

Teaching file



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European Language Portfolio Self-assessment Grid and Checklists

Languages: Both documents are presented in English only as examples. Grids and Checklists in english, german, french are contained in the Swiss Version of Portfolio and are available on the website <http://culture.coe.fr/lang/fr/fedu2.4.htm> . For other versions contact the representatives listed on page 61.

Level: The Grid can be used as a self-assessment tool at all levels. The Checklist given here is level B2.

Objectifs: What can teachers do with the Grid and Checklists presented? They can experiment with them to find out how they function, to see how the students react, to obtain information about how to explain and apply them.

Introduction

The first aspect of the Portfolio presented to students has generally been self-assessment. Teachers often introduce students to self-assessment by means of the Grid, followed by Checklists at the relevant level/s. Students whose language learning experience has been based primarily on grammar, vocabulary and literature find it difficult to assess themselves according to the criteria in the Portfolio; they also have a tendency to overrate their ability to perform tasks (or undervalue the difficulty of the tasks themselves) described in the Checklists. L2 teachers involved in experimenting the Portfolio are therefore concentrating on helping students develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning, with stress on balanced development of all skills. Students' self assessment (column 1) comes before the teacher's assessment (column 2). In order to help students move from assessing their present level of competence to finalising objectives for their language learning and finding strategies to achieve their goals, teachers encourage students to fix clear objectives

(column 3) and to fill in a form stating their plans for reaching them.

In an initial experiment, a limited number of students were asked to fill in a questionnaire evaluating the Portfolio (an earlier draft form) from the point of view of the user and giving their comments on the various sections. Results of this questionnaire indicated that the most popular part seemed to be the self-assessment in general. The majority enjoyed filling in the checklists.

As far as more recent experiences are concerned, it seems that students have been making the move from indicating a personal objective in the checklist to transferring that objective into reality. Many students know **what** they want to achieve but they do not know **how** to achieve their objectives, so they find themselves too dependent on the teacher. Students seem to find some of the support they need by working in small groups with similar stated aims. This is particularly important at higher levels (B2 or C1), when the goals may seem far away and difficult to reach.