

Sample Assessor Feedback

Review the following sample comments from assessors to gain an idea of the types of qualities assessors are looking for in a portfolio:

- The student demonstrated his client-centered approach and mastery of the delicate balance between advocacy for clients and upholding the legislation and agency's policies.
- The portfolio was clearly written and organized.
- This student is an excellent candidate for PLAR and for this degree. Clearly her extensive and varied experience in human services has generated vast learning in this field.
- I especially appreciated the Supporting Documents section that used strongly descriptive titles to indicate what the "inventory of evidence" contained. Rather than being a "collection of stuff" it provided clear evidence of his learning.
- The student shows a steady progression from non-Human Resources (HR) related occupations into a HR professional at a long-term care center. Her portfolio demonstrates direct experience with a number of HR functions, including recruitment and selection, grievances and union-management relations, and performance management.
- While the student shows considerable work in the area of strategic planning within policing, missing from this was the application of current concerns facing police services that could have situated his learning within a broader framing. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement that began in 2014 as well as the introduction of procedural justice and police legitimacy research since the early 2000s—both continuing to have considerable influence on policing today—were not discussed or mentioned within the context of planning. These are central issues that go beyond policing and speak to criminal justice processes and policies more broadly that would have been great to have seen included (or any other broader factors that could be linked to the decision making and policies adopted by the police services he has worked for).
- The narrow occupational setting of this student's Human Resources (HR) experience – a single employer in the health care sector – does pose some limitations to learning assessment. While there is no doubt her experience has been rich and rewarding, the lack of diversity in her experiences detract from her learning as she cannot speak to how HR is practiced in other contexts (different sectors, non-union environment, etc.). While the scope of her responsibilities has increased over time, there continue to be important aspects of HR that her portfolio does not demonstrate, such as higher-level policy-setting or strategic planning. The portfolio is heavy with practical experience. This is important, without a doubt, but missing is reflection on how practice links with theory and consideration of how the two interact.

Hints from assessors to help you

Our assessors provide these suggestions about what makes a good portfolio:

- Learners need to ensure that they understand what it means to demonstrate and what counts as providing sufficient evidence to illustrate the learning that they have.
- Content within each section should be new and relevant to the issue at hand. Avoid the “tell-everything-hoping-something-sticks” approach.
- Applicants need to find a balance in their Career and Education Autobiography between providing relevant information concerning their personal development and providing lengthy descriptions of events of questionable relevance. If applicants think such information is relevant, then they need to demonstrate why.

Program guidance from Assessors

Here are samples of program completion and future educational suggestions which assessors have provided:

- This student would benefit from courses to broaden his view of the field. Having worked in one agency/service area so long has benefited his in-depth learning. Courses in human services-policy and theories could help broaden it.
- I would encourage the student to consider an independent research course that could allow him to explore an area of study in more depth.
- The student’s life experiences, formal study and employment provide her with insights of great value to her program learning goals. More broad-ranging social theory will provide a stronger foundation upon which to build her ideas about how meaning and direction can be planned for as her career advances.
- The student shows good evidence of professionalism and understanding of ethics. The required philosophy courses in her program should round out that understanding.
- The student is very good on the practical side and insightful on largely pragmatic grounds. Now, she should pursue a theory focus, which will lead toward deeper understanding of policy and the issues that drive it. There are many steps to developing the portfolio. By the time you are working on the statements that demonstrate your learning, you will have completed required documentation including your Career and Education Autobiography, Resume, and perhaps the Critical Incident Essay (optional). You will have begun thinking about where your PLAR learning will fit into your program. This guide is designed to help you understand the thought process behind constructing your Learning Statements.

