

# Portfolio Guidelines

(to begin in Fall 2023)

***Portfolio... the document that brings everything together.***

## 1. Purposes

- a. The portfolio is the capstone project of the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program that provides a way of tying together major themes, issues, and perspectives the MSLT student has encountered and reflected upon over the course of the Master's program. This understanding is cast in the light of what it means to the MSLT student and for the MSLT student's intended professional context.
- b. Writing the portfolio is a process of making connections and making explicit the knowledge and understanding the student has gained over the time period that the student was enrolled in the program.
- c. The portfolio is a demonstration of the student's professionalism; as such, it marks the beginning of one's new professional identity, as a result of having gone through the MSLT program.

## 2. Characteristics

- a. The portfolio is the product of the student's coursework; some of the components are written as course requirements in various courses.
- b. The author's stance is very important; the reader needs to hear the writer's *personal, professional* voice.

## 3. Format:

- a. Use APA citation and formatting style throughout.
- b. Total size: no more than 75 pages (which includes all preliminary pages, the main 'body' of the portfolio, and the References section). Page count does not include the appendices.
- c. Use 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spacing.
- d. Use 1-inch margins.

#### 4. Components:

a. **Preliminary pages.** A template for these preliminary pages will be provided to you. Preliminary pages include: cover page with lines for signatures, copyright page, dedication page, abstract (written in 3<sup>rd</sup> person in layperson's terms without technical vocabulary), acknowledgments, table of contents, list of acronyms, list of tables, list of figures, and list of appendices.

b. **Introduction** (about 2-4 pages)

- Introduce yourself to the reader with respect to your education and teaching background. Focus on the parts that are relevant to your portfolio (e.g., teaching philosophy) and MSLT experience.
- Briefly explain your goals when joining the MSLT program.
- Reflect on your MSLT experience and what you learned about yourself as a teacher, about teaching and learning second languages, and about teaching and learning in general.

c. **Teaching Philosophy** (3-5 pages). In the teaching philosophy, the student lays out "This is who I am as a teacher, coming out of this program." As such, the teaching philosophy is personal, not about what the program is or does for people in general, but what it has meant to *you* ... what is important to you, in your teaching. The teaching philosophy should address the following:

- *Professional Environment:* Describe what kind of professional setting you have in mind when articulating your teaching philosophy. What kind of teaching situation is this portfolio aimed at – for example, teaching Japanese at an American university, adult ESL in the USA, Dual-Language immersion (DLI) Chinese in Utah, high school French in Vietnam, EFL for business professionals in Brazil, as an Adjunct instructor teaching Spanish in a college setting, etc.?
- *Teaching Philosophy Statement:* Delineate your own beliefs about teaching and learning as well as how exactly you plan to implement your beliefs in a real-world context. For each point/belief, briefly describe an example of a classroom activity you have used in the past or you intend to use in the future. Be sure to explain all important concepts and terminology and cite relevant sources along the way. Students are expected to cite at least five different references in their teaching philosophy statement.

d. **Hands-on teaching experience** (approximately 5 pages): For this part of the portfolio, you need to report on a hands-on teaching experience or work involving the creation

and/or implementation of a practice that is somehow unique, have impacted your teaching, and may inform the teaching of other practitioners. This experience could be based on your current or previous teaching experiences. The report should include a discussion about the experience/work itself and what it means for your teaching practice in the professional context in which you envision yourself.

The following are possible broad options for this part of your portfolio:

- *Service language teaching experience:* Service teaching combines community service and formal teaching, and it is an excellent way to engage students in language use in meaningful contexts and in ways that are important to their lives and careers. Discuss a service language teaching experience you may have had in terms of three different elements. First, describe why you choose this work and provide other relevant contextual information about it. Second, explain how you designed instruction, how you engaged students in this experience, and how you implement the service component. Third, reflect on the experience and what was learned from it. Consult with MSLT co-directors about the placement you choose for this project (e.g., in-person, virtual). The length of the project can vary from 1 class to several.
- *Innovative language teaching practice:* Language teachers always try different methods, materials, and activities that can improve the instructional process and enhance students' learning. Discuss an innovative language teaching practice that worked well for you and connect it to existing research. You may report on something that is already in use but that you modified or changed slightly to suit your students and their learning needs. Describe the practice in terms of three dimensions. First, describe the context of this practice (when, where, level, etc.). Second, explain the implementation of this practice in detail and how it influenced the instructional process and students' learning. Third, reflect on the practice and what can be learned from it.
- *Material design/development:* Language teachers sometimes have to develop their own materials to meet their specific teaching needs or students' needs. These materials could include textbooks, stories, videos, audios, skits, images, worksheets, maps, etc. Discuss a type of material that you developed and served you well in your teaching. The report should include four aspects. First, explain the motive for the material development as well as the context to which it was developed. Second, describe the design and development of the materials. Third, summarize how it was used and how it impacted your teaching. Lastly, reflect on the material-development experience and what can be learned from it.

