

CHAPTER 6: ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIOS

FIRST-YEAR WRITING ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO INSTRUCTIONS

Every student who takes a First-Year Writing course at the University of Georgia will compose an electronic portfolio or other capstone assignment over the course of the semester. While most FYW classes use the portfolio, some instructors use other capstone approaches as described in their syllabi.

The portfolio gives students an opportunity to revise and polish their work—even after it has been evaluated for a grade during the semester—to reflect on their writing processes, and to showcase their work in a personalized context. The use of an electronic portfolio for all FYW classes means that students have an opportunity to raise their grades through steady work and revision; it also means that students need to schedule adequate time to do their very best work in the portfolio, as it counts for 30% of their final grade.

While your instructor may have you turn in artifacts to eLW for workshoping and peer review, you will turn in your final portfolio to eLC under "Assignments." Students develop portfolios throughout the semester using their instructors' directions to update and revise their work, uploading their final products to eLC. Students will also find that using feedback from their classmates in peer review sessions will make the portfolio development a much more rewarding process, as will visiting the Writing Center and Digital Learning Lab.

There are video and text resources to help students with the process of submitting a portfolio accessible from eLC courses under "Content" --> "FYW Resources and Info."

NOTE: You cannot re-use or recycle **any exhibit** from your English 1101 portfolio for your English 1102 portfolio. This would be Academic Dishonesty and handled under the Academic Honesty policy and procedures. Including any other materials previously submitted for any other classes (e.g. using a lab report as part of a wild card exhibit) **must** receive written consent from both your FYW instructor and the instructor for whom you originally wrote the document.

ELEMENTS OF THE PORTFOLIO

BIOGRAPHY

The biography is a short introduction to you, the author of the portfolio. Your teacher may specify particular information to include in your bio, but, in general, the bio should act as an author's note.

Images on your biography page are optional, but readers like them, so you should try to include some image that is relevant. You can select a representative image (a windmill, a horse, or anything you can find on the Web—just remember to include a citation), or you can select an image of yourself. Think of it as a dust jacket image on the back of a book—how do you want to represent yourself? The goal of your Biography should be to introduce yourself as a writer.

INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIVE ESSAY (IRE)

The most important element in your portfolio, the Introductory Reflective Essay ties together all the exhibits in your portfolio; it helps you describe and reflect on your writing processes, with your exhibits providing the supporting evidence. The IRE is also the first item your instructor will read after they open your Biography. Your teacher may provide

you with a specific prompt or direct you to some specific portion of the FYW program sample prompt to help you get started. In your IRE, you might discuss how the various exhibits you have chosen for your portfolio reveal the way you have engaged with the goals of the course listed earlier in this *FYW Guide*. Some successful portfolios have re-organized the author's work for the semester around a common theme that the writer sees in their own work.

750-1500 words is the average length for an IRE, although some of the Moran Award winners have written longer IREs.

TWO REVISED ESSAYS FROM THE COURSE

You will include in your Portfolio two of the three graded projects you have written for the class, revised and polished and posted to the portfolio. They should be substantive and well-argued, carefully edited, and completely, thoroughly, and correctly documented in MLA format. Think of these as examples of your writing at its best.

Note about the Revised Essays: We recommend a thorough revision for the Revised Essays exhibits in your Portfolio—not just a quick proofreading for surface errors. Could more evidence be developed, a new perspective raised, a change in tone attempted, or a firmer line of reasoning followed?

When choosing essays to put in your portfolio, think about how they will work together to help make the portfolio a unified whole. Some students choose the essays that received the highest grades, but this is only one criterion. You may want to choose the essays you like the best, the ones you can improve the most, or the ones that fit best with your chosen theme.

EXHIBIT OF COMPOSING/REVISION PROCESS

This exhibit demonstrates your composing and revision process. Typically, students construct this document by copying and pasting the same or similar sections of multiple drafts of a selected essay into a single document. (Note – your instructor may request that you use the “Compare Docs” feature of eLW in creating the revision exhibit). You can then add commentary explaining the significance of the different versions, annotating and contextualizing the changes you made through successive drafts. This explanation is just as important as, or perhaps more important than, your chosen examples. The revision exhibit gives you a chance to reflect on your progress throughout the semester and to perform a self-assessment.

EXHIBIT OF PEER REVIEW PROCESS

You will select and post to your portfolio one of the peer reviews that you have written during the semester, including commentary to help the reader understand your peer review process. As with the Composing/Revision Process Exhibit, the Peer Review Exhibit gives you a chance to reflect on the collaborative revision process throughout the semester.

WILD CARD

This exhibit is up to you. The only limitations are that your Wild Card 1) must be digitally accessible (remember to check sharing permissions for web-based projects); and 2) must include some of your writing. In the past, students have submitted journals, photos with captions, short stories, poems, letters, song lyrics, slideshow presentations, scans of drawings with comments, podcasts, and music files. In thinking about selecting or creating a Wild Card, consider how it fits into your overall portfolio rationale.

OTHER GUIDELINES:

PORTFOLIO PUBLICATION

The portfolio must be uploaded to eLC under Assignments. Follow your instructor's directions regarding whether they prefer you format your portfolio as a single .PDF or .DOC file containing all your exhibits or if they prefer each exhibit be uploaded as individual files. Help with the technical aspects of uploading student portfolios may be found under the "Help" module in eLW.

