of thanks, recognition, acceptance, congratulations, etc.
- Workshop or seminar certificates of completion, attendance, etc.
- Transcripts of marks
- Course outlines
- Awards and honours
- Newspaper articles about you
- Licenses and similar credentials, either on paper or cards (and you can always photocopy and enlarge the cards if desired).

Anything else that someone else published regarding the academic/professional you, or about you, that doesn’t fit anywhere else usually fits here (except personal stuff – we’ll discuss that one shortly!)

OK, SO WHAT ABOUT THAT “PERSONAL” SIDE OF ME?

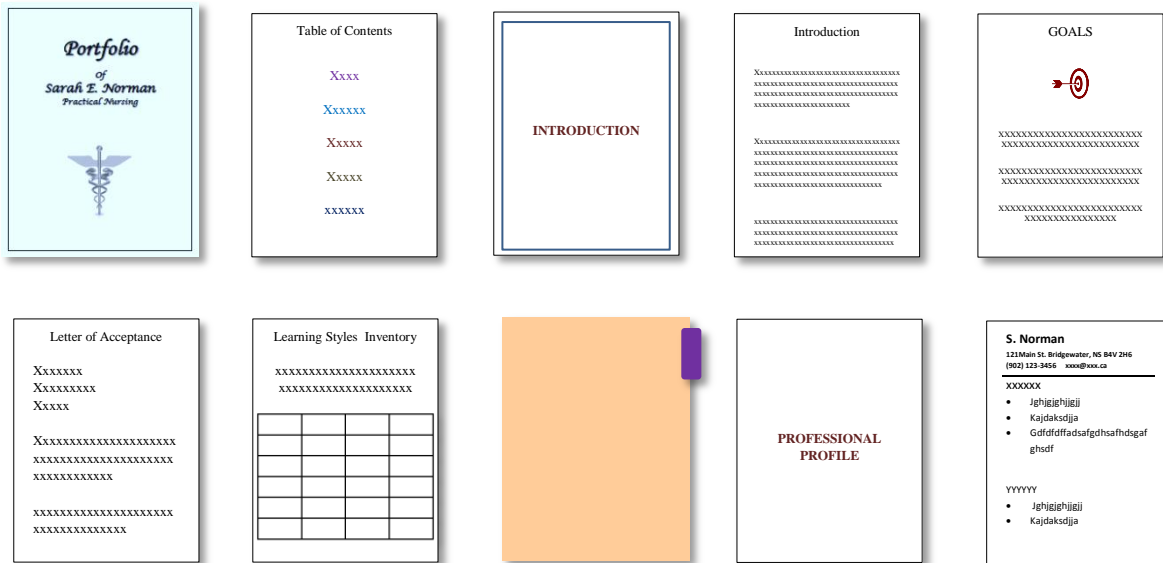
Some students prefer to add a section that shows another side, i.e. their *personal* interests, hobbies, etc. If you wish to go in this direction, I would recommend making it the last section, so you can easily remove it temporarily if you are planning to show it to an employer and prefer not to share everything. If you are uncertain, have a chat with your faculty to discuss the pros and cons.

SOME TIPS

- Consider colour-coding your dividers and the entries in your “Table of Contents.” It adds a really nice touch.
- For some documents, it’s best to have both pages visible without having to flip a page (called “kissing pages”). A 2-page resume would be a good example here. You see both at a glance.
- For each section, have a “section title page.” Keep it simple, but a page border, large font, and consistent colour and formatting across all the title pages can make a nice statement.
- Try to limit your material to that which is *relevant*. Sometimes that takes some “soul-searching,” and if in doubt, discuss it with your instructors.
- A checklist of what should be in your portfolio is available to all students. Ask your instructors if you don’t have access to this.
- The answer to the question “Can I just *hand-write* or *hand-print* items instead of type them?” is “no” (but you *may* write a signature on some personal documents like cover letters, etc.) Remember: professional! ☺
- Sticky notes affixed to the edge of a sheet of paper are not accepted as “dividers.” Just saying!

SO LET'S GET STARTED!

