ABSTRACT
        This insert, which is written for adult basic
education (ABE) teachers, presents practical advice on storing the
written work generated by students and teachers in ABE programs.
Discussed first is the value of ABE students' completed work as the
following: a record of achievement that can document students'
progress and motivate them to continue their programs; reference
material to which students can refer when they need repetition,
reminders, and reinforcement; a planning tool that can be used to
appraise students' work more and thereby result in better learning
plans; material for inclusion in accreditation portfolios; and a
vehicle for helping students develop pride in their work and improve
their self-esteem. Teacher and student roles in saving/storing work
are outlined, and considerations in deciding who should assume
responsibility for storing students' files are discussed. Examined in
a section on file organization are the questions of how to classify
students' written work and what to include in accreditation
portfolios and student files. A sample student record consisting of
background information about the student and a coursework file is
included along with a sample numeracy skills assessment instrument.
(MN)

ALBSU
The Basic Skills Unit

YOU MIGHT AS WELL USE A BIN LINER!

Students' work, when it is well organised, contributes to planning, motivation and accreditation. On the other hand a mixed bag of outdated first, second and third drafts can be inefficient and discouraging. Elaine Scott, ABE Co-ordinator at Tresham Institute, gives practical advice on working towards a clear, useful way of storing work, and advises against 'passive squirelling'.

Introduction

Basic skills students come along in all shapes and sizes, at all ages, from all sorts of backgrounds, for all sorts of reasons, but invariably they have one thing in common. In the course of their studies they produce and use a copious amount of material – worksheets, handouts, exercises, rough copies, draft copies and work for assessment.

What happens to all this material? It is only in recent years that I have seriously considered this question. When I looked closely at my students' paperwork, I found that all too often everything was kept in one receptacle, usually a folder or ring binder. At the end of each session, papers were hastily gathered together and deposited in the students' folders – undifferentiated, unclassified, and worse, unusable.

The students' folders had become the educational equivalent of bin liners! This situation led me to pose a number of questions.

Does it matter?

Should we, as tutors, be concerned about what happens to a student's work once it has been completed? Surely, we may say, our priority must be the learning process itself, what happens during the session not what happens after it?

In answer, I would say that it is all about valuing work – our work as tutors, and the students' work as learners.

If we and our students value the work, our objectives should be to keep it as:

- a planning tool
- an accreditation portfolio
- a record of achievement
- a reference system.

Mutual respect for the effort applied to the work will mean we want to look at and access previous work.

Record of achievement

Most of us will have experienced times when we wonder what we are achieving, or indeed if we are achieving at all. This is also true for our students. These feelings are destructive and demotivating. Enthusiasm can wane and so easily affect further progress.

If, however, we have kept a clear, accessible record of the student's work, we can all see at a glance the improvements that have taken place. The students can feel justifiably proud of their progress and gain motivation by that progress.

Reference system

When students work on a specific skill area – for example spelling, punctuation, letter formats – tutors provide information to help them. This may take the form of handouts and worksheets with spelling rules, examples of punctuation usage, model letters and so on, or it may be information obtained from books. Whatever the form, we have taken the trouble to find relevant information at the right level for our students.

If this information is not recorded and filed appropriately, neither we nor the students can refer to it again when repetition, reminders and reinforcement are needed. We all know that revision has to be built into a learning programme, so it makes sense to use a reference system rather than waste our efforts. Once in place, this reference system can then be independently accessed by the student when faced with writing a letter at home, for example.

There is a further way in which previous work may be used for reference. Increasingly the importance of the context for learning is being recognised and the materials used reflect the interests and vocational aspirations of the student. Once again considerable effort is spent on ensuring that these materials are appropriate for the level at which the student is functioning, and therefore they deserve to be recorded and kept for future use.

Planning tool

When an initial learning plan is negotiated with a student, it is not a definitive statement. We do, of course, use information obtained from initial interview and assessment, but clearly the more in-depth knowledge gained by working with a student can lead us to modify the original plan. That is as it should be a learning plan is a living document and reviews should be incorporated into all learning programmes.

