

Comprehensive Portfolio Guidelines

Education Doctoral Programs
North Dakota State University

The purpose of the Comprehensive Portfolio in the Education Doctoral Programs is to allow the doctoral student to document her/his academic and professional preparation and growth in an organized, coherent, and selective manner that facilitates evaluation by the student's Supervisory Committee. It provides both a formal mechanism for self-reflection and a comprehensive account of the doctoral student's experiences and ongoing progress toward his or her academic and professional goals. The Comprehensive Portfolio is developed in three stages by the student during the pre-candidacy phase of the doctoral program and represents the scope and depth of a student's goals, plans, and accomplishments in coursework, independent study, research experiences, internships, and other advanced learning activities. The review and evaluation process includes three presentations by the student to her/his Supervisory Committee over the course of the program, typically about once per year during the portfolio week established by the program faculty each semester. The Comprehensive Portfolio is designed to allow a student to demonstrate his or her readiness to undertake doctoral research, so positive evaluation of the Comprehensive Portfolio is required before a student may submit and defend a dissertation proposal or otherwise proceed to the independent research phase.

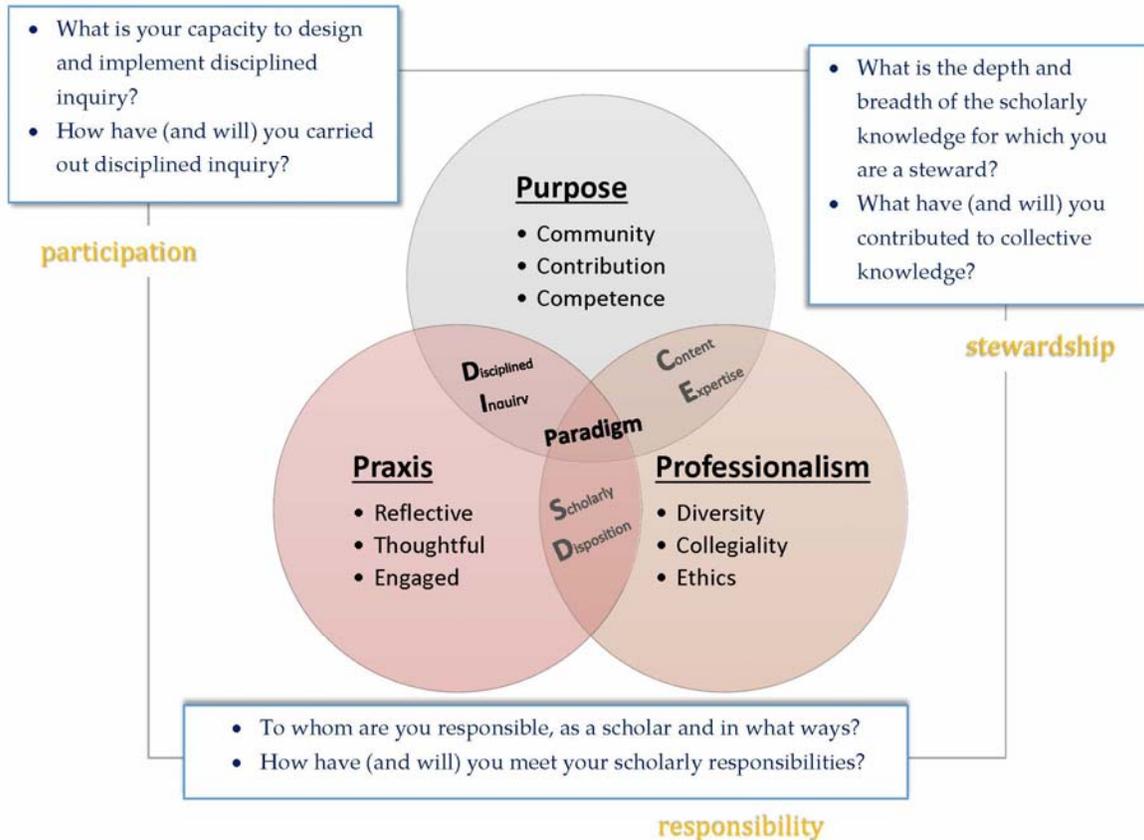
Through development of a comprehensive portfolio, students will demonstrate their preparation to advance to candidacy as education scholars. Specifically, students will use the process of developing a Comprehensive Portfolio to:

1. Define and clarify academic and professional goals;
2. Formulate specific plans to achieve these goals through coursework, research, and field-based activities;
3. Demonstrate depth of understanding of the specialization area, including increased understanding of how knowledge is advanced through inquiry;
4. Synthesize and reflect upon the process and results of their formal, informal, and non-formal learning activities;
5. Modify goals and plans as needed based on reflective self-evaluation and feedback from the supervisory committee; and
6. Demonstrate a readiness to proceed to the next step of the doctoral program: independent research in the form of a doctoral dissertation.

