NCFE

Guide to designing and creating learner portfolios of evidence for assessment

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1. Introduction

This guidance has been written to support providers with guidance and ideas on the development of learner portfolios. This is general guidance on portfolio development and you should always refer to any specific guidance relating to portfolio presentation in the appropriate qualification specification.

Portfolios are a key assessment tool for creating, collating, ordering and presenting evidence of learner knowledge and skills. There are a wide range of evidence sources that can be used in a portfolio, ranging from reflective logs to a presentation poster. This guide will summarise some of the key evidence types that can be used in portfolio submissions.

- Videos
- Photographs
- Presentations
- Posters
- Artefacts and work products
- Case studies
- Reflective journal / Learning logs
- Observation
- Expert witness testimony
- Simulations
- Multiple choice and short answer questions
- Interviews
- Professional discussions.

Whilst this list covers the majority of common evidence types that can be used in assessment portfolios it is not exhaustive. It is common to see some of these evidence types combined, for example a poster and presentation or an expert witness testimony of an observation. The important issue here is to always refer to the appropriate qualification specification to check for the specific portfolio requirements and speak to your EQA if the type of portfolio evidence is not clear.

Traditionally, learner portfolios of evidence have been paper based using a partitioned file containing learner logs, notes, statements, drawings, etc. However, digital portfolios have now become more common place. The advantages of a digital portfolio are numerous in terms of storage, security, access, search capability and flexibility. There are many dedicated digital portfolio products on the market designed specifically for this purpose. There are also many free products and other tools, which although not specifically portfolio products, can easily be adapted for such use. Evernote, Google Keep and Microsoft OneNote are all good examples of free digital notebooks that can capture, process and present various media types.

2. Portfolio Organisation

There is no single best way to organise a portfolio of evidence. Digital portfolios do offer the advantage of being able to freely move pages and evidence between sections

and copy and paste pages / sections where they are being used to support more than one assessment criteria.

Some issues to consider and support you in facilitating the organisation of portfolios include:

- Focus of all evidence collection should be *quality* and *not quantity.*
- Learners should carefully select the evidence they collect to present in their Portfolio.
- All evidence should be clearly marked / annotated to show which specific criteria the evidence relates to, with the inclusion of a reference system or page which summarises the portfolio / logbook contents (see example below in Table 1).
- It should be the responsibility of the learner to ensure that they include sufficient and reliable evidence, which can also be authenticated.
- Support learners by making the most of every single piece of evidence, by including documents which meet multiple criteria.
- Encourage learners not to aim low and submit just one piece of evidence for every criteria; learners should map their portfolio contents to as many of the assessment criteria as possible.

Table 1 Example contents page / mapping document

Evidence reference:	Evidence description:	Criteria references:
A1	Emails to and from customer	- resource management - communication and collaboration - professionalism - using IT systems - project quality
A2	Witness testimony – employer statement	- professional boundaries and relationships - compliance – statutory standards and codes of practice - rights and behaviours – dignity - barriers to communication - hazardous substances - reducing the spread of infection - asking for help and working with others
A3	Reflective journal	- record and document production - decision making - communication and quality - relevant regulations, processes and policies - professionalism, adaptability and responsibilities

3. Creation, collection and storage of digital evidence

It maybe that you are required to facilitate the creation, collection and storage of digital evidence. There are a number of tools and platforms that can support this process.

There are three different types of digital asset that can be collected and stored:

- video and screen recordings – MP4/ MOV/AVI File
- photographic images – JPEG/PDF
- audio recording – WAV/MP3

Most modern smartphones are capable of capturing all three types of digital asset. Once assets have been captured there are a number of options for filing and storing.

Whilst NCFE does not necessarily recommend a single solution, the list below includes some more well-known options:

- Microsoft OneNote – enables the capture of all three asset types directly into the application with no further requirements for copying into a different application.

   12 cool things you can embed directly into OneNote
   www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3ECzpJNKWE

   OneNote tips: Learn how to add pictures and videos
   www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3bjzQAHMkA

   Getting learners working in OneNote class notebooks - Office 365 tutorial for Teachers www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8AblzF8yNU

   Using OneNote for learner ePortfolios
   www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYgnmoCSymI

- Evernote https://evernote.com/

- Google www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_TKmYg9M6o

4. Types of Portfolio Evidence

4.1 Videos

Videos are an appropriate method of evidence for the recording of an individual conducting an activity, process or performance. The focus tends to be on their kinaesthetic and psychomotor skills. Examples and scenarios of which may include:

- performance of a song, dance or creation of a piece of art
- recording a professional discussion
- demonstrating the process of making a meal
- carrying out a physical exercise or sporting procedure.

