

Teaching Statement Reflective Guide

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Research: Purpose, formatting, and general guidance

A Teaching Philosophy Statement¹

- Is a narrative that includes your conception of teaching and learning, a description of how you teach, and justification for why you teach that way.
- Demonstrates that you have been reflective and purposeful about your teaching.
- Communicates your goals as an instructor and your corresponding actions in the classroom.
- Provides an opportunity to point to and tie together the other sections of your job portfolio (other teaching docs, CV).
- Provides a window into your class.

General formatting and other suggestions²

- There is no required content or set format
- It is generally 1–2 pages, single spaced in length (2 page limit unless specified)
- Use present tense, in most cases
- Avoid technical terms
- Include teaching strategies and methods to help people “see” you in the classroom
- Make it memorable and unique
- “Own” your philosophy (i.e., “I use X pedagogy to reach Y goal in my courses” instead of “The use of X pedagogy is the only way to reach Y goal.”)

Make it memorable³

- **Begin with the ending.** Articulate the precise skills students will gain in your courses and the reasons those skills are important in the discipline.
- **Make distinctions.** You will likely find yourself teaching two kinds of courses (those aimed at majors that draw upon your research and those that fulfill core requirements for graduation that your department must offer). Discuss how your objectives and approaches vary in these two types of courses. Or how they will vary depending on the students you will teach.
- **Be specific.** Describe your teaching objectives and then tell a story or two about how your objectives play out in the classroom. The story may focus on an enlightening moment, or a moment of failure that led you to develop new teaching methods. Or focus in detail about a creative strategy you use in the classroom.
- **Cite your sources.** Whatever the source (your own experience as an undergrad, a mentor, a book or article) it reflects well on you to explain how and why you developed your teaching principles.

What to do if you have not had a lot of classroom experience⁴

- Even if you have not had the opportunity to create the syllabus, you should **draw upon your experiences as teaching assistant** (e.g., how do you communicate expectations, what teaching methods do you employ in labs/discussions/office hours and why, how do you assess student learning through grading/reflections/providing feedback)
- **Think of other transferable experiences** like tutoring, coaching, or mentoring that illustrate what you would be like as a teacher.
- What will you do in the class? Why? **What experiences** do you have to draw from to **demonstrate these skills**? Never say you lack teaching experience.
- If you have time, seek out teaching-related opportunities, such as giving guest lectures or mentoring junior colleagues.
- **If you really have no teaching experience** (and even if you do), imagine and describe what you will be like as a teacher, propose courses that you could teach, and provide concrete techniques that you will employ in the classroom. Use your experiences as a learner to create an image of who you want to be as an instructor, and rely on scholarship about learning and disciple-based education research in your field.

Rubric⁵

On the next page, you will find a rubric that you can use for composing and evaluating your teaching statement. The rubric is based on data collected from a survey of 457 search committee chairs across many disciplines. Use the rubric to guide you in your writing and to assess your statement during the drafting stage.

References:

1. Cornell University Graduate School. Teaching Philosophy Statement. <https://gradschool.cornell.edu/career-and-professional-development/pathways-to-success/prepare-for-your-career/take-action/teaching-philosophy-statement/>

2. Michael V. Drake Institute for Teaching and Learning. Philosophy of Teaching Statement.
<https://drakeinstitute.osu.edu/instructor-support/teaching-portfolio-development/philosophy-teaching-statement>
3. Lang, J.M. (2010, August 29). 4 Steps to a Memorable Teaching Philosophy. The Chronicle of Higher Education. www.chronicle.com/article/4-Steps-to-a-Memorable/124199
4. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center. Teaching Statements.
<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/teaching-statements/>
5. O'Neal, C., Meizlish, D., & Kaplan, M. (2007). Writing a statement of teaching philosophy for the academic job search. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.
http://www.crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/resource_files/CRLT_no23_revised.pdf