Education scholars are unique in their chosen content knowledge, their areas of professional expertise, and even their manner of conducting scholarship. Therefore, the portfolio process is well-suited to assessment and evaluation as it allows greater autonomy for students to demonstrate their scholarly preparation in an integrated way while also providing a more meaningful way for Supervisory Committee members to evaluate the learning process. While it is expected that submitted portfolios may look somewhat different from one another, the Conceptual Framework presented below is intended to help clarify the common characteristics and values shared by all education scholars.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the Comprehensive Portfolio is provided below.



Educational scholars participate responsibly in the stewardship of the field of education. This framework highlights the interconnected values and characteristics of a scholar, which should all emerge coherently from her/his paradigmatic perspective.

Scholars of education have **Purpose**. They have:

- A **Community**-orientation, working with and for local communities, communities of practice, and disciplinary communities;
- An ability to **Contribute** creatively to the field of education and the disciplinary knowledge bases from which we draw; and
- **Broad Competence with Focused Proficiency/Expertise** with respect to methods/methodologies, theoretical underpinnings of the field, and immersion in substantive, domain-relevant literature.

Scholars of education exhibit **Professionalism**. They are:

- **Appreciative of Diversity** of persons/people(s), ideas, perspectives, methods/methodologies, paradigms, worldviews, etc.;

- **Collegial** as they provide thoughtful critique of studies, programs, ideas, perspectives; engage in effective argumentation; and humbly seek constructive feedback from colleagues; and
- **Ethical** as they acknowledge intellectual contributions of other individuals and communities, seek to advance the field/profession, respect/value diverse ways of knowing/being, and advocate for the rights of learners/participants;

Scholars of education are active in **Praxis**. Their work demonstrates that they are:

- **Reflective** about their own strengths and weaknesses, their own and others' paradigms, and their responsibilities to learners, participants, colleagues, the field/profession, the broader scholarly community, etc.;
- **Thoughtful**, as evidenced in the way they conceptualize problems and theorize results by integrating/synthesizing information and ideas as they think holistically (complexly) and critically; and
- **Engaged** in research and/or practice through the planning, development, implementation, analysis, and dissemination of information about of programs, policies, institutions, or research, evaluation, or assessment projects.

Guiding Questions

Generally, it is the student's responsibility to construct a portfolio which evidences the inter-related values and characteristics of a scholar described above. However, the six guiding questions articulated on the framework above should help to structure – and more concisely synthesize – the information to be communicated via the portfolio:

- What is the depth and breadth of the scholarly knowledge for which you are a steward?
- What have (and will) you contributed to collective, scholarly knowledge?
- What is your capacity to design and implement a disciplined inquiry?
- How have (and will) you carried out disciplined inquiry?
- To whom are you responsible, as a scholar, and in what ways?
- How have (and will) you meet your scholarly responsibilities?

Examples of artifacts which can be included in the portfolio to address these questions include literature reviews, manuscripts, conference or other professional presentations, book reviews, position papers, service/professional involvement, program development, consultation, evaluation reports, grant proposals, philosophy statements, etc. (*Requirements for the inclusion of artifacts are detailed below.*)

Portfolio Process Timeline

As students move through doctoral coursework, they will meet with their Supervisory Committee approximately once per year to review goals, plans, and accomplishments, and to discuss possible modifications and additional work needed to facilitate continued progress in the doctoral program. Specifically, students will make three separate oral

presentations to their Supervisory Committee on the progress that has been made towards development of their Comprehensive Portfolio.

At these Supervisory Committee meetings, the students will discuss progress with the members of the Supervisory Committee, who in turn will discuss areas where additional progress is needed. After each meeting, the Supervisory Committee will provide the student with a written assessment on the progress the student is making towards development of their Comprehensive Portfolio, and identify areas where improvement is needed in order to pass the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment. A copy of this assessment, signed by all members of the Supervisory Committee, will be also be submitted to the Program Coordinator to be placed in the student's departmental file. Given the developmental nature of these meetings, students are not allowed to conduct two portfolio reviews in the same semester and are expected to adhere to the schedule outlined above.

