



School of Information Science

College of Information and Communications

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

General Track Portfolio FAQs

What exactly is the MLIS portfolio?

The MLIS portfolio is a compilation of your hard work in the MLIS program. It serves 3 roles:

1. All graduate students at the University of South Carolina must complete an end of program evaluation. Some programs require a thesis, we require the MLIS portfolio.
2. Allows students to reflect on everything they've learned in the MLIS program and how it relates to the MLIS Core Competencies – did you learn what we promised you would when you started?
3. Gives students a work sample to provide to potential future employers

When should I start on my portfolio?

All End-of-Program Portfolios are due in the student's graduating semester, with the exception of summer graduates:

- Spring graduates – portfolios due April 15th of the graduating term
- Summer graduates – portfolios due April 15th of the spring semester prior to graduation
 - Example: If you are graduating in Summer 2025, your portfolio would be due April 15, 2025
 - This is due to professor availability during summer semesters. We need to have faculty reviewers available to review portfolios and not all faculty are on contract during summer semesters
- Fall graduates – portfolios due November 15th of the graduating term

However, just because your portfolio is due in your final semester doesn't mean you need to wait until your final semester to DO your portfolio! Here's some ways to get started early:

1. Review the Core Competencies early in your program to get an understanding of what to look out for in your assignments.
2. Compile ALL assignments in your own personal organization system.**
 - a. Do NOT rely on being able to get back into blackboard to find an assignment.
 - b. Save EVERYTHING yourself as a precautionary measure
3. Bookmark assignments that seem to meet a core competency

- a. Just completed an amazing assignment where you really dug into a new technology to provide digital resources? Sounds like a good Core Competency 5 assignment!
4. Jot some things down about assignments – what went well, what didn't go well
 - a. These don't have to be full paragraphs. Even just short notes to yourself will help immensely!

****We STRONGLY recommend saving assignments somewhere that can be accessed via internet connection, meaning not strictly on your desktop of your personal laptop. What if the laptop you used all through your program completely crashes in your final semester and you lose everything?**

Every student has access to OneDrive through their university email address, drop your assignments in your personal OneDrive and they can be accessed anywhere. GoogleDrive is a similar option.

How do I create a portfolio?

All portfolios will be created in the website building format of your choice. By far the most common site is **GoogleSites** – it's free, easy to navigate, and many people already have a Gmail account.

However, you are free to use any website of your choice! Other common ones are:

- WIX
- Wordpress
- Weebly
- Canva

Can I use Blackboard? It's not listed above but I know previous students have built their portfolio there!

As of Spring 2024, MLIS portfolios will no longer be allowed to be submitted via Blackboard. Blackboard is tied exclusively to your USC account and the only people who can view the beautiful portfolio you built are you and the specific person you shared it with. That means you can't take this portfolio and show it to potential employers.

Blackboard portfolios will no longer be accepted starting in Spring 2024.

Can I see what a great portfolio looks like?

Yes! The following portfolios all received a perfect score (100) and their creators were kind enough to allow us to share them with future students:

- [General Track Portfolio 1](#)
- [General Track Portfolio 2](#)

What needs to be included in the portfolio?

Every General Track Portfolio will include the same 9 sections. Students who complete the Certificate in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion must include a 10th section addressing the EDI Certificate.

- [General Track Portfolio Requirements](#)

The 9 required sections are outlined in the website above as well as listed here:

1. Welcome or Introduction Page
2. Resume
3. Core Competency 1 Work Sample and Reflective Essays
4. Core Competency 2 Work Sample and Reflective Essays
5. Core Competency 3 Work Sample and Reflective Essays
6. Core Competency 4 Work Sample and Reflective Essays
7. Core Competency 5 Work Sample and Reflective Essays
8. Core Competency 6 Work Sample and Reflective Essays
9. Vision Statement

Students who complete the EDI Certificate will add a 10th section which includes a work sample that is directly related to the EDI Certificate, along with a reflective essay. The essay prompts are included in the link above.

What are these core competencies anyway?

The MLIS Core Competencies indicate what skills, knowledge, dispositions, and professional values MLIS graduates should be able to demonstrate. Basically, why was your MLIS degree important? What did you learn? What was it all working toward?

There are [6 MLIS Core Competencies](#):

1. Information and Its Organization
2. Provision of Information Services
3. Leadership and Management
4. Research
5. Technology
6. Professional Development and Lifelong Learning

You'll see on the website linked above that each **core competency** also includes several **learning outcomes** with it. The learning outcomes give additional information and context to the core competency. For example – Core Competency #4 is Research. “Research” is a pretty broad term, what kind of research? How are you supposed to demonstrate that you are proficient in research? By using the learning outcomes! We're not asking “can you do research?”, we're asking:

- A. Can you identify and explain a research question?
- B. Can you locate, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize research findings?
- C. Can you identify appropriate research methods, collect, and analyze data to address issues faced by libraries or other information agencies?
- D. Etc.

Each work sample must specifically address at least **two learning outcomes** per core competency.

If the work sample you chose specifically addresses your ability to a) identify and explain a research question and d) employ evidence-based practices to solve information problems, then it would be a wonderful work sample to include for the Research Core Competency!

Choosing Work Samples

Can I use the same assignment twice in the portfolio?

No, you can only use an assignment one time in the portfolio.

Can I use two different assignments from the same class to demonstrate two different core competencies?

Yes, you can, there is no official rule against using two different assignments from the same class for different core competencies. But we encourage you to consider the following:

The purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate the depth of your degree and to demonstrate that you have a full mastery of the core competencies outlined for the program.

If you have two assignments from the same class that you believe are the VERY BEST demonstrations for two different competencies, you can use them. But if you have another work sample from another class that also demonstrates a core competency, you should try to use that to demonstrate the wide variety of classes you took for your degree.

Best practice would be to use different classes for each competency to show the variety in the coursework you took and to show how well rounded of a student you are.

You should not be using a class more than twice. If you find yourself leaning towards the same class for a third competency you need to take pause, review the core competencies, and ask yourself if these are really the best or if you are just using them because it is easy to pull from one class.

I'm not sure what assignments to include for a certain core competency? Who can I ask who can tell me what to include?

- Short answer – yourself
- Long answer – no faculty or staff will be able to tell you what assignment you should or should not include in your portfolio

YOU'VE done the assignments, YOU'VE made it this far in the program, YOU are about to graduate with your master's degree. YOU know what assignments you've done, what all went into them, what work you did, how you did on them, etc.

- Look at the core competency, look at the learning outcomes. Can you make an argument for why this assignment demonstrates two of the learning outcomes of the core competency? Would you be able to clearly explain that to someone else? If the answer is yes, then you probably have a pretty good artifact on your hands
 - If the answer is no, then you probably need to keep digging
 - Go through your classes, look back at the assignments. What was the purpose of that assignment? Have the [core competencies page](#) pulled up and look through them one by one