

Advice to a Future PDP-er

This list ranges from the broad to the incredibly micro. This advice is based solely on my own experience participating in the PDP in the 2021-2022 school year and what I remember at the end of the process (I'm writing this in June 2022). Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or if you'd like to talk more about any of this.

General Advice

- Choose a team that you can be vulnerable with. It's very hard to engage authentically with this process without a sense of trust in your team. There can be logistical challenges, depending on who shares the free period that you'll be using to meet, but I can't overemphasize the importance of team composition.
- Reach out to your facilitator with questions and/or when you're feeling stuck. Their primary role is to support you and to be an advocate for you in this process. Let them help!
- Don't be afraid to push back (respectfully) on any part of this process. Question the expectations, as they were designed more generally and may not work for your specific situation. Challenge an indicator if it doesn't seem relevant or authentic to you. It's worth having a conversation with your facilitator and team about ways to interpret the different expectations, but you don't have to fall into lockstep with them.
- Along those same lines, make the indicators your own. There were several times where I approached an indicator and defined it for myself, which may or may not have aligned with its intended purview, but which helped me engage with it.
- Look to the work that was done by members of previous cohorts if you aren't sure how to get started on an indicator but remember that you don't have to approach it the same way that they did.
- You may find it helpful to divide your work time between generating new content and revising previously written pieces (after receiving feedback from your team). I found it challenging to try to do both of these in the same sitting.
- Consider asking someone on your team to be a note-taker if you're comfortable with delegating this task.
- It may be helpful to have follow-up meetings with one of your team members to help you sift through the feedback you receive in your individual meetings. As a perfectionist and a people-pleaser, I found it helpful to have another person's perspective on which suggestions were worth following up on and which ones I could set aside.

Building your Portfolio via WordPress

- First and foremost, it's okay if you are choosing not to create a website (unless those expectations change for future cohorts). The idea of leaving my finished project in a OneNote did not feel like a sufficient culmination, so making it into a website was important to me as part of being "done" with the experience.
- Look at the portfolios created by previous cohorts to see if any of them appeal to you, design-wise. The tech team will create a bare-bones website for you, but you then have flexibility on how much you want to tweak it. I did very little to my site to change it from the template.

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- For me, working within WordPress was time consuming, but not difficult. As someone with zero previous experience with the platform, I had a 45-minute meeting with Derek to receive some overall pointers and then I was able to do just about everything from then on.
- If you decide to create a website, it's worth considering if you want to write directly in WordPress vs. drafting in your OneNote. An advantage of working within the website is that it will save you a lot of time cutting and pasting. A disadvantage is that it's harder for your team to give you feedback this way, as the OneNote is more readily accessible.
- If you have time over the summer, it may be helpful to start to collect evidence. Go through your photos. Look through the ones saved on the Faculty Drive (talk to the tech team if you don't know how to access those). Consider if there are things in your desk or classroom that you might want to photograph (thank-you notes, student projects, etc.).
- Save any photos that you might want to use as image files in a separate folder on your computer (or in the cloud). This will be a huge time-saver if you decide to go the WordPress route to create a website. I put all of my images into my OneNote and then had to individually go through and save them again, which was quite time consuming.
- As you use images, transfer them into a separate folder to help you keep track of which evidence has already been used. It's not a problem to use the same evidence in more than one place, of course, but it's helpful to know if/when you're doing that intentionally.
- For photos and excerpts that can be snipped directly as small images, insert them directly into the website (in other words, don't create posts for every single piece of evidence).
- For larger documents (Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, etc.), save them as pdfs, as WordPress can work with those quite easily.
- Short videos can be dropped directly into WordPress. Longer ones will need to be hosted on YouTube.
- College recommendations, if used as evidence, should have student names redacted. You can leave identifying information in other components as these websites will only be accessible to faculty and staff and not the larger community.