

Teaching Portfolios: two views, multiple agendas

teaching portfolio; reflective practice, quality assurance

Abstract

The literature on teaching portfolios contains many comprehensive statements about their roles and uses. Teaching portfolios are claimed to be effective mechanisms for encouraging reflective practice, as such they are recommended as key elements in tertiary teaching courses. They are also recommended as a mechanism for demonstrating effective teaching and as such are often required for quality assurance processes and for promotion and teaching awards. The rhetoric of academe thus presents the teaching portfolio as a multipurpose tool, but what is the associated reality?

Our research has found that, faced with multiple agendas and pressures, staff at different levels and with varied career projections have a range of views and practices around teaching portfolios. This session/paper/workshop will introduce you to six fictional staff members. These players will share with you their confusion, idealism and pragmatism. They will tell you about their portfolios (or lack of portfolios) and the roles these play in their teaching and career progression.

This research raises some important issues about the very different benefits of writing a teaching portfolio within a mentoring relationship and as an isolated activity in response to demands of accountability. It also juxtaposes the experience of writing an initial portfolio with that of updating an existing one. These insights raise questions about the optimum use of the teaching portfolio to nurture and encourage new staff and also of facilitating the emergence of truly exceptional academic leaders. These issues and questions will be discussed.

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