Videos need not only be focussed on kinaesthetic skills but could also include demonstration of cognitive processing. Examples may include:

- carrying out a database query
- making changes to a spreadsheet
- operating photoshop or other creative software
- conducting an internet search.

Where videos are used demonstrating cognition they should be accompanied by a verbal narrative from the learner stating what they are doing and why. It is also important that they should introduce themselves clearly, stating their name and the NCFE qualification they are studying.

4.2 Photographs

Photographs can be appropriate methods of assessment in similar circumstances to that of videos. It is good practice to show not only the final piece of work, but also photographs at different stages of the process, for example the stages of making a recipe / meal or the creation of a piece of art. Photographs should be ordered in a logical storybook style with accompanying narrative that links to learning objectives.

Photographs can be captured by learners on a smartphone or other device and be uploaded to Microsoft OneNote or other alternative tools.

4.3 Presentations

A presentation is a common way of evidencing learner achievement of assessment objectives. Presentation evidence can take a number of different formats. Face-to-face presentations in front of a live audience are the ideal scenario to facilitate the two way flow of information and clarifying learner understanding. Where learners are not able to present in person to a live audience, it is possible to vary this in a couple of ways. Firstly, the learner could record a presentation using a mobile device or camera and upload it to a suitable digital storage solution like OneNote. Secondly, they could use Teams, Zoom or a similar digital collaboration tool to share and present their screen and hence allow for two way flow of communication. Either options should allow for the digital recording of the presentation and could be uploaded with a copy of the slide deck to a selected digital storage solution.

4.4 Posters

Posters can be appropriate portfolio evidence in their own right or form the basis of a presentation (for details of presentation evidence – see above). Posters are usually appropriate for the summarising of key points from a wide range of sources in response to a brief. A good poster should aim to include a variety of information types, including text, images, graphs, etc. Where the poster does not form part of a presentation, it should be accompanied by a short rationale explaining how the poster meets the brief and any supporting research or evidence. The poster, if possible and if it's not too large, could be incorporated into the portfolio, or alternatively a photograph could be taken of the poster and incorporated digitally into the portfolio.

4.5 Artefacts and work products

Artefacts and work products are physical / tangible items produced by learners, normally in response to a brief. They are primarily evidence of learner skill in the creation of a range of items which may include, for example:

- a design prototype
- a sculpture
- an engineering product.

Where these cannot be submitted as live artefacts they can be captured on video or photographed and uploaded to a digital portfolio. It would be good practice to capture not only the final work product but also the various stages of development with some accompanying narrative.

4.6 Case studies

Case studies depict real life situations in which problems need to be solved. They give learners opportunities to engage with current issues in a particular field, making their learning clearly relevant to real-world situations. Case studies can be used to assess individual learners or groups of learners. Typically, a case study will consist of a scenario or situation and be accompanied by a set of questions to answer or an issue to resolve.

Case studies can be fictitious and designed by centres, with a view to provide learners opportunities to meet assessment criteria. They can also be actual real life case studies located in the learners' place of work.

There are a range of evidence outputs that can be used from a case study as part of a portfolio. These could include:

- a formal report
- briefing notes
- a presentation
- marketing literature
- a work product.

It should be possible to upload a digital copy of the case study along with video or photographic evidence of the outputs to a digital platform for storage and assessment.

4.7 Reflective journal / Learning logs

Reflective journals are written records of work-related activity that has happened while the learner is on their learning programme. Reflective journals use the experiences of the learner to review their individual progress and development.

Reflection should be a purposeful activity in which the learner analyses their experiences, skills, practice and responses, in order to learn and improve. Throughout

the programme of study, for both on and off-the-job learning, the learner should record their learning, reflect on it and draw conclusions in relation to how it impacted on their future development activities and practice.

Reflective journals can be completed by hand or digitally. Digital journals are easily set up and organised in tools like Microsoft OneNote.

4.8 Observation

An observation involves a teacher / assessor observing a learner undertaking a task or series of tasks in the workplace, or in a simulated workplace setting, as part of their normal activities; these are 'on-the-job' / naturally occurring duties. The observation will normally be complemented by questioning from the assessor during and / or after the observation. Observational assessment is deemed the most appropriate assessment method for practical skills; by watching the learner complete a task, they can demonstrate their competence.

