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Teaching Tip #9 Guidelines for Teacher Portfolio

Courses I've taught

These guidelines will assist you when you are adding or updating information regarding the courses you have taught.

Course name

Choose a unique name for each course so that you can recognise it easily later on. e.g. "Autumn 2006 Elementary 13 year olds" or "Business English March 2003". (If you taught or teach the same course more than once, you may prefer to refer to it only once.)

Subject

This may be "General English" or you may specify the exact content area of the course. e.g. "medical vocabulary for nurses".

Aims of course

You can state the aims as "general language improvement" or specify the goals that the learners aimed to achieve.

Learner profile

State briefly who studied on the course. e.g. "Secondary school 15-16 years old".

Level

State the general level of the class. Use the levels described in Language Levels.

Interesting or important events on this course

You might want to include examples of learner achievements, or unusual or memorable events that happened.

Reflections

Reflect on what you learnt from teaching this course.

Teaching & Learning Samples

This section will assist you when adding or updating the Teaching & Learning Samples section of your Teacher Portfolio.

The context

This could state where the sample was taken from, when, where, and the type of learners.

Teaching and learning snapshots

These are short excerpts describing a lesson or another educational event. Sometimes

a snapshot can show more about you and your work more effectively than a description of a full lesson. When describing:

- your own teaching, aim to describe a range of lessons exemplifying some of your typical ways of working and more experimental, difficult or unusual situations.
- an other teacher's sample say why you have chosen it, what it illustrates about the teacher and the teacher's way of working and what you have learnt from it.

Reflections

Add a reflective commentary about this sample. Remember that reflective commentaries are about your personal reactions. Try to focus on what you have learnt, even if you didn't like a course or other event you can still focus on what useful learning came out of the experience.

You may add documents or photos to illustrate your snapshots. You can do this in the Assets section of your Teacher Portfolio.

Assets

The Assets section allows you to provide evidence to support what you say about yourself and your work in many ways. Some of the assets will be written by you. Other assets will be from people who know and work with you - your students, other teachers, supervisors, trainers, employers, officials, parents etc. Some documents may be official texts that state requirements or provide constraints on what you do, for example: a syllabus. The asset file types you may upload to your portfolio: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, PDF and Jpeg.

Your Portfolio can only be viewed by those you allow to see it. Indeed, you may decide to keep it entirely private and for your eyes only. But, in preparing the Portfolio, it may help you to imagine who a future reader might be - a colleague, a supervisor or an employer. Would they find it too much or find the purpose of the content unclear? Or would they get a clear picture of you, your career and beliefs as a teacher?

It is important to choose carefully what you will include. Select key things rather than everything.

- Your portfolio will lose impact and purpose if it becomes scrapbook of everything you could possibly put in. Choose only items that best support your data and views.
- Make sure that you refer to your assets in your writing so there is a clear link to why it is included.

You could include:

- Scanned qualifications, certificates, records of official teacher status
- Open references about you written by former employers, trainers
- Written feedback by trainers or supervisors about lessons they have observed you teaching
- Photographs of places: schools, classrooms, staff rooms, preparation areas
- Photographs of people: learners, colleagues, supervisors, Heads of Department, Directors of Studies
- Photographs of work: classroom writing activity, pair work
- Syllabus, curriculum, background documentation related to lessons and courses
- Lesson plans, course plans, year plans, schemes of work, records of work covered
- Samples of learner work - marked or unmarked

- Copies of materials you have created or adapted yourself
- Examinations, tests, quizzes, reviews, blank feedback forms
- Photographs of student work: wall posters, project work
- Photographs or diagrams of board work, notice boards, realia, room displays
- Scanned learner mid-course or end-of-course feedback forms
- Records of tutorials with students
- Lists of books read, maybe with summaries or reviews
- Web pages (or links)
- Correspondence about teaching and learning
- Handouts, examples, excerpts from seminars, books by other people, which have made an impact on you or that you wish to comment on

Note: If you include any material that you did not create yourself, you must ensure that you have the permission of the copyright owner. University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations does not accept any responsibility for material that you put on the site, and you will be liable for any claims arising from this material.

Teaching Action Plan

This section will assist you when adding or updating the Teaching Action Plan section of your portfolio.

Action step

Your action step is a clear, concise, factual description of an intention to do something, to try something, or to behave in a certain way. An action step can be

- about a single occasion (for example: I will use flashcards when teaching my next Beginner's vocabulary lesson) or a number of occasions.
- about behaviour over a period of time (for example: I will talk less in lessons this term).
- longer-term plans or intentions for the future (for example: I will become more confident at teaching phonology).

Action plan

Your action plan gives the details of how you will implement the action step - for example: when, where, who with, who will help you, who will observe or give feedback, how you will assess the success of the action step.

