

# WRITING PORTFOLIO BOOKLET



SAINT JOSEPH COLLEGE  
WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

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## INTRODUCTION



Saint Joseph College uses writing portfolios for several reasons:

First, portfolios help students track their writing progress while at the College. In this way, students can collect their best writing samples in one place, much the way artists create a portfolio of samples of their best work. A writing portfolio allows students to look back at individual pieces of text and reflect on their ongoing development as writers. The critical reflection that occurs should help students become better writers as they note areas of strength and areas needing improvement.

Second, the college uses writing portfolios to assess how students at the College write. Each year, the College analyzes information obtained by the evaluation of students' writing portfolios, and this information is used to guide the College curriculum and classroom instruction.

Third, the College uses writing portfolios to address the requirement that students achieve competency in writing before graduation. Students' portfolios are evaluated at two points: the end of sophomore year and the end of junior year. The first evaluation is a preliminary one that gives students information about areas that should be addressed during junior year. The second evaluation is the final evaluation, although students receive valuable information to assist with writing skills required for the future.

Fourth, the College believes that the achievement of writing proficiency is an integral part of an undergraduate education. Students should leave college with a level of competency that will enable them to succeed in academic and professional settings.

This portfolio booklet outlines the steps for creating a portfolio and the evaluation criteria used to evaluate portfolios. Students should pay particular attention to the definitions of the criteria to help guide the selection of submissions.

## AT A GLANCE

### Quick Information about the College Writing Portfolio Program



- ☑ The program was established in 1989, and has received several state and national awards and accolades.
- ☑ The writing portfolio is designed to allow students to collect and reflect on their work, as well as to receive objective, individualized feedback which can foster academic and professional success.
- ☑ All undergraduate students must complete a writing portfolio prior to graduation.
- ☑ All undergraduate candidates for student teaching must complete the portfolio *prior to student teaching*.
- ☑ Students must submit original papers with the professors' grades and comments.
- ☑ Students are strongly encouraged to revise work based on the professors' comments and grades before submission to the portfolio.
- ☑ At least one submission must be a paper that synthesizes information from scholarly research and accurately applies a documentation style.

<b>Student Status*</b>	<b>Number of Papers</b>	<b>Submission Deadline</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
First Year	2	May 1 <sup>st</sup>	File started; papers held
Sophomore	2 additional	May 1 <sup>st</sup>	Preliminary evaluation
Junior	2 additional	April 15th	Final evaluation
	Total: 6		

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\*Transfer students should see information on page 10

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS COMPILING A PORTFOLIO



### ☞ **What papers do students include in their portfolios?**

Students submit papers that they write for their courses at the College. Students should begin to think about the papers they wish to put into their writing portfolio during their first semester at the College in preparation for submission usually at the end of the academic year (spring semester). Thus, at the end of the year, most students submit two papers from courses taken that year. In thinking about what papers to submit, students should also note the method by which portfolios are evaluated. They are evaluated holistically on a 5-point scale, with 5 as the highest score. In addition to this score, a 7-item criterion list is used to assess specific skills. Students should read the definitions of the criteria to understand how work will be evaluated and make appropriate decisions about what papers to submit based on the criteria.

**At least one paper in the portfolio must demonstrate competency in research techniques.** Students are encouraged to have such a writing sample in their portfolio by the end of sophomore year for the preliminary evaluation. They may be encouraged to submit another research paper for the final evaluation at the end of junior year. Research writing is defined as any paper that synthesizes information from multiple references to advance a thesis; this paper must also use a correct documentation format, such as the MLA or APA styles.

### ☞ **Do students submit papers with professors' evaluations?**

Papers include professors' grades and comments. **Students may elect to revise papers based on their professors' comments. In such cases, students must submit the original with the revised copy.**

### ☞ **Must papers come exclusively from Saint Joseph College courses?**

Yes, the papers submitted must be ones that were written for Saint Joseph College courses. Papers from courses taken through the College Consortium while a matriculated Saint Joseph College student are also acceptable.

## ☞ Are there specific kinds of papers that are considered unacceptable submissions?

Students should not submit essay exams unless they are typed, take-home exams, using a formal documentation style if references are required. Handwritten reports, such as science lab reports, are unacceptable.

