



Hong Kong College of Midwives

Advanced Practice in Midwifery Certification

Guidelines for Writing a Professional Portfolio

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Introduction

Portfolios are increasingly being used by midwives and nurses as a tool to help plan their careers, direct their learning and communicate their competence. Portfolios help midwives and nurses to provide evidence to communicate professional responsibilities, commitments, plans, expectations and outcomes. A portfolio is a collection of evidence that demonstrates these skills. As a professional record, a portfolio will allow her to communicate to others the best of what she has to offer. (RCNA)

As a broad and structured composite of materials, a professional portfolio assists in demonstrating:

- a record of employment, education and professional and personal development performance based on analysis of previous and current practice
- competence based on analysis of previous and current knowledge, skills and experiences
- learning based on knowledge acquisition and skill development
- future goals and career direction based on consideration and analysis of the previous two points
- individual reflective processes.

When a midwife enrolls into the earned Fellowship Programme of HKCMW, one of her assessment tasks is to submit a portfolio to demonstrate that she has, as a midwife:

- the significant responsibilities in rendering midwifery care and interventions and supporting women to achieve normal birth and safe delivery in case of complications arise;
- she keeps herself informed about the knowledge developments and recommended practice changes relevant to her future role and practice. This is particularly important as midwifery care becomes increasingly complex due to changes in healthcare conditions, technology, pharmacology, health systems and practitioner roles;
- she possess the knowledge and skills to provide the care, as well as the skills to demonstrate why she is-competent to practice as a fellow;
- she recognises that the only effective way to manage these expectations is to always be learning. Professional portfolios are a way of demonstrating continuous learning, that she is a lifelong learner;
- she reflects on her practice in order to continually improve her practice

A portfolio is a collection of certificates and all the documents relevant to the practice of midwifery

Reflective practice

As learning is continuous, it is important to recognize that learning is more than just thinking about and remembering new information. Moving from superficial or surface knowledge to a deeper understanding through complex psychological, social and emotional learning processes, with reflective thinking being one example of these processes. Reflection allows individuals to 'explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation'. In this way, reflective skills assist in shifting the focus away from the content or information to the learner and the learning process.

Evidence-based practice

Evidence-based practice for health practitioners involves:

- consideration of the best available evidence and practice guidelines; and
- how these fit with the needs and values of the client and the available clinical expertise.
- this definition recognises that research alone is not the only source of evidence and may not provide all the information necessary to direct the scope of actions that are taken in providing healthcare.

In addition to research evidence, objective and subjective information can be obtained from other people (including colleagues, clients and authorities), or provided through personal observations, reflections, experiences and case studies. Individual client circumstances and resources available in your healthcare context also need to be considered. Evidence-based portfolios also need to demonstrate that the midwife understand a broader picture. This requires the midwife to acknowledge that there are professional standards and demonstrate how you practice in relation to them.

Quality portfolio evidence demonstrates the awareness and understanding of the required knowledge, skills and attitudes for the level at which the midwife needs to practice. It also demonstrates that the midwife is aware of the different characteristics of her study or practice environment that shape her learning and practice. For example, the midwife may have certificates in breastfeeding support that will support a claim about current knowledge and skills in these areas. This evidence needs to be supplemented with a description of how she applies this knowledge in her practice.

Description of the workplace context is important. The application of breastfeeding support knowledge and skills will differ for people in managerial or educational roles. Clinical contexts will also influence how the midwife uses her knowledge and skills. While the principles may be the same, competency in breastfeeding support will be enacted and described quite differently in the context of home-support programs, delivery suite or midwifery management roles.

Her portfolio and, hence, the evidence that she has, generates and uses needs to demonstrate her understanding of contemporary knowledge and skills, and how she can best apply this within her role and to those for whom she provide care. Different forms of evidence serve different purposes; for example, a certificate in breastfeeding support can demonstrate the achievement of an educational outcome; a case analysis can demonstrate a level of application and adaptation to client needs; and a client audit can demonstrate planning and analysis skills as specified in an individual role description.

Alternatively, one piece of evidence may be used to support different contentions; for example, a breastfeeding support certificate is evidence of continuing or lifelong learning, and is also evidence of competency in the specific knowledge and skills related to the content area.

An example of a portfolio for a practitioner status

The specific purpose of this portfolio is to support an application for a Fellowship that carries a particular and high-level status midwife. The purpose of evidence in portfolios is simply to provide something tangible and practical that will demonstrate a specific achievement or outcome. Evidence can be an object, document, recording or product of some sort that demonstrates your achievement.

Example portfolio structure

1. Table of contents
2. Portfolio explanation – details of the purpose and use of the portfolio
3. Personal details – this may be extended into a personal profile/curriculum vitae
4. Placement-experience record/work-experience summary
5. Competency statements or standards (as a fellow in HKCMW)
6. Appendices such as:
 - learning objectives and associated achievements
 - employment summaries
 - role descriptions
 - a reflective journal
 - certificates of attainment (e.g. ALSO, CPR, IBCLC, etc)
 - completed clinical skills assessment checklists
 - summaries of activities/tasks undertaken
 - academic transcripts
 - referee reports and testimonials
 - care plans and other work-related documents

Type of Activity	Documentation
Work Experience	Job descriptions; awards; letters of commendation; letters of corroboration from supervisors, peers, or clients; evaluation; evidence of implementing change; explanation of tasks performed; explanation of job ranking; licenses; membership in professional organizations; membership requirements and activities; military records.
Community Service Activities	Commendations; awards; newspaper or magazine clippings; letters of corroboration from co-volunteers, clients served, or supervisors; description of activities
Non College Courses, Seminars, Workshops, and Training	Assignments; time spent on assignments; letter or certificate attesting enrolment; learning outcomes of course; syllabi; handouts; evidence of completion; course description; number of hours spent in class ; number of practicum hours; diplomas; verification of certification.
Special Accomplishments	Articles/books published; books edited; speeches given; writing samples; in-service presentations; hospital committee service; audio-visual presentations; proposals written; conversations with experts; travels; hobbies
Letters	<p>Used to corroborate any type of activity. Since they occupy such an important role in documentation procedures, the RN should be advised of the following guidelines when obtaining letters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The individual writing the letter MUST know the midwife and have first-hand knowledge of the experiential activity which the midwife has cited in the portfolio. 2. The author of the letter should state clearly the nature of the relationship with the midwife. 3. The letter should be written on the official letterhead stationary of the organization with which the author is associated. 4. The content of the letter should focus on the duties, responsibilities, tasks, or activities which were inherent in the experience under consideration. 5. The author of the letter should describe the activity under consideration fully in much the same fashion as it is described in the midwife prepared portfolio (i.e., the letter should set down the context of the experience – the who, what, when, where, why, and for how long). Most of all, the midwife should make it clear to the author that the letter to be written is one of verification, not recommendation. 6. The author should also include a phone number or email address so that additional verification may be obtained if needed.

Reference:

Anderson D, Gardner G, Ramsbotham J & Tones M (2008). E-portfolios: developing nurse practitioner competence and capability. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing* Vol. 26 No. 4 p.70 – 76.

Andre K, Hearfield M (2007). *Professional Portfolios Evidence of Competency for Nurses and Midwives*. Elsevier Australia, Marrickville NSW.

Professional Practice portfolio, EQUALS International F 195 Oct 2011.