

Portfolios

How to create and implement neuro-inclusive Portfolios.



About Portfolios

Portfolios can be effective assessment methods used in recruitment, providing a visual and practical demonstration of a candidate's capabilities. They allow employers to gain deeper insights into a candidate's work beyond what resumes or interviews alone can offer. Portfolios can stand alone as an evaluation method or be used in conjunction with interviews, where candidates may present their work and discuss its relevance to the role. For some positions a Portfolio might be something you ask for after the first interview to help you make your decision.

Benefits

The benefits may include:

- Portfolios exhibit a wide range of a candidate's work, highlighting their skills, creativity, and attention to detail, without assessing non-relevant skills.
- Candidates can present tangible examples of their achievements, such as design projects, written articles, or project summaries.
- They offer a glimpse into the candidate's personal style and work ethic.
- Portfolios are particularly valuable in roles where visual, tangible, or performance-based work is essential.



Ideal for:

Creative fields, trades, performance and personal services, including hairdressing, voice acting, event planners, public speakers, florists, and fashion designers.



Considerations and solutions

There are considerations to address to ensure the assessment is neuro-inclusive. These include:

Considerations

Maintaining relevance:

Portfolios may include work that is not directly aligned with the job requirements.

Quality control:

The quality of work presented might vary significantly, making it hard to assess talent accurately.

Solutions

Request specific examples or guide candidates to highlight the most relevant pieces for the role.

Develop clear evaluation criteria to ensure consistency when reviewing Portfolios, focusing on outcomes like innovation, technical skill, and relevance to the role.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Portfolios

Portfolios can be a valuable tool for evaluating a candidate's skills, creativity, and potential. By considering neuro-inclusive strategies when asking for Portfolios employers can ensure a fair and supportive process.

Pre-assessment preparation

Preparing a Portfolio, whether for standalone submission or presentation, can be overwhelming for candidates if instructions are unclear or expectations are vague. By providing detailed, accessible guidelines and accommodations, employers can reduce anxiety and set candidates up for success.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Applicable to: Stand-alone Portfolios and Portfolios paired with Interviews

Neurodivergent awareness training

Ensure all staff involved in the assessment understand common neurodivergent characteristics and how these may present in the portfolio assessment context.

Step-by-step guidance

Provide a timeline or checklist to guide candidates. For example,

- **Step 1: Select three projects relevant to the role.**
 - **Step 2: Write a brief description of each project.**
 - **Step 3: Submit via the provided link by [deadline].**
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Examples and templates

Share Portfolio examples or templates tailored to the role.

For example, a graphic design template might include sections for branding, web design, and social campaigns. This provides clarity and reduces the cognitive load of structuring a portfolio.

Support accommodations

Encourage candidates to request accommodations, such as deadline extensions, alternative formats (For example, video submissions), or assistance in compiling their portfolio.

For example, When candidates present their portfolios, they could be asked if they want to do it first thing, or after a break.

Flexible submission formats

Flexible submission options

Allow candidates to submit their portfolios in a format most suitable for them, written documents, or a digital presentation.

Technology and submission support

Provide options for candidates to use assistive technologies or software that supports their portfolio creation, such as speech-to-text programs or visual organisation tools.

Support

Offer support for candidates who might need help in compiling or formatting their Portfolios. This could include access to a help desk or the option to submit materials in draft form for feedback.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Portfolios

Preparing the assessment environment

For candidates presenting their Portfolios in an interview, the environment can pose challenges due to sensory distractions or unfamiliar settings. Ensuring the physical and sensory environment is supportive can reduce anxiety and allow candidates to perform at their best.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Applicable to: Portfolios presented in Interviews

Workplace visit

Where applicable, offer candidates an opportunity to tour the workplace prior to the assessment. This visit can help candidates familiarise themselves with the setting, reducing anxiety and allowing them to identify accommodations they may need.

Sensory-friendly settings

- Minimise loud, continuous noise
(For example, humming from coffee machines)
- Avoid sudden loud noises, like doors slamming
- Ensure consistent, non-flickering lighting
- Avoid strong smells from perfumes, kitchens, or nearby restrooms
- Provide simple décor and communicate any potential sensory stimuli in advance
- Allow candidates to adjust the environment (For example, dim lighting, use noise cancelling headphones).



Ask the candidate:

"How can we make the interview more comfortable for you?"

Workplace tours

Offer candidates the option to visit the presentation space beforehand, helping them familiarise themselves with the setting.

A neurodivergent employee shared

“Knowing the questions beforehand lets me organise my thoughts and respond more clearly.”

Break spaces

Identify a quiet area for candidates to take breaks before or during the presentation to manage stress or sensory overload.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Portfolios

During the assessment

The assessment phase, particularly for in-person or live reviews, can be stressful for neurodivergent individuals. Sensory sensitivities (**For example, bright lighting, loud noises**) or anxiety about presenting to an audience may hinder their ability to perform at their best. Some candidates may also find it difficult to respond to unstructured discussions about their work.



Neuro-inclusive strategies

Applicable to: Stand-alone Portfolios



Structured evaluation criteria

Use a rubric to objectively evaluate portfolios based on creativity, skill, and relevance to the role.

