Professional Portfolio Guidelines

Your professional portfolio will be shared with the school district when the Graceland Field Office requests a student teaching placement for you. This is your professional introduction to the school and should demonstrate that you can effectively communicate information about yourself both through carefully constructed documents and by using other visually appealing media. You will first create this portfolio during EDUC2420 Entry Workshop when you begin the program, and you will continue to revise and improve it until you are ready to apply for student teaching. One very important step is making sure your professional portfolio is complete and meets the expected quality levels so that you make a great first impression. Your portfolio will be reviewed first by the entry workshop instructors. The approval process described below for student teaching is for the sole purpose of ensuring that your portfolio has a professional appearance and that you’ve demonstrated quality writing with good grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

BEFORE you submit the application: Meet with your advisor to discuss your grad plan and make sure all required courses are or will be completed before student teaching. Your advisor will review your portfolio and let you know if you need any corrections as indicated on their checklist before submitting your application. Prepare for the application by discussing the EDUC student teaching course you will need for your major and endorsement area(s), as well as your top three school district choices. After making any portfolio changes suggested by your advisor, you may go ahead and submit your online application (including your portfolio URL) for an initial field office review. If the field office suggests further changes, fix your portfolio and then resubmit it to fieldoffice@graceland.edu for final approval. Once your portfolio is deemed satisfactory, the field office will send your application to your academic advisor for final review and approval before the field office communicates with the school district to request a placement for you.

Support Resources
- Video Tutorial demonstrating how to create the portfolio in Chalk and Wire
- Sample Resume Template
- Article: Learning the Basics of a Student Teacher Resume
- Article: Developing a Teaching Resume
- Philosophy of Education example
- Tips for Writing your own Educational Philosophy

Required Pages and Appearance

Background Theme – under Setup on the portfolio’s table of contents screen, choose the Graceland Theme.

Page Title - under Setup on the portfolio’s table of contents screen, the required title must be “(Name)’s Professional Portfolio”.

Page Appearance – use the same font, font size, and font color (black or dark gray) on every page of your portfolio to make the appearance more cohesive and professional. Special items like headers, titles, and quotes may be larger, a nice dark color that’s easy to read, or in bold or italics.

Quotes – Educational quotes are desirable and can add a depth of meaning and attractiveness to your portfolio’s appearance. Quotes can also give the school administrator an insight into your personality and what you value most. Make sure your quotes are appropriate for your grade level placement.

Additional Pages – Should be approved by the field office.
1. Home
This is the first page that people will see when they open your portfolio, so it’s important that this page be professional, attractive, and welcoming. Keep it clean and simple. A single professional looking head shot photo (no selfies) of yourself with your name in a large font as a heading is sufficient, but photographs are not required. Your photograph should have a professional appearance, and your clothing should be modest and appropriate for a teaching professional. Avoid bright colors and loud prints. Do not include photos of your family, friends, or pets. Centered under your name, include your Education major and areas of concentration using the official language and grade levels listed on the Academics page in My Graceland (i.e. Elementary SPED is officially listed as Instructional Strategist I Mild/Mod K-8).

2. Introduction*
This page should include two to three paragraphs describing yourself and your educational journey (after high school) leading to student teaching, including previous work with children and what has inspired you to become a teacher. Other information such as interests, family information, where you’ve lived, should be very brief or not added at all.

This area should be all about information convincing them YOU are a great student teaching candidate to put with their students and teachers. Detailed descriptions are not necessary, and you should stay away from politics, religion, or other topics that can be divisive or unprofessional like boyfriends or pets. Add this as text on the page, not an attached file.

*This page will be looked at by districts to evaluate how you write and what makes you passionate about teaching.

Page Title Suggestions: About Me, My Personal Journey, Introduction

3. Philosophy of Education*
This page includes the Philosophy of Education that you began creating in your introductory course to education. At Graceland, this course is EDUC1400 Introduction to Education. This document is meant to evolve as you go through the Teacher Education program, so be sure it’s updated before you submit your student teaching application. Add this as text on the page, not an attached file. Format the text so it’s attractive and easily read. Separate statements or paragraphs with an extra space. Avoid multiple colors, extra-large or centered text. The generally accepted format should be a “belief statement” followed by an “action statement” of what the belief statement will look like in your classroom.

* This page will be evaluated by districts and teachers to make sure you realize the important issues facing teachers and how you will address them. Remember that a teacher’s main job is to “insure high levels of academic achievement for ALL students.”

