

LeADERS

Learning through Active Discovery, Engagement, Reflection, and Showcase

Planning your LeADERS ePortfolio

In order to graduate with LeADERS distinction, you will have to submit an ePortfolio (or tab within an ePortfolio) which includes the following components:

- Introduction with brief biography, professional focus/philosophy statement, and career aspirations.
- “About LeADERS” section that explains LeADERS in your own words and reflects on your experiences overall as it relates to your professional development.
- Detailed explanation of each of your LeADERS experiences, providing insight into what it was, what you did in it, and relevance of category to your career
- A “Work Samples” section that demonstrates the skills you’ve gained from each of your LeADERS categories, with context explaining what they are and the knowledge and/or skills they demonstrate.

We ask you to do this because we want to help you:

- 1) establish yourself as a professional in your field,
- 2) articulate and tie your college experiences to your professional aspirations, and
- 3) showcase examples from your courses and experiences that demonstrate your knowledge, skills, and abilities.

All of these components must be completed in order to graduate with a LeADERS distinction. Guiding questions, tips, and other resources are embedded throughout to support you with completing this task.

Since this ePortfolio is meant to be unique to you, you are welcome to build it however you’d like! You can create a new website or, if you already have an existing ePortfolio, you can easily integrate these items as their own separate tab or tabs. Or, if you’d like something to help you get started, request a copy of our template.

We encourage you to build and maintain this ePortfolio throughout your time at ODU, since it provides a central space for you to both document and reflect on your undergraduate journey.

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Required Component 1: Introduction with brief biography, professional focus/philosophy statement, and career aspirations

Our goal with this component is for you to articulate your professional identity, which includes both what you will do immediately following graduation as well as your long-term plans for your career. **The primary focus should be your professional identity.** While you might currently be a marketing major, for example, we want to see you present yourself as perhaps an up-and-coming social media marketing strategist. If you are comfortable, include a photo of yourself.

This is typically your “Home” or default landing page. It sets the tone for what a reader can expect to learn about you as they move through your ePortfolio.

- If you have a philosophy statement (we’re looking at you, nursing and education majors!), you might consider sharing a condensed version of it. In this way, you can share how your philosophy drives your professional aspirations.
 - Perhaps you believe that change happens from the bottom up, which is why you are pursuing a career as a community/grassroots organizer.
- If you don’t have an overall philosophy statement (which is completely fine!), but you have more specific professional interests, this is also a great place to share.
 - Perhaps you want to research biological mechanisms underlying drug addiction, or advocate for children of divorce.
- If you don’t have either of those, consider thinking about your personal values or overarching trends/themes that you notice when you look at your life and journey.
 - Maybe you’ve always been able to persevere through challenges? Or you can always find the humor in a situation? If readers of your ePortfolio walk away remembering only one thing about you, what would you want it to be?

Your home page itself should be pretty short. That means that you might also create subpages such as “About me,” or “My story,” etc. where you might include more narrative to help the reader really get to know who you are and how you arrived at this point in your journey. The next page includes more suggestions and reflective questions to help you generate this content.

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About Me

This subpage can be more informal than your landing page. It's a great space to include background details such as where you are from, your personal interests, and what you like to do in your free time (assuming you have any!).

- Since your homepage focuses on your identity as a professional, this section can include more narrative about your current identity as a student.
 - What do you hope to do in your final semester(s) as a student?
 - What are you planning to do right after graduation?
- You might also share a fun fact about yourself. This is helpful ice breaker material for interviews and also provides more opportunities for readers to connect with you beyond your professional interests and aspirations.
 - Perhaps you once spent a summer driving an ice cream truck? You have a favorite book series or author? Or you can sing all of the lyrics to [Blues Travelers' The Hook](#)?
- Consider including more pictures in this section. Do you have pets? Readers love seeing them!

My Story

This subpage can include more narrative about your personal journey to this point. While your homepage might have a short philosophy statement or career focus, this page can expand on those statements with lots more detail.

- Explain more about why you are interested in pursuing this career or graduate degree in your field.
 - Perhaps there was a moment that you experienced as a child which impacted you? A key figure who inspired you to pursue this path?
- If you have a longer philosophy statement, this would be a great place to add that as well.
- Consider carrying your narrative from your past into considering your future:
 - What does life hold for you upon graduation?
 - What do you aspire to accomplish in your career? If you have specific goals in mind, share them here!