Portfolio Meeting I (Preliminary Portfolio)

The meeting for Portfolio I is required to be completed **by the end of the first year** of coursework after admission to EDP. Specific artifacts to be included in this portfolio are described on the following pages. This meeting is intended to establish relationships among and between you and your committee members and it is primarily developmental in nature. However, it should not be taken lightly. Students are expected to use the feedback received from the Supervisory Committee from Portfolio Review I in preparing for the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment. Should you not pass this portfolio assessment, you can conduct this review once more within three months of the date of the first Portfolio I presentation.

Portfolio Meeting II (Formative Portfolio)

The meeting for Portfolio II is required to be completed **prior to completing 27 hours** of coursework. Specific artifacts to be included in this portfolio are described on the following pages. This meeting is intended as a review of progress after a substantial portion of the degree program has been completed, which can inform refinements for subsequent planning for scholarly development. It will be primarily developmental in nature, with committee members giving targeted feedback about your progress. However, it should not be taken lightly. Use the feedback you receive from your Supervisory Committee from Portfolio Review II in preparing for the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment. Should you not pass this portfolio assessment, you can conduct this review once more within three months of the date of the first Portfolio II presentation.

Portfolio Meeting III (Comprehensive Portfolio)

Finally, the meeting for Portfolio III is required to be completed **after completing 42 hours of coursework**, but prior to beginning the dissertation proposal/independent research portion of the program. Specific artifacts to be included in this portfolio are described on

the following pages. This final meeting is the context for conducting the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment, a formal evaluation of a student's readiness to proceed to the dissertation proposal development stage. It is the Education Doctoral Program's comprehensive exam process and is the summative assessment that must be passed in order to advance to candidacy for a doctoral degree, in accordance with the policies of the NDSU Graduate School.

If any weaknesses or gaps in evidence of readiness for dissertation work are noted in the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment, use feedback from this meeting to address each area of concern prior to beginning work on your dissertation proposal. In order to give you guidance the Result of Preliminary/Comprehensive Exam form *must* specify any and all actions that your committee requires you to complete before you are judged to have fully passed the Comprehensive Portfolio assessment process. Generally, these requirements must be completed no more than 12 months from the date of the first Portfolio III presentation unless otherwise specified by your Supervisory Committee, at which time your committee will reconvene for another review. Students who are unable to provide acceptable evidence of dissertation readiness at that second presentation will not be permitted to continue in the doctoral program.

Scheduling a Portfolio Presentation

Prior to presenting the three stages of your Comprehensive Portfolio, you should meet individually with your advisor to discuss expectations. With approval of your advisor, you should contact all members of your committee to schedule a meeting date and time. The first two committee meetings should be scheduled to last up to one hour, and the final review, constituting the oral examination, should be scheduled to last up to two hours. The entire Supervisory Committee must have at least two weeks to read and review your portfolio, and (for meeting III) appropriate paperwork must also be submitted to the Graduate School no later than two weeks prior to the exam date. Failure to provide the portfolio to the committee at least two weeks prior to the oral examination will automatically result in postponement of the committee meeting/examination.

Comprehensive Portfolio Contents

A total of twelve artifacts – nine of which are required of all students and three of which are supplemental artifacts to be selected by the student – are required to be included in the Comprehensive Portfolio in order to address the six guiding questions articulated above. Preliminary drafts of many of the artifacts are to be included in the first two portfolios as indicated in the table below, with all identified artifacts included in the final portfolio. Descriptions of the artifacts are included on the following pages.

	Portfolio I	Portfolio II	Portfolio III
Deadline	<i>By end of first year in EDP</i>	<i>Prior to completing 27 credits</i>	<i>After 42 credits completed</i>
Required Artifacts			
1. Context Statement	X	X	X
2. Philosophy Statement	X	X	X
3. Meta-Reflection	--	X	X
4. Prospectus	--	<i>Must include a minimum of 3 of these 6 artifacts</i>	X
5. Position Paper	--		X
6. Literature Review ¹	X		X
Supplemental Artifacts			
7. Artifact 1	--		X
8. Artifact 2	--		X
9. Artifact 3	--	X	
Appendices			
10. Curriculum Vitae	X	X	X
11. Plan of Study	X	X	X
12. Doctoral Transcripts	X	X	X

¹ Only an annotated bibliography – typically developed in EDUC 802: Foundations of Educational Research – should be included with the first portfolio.

Required Artifacts

In order to demonstrate growth and development during the doctoral journey, the following artifacts are required of all EDP students, regardless of degree program (EdD or PhD) or option area (Institutional Analysis or Occupational and Adult Education): Statement of context, philosophy statement, meta-reflective essay, prospectus, position paper, and a comprehensive literature review. Descriptions of the required artifacts, including any differences according to portfolio stage, are described below.