Page Title Suggestions: My Teaching Philosophy, Philosophy of Education

Philosophy of Education Example:
I believe teachers should treat all students fairly (Belief Statement). There will be no favorites in my classroom, I will ask for input from all students and will work hard to make everyone feel included (Action Statement).
4. Cover Letter*

This page will serve as your direct communication with the school district. This letter should be generic, so do not mention a district specifically. Do not date it as requests go out much later than when you submit your portfolio. Add this as text on the page, not an attached file. In your application you’ll state your top three district choices, and if your cover letter is generic in nature, it lets the Field Office continue to send your information to your second and third choices if the first one doesn’t work out.

First, you will want to clearly state you are seeking a student teaching placement in their district and why you have chosen to be considered for the school district. Explain why you picked the district as one of your top placement choices (flatter them a bit). In most cases, your reasoning will be the same for your top three choices so you should be able to write it in a generic way. Why are you a good fit for these schools? What makes you better than other applicants? This is an opportunity to show you have done some research on the school’s philosophy or programs that reflect your own goals and interests. Again, be concise. This page should be no longer than two or three well written paragraphs at most. Include your major and endorsement areas. The Cover Letter is not required to pass the Entry Workshop, but must be part of your student teaching portfolio.

*This area will be used by districts to evaluate how well you write formally and how well you communicate why you are a good fit for their district.

Page Title Suggestions: Letter to School District, Resume Cover Letter

Cover Letter Example:

Dear School Administrator,

I am currently working on my _______ degree with a concentration in _______, and I am seeking a student teaching placement in your school district. I would prefer to be in a ____ or _____ grade classroom. I am passionate about making a difference in the lives of children, and my resume provides more details about the experiences I’ve had working with children in the past. I have requested your district because __________, and I feel I have a lot to offer your school district and the students in it. This student teaching experience will allow me the opportunity to connect with students and not only teach content but, also lifelong lessons.

5. Resume*

This page contains your resume that describes your employment and education history. An emphasis should be on any and all experience you have working with children. These could be paid or volunteer positions, and you should include a short description of your role in that position or what your duties entailed. You may also include other employment, if appropriate. The resume should be no longer than one page in length. Add this as text on the page, not an attached file. See the resume example for a suggested template, but feel free to use whatever formatting and design you prefer. You might find it easier to create your resume in Word first and then copy and paste into the portfolio text block.

Make sure your “Objective” tells them you are “seeking a student teaching placement” in one way or another. Follow this with any experience you have had working with children and then list your previous employment. You do not need to add references as this is not that kind of resume.

*This area will show districts your educational background and experience. This is where you can highlight and describe your work with children if you have any.

Some items to include:

- your major and endorsement area(s) | contact information
- your education (most recent first), including degrees completed or working towards | GPA (if 3.00 or above)
- leadership roles | awards & honors | extra-curricular activities

Technical Support – Debbie Young (dyoung@graceland.edu) or (641) 784-5088 or (800) 8529-1215
Share Your Portfolio

You will create a web link (URL) in Chalk and Wire to share your portfolio with others. In the Entry Workshop, you will copy and paste the URL into an email to the workshop instructors. For student teaching, you will copy and paste the URL into the textbox provided in the online student teaching application. This is the link the Field Office will send to the school district when your placement is requested.

1. First Step – Make sure the Home page is the first page that will open when you share your portfolio with others.
   a. Open your portfolio so you can see the table of contents on the left.
   b. Select the Home page first and then return to the Table of Contents.
   c. You should see the Home page highlighted blue to indicate it is selected. This will ensure the Home page is the first page people will see when you share your portfolio.

2. Second Step – Create the URL you will share with others
   a. On the right side click the blue button, “Share this Page”
   b. Click the blue button, “Generate Share URL”

3. Third Step – Share the URL
   a. Select the URL that appears in the text box by clicking and dragging from the far left all the way to the right, being careful to get the entire address. The URL is a little longer than what you can see in the box so keep dragging to the right until you’ve selected the entire thing. You may also triple-click in the box which automatically selects the entire address. The URL will look like this and ends with the number ‘48’:


   b. Right click on the URL while you have it selected and choose Copy. (On a Mac computer, hold the “control” key as you click.) You can now right click (or control click) in the body of a new email message (for entry workshop) or the text box provided in the online student teaching application, and choose paste.

   Note for Entry Workshop: If you have an email account set up on your iPad (or computer), you don’t have to select the URL to copy and paste. Just click the “Send Email” button and it will automatically create a new email message with the URL in the body of the message.

   Note: Test the URL before you submit the student teaching application!