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Required Component 2: “About LeADERS” section that explains LeADERS in your own words and reflects on your experiences overall as it relates to your professional development.

Our goal with this component is for you to provide context for your readers about what LeADERS is and why this distinction is significant - i.e., why **you** are a big deal!

Many students - particularly, those who are incorporating this LeADERS content into another ePortfolio - will include a section called “LeADERS” in their navigation menu which, when clicked, will offer drop down options. The first of these drop down options is typically called “Program Overview,” or, “About LeADERS,” or even just, “About,” followed by each of the LeADERS categories that the student completed. Here’s a quick screenshot that shows what we are talking about:



About LeADERS

First, explain what LeADERS is in your own words. Because this is an ODU-specific initiative, most people outside of ODU (such as employers or other institutions’ admissions offices) will have no idea what it is or why it was an important part of your University experience.

- The first time you mention LeADERS, make sure to spell out the name in full:
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- Feel free to use any information that we've provided as inspiration for your ePortfolio (such as what is on our website or in Canvas), but don't just copy and paste that language into your ePortfolio.
 - This is the chance for you to practice talking about the program. If you were to describe LeADERS to someone who had no idea what it was, what would you say? Figure that part out here so that you have a ready answer later!

If you'd like, this would be a great space to talk about your interest in pursuing a LeADERS distinction.

- What drew you to join LeADERS? What made you say, "I want to do this?"

Reflection and Impact on your Professional Development

Many employers share that recent graduates struggle to talk about their college experience in a cohesive manner during the application and interview process. First, their various college experiences end up simply listed under different resume headings, and then they talk about them in interviews as distinct topics without consideration for how one activity shapes, augments, or enhances another. And guess what? Employers don't like that! This inability to integrate experiences and articulate one's personal story throughout the interview process was seen as a critical shortcoming among employers (Chan & Gardner, 2013).

So, the purpose of this section is to look at your experiences as a whole and put them in conversation with one another. Our goal is for you to find connections between your various experiences, develop new meaning about these experiences when considered together, and apply these insights broadly to your future career. This is your chance to share how your ODU journey uniquely prepared YOU for your plans after graduation.

Reflection on Professional Development

First, think about your LeADERS experiences overall. This can be about your emerging professional identity, about your personal journey, or even about how you felt about the experiences. The goal here is to think about it holistically. Then, consider the following questions.

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- What were some interesting discoveries you made while engaging in your LeADERS experiences?
 - About yourself?
 - About others?
- What themes emerge when you look at your LeADERS experiences as a whole?
 - How do these themes tie together?
 - Perhaps they are all related to understanding who you are as a leader, or the importance of being an agent of social change?
 - How do these themes shape your philosophy or approach to how you will engage in your profession?
 - Perhaps you see the importance of empathy and connection when working with members of vulnerable populations?
- How did LeADERS fit into your overall undergraduate experience?
 - What was unique about it?
 - What themes were reinforced through your other courses or experiences?
- What were some of your most powerful learning moments and what made them so?
- What is the most important thing you learned personally? Why was it so important?

Impact on Professional Development

Identify one key skill or professional insight that you gained from each of your LeADERS experiences. Then, talk about how those skills fit together as part of your emerging professional identity. Consider the following:

- Why is it important for someone in your field to have these skills?
 - Perhaps you've seen the importance of people skills for your success in the nursing field?
- What did you learn about your strengths and areas for improvement when it comes to these skills?

How might you apply these skills or insights in your career?

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Required Component 3:

Detailed explanation of each of your LeADERS experiences, providing insight into what it was, what you did in it, and relevance of category to your career

In this section, we want you to provide greater context for your readers about the individual courses and experiences that you completed as part of your LeADERS distinction, and personalize them for your unique journey. We know that many students complete these courses or experiences in any given year, *especially* if they are required courses for your major. But everyone who sits in that classroom is on a different journey, and what is meaningful to them might not be what is meaningful to YOU. This is where you will make those connections for your reader.

Previous graduates have taken varying approaches to how they structure this section of their ePortfolio.