An important question arises. How useful is the review process without an appraisal of previous work? Tutors will obviously have their own record of work undertaken and some comments on that

work, but such records are perforce an overview that needs padding out for a full picture to emerge.

Looking together at students' previous work can only enhance the review process and improve the quality of learning plans. In this way, when the question 'How far have I got with my aims for this term?' is asked, the answer can be based on accurated records and outcomes rather than subjective feelings based on memory.

Accreditation portfolio

Increasingly basic skills students' work is being accredited through Wordpower and Numberpower. Clearly then, work entered for accreditation needs to be kept and recorded systematically. This might sound like an obvious point that does not need reiteration as it is already being done.

Do not take it for granted! I write from personal experience, much to my chagrin.

A few years ago I had a group of students all working towards Wordpower. During an induction session I had explained the assessment procedure and suggested how work could be kept and filed for the verification process. One of the group was away that day, so I made a mental note to cover these issues on a 1:1 basis. My mental note must have slipped through the sieve!

Weeks later, after a fair amount of work had been covered, I was talking to this student about where a fairly complex, integrated assignment should be filed. He looked totally blank. As the alarm bells rang, I smiled and said calmly, 'Let's look at your assessment folder and I'll show you what I mean.'

'What folder?'

Eventually my panic subsided sufficiently to talk things through. My student had assumed that the Personal Achievement Record contained all the evidence that would be submitted for verification. All the completed assignments I had dutifully assessed and recorded in the Personal Achievement Record had been subsequently filed – in the bin!

Looking back, I can only say I learnt a great lesson from this experience. Never again have I left the compilation of an accreditation portfolio to chance.

Self-esteem

Taken together the four reasons outlined above support my view that the way in which students' work is kept does matter. There is a final reason that is of equal if not more importance. I said before that this whole issue is a question of valuing the work. If we as tutors do not show that we value the work, the student will not value it and neither will other people who may be involved. What effect will this have on the student's self-esteem? Having broken down the many barriers to learning, the students deserve our respect and the chance to gain self-respect. Self-esteem is of paramount importance to the learning process.

By enabling and facilitating work to be kept in a useful way, by encouraging pride in the presentation of work and by making sure we do use previous work, we can complement and reinforce all our efforts to boost confidence and promote self-esteem.

So, YES. Students' files do matter.

Whose responsibility?

I can clearly hear alarmed voices saying it will take too much time for tutors to be responsible for maintaining students' files. They are quite right – it is time consuming. We all know how many demands are already made on the time of basic skills tutors, especially the large army of part-time tutors who do so much in the way of materials' development in gift time.

I hear other voices proclaiming that as we are dealing with adults it must be left to them to do as they wish with their own work. The ownership, and therefore the responsibility, belongs to the student.

Both views are right in a sense, but both stem from a negative reaction to the problems raised. The only positive answer is to promote **joint responsibility** for students' files.

The tutor's role

The majority of basic skills students are unaccustomed to learning in a formal setting and have little experience of the student role. Frequently the success of previous learning experiences has been limited. Should we, therefore, tacitly expect that our students will have the skills and knowledge necessary to organise their own completed work? Are we guilty of assuming prior learning that has not taken place? Any tutor who has worked or is working towards accreditation through City & Guilds 9285 will know just how demanding is the task of compiling a portfolio.

Organising study notes and completed work is a basic skill in its own right which should be included in students' learning plans as an integral part of their programmes. This is stated explicitly in the ALBSU Standards for Stage 2 and Stage 3 work. Those students who are working at Foundation Level or Stage 1 should be beginning to acquire the skills needed. When we look at the underpinning skills and knowledge required for Unit 14 Element 2 it is clear that these are skills that can and should be gained throughout a learning programme.

Moreover, these are skills that are transferable to so many contexts other than studying itself. There are few roles in life for which organisation and efficiency are not assets.