## ☞ What is the timeline for submission of papers?

At the completion of each semester, students should select at least 1 paper to put into their portfolio. To ease the collection process, students submit 2 papers the end of the spring semester. At the end of freshman year, students submit 2 papers, and at the end of sophomore year, they submit 2 additional papers (for a total of 4 papers) when the preliminary evaluation occurs. At the end of junior year, they submit 2 more papers (for a total of 6), when the final evaluation occurs. It is not necessary for both papers to come from each semester. For example, a student may elect to submit 2 papers from the spring semester if these papers better fit the portfolio criteria in comparison to papers written in the fall semester.

*Transfer students and part-time students* need to follow a modified schedule.

- ☞ Sophomore transfers should follow the general rule of thumb of selecting one paper for each full semester of work completed. For example, students who transfer with enough credits to be considered **first-semester sophomores** (24 credits) must submit 2 papers at the conclusion of 2 semesters of work, thereby having 2 papers in their portfolio for the preliminary evaluation at the end of sophomore year. If such papers are short, then the student is advised to submit additional work. Students will then submit 2 additional papers at the end of junior year (for a total of 4 or more papers) for the final evaluation at the end of junior year.
- ☞ Students who transfer with **second-semester sophomore-year status** (36 – 45 credits) must submit 2 papers after 1 or 2 semesters of work to have a preliminary evaluation done, and an additional 2 papers at the end of junior year. Such students need to have their evaluations occur at mid-year rather than at the end of the year.
- ☞ Students who transfer with **junior-credit status** (54 + credits) may elect to have a preliminary evaluation done at midyear before the final spring evaluation. Otherwise these students will miss the benefit of a preliminary evaluation prior to the final evaluation. For the final evaluation, junior-transfer students need to have at least 3 papers or a total of 20 pages in their portfolio. Portfolios with less work are difficult to evaluate. (See page 10.)

Occasionally, students miss the preliminary evaluation. For instance, some students drop down to part-time status for a semester. Other students transfer midyear with sophomore status and may find that after one semester, they have only one paper to submit. To accommodate students in these kinds of situations, a preliminary evaluation can occur at

midyear rather than at the end of the year. To be included in this midyear evaluation, students need to submit papers at the end of the fall semester.

### ☞ **Can students submit more than the required number of papers?**

Students may elect to submit more than the required number of papers. Extra papers may help evaluators make a more accurate assessment of a portfolio. Also, if students are proud of several papers that they wrote during the year, they may want to submit more than the required number of papers. Students may want to consult with the Writing Portfolio Coordinator or a writing tutor from the Center for Academic Excellence about submitting additional papers.

### ☞ **Can students switch papers, replacing an old paper with a new paper?**

While this practice is not standard, it is possible to switch papers. It sometimes happens that a student receives a paper back from a professor after a portfolio evaluation occurs and prefers such a paper as a submission rather than a paper previously submitted. A student might well have another legitimate reason for a switch. A decision to make a switch, however, should ultimately be based on the fact that the replacement paper better showcases the student's writing abilities than the paper being replaced.

### ☞ **What is the process for submitting papers?**

Three sets of all portfolio papers and cover pages are maintained. Students make one copy of these materials to keep themselves and submit two copies to the Center for Academic Excellence. At least one of the sets of papers submitted must be an **original paper with the professor's grades and comments**, not a photocopy. Because some photocopies are difficult to read, **portfolio evaluators read the original versions**. (The originals are returned to students when they complete the portfolio process.) The second set of work submitted is forwarded to students' advisors with copies of preliminary and final evaluation score sheets. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss portfolio papers and evaluations with their advisors.

**It is important for students to keep a copy of all the papers they submit.** This step permits them to track their growth over time and to collect their best papers in one place. Furthermore, it is vital for students to keep copies of all their work in the event that college copies are misplaced. Thus, in total, there are three sets of all the work, a safeguard in the event any one set is misplaced.

A **cover page** must accompany **each** paper submitted. On each **cover page**, students summarize the assignment and describe how the paper demonstrates strengths and areas in need of improvement. A copy of the cover page is included in this packet of material. (See page 17.) Students are reminded to make a duplicate copy of all cover pages so that their advisors receive this information with a copy of each paper.