Statement of Context. Provide a succinct statement of context (no more than five pages) describing your academic goals (specialization and supporting areas of study), research goals (problems, topics, theories, concepts, approaches, interests), and professional goals in relationship to the portfolio conceptual framework. In developing this statement, you should reread the original goals statement you prepared for admission into the program and then address how you are now viewing your role and place in your doctoral coursework and your profession. Your statement should articulate how the artifacts provided in the portfolio evidence your growth and development as a member of the community of educational scholars.

Philosophy Statement. Provide a statement of philosophy (no more than five pages) that synthesizes your scholarly perspective. You should incorporate ideas from any of the various philosophy statements you have developed throughout your doctoral journey (education, teaching, learning, schooling, training, assessment, disciplined inquiry, etc.)

that are relevant to your present philosophical perspective.

Meta-reflective Essay. Provide a reflective essay (no more than five pages) that addresses your learning and development as a scholar throughout your doctoral journey. In preparation for writing this essay, you should review all of your coursework to date, focusing especially on reflective assignments you have completed. However, rather than simply recounting your experiences in specific classes, this essay should be written to highlight key moments in your development of the scholarly characteristics and values detailed above. You may address ways your development has been impacted through coursework, but it is equally (if not more) important that you demonstrate ways you have been an active and intentional agents in your own learning.

Position Paper. Provide a scholarly manuscript or essay (no more than 7 pages excluding references) identifying and discussing an important, contemporary issue in your area of specialization. Your paper should engage the literature of your specialized field, but you are free to focus on any topic you believe to be of contemporary importance. You are also free to take any position you wish with respect to the issue you have chosen, but you must make a strong argument for the position you are advocating in accordance with the submission criteria for leading education journals such as *Educational Researcher* or *Harvard Educational Review*.

Comprehensive Literature Review. Provide a comprehensive review (no less than 30 pages, but no more than 50 pages, excluding title page, abstract, references, and appendices) of a body of literature. You should survey and synthesize a literature to both demonstrate the depth and breadth of your knowledge relevant to the topic and refine your focus toward a researchable topic or problem in your field. You should look upon this essay as a potentially publishable article in your field that serves also as a dissertation planning document. In general, you should be sure to address these questions:

- What is the problem or topic?
- What is the history of the research in this area?
- In what databases have you searched?
- What are the theories that inform the field?
- What are the “camps” within the field?
- How convincing is the evidence for each “camp”?

The comprehensive literature review does not bind you to a particular topic for your dissertation project (however, it is recommended you chose your topic strategically, so it can provide a basis for your eventual dissertation study). This artifact will be evaluated according to criteria comparable to the submission guidelines for top-tier journals in our field such as AERA’s *Review of Educational Research* journal.

Prospectus. Provide a succinct (no more than 15 pages) proposal for a workable, scholarly project. Appropriate formats and contents will vary widely depending on purpose and perspective for the work, but it should convey the information needed to readers to fully

understand the intended project. At minimum this should include descriptions of:

- *The research problem (PhD) or problem of practice (EdD)*
- *Perspective(s) or theoretical framework*
- *Methods and methodologies*
- *Data sources, evidence, objects, or materials*
- *Plans for data collection and analysis*
- *Scientific and theoretical significance (PhD) or practical significance and expected impact (EdD) of the study or work*

This prospectus does not bind you to that particular topic or strategy for your dissertation project, and it is not a formal dissertation proposal (however, it is recommended you chose your topic strategically, so it can provide a basis for your eventual dissertation study). This artifact will be evaluated according to established professional criteria such as the *Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications*.

Supplemental Scholarly Artifacts

In addition to the evidence listed above, you are expected to include additional documentation to evidence your preparation as a scholar in your chosen area of professional specialization. You should chose additional artifacts strategically to extensively triangulate your preparation as a scholar. Each artifact (required and supplemental) should evidence multiple elements depicted in the conceptual framework above – and each element in the conceptual framework should be evidenced by multiple artifacts. In your context statement, you should provide clear rationale for the supplemental items you choose to include. A maximum of three artifacts may be included, and you are strongly encouraged to consult with your advisor and/or other academic and professional mentors when making your selections. While previous submissions for major course assignments may often be appropriate for these supplemental artifacts, you are encouraged to continue developing such projects beyond what was submitted in your classes based upon instructor feedback and/or self-evaluation. While written documents are the dominant mode of communication in our field, artifacts may be incorporated in other formats/media as well (this may be particularly applicable for EdD students)

Appendices

The appendices to your Comprehensive Portfolio should include a current copy of your curriculum vitae, your Plan of Study, and copies of your graduate transcripts. The expectations for each artifact are described below.

