First Year Composition (FYComp) ePortfolio Assessment

The FYComp Program at Northern Illinois University uses ePortfolios as authentic, evidence-based assessment of student competencies. We developed our own ePortfolio system and have been refining it for over twelve years. Recently, the FYComp ePortfolio became a model and starting point for university-wide general education assessment at NIU.

Our portfolio-based pedagogy paths a coherent trajectory for student learning across the FYComp curriculum and plays a critical role in both student-centered and programmatic assessment.

Individual Assessment
- Teacher assessment of individual student progress in meeting FYComp outcomes
- Student self-assessment of developing writing skills/strategies and reflection upon growth towards desired outcomes

Institutional Assessment
- Programmatic and institutional assessment of written communication, critical thinking, and information literacy general education outcomes

Assessing Students and Programs Via ePortfolio

Student portfolios go through two separate assessment processes. During the semester, students compose, revise, and reflect on their work individually; with teachers during office hours, in conferences, and through written feedback; and with classmates during peer-review. The ePortfolio that each student produces functions both as a snapshot of her or his individual growth as a writer in FYComp classes and as an organic, evolving platform on which to showcase progress as a student and potential employee and to participate in ongoing self-assessment.

Portfolio assessment plays a key role in programmatic assessment each semester as well. Portfolio samples are collected and reviewed in assessment sessions to map overall student success according to a range of criteria critical to the FYComp program’s course goals and outcomes. Assessment data is further employed in charting student progress across the two semester FYComp curriculum as students develop key writing, research, and critical thinking strategies within a number of genres and disciplines.
Assessment Data Collection and Management Through ePortfolios

The FYComp program employs a five-step system for collecting, assessing, and analyzing ePortfolio data as a part of semesterly programmatic self-assessment.

Programmatic assessment does not judge individual student progress, but charts overall student success in all FYComp classes towards several key writing skills across a number of relevant demographics.

Preparation

The Assessment office sends us student ID numbers determined to provide a selection of student portfolios across several demographic categories. FYComp teachers are then asked to collect the requested portfolios for programmatic assessment.

Calibration

Each scoring session begins with a series of calibration readings in which group members score each ePortfolio, discuss their scores, and adjust their scores if needed. Group leaders can display scores from their groups during the calibration session.
**Scoring**

Group members use a template and rubric to read, score, and write comments on their assigned ePortfolios. Teachers do not read ePortfolios from their own classes, and each ePortfolio is scored by at least two different readers. Groups debrief at the end of the session, discussing strengths and weaknesses they noticed in the ePortfolios they scored, as well as in the overall process.

**Leader Debriefing**

Group leaders meet after the final scoring session to record observations about the ePortfolios, the calibration, and the scoring process. Group leaders take detailed notes on strengths, weaknesses, and the overall process. These notes become part of the qualitative report on that semester's assessment.

**Feedback Loop**

ePortfolio scores are aggregated and graphed to show change between semesters and achievement by categories of student and types of instruction. FYComp uses both the qualitative and quantitative reports to plan future assessments, curricular changes, textbook selection, and faculty development activities.
## Portfolio Scoring Sheet for Evaluators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student ID</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holistic Impression</strong></td>
<td><strong>Excelling (4)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience &amp; Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Writer demonstrates thorough understanding of audience and task while using a compelling voice and style.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Focus &amp; Development</strong></td>
<td>Writer clarifies major aims, arranges material to support those aims, and may show insight into problematic or provocative aspects of the topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Writer carefully and consistently evaluates the relevance of contexts, rhetorical strategies, and/or credibility of sources when presenting a position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source Integration</strong></td>
<td>Writer understands and elegantly articulates his/her ideas as they relate to those of others and effectively integrates source material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format &amp; Editing</strong></td>
<td>Writer shows mature command of format conventions and sentence level features of written language (grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
<td>Writer evaluates growth, describes composing processes in detail, and cites compelling evidence within portfolio.</td>
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