- *Development of an assessment tool:* Teachers may sometimes need to create certain tools to assess assignments, tests, quizzes, activities, projects and so on. Sometimes, we may need to modify or adjust a well-established assessment technique to suit our class needs. Discuss an assessment tool that you created, modified, or used in a non-traditional way in terms of four aspects. First, describe the motive and context of the assessment. Second, explain the design or change that you made and how it was implemented. Third, explain the impact of the assessment tool on your teaching and students' learning. Fourth, reflect on the assessment-tool-development experience and what can be learned from it.

e. **Main Paper** (20-30 pages). For this part of the portfolio, you need to work with your major professor to identify a major topic of interest to you which is tied to your learning experience in the MSLT program and your professional teaching career. This topic could be based on work you have done in any of your MSLT courses, your current or previous teaching experiences, or your readings of the second language education/acquisition literature. The paper should be introduced by a short section (2-3 pages) where you discuss why you chose this topic, what you learned from investigating this topic, and what this means for your teaching practice in the professional context in which you envision yourself.

The following are possible broad options for your main paper:

- Small-scale research project: This could be a descriptive study where you collect data about a teaching method, current status of a program (e.g., DLI program in Cache Valley), needs analysis (e.g., in the Spanish program), survey of attitudes toward certain aspects of teaching and learning, etc. Make sure to consult with your major professor well ahead of time concerning the IRB requirements if data collection is needed. Your research needs to be contextualized in the wider literature on your topic to demonstrate how your research contributes/adds to the existing literature.
- Position paper: This is a paper where you take a stand on a common idea or practice in second language teaching (e.g., peer assessment, the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, oral corrective feedback techniques). Your paper should not be merely a review of the existing literature on the topic of interest; it should reflect your personal take on this topic in contrast to what has already been written or thought about on this issue. In other words, instead of recycling the existing ideas and arguments, you present a new perspective on or approach to this topic. Your stance should be backed by observations, real-life experiences, and factual information (e.g., statistics found in the literature or obtained from a school district or from the Department of Education).

- Reflection paper: This is a paper where you reflect on an experience that has led to a major change (or major changes) in your conceptualization of, approach to, or methods of teaching. Reflecting on one's teaching and students' learning may lead to adopting innovative techniques, new technology apps, uncommon cultural artifacts, underused literary genres, etc. These reflective experiences and the changes that ensue are often associated with tangible instructional improvements that should be reported as part of this paper. Your reflective experience should be contextualized within the wider literature on your topic.
- Review paper: In this option, you thoroughly review and evaluate a popular teaching website, teaching app/technological tool, or textbook. Your review should highlight the strengths and limitations of the item of interest and also present your own perspective as to how to make this item more effective and useful for students. While it is important to present your own perspective on your item of interest, it is also important to reference the existing literature as to why certain aspects work well while others impose limitations.
- Teaching video analysis paper: This paper should be based on a teaching video and accompanied by a lesson plan for teaching a specific topic (a grammatical concept like prepositions, a particular aspect of the second language culture, using a literary text to teach grammar or vocabulary, using video to teach speaking or pronunciation, etc.). Your lesson plan should include all of the main stages of your class session, including explanations of your choices, strategies, and activities. Based on the video, you will analyze what aspects of your lesson plan worked well for your students and what aspects did not go according to plan. Relate your analysis to the existing literature. You also need to explain how you might overcome some of the challenges that you faced. While students are not required to make their videos available for public viewing, they must provide their defense committee with access to the video for evaluation purposes. For example, they can upload it to Google drive and share a link with the committee prior to the defense.

f. **Statement of Future Goals and Plans** (1-2 pages). Describe what you are aiming for in your professional development: what aspects of your knowledge and teaching do you want to (further) develop, and by which means might you accomplish this?

g. **References**. All the works cited in the portfolio go into one large reference section at the end of the portfolio. As you work on drafts of various sections of the portfolio, you need to keep the references with that section, but when putting the whole portfolio together, all references go together into one section at the end of the document. Please follow current APA stylistic guidelines for this References section.

**h. Appendix/Appendices.** If you want to include any additional material that is either too long to fit in the body of your portfolio or is simply more appropriate to be included as an Appendix (work with your Chair to determine if something is better placed in an Appendix section vs. the body of the portfolio), please place it at the end of your portfolio in a dedicated Appendix/Appendices section. It is important to note that copyrighted materials, including textbook pages, lesson plans, images, etc., may NOT be included in the Appendices or elsewhere in the Portfolio.