Your Current Curriculum Vitae. Include a copy of your curriculum vitae with sections organized chronologically. Your curriculum vitae should include, at a minimum, sections for each of the following: your name and contact information; your educational background; employment and professional experience; disseminated scholarly work (e.g., publications and presentations); grants, honors, and awards; and memberships in scholarly

or professional organizations.

Plan of Study. At the first Comprehensive Portfolio review meeting, you will present a proposed Plan of Study to your Supervisory Committee. At this meeting you and your committee may suggest program changes. All members of the Committee should sign the Plan of Study, thereby accepting it as your approved program. Once signatures are secured, please submit this document to the NDSU Graduate School for your permanent files. You will include the Plan of Study in your remaining portfolios, adjusting it as necessary as you proceed.

At the time of your Comprehensive Portfolio meeting, your plan of study and your academic transcript should be nearly identical. Conduct a review of your program plan and timeline and make changes as appropriate, filing the changes with the NDSU Graduate School immediately after your committee meeting. It is incumbent upon you to be sure you have satisfied all program and institutional requirements in order to proceed to the dissertation phase of the program. Should you have failed to take a required course, or still have a grade of Incomplete (I) for any course, you will not be allowed to proceed to EDUC 899: Doctoral Dissertation.

Transcripts. Include copies of your graduate transcripts (unofficial transcripts are acceptable), along with a statement explaining why you received any grades of C, D, F, or Incomplete in courses taken during your doctoral studies. For any courses with incomplete grades, you must also include a discussion of how you plan to complete the course, including an expected timeline for action.

Comprehensive Portfolio Format

The Comprehensive Portfolio should be compiled using a well-designed electronic format that facilitates appropriate organization of materials, provides for easy access to materials, allows for frequent updating, and is readily accessible by committee members. In addition to providing a demonstration of technological competence, electronic portfolios are easier to store and can be more easily referenced and viewed by all committee members. Students creating electronic portfolios are not required to include personal information such as addresses or phone numbers, but can present any such information, if needed, during the portfolio meetings.

Web-based portfolios are encouraged but not required. As an alternative, students may elect to create electronic portfolios on CDs. In this case, each member of the committee should be provided one copy of the CD a minimum of two weeks prior to the portfolio meeting.

Comprehensive Portfolio Evaluation

The focus of the Comprehensive Portfolio evaluation meeting shifts from academic and professional development to formal evaluation. The purpose of this meeting is to assess

the student's readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of the doctoral program (equivalent to the traditional doctoral comprehensive exam). Discussion will normally center on the following topics:

- Student Goals and Accomplishments
- Evidence of Oral and Written Communication Skills
- Evidence of Analytical and Integrative Thinking
- Research and Professional Competencies evidenced and those for which additional preparation is needed
- Initial Dissertation Planning

At the end of the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment meeting, the student will be asked to leave the room. The Supervisory Committee will discuss the student's progress and performance and agree upon one of three possible results:

Outcome 1: Pass. The student has demonstrated readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of the program and may do so immediately upon completion of coursework (although non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may be specified by the Supervisory Committee).

Outcome 2: Conditional Pass. The student may proceed to the dissertation phase of the program when coursework and any additional required actions are completed; a second Comprehensive Portfolio review meeting is not required. A deadline for completing the required actions (typically between 1 month and 12 months from the date of the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment meeting) will be specified by the Supervisory Committee, along with precise procedures for verifying that these actions have been completed. Non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may also be specified by the Supervisory Committee at this time. If the student does not meet the timeline or the actions taken are insufficient, the result of the assessment is changed from Conditional Pass to Fail and the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment meeting will need to be repeated.

Outcome 3: Fail. A second Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment meeting will be scheduled when required actions are completed, with the second meeting scheduled no earlier than three months and no later than 12 months from the date of the first meeting. (Non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may also be specified by the Supervisory Committee at this time.)

When the student fails to meet the expectations for the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment (Outcome 2 or 3), the Supervisory Committee shall provide the following in writing and a copy will be placed in the student's departmental file:

1. Any actions that the committee *requires* the student to complete before they are judged to have fully passed the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment; and
2. A precise deadline for completing these requirements and how new materials are to

be evaluated (i.e., by whom and in what context).

Discontinuation

A student who does not pass a second attempt at either the preliminary or formative portfolio meetings (i.e., receives outcome 3, twice) will be referred to the full program faculty for review and a determination regarding program continuation will be made. For the comprehensive portfolio meeting, students initially receiving outcome 2, but failing to subsequently satisfy the requirements as given by their supervisory committee in the specified time (and thus reverting to outcome 3) may also be prevented from continuing work towards a dissertation at the discretion of the Supervisory Committee.