The tutor's responsibility, then, is not to take on the task of organising files in his/her own time, but to incorporate the teaching of the necessary skills into the learning programmes and guide the students through the tasks involved.

ALBSU COMMUNICATION SKILLS STANDARDS

The Basic Skills Unit

	FOUNDATION	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
READING TEXTUAL MATERIAL	1.1 Read and understand simple text (up to one paragraph with short simple phrases and sentences).	6.1 Read and understand a variety of text (e.g. short features in a newspaper or a magazine).	13.1 Choose and use appropriate material from more than one written source.	17.1 Select and evaluate material from a wide variety of written texts.
		6.2 Follow written instructions – each step could contain up to 3 short sentences.		
	1.2 Follow simple instructions (up to 6 steps, one per step).	6.3 Consult a reference source (e.g. Yellow Pages, dictionary) to obtain simple information.	13.2 Select material from more than one graphical source (e.g. complex tables, plans).	
READING GRAPHICAL MATERIAL FOR EVERYDAY PURPOSES	2.1 Understand and act on signs and labels with single messages.	7.1 Understand and act on signs and labels with multiple messages.		17.2 Find and interpret information which is presented in graphical and textual form.
	2.2 Follow a route on a map or plan.	7.2 Plan a journey using maps.	13.3 Understand the purpose and meaning in a text and make a judgement from the information.	
	2.3 Find specific pieces of information from simple tables (no more than 2 variables).	7.3 Find information from complex tables, with at least 2 variables and with additional sources/keys.		
	2.4 Follow instructions given in the form of pictures or diagrams.			
USING REFERENCE SYSTEMS			14.1 Use a reference system to find specific information (e.g. find a book in a library or a file in a filing system).	18.1 Use a range of reference systems (e.g. using a library to find a variety of material in order to research a topic).
			14.2 Organise material into a given reference system – alphabetical, numerical or date order and use the system created.	18.2 Select and create a reference system.

The students' role

Before students can begin to take responsibility for organising their files two things must happen. Firstly, they must be encouraged to value the work, and secondly they must have the rudimentary skills and knowledge to carry out the tasks. Thereafter, a student should take day-to-day responsibility for their own work, with guidance and encouragement from the tutor.

Our aim in basic skills work is to promote independent competence, this would apply to these referencing skills in the same way as it does to money handling, measuring and letter writing. Clearly some students will need ongoing support from the tutor, just as they do in other areas of their learning. Gradually the level of support can be reduced and the balance of responsibility altered.

Storing files

The question of who takes responsibility for storing students' files is more difficult to answer. The principle of ownership would dictate that the students should be responsible for the safe-keeping of their work. There would also be the advantage of more opportunities for self-initiated independent study and for accessing information from the files.

In reality, tutors may be unwilling to take the risk of work being lost or damaged. This would be particularly true for work that is to be accredited. In addition, tutors and co-ordinators may need the files to be accessible for lesson planning, updating records, internal verification, monitoring and evaluation. Accessibility can be even more important where a student has more than one tutor.

The storage of files is an aspect that must be considered and discussed with the students, but the outcomes will vary according to individual factors and priorities.

How should files be organised?

Having established the rationale behind keeping students' work systematically, and having considered where the responsibility for this should lie, we must now consider the manner in which the work should be organised. There are two main considerations.

- the classification of material
- what to include.

How should the material be classified?

The essential tool and starting point for deciding how the material is to be classified is the student's learning plan. Priority skill areas and learning goals which reflect the context for learning will have been identified. Accreditation aims will also have been identified. By extracting this information, a logical classification system for materials and work can be set up with relative ease.

To see how this works in practice, we can look at an example of a particular student (see below).

Where students do not have the necessary skills to maintain a system of keeping their work, I have successfully used a colour coding system in the past. I either use different coloured paper for each section, or use small coloured stickers at the top of each sheet.

