



LIS614: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

TO INITIATING YOUR UX DESIGN & RESEARCH
PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO & RESUME

ABSTRACT

The content guides individuals as they begin their journey of creating a UX Research & Design professional portfolio, resume, and/or cover letter. This outline suggests a strategic approach and emphasizes the importance of developing a plan to set goals and remained focused on the outcomes through-out the semester.

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GET STARTED WITH RESEARCH

Get started doing what you do best, research. Search LinkedIn and job boards to find what fits your desired career path, and then look at a few professional portfolios. Find out how others talk about themselves and what catches your eye about those individuals and their work. What do you see as commonalities across professionals and what work are they showcasing to the market right now? What job titles fit the work you enjoy doing? Understand the job requirements and make notes of keywords in the job posting. Adding those keywords throughout your portfolio, resume, and cover letter will help you get noticed when you start applying for your internship or future job.

Portfolios to review:

- i. <https://www.hey mia.co>
- ii. <https://mikeyux.com>
- iii. <https://www.francestung.com>
- iv. <https://www.meganolman.com> (Previously worked at UW-Madison)

CREATE A PLAN

A plan will transform this big daunting project into incremental tasks that will keep your forward momentum. It's recommended you set aside 1 – 3 hours per week to work exclusively on your portfolio over 7 weeks.

CHOOSE A PORTFOLIO MEDIA

You will need to determine where your portfolio will live. There's no right answer here but choosing a media where you can continuously update will be important.

- (Low Tech) Word processing document without interactive features converted into PDF for ease of sharing and opening.
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader
- (Low-Medium Tech) Digital PDF-like format
 - Microsoft PowerPoint or Apple Keynote
 - Canva
 - Flipbook.com
- (Low-Medium Tech) Social media platforms
 - LinkedIn
 - Instagram
- (Medium – High Tech) Website or blog with or without paid domain.
 - [Free Portfolio Websites](#)
 - Wordpress
 - Wix
 - Square Space
 - Weebly
 - Adobe Portfolio
 - Webflow
 - UXfolio

IDENTIFY 3 – 5 CASE STUDIES PROJECTS

[NOTE: This is content is from A. Rule's LIS613 final project work instruction doc]

Identify 3 – 5 case studies that highlight your best work. Write a description about the project and its goals. How did the research and design process meet (or didn't meet) the project goals. Describe not only what you did, but why you did it. Potential employers want to see that you not only know how to perform common research and design tasks, but that you can think critically. How you design the case study is ultimately up to you, but here are a couple pieces of advice:

1. Minimize text: Aim to have no more than 500-1000 words in your case study. The story of your project should be concise and to-the-point.
2. Include images: Your case study should include multiple images; not only representing your final research findings, but also of intermediate artifacts you created along the way. Your readers will learn more from these visuals than from your text. Note: Do not include images of your study participants.
3. Tell a story: That is, start with the research goals, describe how you designed a study to achieve those goals, and what you learned from your study. Also include a few insights about what you learned about the process of doing UX research.
4. Don't include everything: Your readers won't have enough time or attention to read about everything you did this semester. You're going to have to choose some parts of the process not to mention. Focus on your usability test, and not your other evaluations (e.g., the accessibility audit, the card sort) unless they are very relevant.
5. Be user-centered: In this case, your user is a hiring manager who might look at your portfolio after you apply for a UX job or internship. What might they want to know? How can you make that information easy to perceive and understand?
6. If it's a group project that you'll be showcasing, extract out the pieces of the project you had a significant contribution to and/or what type of work you'd like to do more of.

CHOOSE ARTIFACTS TO SUPPORT THE CASE STUDY

It's time to sift through your work and determine what artifacts showcase your best work. Think journey maps, personas, brainstorming sessions, wireframes, workflows, high-res mock-ups, usability testing, etc. Find 3 – 5 projects that confidently showcase your skills and qualities you want employers to know.

ABOUT YOU

In 500 - 750 words, write a brief bio about yourself and your brand. You'll want to include a section within your portfolio that highlights you – not just who you are at work, but maybe a little about the person you are outside of work. Include things such as: your professional and personal aspirations, goals, skills, personality, hobbies, interests, etc. Employers want to know who they'll be working with, and it might be an opportunity during the interview to find something in common or have something interesting the employer can ask questions about.

If you don't have a professional photo already, it's time. Find a professional photo should be included in your about me section.

REFERENCES, AWARDS, & CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have letters of recommendations, awards, professional feedback, certificates, etc., you will want to include those in your portfolio. Also, determine how you want employers to contact you; will it be email, phone, or both?

NETWORKING

Building a professional network may be the most important component in finding your dream job, and in doing so, it takes some initiative and effective communication. This assignment reinforces the importance of networking and also fosters an opportunity to build networks and/or mentorship opportunities.