Here is a graphic representation of how the first parts of a portfolio *might* look. In this example, we start with the cover, then the *Contents*, then the Introduction section (the Introduction title page, followed by the parts in that section). The remaining sections would follow the same pattern as the *Introduction* section (title, followed by the pieces that make up the section). Notice the **divider** used to separate the Introduction section from the next section, "Professional Profile." ☺



SO LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN!

Start early! Start early! Did I mention to **start early**? ☺ Waiting until the last week of classes to do your portfolio is a *very* bad idea. Portfolio is as much about *process* as it is about *product*. You want to have it approved, and rush jobs often just don't make the grade. Keep the binder visible somewhere so that you can revisit it whenever it is advantageous to do so (but do keep it safe as well – if the family cat decides to sharpen her claws on it, well...)

Your entire faculty knows about the portfolio process. They all have to make and maintain one too! Whenever you have a question about what might go in it, how to arrange or format it, etc., ask them for some advice or feedback. They'd be glad to help!

A FEW LINKS TO CHECK OUT...

http://www.nsc.ca/learning_programs/portfolio/

<http://www.burridge.nsc.ca/portfolio%20guide/>

A Handy Checklist to Track Your Progress

This is similar to the one your faculty will use to approve this milestone. When you submit your portfolio for approval, we will look for this content and organization. If there are any areas in need of work, it will be returned as “Not Approved” and you will have time to make the necessary revisions/additions.

Note: below are *minimal* standards. You may of course opt to add more/other materials as well.

- A new and appropriate-size binder is used (3”)
- Sections are partitioned with dividers
- Pages are inserted into plastic sleeves
- Each new section begins with a section title page
- The first item after the cover is a Table of Contents
- Introduction** section contains introduction, goals, mission/vision, perhaps your acceptance letter, etc.
- Prof. Profile** section contains up-to-date resume, letter, references, skills inventory, etc.
- Reflections** section contains at least several learning narratives/reflective pieces
- Work Samples** section contains a good representation of your course-related work, using a variety of different samples, captioned when necessary (e.g. photos)
- Documentation** section contains valid and relevant documents pertaining to your field of study and career choice. Other names for this are fine, as are logical subsections if desired.
- You have reviewed your documents for *obvious* typos, spelling, etc.
- Other** _____
- Other** _____

Questions I have:

① THE REVISION PROCESS

Portfolio is a milestone that *isn't graded* numerically, but it *must be approved* in order for you to graduate from your program of choice.

If you have been asked to revise (this is actually quite common, so don't take it personally – we are your editors, and are on *your* side 😊), you will be advised by email to pick up your portfolio at the campus, and to return it to the campus within a prescribed time, TBA. This may or may not occur during your work-term or clinical. Your faculty will have filled out a checklist like the one above, and will also affix *sticky notes* to those areas in need of revision/addition/deletion. These notes will explain what needs to be done, without marring your valuable documents, and can be disposed of when you are finished. Once your faculty has approved your revisions, they will sign or initial the checklist, and you are good to go (meaning, the campus registrar will be advised to credit you accordingly)! 😊



APPENDIX: SOME SUGGESTED PORTFOLIO ITEMS (in no particular order)

Introduction	Academic & Career Goals	Mission & Vision Statement
Resumes	Cover letter	References List
Recommendation letters	Letters of thanks	Letters of recognition
Acceptance letters	Scholarships	Bursaries
Degrees and Diplomas	Certificates	Licenses & certifications
Workshop/seminar certificates	Transcripts	Course outlines
Papers and essays	Tests and quizzes	PowerPoint slides
Reflectives/Learning Narratives	Cards of thanks & appreciation	Photos of your work (captioned)
Supervisory reports	Newspaper articles about you	Work-term evaluations
Skills Inventory	Self-assessments	Screen shots of your work
Published articles	Inventory of Personal Qualities	Principal's List Award and/or picture
Volunteering (pictures, letters, etc.)	Class Pictures	Grad photos
Video clip(s) of you at work or working on a project (this could be on a labeled DVD, or given as a web link)		

This is a start; you probably have or will perhaps discover other potential items that are portfolio-worthy. When in doubt, just ask, and we'll be happy to provide an opinion.



 Notes...

A series of 20 horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.

