



Developing a Teaching Portfolio

This site aims to provide faculty and graduate teaching associates (TAs) with a practical and self-reflective guide to the development of a teaching portfolio.

Writing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement

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What is a philosophy of teaching statement?

A philosophy of teaching statement is a narrative that includes

- your conception of teaching and learning
- a description of how you teach
- justification for why you teach that way

The statement can

- demonstrate that you have been reflective and purposeful about your teaching
- communicate your goals as an instructor and your corresponding actions in the classroom
- provide an opportunity to point to and tie together the other sections of your portfolio

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What is the purpose of developing a philosophy of teaching?

Faculty and graduate teaching assistants are increasingly being asked to articulate their philosophy of teaching. This request may be in conjunction with the submission of a teaching portfolio for seeking academic positions, or as a regular component of the portfolio or dossier for promotion and tenure. Philosophy of teaching statements are also requested of candidates for teaching awards or grant applications.

Why do teachers need to articulate their philosophy of teaching? What purposes does a philosophy of teaching serve? It has been

recognized by many teachers that the process of identifying a personal philosophy of teaching and continuously examining, testifying, and verifying this philosophy through teaching can lead to change of teaching behaviors and ultimately foster professional and personal growth.

In his book, *The Skillful Teacher* (1990), Stephen Brookfield points out that the development of a teaching philosophy can be used for several purposes:

Personal purpose: "... a distinctive organizing vision—a clear picture of why you are doing what you are doing that you can call up at points of crisis— is crucial to your personal sanity and morale." (p. 16)

Pedagogical purpose: "Teaching is about making some kind of dent in the world so that the world is different than it was before you practiced your craft. Knowing clearly what kind of dent you want to make in the world means that you must continually ask yourself the most fundamental evaluative questions of all—What effect am I having on students and on their learning?" (pp. 18-19)

Gail Goodyear and Douglas Allchin, in their study of the functions of a statement of teaching philosophy (Goodyear and Allchin, 1998), identify another purpose:

"In preparing a statement of teaching philosophy, professors assess and examine themselves to articulate the goals they wish to achieve in teaching.... A clear vision of a teaching philosophy provides stability, continuity, and long-term guidance.... A well-defined philosophy can help them remain focused on their teaching goals and to appreciate the personal and professional rewards of teaching." (pp. 106-7)

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General formatting suggestions

There is no required content or set format. There is no right or wrong way to write a philosophy statement, which is why it is so challenging for most people to write one. You may decide to write in prose, use famous quotes, create visuals, use a question/answer format, etc.

It is generally 1-2 pages in length. For some purposes, an extended description is appropriate, but length should suit the context.

Use present tense, in most cases. Writing in first-person is most common and is the easiest for your audience to read.

Most statements avoid technical terms and favor language and concepts that can be broadly appreciated. A general rule is that the statement should be written with the audience in mind. It may be helpful to have someone from your field read your statement and give you some guidance on any discipline-specific jargon and issues to include or exclude.

Include teaching strategies and methods to help people “see” you in the classroom. It is not possible in many cases for your reader to come to your class to actually watch you teach. By including very specific examples of teaching strategies, assignments, discussions, etc, you are able to let your reader take a mental “peek” into your classroom. Help them to visualize what you do in the classroom and the exchange between you and your students. For example, can your readers picture in their minds the learning environment you create for your students?

Make it memorable and unique. If you are submitting this document as part of a job application, remember that your readers on the search committee are seeing many of these documents. What is going to set you apart? What about you are they going to remember? What brings a teaching philosophy to life is the extent to which it creates a vivid portrait of a person who is intentional about teaching practices and committed to his/her career.

“Own” your philosophy. The use of declarative statements (such as “students don’t learn through lecture” or “the only way to teach is to use class discussion”) could be potentially detrimental if you are submitting this document to a search committee. You do not want to appear as if you have all of the answers and you don’t want to offend your readers. By writing about *your* experiences and *your* beliefs, you “own” those statements and appear more open to new and different ideas about teaching. Even in your own experience, you make choices as to the best teaching methods for different courses and content: sometimes lecture is most appropriate; other times you may use service-learning, for example.

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Sample statements

The following samples are written by Ohio State faculty and TAs and are examples of various formats you may choose to use.

Essay format samples:

[Elizabeth Allan](#), Educational Policy and Leadership
[Robert M. Anthony](#), Sociology
[Mahesh Iyer](#), Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering
[Szu-Hui Lee](#), Psychology
[Laura Luehrmann](#), Political Science
[Matthew Maurer](#), Science Education
[Diana Ruggiero](#), Spanish & Portuguese
[Christine Sahling](#), Germanic Languages & Literature
[Leslie Wade](#), Psychology
[John Wenzel](#), Entomology
[Deborah Zelli](#), Anthropology
[Carl Zulaf](#), Agriculture

Question & answer format samples:

[Susan Hannel](#), Consumer and Textile Science

Creative: poem or extended metaphor samples:

[Faith O. Mowoe](#), Literature
[Jeffrey Stowell](#), Psychology
[Nancy Tatarek](#), Anthropology
[Joseph Zeidan](#), Near Eastern Languages & Cultures

Samples of teaching philosophy statements from other universities:

Rex Campbell, Professor, University of Missouri [philosophy of undergraduate teaching](#) and [philosophy of graduate teaching](#)
[Aaron Bloomfield](#), University of Pennsylvania
[Christopher Burrows](#), University of Pennsylvania
[Gregory Flaxman](#), University of Pennsylvania
[Micaela Morales](#), Systems Librarian, University of Arizona
[Don Vaughan](#), Mississippi State University

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Major components of a philosophy of teaching statement

Each statement of teaching philosophy is very personal by nature. Therefore, it should be up to instructors to decide what components to include in their own statements. However, there are a number of excellent resources to get you started with the writing process at [Guidance for Writing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement](#).

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Other sites with information on philosophy of

teaching statements

[What's Your Philosophy on Teaching, and Does it Matter?](#) Article in the Chronicle of Higher Education

[Center for Excellence in Teaching](#) at the University of Southern California

[Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching](#) at Iowa State University

[The Center for Effective Teaching and Learning](#) at the University of Texas at El Paso

[Teacher Portfolio and Preparation Series](#) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center (includes philosophy of teaching statements written by language teachers)

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References

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