## **☞ What are the reasons for the preliminary (sophomore-year) evaluation and what does it entail?**

To ensure inclusion in the preliminary score process, students who have earned 48 credits (completed sophomore year) must have portfolio papers submitted to the Center for Academic Excellence *before May 1st*. Preliminary evaluations begin immediately, and students receive evaluations in the mail during the summer. The preliminary evaluation helps students know what areas to address during junior year. This evaluation also gives students information about the types of submissions they should make junior year to achieve a balanced collection of work. Students may want to meet with a writing tutor at the Center for Academic Excellence or with their academic advisors to discuss the results of the preliminary evaluation.

## **☞ What does the final (junior-year) evaluation entail?**

The portfolio timeline requires that juniors submit papers to the Center for Academic Excellence *before April 15<sup>th</sup>*. Portfolios are evaluated starting the week of April 15<sup>th</sup>. Students receive the results in the mail. If the portfolio is successfully completed, students are mailed the original set of papers.

A portfolio notation appears on students' transcripts. If the portfolio receives a successful evaluation (a rating of 3 or better), the transcript bears the notation, "Writing Portfolio Complete." If the portfolio is below satisfactory (a rating of 2 or lower), the transcript bears the notation, "Writing Portfolio Incomplete." Furthermore, any student who earns the distinction of a 5 (top score) on the final evaluation receives a special note on her/his transcript: "Writing Portfolio Completed with Distinction."

## **☞ Who evaluates portfolios and what is the process?**

The preliminary evaluation is done by the Center for Academic Excellence writing tutors. Faculty members do the final evaluations. In both cases, a pair of readers assesses the portfolio, each reading it independently before collaborating to synthesize the evaluations. With the final evaluation, in cases where a pair of faculty scorers have agreed that the portfolio is below satisfactory, the portfolio is read by another pair of scorers who have no knowledge of the first evaluation. If this reading results in another below satisfactory score, then the portfolio is scored as such and all of the evaluations are synthesized. If the second scoring yields a satisfactory score, then the portfolio is considered satisfactory. Thus, any portfolio that receives a below satisfactory evaluation has been considered as unsatisfactory by four independent readers who assert that the work is not at an acceptable level to meet college-level competency as defined by the portfolio criteria.

## **☞ What happens when a portfolio receives an unsatisfactory or incomplete score on the final evaluation?**

The portfolio process has been devised so that all students who comply will graduate as planned. Students who do not have a satisfactory portfolio at the end of their junior year have their senior year to improve their writing. Such students are encouraged to have their portfolio evaluated as early into the senior year as soon as possible. They may revise papers already in their portfolios, or they may submit new papers. Any student one semester shy of graduation who has not completed a satisfactory portfolio is urged to work with the staff of CAE to meet this graduation requirement. Those students who do not complete a satisfactory writing portfolio in time for their planned graduation date will not graduate until this requirement is met. Such students may access CAE resources during this period to complete the portfolio. The intent is for the students to achieve competency within a few months and graduate accordingly. When the portfolio is completed, the transcript is changed to note the accomplishment.

## SUBMISSION TIMELINE AND REQUIRED NUMBER OF PAPERS

### **FOR STUDENTS WHO ENTER AS FIRST YEAR STUDENTS**

Once students earn approximately the following number of credits, they should have in their portfolios the following *total number of papers*:

<u>Number of Credits</u>	<u>Number of Papers</u>
24	2
48	4 (including 2 from above)
75	6 (including 4 from above)

**FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS** (Students should consult with their advisors regarding credit status and class year.)

### **Students who transfer with second-semester freshman status (12 + credits)**

Once such students earn approximately the following number of *total credits on their transcripts*, they should have in their portfolio the following *total number of papers*:

<u>Number of credits</u>	<u>Number of Papers</u>
24	1
48	3 (including 1 from above)
75	5 (including 3 from above)

### **Students who transfer with first-semester sophomore status (24 + credits)**

Once such students earn approximately the following number of *total credits on their transcripts*, they should have in their portfolio the following *total number of papers*:

<u>Number of credits</u>	<u>Number of Papers</u>
48	2
75	4 (including 2 from above)

### **Students who transfer with second-semester sophomore status (36 + credits)**

Once students earn approximately the following number of *total credits on their transcripts*, they should have in their portfolio the following *total number of papers*:

<u>Number of credits</u>	<u>Number of Papers</u>
48	1
75	3 (including 1 from above)

### **Students who transfer with first-semester junior status (54 + credits)**

Once students earn approximately the following number of *total credits on their transcripts*, they should have in their portfolio the following *total number of papers*:

<u>Number of credits</u>	<u>Number of Papers</u>
75 *	3 (or 2 long papers, for a total of over 20 pages)

(\* Students may need to consult with their advisors or the Registrar regarding status of completion of the junior year.)