- As mentioned in the previous section, many students will include a section called “LeADERS” in their navigation menu which, when clicked, will offer drop down options which include each of the LeADERS categories that the student completed.
- Other students include a section called “Coursework” in the menu. When readers select that option, they are taken to a page which lists and describes all of their relevant courses. LeADERS courses are embedded within that work, with links to more detailed explanations of each course or experience.
- Still other students will identify their key characteristics or skills, such as, “Leadership,” or “Innovation,” which then link to the associated LeADERS course or experience.
- Finally, some students like to include links at the bottom of their “About LeADERS” section which invite the reader to explore their experiences within each of the categories that they completed.

First, share why it is important for someone in your field to have training and/or experience in this area (Leadership, Service Learning, etc.). If the course is a required part of your major, think about why your program included it. What is so important about this topic that your faculty believe that ALL students should learn it?

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- Perhaps, as a future accountant, you'll work for an international company and thus interact with clients and team members who come from different backgrounds?
- Or you might consider opening your own private recreational therapy practice, and therefore need training/experience in entrepreneurship?

Then, provide greater context about your course or experience. Describe it like you are telling someone who has never heard about it before and knows nothing about it. Include details like what the goal of the class was and the activities that you did.

- What kinds of topics did you learn? What were some key experiences and concepts covered?
 - Maybe your syllabus included learning objectives?
- What kinds of things did you do? What projects did you work on?
 - If you had the option to select a project within the course, tell us why you selected the project that you did. What drew you to it?

Finally, personalize the course or experience as it relates to your development as a professional. Consider the following:

- What did you learn about yourself through completing this course/experience?
 - What was a powerful learning moment and what made it so?
 - What was a challenging moment and what made it so?
 - What did you like about it? What did you dislike?
- What did you learn about your strengths and areas for improvement when it comes to this area?
- What were some interesting discoveries or insights you made? How will these be useful to you in future professional settings?
 - How might you apply these skills or insights in your career? Be specific, if possible.

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Required Component 4:

A “Work Samples” section that demonstrates the skills you’ve gained from each of your LeADERS categories, with context explaining what they are and the knowledge and/or skills they demonstrate.

Our goal for this last required component is for you to demonstrate your knowledge and skills through appropriate, relevant, and compelling content. That is, we want you to **SHOW**, not **TELL**. Anyone can say that they are good at something. But you can show - right here in your ePortfolio - that you are *actually* good at it.

Use the following questions to help you figure out what content to include:

- Think about the LeADERS categories that you completed. What works demonstrate your skills in those areas?
- Look up the LinkedIn profiles of successful professionals in your field. What kinds of work do they highlight? Do you have similar work that you can showcase?
- Look at job postings of positions in your field. What skills are they seeking in candidates for these jobs? What works do you have which showcase those skills?
- Think back to all of the major assignments you’ve completed along your ODU journey. What are some of your best works? What do those works show about what you can do?

Many students upload research projects, final papers, PowerPoint slide decks, or even recordings of themselves giving a presentation via Zoom. Other popular options include pictures (especially of service work), flyers, social media creatives, and reports. But don’t just upload every piece of work you’ve ever done: the focus here is on **QUALITY**, not **QUANTITY**. If an employer only looks at three things, make sure that they are the best representation of what you know and can do.

Once you have selected and added your work samples, add descriptive text to your ePortfolio that provides context to a reader. Explain what the work sample is, what it showcases about your knowledge and skills, and how completing this work sample contributed to your development as a professional.

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Other considerations include:

- Use a variety of samples to show your versatility. Don't just upload a bunch of research papers!
- We **STRONGLY** recommend including a work sample that demonstrates your ability to work on a collaborative project/as a part of a team. Nearly every employer is looking for applicants with teamwork skills; highlighting this in your ePortfolio is sure to help you stand out!
- Consider either embedding the work sample directly into your ePortfolio or linking out to a version stored in the cloud (such as Google Drive).
 - If you choose to link out to your work, make sure to set the permissions so that anyone with the link can view it!
 - No one wants to download your work samples in order to view them. Most employers won't take the time to do it, and others will worry that you are trying to give them a virus.

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Common Additional Content

Customize your ePortfolio so that it is a unique reflection of your work and experiences!

Other content that previous graduates have put in their ePortfolios include:

- Resume
- Contact information that is not your ODU student email address
- Awards & recognition
- Certifications
- Professional experiences
- Community services