Accreditation portfolio

When deciding on the format of a portfolio for accreditation the requirements of the external verifier have to be considered as well as those of the tutor and student.

As an assessor for Wordpower and Numberpower myself, I have to admit it is far easier to verify folders where the work is filed strictly in unit/element order. However without excessive

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Emma – Background information

Emma was a 1st year student on a two year City & Guilds Hairdressing Course (NVQ2). She had always found Maths difficult at school, and was worried about the numeracy skills needed for her course.

Emma hoped to start a mobile hairdressing business after completing her course, but was concerned about coping with bulk purchasing and costing.

Emma was planning to get married at the end of her training, but already she and her fiancé were realising that the budgeting and preparation could become a financial nightmare. Although this area was not an immediate priority, she wanted some help at a later date.

At initial interview Emma identified pressing difficulties with the following skill areas:

- cash handling in the salon
- booking appointments
- timing treatments
- understanding instruction leaflets
- reading tables and charts
- accuracy when mixing products.

Through initial assessment it was agreed that Emma would work towards City & Guilds 3794 at Stage 1. She had always found learning quite easy when motivated, and grasped new skills quickly, so a fairly rapid progress rate was anticipated.

Emma's first learning plan itemised the skills needed to achieve her short term goals – study skills, revision of addition and subtraction, addition of money, giving change, revision of multiplication and division, unit costs, addition of time, scheduling timing, metric units, weighing, measuring and following written instructions.

Emma was advised that she would need two ring binders, one for coursework and one to use as a portfolio for accreditation. It was suggested that she also buy a set of cardboard dividers for each folder. These items could be purchased on site.

Coursework file

Emma's coursework was classified as follows:

Records	• Learning plans
	• Weekly record sheets
	• Assessment details
General numeracy	• Four rules of number
	• Using money
	• Working with time
	• Metric units
	• Weighing
	• Measuring
Maths for hairdressing	• Cash handling in a salon
	• Bulk purchasing
	• Booking appointments
	• Timing treatments
	• Reading tables and charts
	• Mixing products
General hairdressing	• Glossary of hairdressing terms
	• Following instruction leaflets
Wedding preparations	• Reception quotes
	• Wedding car hire
	• Dress prices
	• Budget details
	• Schedule for preparations
	• Schedule for the day

The sections were separated by the dividers, with the contents of each section listed on the divider.

Emma was a very able student who had no difficulty organising her work into the agreed categories. All work was dated before filing so that progress could be clearly seen.

photocopying which would stretch limited budgets, this is only feasible where separate tasks are given to demonstrate each competence.

We all know that assessment situations should reflect the basic skills demands of real life, so that a variety of competencies are tested when carrying out a single talk. Therefore we need to use a cross-reference system to facilitate verification.

The system I use is very simple. Each assessment task is given an identifying letter as well as a title. This identifying letter is added to all materials used for the task, all written or audio-visual evidence and to the assessment sheet itself. When the Personal Achievement Record is completed, the identifying letter is used again, both in the detailed sections and the summary record.

The evidence can then be filed in the accreditation portfolio as a complete task. Where the context for learning is fairly specific, as in Emma's case, the tasks can be grouped together thematically, reflecting the classifications used for the coursework file. Again the divider can be used to list the contents and the units/elements covered. Where more general assessment tasks are used, they can be filed alphabetically. The dividers can list the units/elements covered by assignments A-E, for example.

Some tutors and students do prefer work to be filed in unit order. In this case I would file an integrated assignment under the first unit/element included in the task, and keep a record of the units/ elements covered by each task at the front of the folder.

If one of these systems is used, the result should be a portfolio that is accessible by the City & Guilds Assessor and meaningful to the student.

What should be included in the files?

On initial consideration this question seems simple. If we value our students' work surely everything should go in – rough work, practice work, draft copies, the lot! But why should we keep everything? Is it all necessary or even desirable?

The contents of a student's file should be the result of an active decision not a passive squirrelling.