## SCHEDULE FOR SUBMISSIONS



### FOR STUDENTS WITH FRESHMAN OR SOPHOMORE STATUS

First week in May: All students completing freshman or sophomore year need to submit the required number of papers. (See pages 4 + 8.)

May through June: Preliminary evaluations of portfolios for students completing sophomore year take place.

Last two weeks of August: Preliminary evaluations are mailed.

### FOR JUNIORS

Before mid-April: All students completing junior year need to submit final papers to their portfolios.

Last two weeks in April: Faculty evaluate portfolios.

May: Portfolio score sheets are mailed, and notation of portfolio status is placed on transcripts by the Registrar's Office.

### FOR SENIORS

Seniors who have not completed their portfolios need to continue to submit papers for another evaluation. Papers must be submitted by mid-semester or sooner to ensure time for evaluation.

### FOR STUDENTS WHO PLAN TO GRADUATE MID-YEAR OR IN AUGUST

Such students need to plan ahead in order to have their final evaluation occur at the end of the spring semester of their junior year. If such students cannot meet this date, they should consult with the Center for Academic Excellence about an appropriate time to have their work evaluated. Evaluations in July and August are ordinarily not scheduled. Students who plan to graduate in August must have the portfolio completed before the end of June; December graduates must have the portfolio completed by November 15<sup>th</sup>.

**SAINT JOSEPH COLLEGE  
WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT**

**WRITING PORTFOLIO SCORE SHEET**

**STUDENT'S NAME:**

**SCORING SCALE:**

Writing portfolios are scored as one holistic unit. A scale of 5 to 1 is used. A score of 3 or higher is needed to fulfill graduation requirements. The score scale is as follows:

- 5 = excellent
- 4 = good
- 3 = satisfactory
- 2 = below satisfactory
- 1 = poor
- Inc = Incomplete (work is missing)

**SCORE:**

**CRITERIA LIST:**

A plus mark in front of an area indicates a strength; a check mark indicates an area is satisfactory; a minus mark indicates an area in need of improvement.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. fluidity and clarity of expression
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. use of appropriate organizational structure
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. sufficient use of details and elaboration
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. critical thinking skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. effective and correct use of research techniques
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. effective use of language and diction
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. correct mechanics and usage

**COMMENTS:**

## CRITERION CHECKLIST



The following explanations guide scorers in the evaluation of writing portfolios. They are offered here to help students understand the criterion checklist.

**✎ FLUIDITY AND CLARITY OF EXPRESSION:** The writer expresses ideas in a style that permits smooth reading and clear communication of ideas.

Ideas are written so that they can be understood easily.

Sentence structure permits a smooth reading of text.

The reader does not have to struggle to understand what the writer is saying.

**✎ ORGANIZATION:** Most college papers require an introduction that advances the central idea of the paper and suggests how the material in the paper will be organized.

A statement in the introduction should indicate the parts of the paper, and the paper should follow the plan as stated in the introduction.

Transitions should link parts of the paper, and statements should be made to connect material in parts of the paper to the plan promised in the introduction.

The paper should move along in a well-organized fashion. Each part of the paper should be unified by a key idea and include only material that relates to that idea.

**✎ ELABORATION AND DETAIL:** The writer needs to develop ideas fully and to provide adequate supporting detail.

Each main point of the paper should be adequately developed. Each part of the paper should advance rather than repeat ideas.

Use of sufficient supporting details, such as examples, illustrations, statistics, descriptive specifics, quotations, paraphrases and summaries of references, is essential to the development of main ideas.