In the course work, you will be asked to design and conduct an interview with professionals in, or adjacent, to the field of User Experience Design. This could be a UX Designer, Researcher, or someone with current or past UX experience, and Professionals can be found through LinkedIn, on-campus or online networking events, or faculty or staff. Prior to your interview, submit the name of the person you will be interviewing to protect those who may be asked twice.

You will reach out to the person via email or LinkedIn to request an interview and clearly state why it is you would like their time.

Prepare a short list of thoughtful questions to ask about their experiences, their current and past perspectives of UX, and challenges of today's UX R&D industry, and what advice would you give a student pursuing a UX career.

Submit a written reflection piece 250 – 500 words about the networking process you took, the importance of networking, the person you interviewed, and a few key takeaways from the interview experience.

RESUME & COVER LETTER

Start by creating a list of your professional experiences, education, and skills. Then prioritize the most relevant information that targets the specific job you desire. Write about the accomplishments you achieved during those experiences with action verbs describing what you did and any metrics that may apply.

It's time to grab those keywords you made note of in your job posting research. You'll want to include as many keywords in your resume and cover letter as possible.

Choose a design format; simple resume or two-column.

Double-check past employer names and the dates of employment are correct, and that your references are up to date.

And if you'll be applying to jobs where you think an automated process will be screening applicants, you may want to read this [article](#) before getting started.

Novo Resume (free website) is a resume builder where you can put in your existing resume and a resume is generated for you.

PREPARE FOR YOUR PEER CRITIQUE

Receiving and responding to constructive feedback is a critical part of developing as a professional. In order to set yourself up for a successful critique session, your work should be 25 – 75% done when you present to your peers.

Your peers and mentors will provide insights throughout the process that further fosters a growth mindset and assists you in a creative, iterative process in building a portfolio.

[NOTE: This content is from A. Rule's LIS612 Week 2 – Sketch & Critique]

Feedback should be:

- Specific: Talk about specific design elements
- Justified: Tie your critique to design principles and goals
- Actionable: Give critique that can be acted upon

Poor feedback is often:

- Apathetic: Don't give just a neutral response like "It's fine" ... improve it!
- Inconsistent: Take a stance one way or the other
- Personal: Focus on the design, ideas, and user goals, not the person

Responding to feedback can be difficult, but with practice this becomes easier, so why not practice in a safe environment. It often helps to:

- Just listen. Don't speak up to defend your idea.
- Don't take it personally. It is the design being critiqued, not you.
- Ask clarifying questions. Use questions to better understand the point being made and make it more concrete.
- Go back to the goals. What is it the design is trying to do.
- Get solutions. Ask for how the design might be changed to satisfy the critique.

See Peer to Peer Portfolio Critique Matrix (separate doc)

READINGS | RESOURCES

- **Beginner's Guide to Initiating your Professional Portfolio & Resume**
 - Separate Word document
- **Peer to Peer Portfolio Critique Matrix**
 - Separate Word document
- **Minimum Viable Portfolio**
 - https://d.docs.live.net/0cd968e2d66fb309/UW-Madison%20UX%20Program/LIS614/LIS614_Syllabus%20Summer%202022.pdf
- **NNg What is a UX Portfolio and what should it contain?**
 - <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/what-is-a-ux-portfolio-and-what-should-it-contain>
- **Career Foundry: How to build a UX Portfolio**
 - <https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/ux-design/ux-research-portfolio-guide/>

- **In Pursuit of the Perfect UX Portfolio**
 - https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/pursuit-perfect-ux-portfolio-andy-fitzgerald-phd/?trk=pulse-det-nav_art
- **Portfolio Examples**
 - <https://www.bestfolios.com/tags/Student?page=1&type=portfolio>
- **How to Present UX Case Study (Example)**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVzfWfgmRBY>
- **Harvard Business Review - A beginner's guide to networking**
 - <https://hbr.org/2023/03/a-beginners-guide-to-networking>
- **Harvard Business Review Easy Networking Tips for Networking Haters**
 - <https://hbr.org/2021/10/easy-networking-tips-for-the-networking-haters>
- **Sharing a UX Design Portfolio Video**
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-PoV_slWos
- **Good to Great Resume**
 - <https://exl.wiscweb.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1945/2023/02/MSResumeOne.pdf>
- **Patrick Neeman How to Write a Great User Experience Resume**
 - <https://d.docs.live.net/0cd968e2d66fb309/UW-Madison%20UX%20Program/LIS614/Final%20Submission/Patrick%20Neeman%20How%20to%20Write%20a%20Great%20User%20Experience%20Resume>
- **Simple Resume Template**
 - <https://exl.wiscweb.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1945/2023/02/MSResumeOne.pdf>
- **Cover Letter Example**
 - <https://exl.wiscweb.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1945/2023/02/Cover-Letter-Guide.pdf>
- **How to beat the automated screening of resumes**
 - <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/automated-screening-resume>