Faculty FAQ: Directed Portfolio

**What is a Directed Portfolio?**

A directed portfolio is a culminating project that allows students completing the M.A. to polish their strongest work for a target audience such as a specific journal or conference.

For students pursuing Literary Studies, Popular Culture/ Cultural Studies, or the Open Plan, the directed portfolio showcases the breadth of the student’s knowledge through a collection of three essays that are revised from seminar papers. To complete the directed portfolio, students revise the three selected essays to a level suitable for publication, and they complete a reflection essay (1500 words minimum) which discusses the rationale for selecting the essays included, identifies the target audiences and revision goals for each paper, explains the process that went into revising and any discoveries, challenges, or insights gleaned along the way. **Copies of the original, graded seminar papers must also be included in the final portfolio along with the revised essays and the reflection essay**.

For students pursuing the Writing and Language Studies emphasis, the directed portfolio offers students an opportunity to revise one seminar paper into a length and quality suitable for publication; the revised essay is accompanied by a rhetorical analysis of the target journal, a process narrative discussing the student’s writing process, and a reflection piece articulating what the student learned through this process.

**What are the responsibilities of a Directed Portfolio Director?**

The portfolio director advises the student on the selection of papers to include in the portfolio, assumes primary responsibility for supervising revisions, and assigns a final grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory for the portfolio.

The director is typically the assigning professor for one of the papers that the student plans to include in the portfolio. For portfolios that require three essays, the student should communicate with the assigning professors for the other papers to coordinate their involvement with the revision process. This involvement may vary as discussed below.

If an assigning professor is not willing or available to participate, the director can assume full responsibility for directing revisions and will have access to the original graded essay.

Students are encouraged to approach a professor about serving as director at least the semester before they plan to enroll in the portfolio course to allow for consultation with the director and the set-up of the course. Students must submit a course proposal for the Portfolio in order to register (details about the content and submission of proposals are included below as well as in the *Graduate Student Handbook*).

**What are the responsibilities of an Assigning Professor?**

Once the student selects the papers they would like to include in their portfolio in consultation with their director, the student approaches the assigning professors to discuss their involvement.

The process allows for flexibility in how and how much assigning professors are involved in completing the portfolio. Some assigning professors might meet with the student at the start of the process to review the original feedback on the seminar paper and address any questions about revising or about appropriate target journals. Some assigning professors might review revised drafts and provide additional commentary later in the process. Some assigning professors might not be involved in the revision process at all.

**How does a student set up a course of Directed Portfolio?**

The student selects a current English graduate faculty member to serve as the director and consults with the director to select the paper(s) to include in the portfolio. The student composes a short description (approximately one page) that identifies the papers that they will include and the reasons for selections/goals of the portfolio. When the director is satisfied with the description, they send the proposal and the Portfolio Approvals Form to the graduate director for approval and the graduate secretary who will create a section of Directed Portfolio for the student.

**What is the typical time frame for completing a Directed Portfolio?**

A directed portfolio can typically be completed in one semester. Since portfolios don't require defense and don't need to go on to CGS for additional processes, they are not subject to the same deadlines as thesis projects. Students completing portfolios decide on a revision schedule and a final deadline with their director so that the professor can submit a grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory with other final grades. The portfolio director should also send an email to the graduate program director and graduate program secretary confirming that the student has successfully completed the portfolio.

**Who can serve as a Portfolio Director?**

A portfolio director must be a current English graduate faculty member and is typically an assigning professor for one of the essays that a student plans to include in the portfolio.

**Who can serve as an Assigning Professor?**

An assigning professor must have been a member of the MTSU graduate faculty when the student composed the seminar paper.

**How are Portfolios graded?**

Portfolios are graded as Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. If a student does not finish a portfolio in the first semester but works consistently with the supervising professor, they can still earn a grade of satisfactory. The portfolio course may be repeated once, allowing a second semester for the student to complete the work if necessary.

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