This assessment method is suitable for assessing learning objectives holistically, and specifically assessing practical skills. Some workplaces and simulated environments may not be suitable for observations and therefore may require additional controls to be put in place, for example controls relating to safety, security, confidentiality or restricted access to the site observation area.

If public health measures restrict direct observation by the teacher / assessor, an expert witness testimony could be considered or alternatively a video recording of the learner performing the required tasks.

4.9 Expert witness testimony

Expert witness testimony is where an expert witness submits evidence to an assessor on the competence of a learner in carrying out a particular task or activity. This evidence must directly relate to the candidate's performance in the workplace, which has been observed by the expert witness.

It may not always be possible to plan certain observations and therefore the candidate's line manager or another senior colleague may be the best person to provide evidence of competence in unexpected situations, for example, dealing with a health emergency, an evacuation, or in circumstances where it is not possible for the assessor to directly observe the learner due to public health restrictions.

It is not necessary for expert witnesses to hold an assessor qualification as the qualified assessor makes all assessment decisions about the acceptability of evidence, regardless of the source.

However, it is recommended good practice that the expert witness:

- be inducted and / or supported by the centre / assessor to ensure that they are familiar with the criteria for those units for which they will provide expert witness testimony
- understands the centre's recording requirements and will require guidance on the skills required to provide evidence for the assessment requirements

- identify the assessment criteria and knowledge / understanding they believe has been satisfactorily illustrated in the observation.

The named assessor will then assess the evidence provided by an expert witness and may ask some additional questions for clarification to ensure overall competence of practice observed by the expert witness.

These should be retained by the centre to confirm occupational competence of individuals providing additional evidence to demonstrate a candidate's competence in the workplace.

Where you have identified a potential expert witness, your EQA will be able to support you in identifying and discussing their appropriateness for the role of expert witnesses.

Expert witnesses are able to use the full range of digital media including photos, videos and audio, in collecting their evidence.

4.10 Simulations

A simulation is a recreation of a real-world situation or task, which is designed to explore key elements of that situation. Simulations are interactive events in which the environment is simulated but the behaviour is real.

Simulations might include role-play among students or with teachers, playing games, re-creations, imaginative exercises, etc. There are possibilities for simulations involving computer technology, particularly with regards to augmented and virtual reality (VR). Well-established practices of simulation for learning and assessment include simulated patients, mock negotiations and in-tray exercises.

Simulations offer a simplified representation or imitation of an object or process which may not be directly accessible due to public health restrictions, or issues of scale, time and risk. Simulations therefore can bridge the gap between classroom learning and assessment and real-life experience, offering a safe and repeatable environment for learners to demonstrate competencies. Please check the NCFE qualification specification first as in some qualifications, simulation is not permitted.

4.11 Multiple choice and short answer questions

Portfolio evidence can consist of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) and Short Answer Questions (SAQs). This method includes a variety of tests that are predominately used to assess knowledge.

A multiple choice test consists of a series of questions in which learners are asked to select the correct answer from a variety of options, normally 4-5. Individual questions or groups of questions may include case studies, scenarios and sections of text, graphs or diagrams, on which the questions are based.

A short answer or written test consists of a series of questions which learners are required to answer. These could consist of one type, or a variety of types of question,

such as open questions and scenario-based questions. Short answer responses allow the learner to demonstrate the extent and depth of their knowledge and skills.

It is important to note MCQs and SAQs may be appropriate where they are just one of many evidence types comprising the portfolio. They are also appropriate where triangulating with another evidence types, for example, professional discussion. Where MCQs and SAQs are used as part of a portfolio of evidence, it is not normally a requirement for invigilation and could therefore be delivered either in class or online through VLE platforms like Moodle, Blackboard and Canvas, or quizzing solutions like Microsoft Forms which is part of the Office 365 suite.

This should not be confused with dedicated MCQs and SAQs set and marked by NCFE where the normal rules of invigilation apply

4.12 Interviews

An interview consists of a teacher / assessor asking the learner a series of questions, to assess their competence against the relevant assessment criteria.