For example, instead of assessing presentation or the pitch behind the portfolio, focus on the content, such as innovation, attention to detail, and alignment with job requirements.



Feedback mechanisms

Provide detailed feedback focused on the Portfolio's strengths and areas for improvement. Giving constructive feedback that is specific and clear and potentially in multiple formats (**For example, verbal as well as written**) as it might give the candidate something to ponder later, in case they are too anxious/ stressed to remember the specifics on the day.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Portfolios

Neuro-inclusive strategies
Applicable to: Portfolios presented in interviews

Be welcoming
Meet candidates at the door to create a welcoming first impression and reduce initial anxiety.

Provide a workplace tour
Begin with a brief tour of the workplace, even if the candidate has previously visited. This serves as an icebreaker and helps candidates better understand the role.

Allow time to get comfortable
Allow candidates time to get comfortable in the environment, set up the Portfolio (if physical) and address any potential distractions or causes of anxiety.

Use clear language

- Be mindful of literal interpretations; avoid idioms.
- Avoid double-barrelled questions (where multiple questions with different responses are asked at the same time).
- Use specific prompts to guide detailed responses
(For example, "What steps did you take to mediate the situation?").

Have structured discussions
Guide the conversation with specific, objective questions related to content in the Portfolio.
For example, "How did you approach this project's challenges?"

Contingency plan
Be prepared to adjust the interview approach if unexpected needs or situations arise.

Allow for flexible timing and breaks
Allow candidates additional time to respond to questions and incorporate breaks to reduce stress.

Provide supportive materials
Encourage candidates to share their portfolio to guide their presentation.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Portfolios

Post-assessment feedback

The feedback phase can cause anxiety if timelines are unclear, or feedback is vague. Providing specific, actionable insights ensures candidates feel valued and have opportunities to grow.



Neuro-inclusive strategies

Applicable to: Stand-alone Portfolio and Portfolio paired with Interviews



Timely feedback

Clearly communicate when or if candidates can expect results, such as, **“You will receive feedback within five business days.”**



Present follow-up opportunities

Invite candidates to ask questions or clarify feedback to support their professional growth. Providing the option of giving feedback both verbally and later in written form if the candidate indicated that this way might work better for them.

An autistic adult explained,



“It would be great if employers could be a little more open to seeking candidate feedback after the interview or assessment process. It can be disheartening if an employer does not seek out any candidate feedback, regardless of whether we were successful in the job application or not...”

Example of a neuro-inclusive Portfolio assessment

Scenario

A candidate for a public speaking role is required to display their experience delivering presentations. They are asked to provide a portfolio that includes examples of their work and present their speaking skills in a live or recorded format. The candidate discloses that they have sensory needs and perform best with a clear structure.



The accommodations allow the candidate to focus on showing their skills.

Actions taken

- ☑ The employer provides explicit guidelines for the portfolio, requesting three examples of past speaking engagements. These could include video recordings, event programs, or presentation slides, accompanied by a brief description of the audience, objectives, and outcomes.
- ☑ The candidate is offered the flexibility to submit the portfolio and presentation as:
 - A pre-recorded video presentation.
 - A live virtual session with one evaluator.
 - An in-person presentation in a sensory-friendly environment.
- ☑ The candidate opts for a virtual live presentation of their portfolio, which is scheduled during a quiet time with clear instructions and a structured agenda shared beforehand.
- ☑ The interviewer uses a checklist to guide feedback, focusing on voice modulation, audience engagement, and clarity of message delivery. **For example: "How did you tailor this speech to connect with this audience's needs?"**
- ☑ Feedback is provided within two days, highlighting the candidate's strengths in delivery, storytelling, and audience engagement, along with suggestions for improvement, such as pacing adjustments.



Outcome

These accommodations enable the candidate to focus on showcasing their creativity and strategic thinking, offering a more accurate evaluation of their suitability for the role.

An employer shared,



"So many employers rely so heavily on those 'soft' skills in job interviews, which only assess peoples' ability to make pleasant chit-chat and make themselves appear as if they are qualified. But, when I have interviewed and hired others in the past, I was more interested in whether the candidate could do the job or not, as that was what our organisation needed at the end of the day. So, if employers can focus on whether the candidate has the skills to do the job in some objective manner, that feels as if it is a much fairer method of assessment to me!"

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Portfolios

Continuous improvement

Regular reviews and update processes based on feedback and advancements in accessibility ensure that portfolio assessments meet diverse needs.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

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Regular updates

Regular reviews and update processes based on feedback and advancements in accessibility ensure that portfolio assessments meet diverse needs.

Collect feedback

Use anonymous surveys to gather insights from candidates on the inclusivity of the process.

Use technology

Incorporate assistive tools, such as screen readers or accessible submission platforms, to streamline processes. Employees may have their own technological assistive tools that they can bring along if you do not have them.

By tailoring strategies to both stand-alone Portfolios and Portfolios presented during interviews employers can create a fair and neuro-inclusive recruitment process. This approach fosters diversity, ensures equity, and helps all candidates display their unique potential.

Learn more and access resources

To learn more about Neuro-inclusive Recruiting and how to create and maintain neuro-inclusive workplaces, scan the QR code or visit neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au.