Most papers require a mix of elaboration (explanation) and supporting detail (evidence). The appropriate balance should reflect the assignment requirements.

Some writers will offer sufficient detail but give little attention to elaboration, and some will offer abundant elaboration with little detail. Papers with detail and little elaboration tend to read like lists. Papers with elaboration but insufficient detail tend to read like one generalization after another.

**✎ CRITICAL THINKING:** The writer needs to demonstrate the ability to analyze, synthesize, and critique.

A writer who offers only summaries or descriptions or who strings together material taken from source texts shows a limited ability to critique the material.

Readers will consider how well the writer works with material on a critical level and synthesizes ideas in a cohesive way to reach conclusions.

The writer needs to support ideas thoroughly and to connect supporting material to a central idea.

The writer needs to do more than state facts. The writer needs to extrapolate material given. The writer who relies on quotations often does not offer enough analysis to connect such material to a point that should be made to advance an argument.

**✎ RESEARCH TECHNIQUES:** Each portfolio must include a paper that will permit assessment in this area. The paper does not have to be a formal research paper. However, multiple references need to have been used.

The writer needs to select appropriate material from references to support ideas.

The writer needs to use an appropriate variety of references.

The writer needs to integrate source material smoothly into the flow of the paper.

The writer must appropriately acknowledge material taken from references. Quotation marks must be used to acknowledge the words of others; citations must be provided for both quotations and paraphrases.

The writer needs to demonstrate familiarity with a standard documentation style and needs to use it consistently and correctly throughout the paper.

Papers that offer a mere summary of references may be problematic unless the assignment required an annotated bibliography or review of the literature. Even a literature review should include summary statements and an introduction and conclusion to synthesize material.

**⌘ EFFECTIVE USE OF LANGUAGE AND DICTION:** The writer should use vocabulary that is suitable to college-level work.

Simplistic vocabulary, too many colloquialisms or lack of variety in word choices are signs of a struggle to use language effectively.

Consistently incorrect word choices are other indicators of difficulty with language and diction.

A writer with a good vocabulary who does not communicate clearly may not have difficulty with this criterion area. The problem may be with fluidity and clarity or with usage. Too many awkward sentences may interrupt fluidity, or too many errors may make the paper difficult to read.

**⌘ MECHANICS AND USAGE:** This area encompasses two skills.

Mechanics include spelling, capitalization, punctuation and correct paragraph indentation. Errors in mechanics are sometimes linked to proofreading and editing. Competent writing skills include the ability to proofread and edit writing.

Usage includes verb tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, correct formation of possessive nouns, correct sentence boundaries (avoidance of fragments and run-ons) and correct modification (avoidance of misplaced or dangling modifiers)- -to name a few of the most troublesome areas.

An abundance of errors in mechanics and usage that prevents a smooth reading of text merits a minus in this criterion area. Occasional errors that do not interfere with the reading of the text may be considered acceptable. A check would be appropriate if occasional errors occur; if errors are nonexistent or nearly nonexistent, a plus is merited.

# STUDENT RECORD OF PORTFOLIO SUBMISSIONS



Please feel free to complete this record and retain for your own information. Extra lines are provided beyond the number of papers that the average student will submit. These lines are for students who elect to submit more papers than required.

Title of Paper

Date of Submission

1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____

Preliminary Score: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of strength:

Areas in need of improvement:

Final Score: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Cover Page for Writing Portfolios Saint Joseph College

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Credits to date: \_\_\_\_\_ Anticipated Date of Graduation \_\_\_\_\_

Date Paper Submitted to Portfolio (Today's Date): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Course name & number for which the paper was written (ex: EDUC 251): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of the professor: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date the assignment was handed in to the professor: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Summarize the assignment requirements for attached paper.

4. What do you see as your writing strengths in this paper?

5. What do you see as writing areas in need of improvement based on this paper?

6. Indicate any individuals who assisted you with this assignment:

7. Please complete the following checklist in order to ensure that you have finished the submission process correctly.

\_\_\_\_\_ Did you submit the original version with the professor's comments?

\_\_\_\_\_ Did you also submit an extra copy of that original version?

\_\_\_\_\_ Did you keep a copy of that original version for yourself?

\_\_\_\_\_ If you revised paper, did you include BOTH the first version and the revised version?