READABILITY AND ACCESS

It is very important that your instructor can access and read your portfolio without complications. It is your responsibility to make sure that:

- the portfolio and all its exhibits display properly without significant formatting issues
- all exhibits are in one of the acceptable file formats (see below)
- the portfolio can be navigated easily and efficiently by your readers

FILE FORMATS FOR PORTFOLIO EXHIBITS

- **.pages files:** eLC does not display Pages files.
- **.docx files:** eLC should display Word documents correctly; however, formatting may display differently on your instructor's computer. To ensure that your formatting displays the way you want, you can export your document as a PDF.
- **PDF documents:** Students who include a large number of images in their documents or have special design and formatting needs often choose to upload the documents in their portfolios as PDF documents. This is the only format in which you can be absolutely sure that the document appears exactly the same in your word processor and the web display. You can convert any word processor document to a PDF, typically through a menu option commonly labeled "Export" or "Download." The FYW Digital Learning Labs have computers with Adobe Creative Cloud; students are welcome to visit Park Hall 118 to use the computers and get help preparing their portfolio artifacts.

PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

Although it includes seven different artifacts, the portfolio works as a single complex document. Instructors will evaluate each portfolio as a whole, assigning it a single grade (as opposed to grading each exhibit separately and averaging grades).

As your instructor reads your portfolio, they will evaluate how effectively your Introductory Reflective Essay (IRE) 1) presents an argument about your writing and learning over the course of the semester and 2) supports this argument by incorporating and explaining evidence from your other portfolio artifacts. In other words, expect FYW instructors to use the IRE as a guide for reading your other documents, in order to get a sense of how well they match the expectations you set up in your Introduction. Of course, instructors always look for evidence of care, originality, hard work, and excellent writing, but in the portfolio we are also interested in your ability to write reflectively and persuasively about your writing. Your instructor will look particularly closely at the argument you make in your IRE and how you support it: if your IRE talks about writing complex thesis statements, for example, your instructor will expect to see evidence of complex thesis statements in the IRE and other artifacts that feature argumentation.

Your portfolio will be assessed with **at least** the following four categories, and your instructor may add up to two additional categories from the list of rubric blocks found in Chapter Five.

PROCESS:

In the three major projects you've completed this semester, the Process block has represented the drafts, outlines, peer reviews, and revisions you've performed on your project. The portfolio approaches process **not** as a required set of drafts or iterations, but instead as your awareness of how process has shaped your writing this semester. Your portfolio should consider what you've learned about the writing process and revision over the course of the semester.

This block will be most important for your **IRE** (which should address what you've learned about the writing process), your **revision exhibit** (which should show your reader what your process looks like), your **peer review exhibit** (which shows how collaborating is a part of the writing process), and your **two revised essays** (which show the end result of your process).

ARGUMENT:

You've likely made a variety of arguments in your major projects this semester, but your portfolio will make a very specific type of argument about what you've learned or confirmed about your writing over the course of the semester. Your central thesis could make a claim about your growth in a particular area (e.g. evidence, audience awareness, writing process), could find a larger pattern in or metaphor for how you write, or focus on how the portfolio exhibits your strengths (in analysis, in metacognition, in style, etc.).

This block will be particularly vital for your **IRE** (which should present a clear argument), and each exhibit in your portfolio should connect back to this argument. In addition, the **two revised essays** will likely demonstrate how you create and support an individual argument, depending on the assignment's genre.

EVIDENCE:

Much like in your projects this semester, the evidence block of the portfolio rubric represents how your portfolio supports its central claim. Evidence in the portfolio will likely include quotes from your finished drafts, rough drafts, peer reviews, or instructor comments but it could also include descriptions of how and when you wrote, as well as multimodal evidence like images or videos. Evidence should be curated specifically to support the argument made in the IRE, and all evidence drawn from outside sources should be properly cited.

This block will be most important for your **IRE** (which should incorporate evidence in the form of specific examples drawn from the other portfolio artifacts). In addition, the **two revised essays** will likely demonstrate how you incorporate primary and secondary evidence, depending on the assignment's genre. The **wild card** presents an opportunity for you to support your claim from a new perspective or with additional evidence than what you wrote in class.

REFLECTION:

The portfolio is primarily a **reflective** document: it asks you to think critically about your experiences, processes, behaviors, and tendencies. Reflection is more than simply recounting previous experiences; it should involve serious thought and commentary on what you have *discovered* through those experiences.

The portfolio as a whole represents a reflection about your work over the course of the semester.

The **biography** will help contextualize your reflection by sharing a piece of yourself as a person. The **IRE** will follow that introduction by applying your reflection to the claim about your writing this semester. Later, the **revision exhibit** will critically reflect on specific changes you've made over the course of one of your projects' drafting processes; not just

exhibiting what has changed, but explaining why you made the changes. Your instructor may require you to include brief introductions connecting your other portfolio exhibits to the central reflective argument in your IRE.

OTHER RUBRIC BLOCKS:

Your instructor might choose one or two additional blocks from the rubric to use in addition to the four blocks required above.