Reflection

You write your reflection after the action step has been taken or if it has been postponed or not done for some reason. Here you can state what happened and what you have learnt from it. Use attachments to provide supporting evidence where appropriate.

Reflective Diary

Use this section as a diary to review and reflect on your work and views. You may include comments on your current work position, how you feel about it, the work you do, your learners, your colleagues, your development, things that have a positive impact on your work as a teacher, constraints on your success as a teacher.

Reflective Commentaries

In addition to the factual information you record about your work and skills, there are various points in this portfolio where you can also write reflective commentaries.

Reflection is an important part of the learning process. We learn by doing things and then looking back and thinking about them. When we look back and think about our teaching, we are reflecting. We can draw conclusions from our efforts, successes, problems and mistakes. If we just keep doing things without reflection we may not develop as teachers, perhaps simply repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

Writing a reflective commentary may be useful to you because:

- A Teacher Portfolio with only names, dates, qualifications, and references etc can be a little "cold" and doesn't give a full picture of you as a teacher.
- You may want to add more personal comments on your reactions to things, your feelings, your thoughts.
- The act of writing can help you to clarify your thoughts and notice things you hadn't considered before.
- You can draw attention to important learning from a course or other event.
- You can show a clearer and more personal picture to another reader, for example: in your CV when applying for a job.
- Looking back on your reflective commentary after some months have passed will allow you to see how your ideas and reactions change over time.

Some guidelines and suggestions for reflective commentaries

- There is no requirement to complete these sections. You can leave them blank if you wish.
- If you fill them in, write simply and clearly. Be honest.
- These sections are about your personal reactions. Use the pronoun "I" to explain your opinions and feelings (rather than passives or other impersonal descriptions).
- Try to focus on what you have learnt from each course you teach or attend or important teaching event that happens.
- Even if you didn't like a course or other event you can still focus on what useful learning came out of the experience.

Writing about Teaching Beliefs

When completing the Beliefs about Teaching & Learning section, the example questions below will help you. You may use some of these questions as they are written here, or write new questions of your own (perhaps using ideas taken from these examples).

Whatever you do, don't try to answer all of the questions! Three or four well-chosen questions should be enough to give a good picture of your views about teaching and learning.

The Teacher

- What is a teacher's job?
- What different roles might a teacher have?
- How can a teacher help the process of learning?
- What do I enjoy about the job of teaching?
- What mood or atmosphere does my personality and working style create in class?
- How might one of my typical students describe me and how I work?
- How might one of my colleagues describe me?
- What kinds of teacher have most strongly influenced me in the past?
- What kind of teacher would I like to be?

The Students

- What do students expect / need from my classes?

- Why do people study a language?
- What motivates or demotivates learners?
- What kind of relationship should there be between teacher and student(s)?
- How can I help each learner to achieve the best he or she can?
- What is the best way to work with difficult students?
- What is my attitude to discipline?
- What do I really think about my students?

Learning

- How do people learn a language?
- How do people learn new items of grammar / vocabulary?
- How do learners become better at pronunciation?
- How do people become more skilful in listening / speaking / reading / writing?
- How do learners become better at communicating in real-life situations?
- Do I follow a particular methodology or approach? Why?
- What is my attitude to lesson planning?
- What is my attitude to language tests, classroom tests and big outside tests?
- What is my attitude to computers, the Internet and other new technology?

The Classroom

- What working atmosphere is most appropriate in class?
- What classroom activities are most helpful to learners?
- What is my general approach to classroom management / instruction-giving / use of board / use of gestures etc?
- What is the role of the students' first language in the classroom?
- What kinds of seating arrangement do I use or avoid? Why?

Working as a Teacher

- What am I doing to make sure that I continue to develop as a teacher?
- How can the school or other teachers help me to grow as a teacher?
- What constraints are there on my work as a teacher (e.g. from school, government, individual people, parents, other teachers, yourself, others)?
- What working relationship should there be amongst language teachers within a school?
- How can conferences, newsletters, teaching groups and other resources help a teacher?
- What is my long-term future in this profession?
- Are there other jobs connected with language teaching that I might like to do? (for example: management, materials writing)

Future Aims / Intentions

When stating your future aims / intentions about your beliefs, try to avoid vague or generalised statements. Aim to investigate how the things you believe relate to what you really do in your work. One way to do this is to use the following structure:

Examples

1

State your belief. *"I think it's very important to create a supportive atmosphere in class."*

2

Say how some things that you do are connected to that belief. *"One of the ways I do that is by trying to pay close attention when students are speaking in class and really listen to what they say."*

3

Give some examples of things you do that seem not to come from the belief or which seem to contradict what you believe. *"However, I find I still get impatient when students don't answer my questions quickly and I know that this upsets some of them."*

4

Suggest some ways to move forward. *"I will ask a colleague to observe one of my lessons and tell me what she notices" or "I will read a book on the subject".*