The tutor and the student should jointly decide what will and will not be useful. Personally I can see no reason or justification for keeping work that has gone disastrously wrong. The likely result will be demoralisation and reduced self-esteem.

Equally I can see no reason for keeping the 1st draft, 2nd draft, 3rd draft… Undoubtedly one such example to show the process of proof-reading and drafting would be useful but not endless examples. The final result is what matters. A piece of work that is appropriately and attractively presented – a piece of work in which the student can take pride.

How many examples of practice exercises will be useful? Two or three, maybe, but not page after page after page.

For each piece of work the student should ask, 'Why do I want to keep this?' It could be that the external assessor for your centre asks for drafts to be included in portfolios. If so, that is a valid reason for keeping something. It could be that the student plans to go over a piece of work at home; another valid reason. As long as there is a reason, the work should be filed; where there is no reason, the work should be disposed of.

On the subject of disposal, it is worth mentioning that not everything remains relevant and useful forever.. Just as our gardens benefit from periodic weeding and pruning, so too do students' files.

Conclusion

At every stage of a student's involvement in a basic skills programme, from initial interview and assessment through to final review, work is produced by the student and the tutor that is of value and therefore should be valued.

The outward manifestation and evidence of the value attached to the work is the way in which it is presented, kept and used.

The effort this demands should not be underestimated by students or tutors, but neither should they underestimate the rewards. ∎

3794 Numeracy – Stage 1 Assessment

Title of assessment: K. Working in the College Salon

Elements to be assessed:
(a) Unit 10 Element 3
(b) Unit 13 Element 1
(c) Unit 12 Element 2
(d) Unit 12 Element 1
(e) Unit 8 Element 2

Description of assessment activity:
(a) Take a telephone booking from a lady who wants a tint, a manicure and a half leg wax. Schedule the treatments in the diary.
(b) When your client arrives, refer to the 'Depth and Tone' chart to decide which shade to use for her hair.
(c) Simulate mixing and applying the colouring cream following the instructions given on the leaflet. As your client's hair is very short you decide to use half the quantities given.
(d) Calculate and weigh out the correct amount of wax for a half-leg treatment.
(e) Work out your client's bill and receive payment. As well as the three treatments she buys two nail products.

Source material:
Diary pages
Colour chart
Instruction leaflets
Salon price list

Help allowed:

Tutor's notes on candidate's performance:

Assessed by: ....
Date: ....

3794 Numeracy – (Numberpower) Stage 1

Unit 008
Element 2   Receiving payments
Range
types of money: pounds and pence (sterling)
types of transactions: involving at least three items: price shown on the items
example contexts: private sales, retail sales
optional aids: calculator, ready reckoner

In at least three real or simulated situations including:
(a) one activity selling at least five different items and receiving payment requiring change. The change is to be checked without the use of a calculator
(b) one sale totalling at least £2500 for which payment is made by cheque and a receipt is required.
(c) one of the type illustrated in the range.

Title's reference
K – Working in the College Salon
M – Hotel Reception
C – Family Haircuts

I demonstrated that I:

	a	b	c
2.1 performed all calculations accurately	✓	✓	✓
2.2 completed correctly all necessary documentation	✓	✓	✓
2.3 correctly checked the payment offered, querying any inconsistencies	✓	✓	✓
2.4 offered correct change, when required	✓	✓	✓
2.5 provided a correct receipt, if required	✓	✓	✓
Date	18/4	20/5	10/2
Tutor/Trainer's initials	E.B.	E.B.	E.B.

3794 Numeracy (Numberpower) Stage 1

Summary of Progress:

Unit 008 Using money in everyday situations   Situations – enter date

Element 1 Making payments

A	M	E	B	O
5/3	20/5	17/5	24/3	27/5

Element 2 Receiving payments

K	M	C
18/4	20/5	10/2

Element 3 Sharing payments for goods and services

F	A	C
6/4	5/3	10/2