It is a structured dialogue between the teacher / assessor and the learner, and in some cases, a small panel. It differs from a professional discussion in that the teacher / assessor role is restricted to asking set focussed questions, and there is no scope for two-way discussion. This assessment method is used to assess the knowledge and understanding of a subject.

As with a professional discussion, interviews can take place remotely online using tools like Teams and Zoom, and be recorded so evidence can be uploaded digitally.

4.13 Professional discussions

A professional discussion is a two-way discussion between the assessor / teacher and a learner, to assess their in-depth understanding of their work and industry knowledge.

Professional discussions are most appropriate in a professional context, rather than a question and answer session.
This assessment method is used to:
- assess an in-depth understanding of a subject
- assess occupations / tasks that cannot be directly observed in practice
- assess aspects of an occupation that are difficult to observe, are rare occurrences, or take place in restricted or confidential settings.
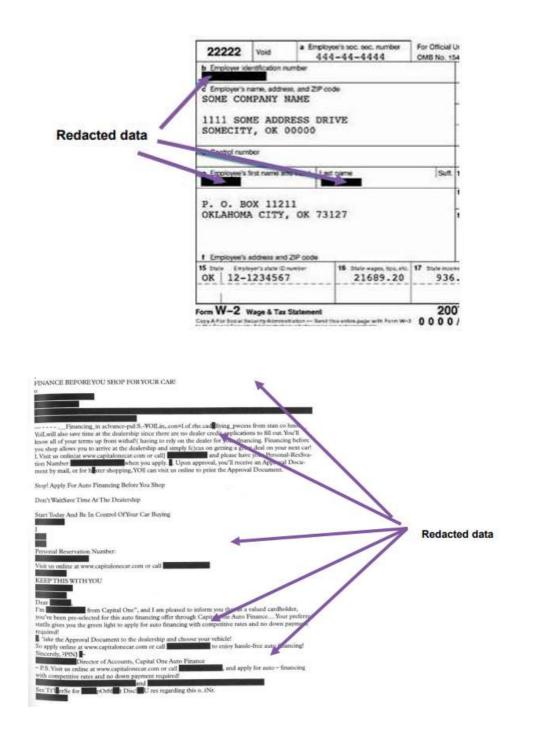
The professional discussion will be used to provide a holistic approach to assessing knowledge and understanding, and will also test the validity and reliability of any other evidence submitted as part of a portfolio of evidence.

The focus and topics of the discussion should be identified in advance and have a clear purpose. Professional discussions can take place remotely online using tools like Teams and Zoom, and be recorded so evidence can be uploaded digitally.

5. GDPR 2018

Be careful! When collecting portfolio evidence, you must ensure you are compliant with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR 2018). Do not submit evidence which has clients' or customers' information contained in it – even if you have their permission, you might breach the regulations once the portfolio has left your possession. This doesn't mean you can't use documents with personal details included – you would need to anonymise them or redact the information, as can be seen in the examples below and on the next page.

Further information and guidance on GDPR regulations is available on at
www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation

6. Quality Assurance Considerations

Where a portfolio is specified as the assessment tool, each learner must create a portfolio of evidence generated from appropriate assessment tasks which demonstrates achievement of all the learning outcomes associated with each unit. On completion of each unit, learners must declare that the work produced is their own and the assessor must countersign this. Examples of suitable evidence for the portfolio are discussed later in this document.

Internally assessed work should be completed by the learner in accordance with the qualification specification. A representative number of assessment hours should be timetabled into the scheme of work. Assessment activities can be integrated throughout, although separate from the teaching of the unit, and do not have to take place directly at the end of the unit.

Any work submitted for internal assessment must be completed during scheduled assessment hours in accordance with the scheme of work and must be authenticated and attributable to the learner. The Tutor must be satisfied that the work produced is the learner's own and the learner must declare that the work is their own.

Wherever possible, the portfolio of evidence will be completed in normal class time within scheduled assessment hours and kept separate from any teaching and learning hours. However, where public health restrictions are in place which prevents scheduling within normal class time, evidence can be submitted by learners from outside supervised class time. This could include the use of video, photographs or a remote presentation.

Evidence is normally generated in response to internal assessment tasks or briefs set by the centre.

If a centre chooses to create their own internal assessment tasks, they must:
- be accessible and lead to objective assessment judgements
- permit and encourage authentic activities where the learner's own work can be clearly judged
- refer to the 'Internal Assessment Tasks: Guidance for Centres' document on our dedicated qualifications website qualhub.co.uk.