This bibliography is offered as a starting point for those interested in finding information on the use of portfolio assessment to evaluate student writing. We wish to thank Lillian Bridwell-Bowles of the University of Minnesota, Karen Greenberg of Hunter College, CUNY, and Sandra Murphy of San Francisco State University for the citations and annotations that they contributed to this list.

Bridwell-Bowles, L. (1987, April). The politics of negotiations: A case study of assessment at a large university. National Testing Network in Writing, Atlantic City, NJ. Reports on a collection of quotes, documents, and newspaper reports surrounding the decision to implement portfolio assessment made by the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota. Classifies the responses to the portfolio plan according to questions most often asked: Why should we assess writing? What are the uses of writing assessment? What exactly are we evaluating—papers or people? Where, when, and under what conditions should we assess writing? What differences do we have as we seek to identify differences in quality and in writing ability?


Belanoff, P., & Elbow, P. (1986). Using portfolios to increase collaboration and community in a writing program. Writing Program Administration, 9, 27-40. The authors describe the philosophy and development of the portfolio evaluation system that is used to assess writing proficiency at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. The essay focuses on the ways in which portfolio evaluation helps writing teachers collaborate more effectively with each other and with their students.

Bridwell-Bowles, L. (1988, April). Portfolio assessment: An Annotated Bibliography. Paper presented at the Excellence in Education Conference, Minnesota Community College System, St. Paul, MN. Describes the need for collaborative judgements about writing ability as the University of Minnesota implements its writing assessment project using portfolios. Specifically, this paper argues that teachers from many specializations and from different kinds of institutions (high schools, community colleges, and universities, in this case) should collaborate on writing assessment. Relative and varying standards for writing are both a strength and a liability in writing assessment; the portfolio presents an opportunity for revealing this diversity to students rather than masking it.

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Portfolio Assessment: An Annotated Bibliography

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Christopher Burnham provides an interesting account of the use of writing portfolios for grading in a college composition program. After successfully completing a predetermined number of assignments, students may elect to submit a portfolio for final evaluation. Students who complete a minimum number of finished drafts but who do not submit a portfolio receive a C for the course. The portfolios are evaluated by the student's instructor. Burnham describes how students are helped to develop their portfolios and how portfolio evaluation is incorporated into the training program for composition instructors.


Roberta Camp traces the history of an ETS writing portfolio project begun in the early 1980s, describing the process of development of the portfolio, the ways components of the portfolio meet the challenges posed by current theories of writing and writing instruction, and the sequence of writing tasks developed by teachers and researchers who participated in the project.


Roberta Camp traces the history of an ETS writing portfolio project begun in the early 1980s to provide a broader range of information about student talents and abilities than is provided by the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Camp describes how the direction of the project changed during its early stages as a result of input from teachers of writing and directors of writing programs. Revised objectives included more focus for the improvement of secondary school writing curricula. Camp also describes the sequence of portfolio writing tasks developed during the project.


The authors define the portfolio evaluation process. Camp describes its application at the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and explains the composition of an ETS portfolio. Belanoff describes the portfolio process at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Elbow, P. (1986). Portfolio assessment as an alternative to proficiency testing. Notes from the National Testing Network in Writing, 6, 3 and 12.

The author discusses problems in typical writing proficiency tests and explains the ways in which portfolio assessment overcomes these problems. He also describes some of the problems in the portfolio process.


The authors describe the history and development of the portfolio evaluation system that is used to assess writing proficiency at The State University of New York at Stony Brook. The essay focuses on the ways in which portfolio evaluation overcomes problems in current methods of assessing writing proficiency, and it describes the portfolio process in extensive detail.


This syllabus describes an assessment system currently employed in England in which both oral communication and written course work are evaluated. The assessment of written course work is based on a selection of five assignments which show a required range and represent the best work achieved. The syllabus provides instructions for teachers to follow in making assignments, in selecting pieces of the student's work, in providing supplementary information (e.g. descriptions of the assignments and the conditions under which they were met) as well as criteria and procedures for teachers to follow in making assessments. The syllabus also describes the assessment objectives and review procedures established for the purpose of maintaining consistent standards within the system.

Report of the task force on writing standards. (1987). College of Liberal Arts, the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

The document approved by the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota which outlines the plan for using portfolios for writing assessment at the University of Minnesota. Written by an interdisciplinary Task Force composed of faculty from across the University.