Categories	Excellent	Needs Some Revision	Unsatisfactory
<p>Goals for student learning: What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important for student success in your discipline? What are you preparing students for? What are key challenges in the teaching-learning process?</p>	<p>Goals are clearly articulated, specific, and go beyond knowledge level, including skills, attitudes, career goals, etc. Goals are sensitive to the context of the instructor's discipline. They are concise, not exhaustive.</p>	<p>Goals are articulated but may be too broad or not specific to the discipline. Goals focus on basic knowledge, ignoring skills acquisition and affective change.</p>	<p>Articulation of goals is unfocused, incomplete, or missing.</p>
<p>Enactment of goals (teaching methods): What teaching methods do you use? How do these methods contribute to your goals for students? Why are these methods appropriate for use in your discipline?</p>	<p>Enactment of goals is specific and thoughtful. Includes details and rationale for teaching methods. The methods are clearly connected to specific goals and are appropriate for those goals. Specific examples of the methods in use within the disciplinary context are given.</p>	<p>Description of teaching methods not clearly connected to goals, or if connected, not well developed (seems like a list of what is done in the classroom). Methods are described, but generically; no example of the instructor's use of the methods within the discipline is communicated.</p>	<p>Enactment of goals is not articulated. If there is an attempt at articulating teaching methods, it is basic and unreflective.</p>
<p>Assessment of goals (measuring student learning): How do you know your goals for students are being met? What sorts of assessment tools do you use (e.g., tests, papers, portfolios, journals), and why? How do assessments contribute to student learning? How do assessments communicate disciplinary priorities?</p>	<p>Specific examples of assessment tools are clearly described. Assessment tools are aligned with teaching goals and teaching methods. Assessments reinforce the priorities and context of the discipline both in content and type.</p>	<p>Assessments are described, but not connected to goals and teaching methods. Description is too general, with no reference to the motivation behind the assessments. There is no clear connection between the assessments and the priorities of the discipline.</p>	<p>Assessment of goals is not articulated or mentioned only in passing.</p>
<p>Creating an inclusive learning environment, addressing one or more of the following questions: How do your own and your students' identities (e.g., race, gender, class), backgrounds, experiences, and levels of privilege affect the classroom? How do you use multiple teaching approaches? How do you integrate diverse perspectives into your teaching?</p>	<p>Portrays a coherent philosophy of inclusive education that is integrated throughout the statement. Makes space for diverse ways of knowing and/or teaching approaches. Discussion of roles is sensitive to historically underrepresented students. Demonstrates awareness of issues of equity within the discipline.</p>	<p>Inclusive teaching is addressed but in a cursory manner or in a way that isolates it from the rest of the philosophy. Author briefly connects identity issues to aspects of his/her teaching.</p>	<p>Issues of inclusion are not addressed or addressed in an awkward manner. There is no connection to teaching practices.</p>
<p>Structure, rhetoric and language: How is the reader engaged? Is the language used appropriate to the discipline? How is the statement thematically structured?</p>	<p>The statement has a guiding structure and/or theme that engages the reader and organizes the goals, methods, and assessments articulated in the statement. Jargon is avoided and teaching terms (e.g., critical thinking) are given specific definitions that apply to the instructor's disciplinary context. Grammar and spelling are correct.</p>	<p>The statement has a structure and/or theme that is not connected to the ideas actually discussed in the statement, or, organizing structure is weak and does not resonate within the disciplinary context. The statement contains some jargon.</p>	<p>No overall structure present. Statement is a collection of disconnected statements about teaching. Jargon is used liberally and not supported by specific definitions or examples. Needs much revision.</p>

Reflect: Reflective prompts taken directly from the rubric

1. Goals for student learning

What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important for student success in your discipline?

What are you preparing students for?

What are key challenges in the teaching-learning process?

2. Enactment of goals (teaching methods)

What teaching methods do you use?

How do these methods contribute to your goals for students?

Why are these methods appropriate for use in your discipline?

3. Assessment of goals (measuring student learning)

How do you know your goals for students are being met?

What sorts of assessment tools do you use (e.g., tests, papers, portfolios, journals), and why?

How do assessments contribute to student learning?

How do assessments communicate disciplinary priorities?

4. Creating an inclusive learning environment

How do your own and your students' identities (e.g., race, gender, class), backgrounds, experiences, and levels of privilege affect the classroom?

How do you use multiple teaching approaches?

How do you integrate diverse perspectives into your teaching?

5. Structure, rhetoric and language

- How is the reader engaged?
- Is the language used appropriate to the discipline?
- How is the statement thematically structured?

Resources: Example statements and other guidance

Example Teaching Statements

You can find [discipline-specific Teaching Statements here](#). Each example is considered to be "excellent" in at least one rubric category.

Resources categorized by the dimensions of the rubric

1. Goals for student learning

[University of Colorado Boulder, Science Education Initiative: Learning Goals](#)

[University of Kansas, Center for Teaching Excellence Flexible Teaching: Review Your Learning Goals](#)

[AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes](#)

2. Enactment of goals (Teaching methods)

[University of Kansas, Center for Teaching Excellence: Using Class Time Well](#)

[Clemson University, Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation: Evidence Based Teaching Strategies](#)

3. Assessment of goals (Measuring student learning)

[University of Kansas, Center for Teaching Excellence: Assessing Student's Learning](#)

[University of Kansas, Center for Teaching Excellence Flexible Teaching: Rethink Your Assessments and Assignments](#)

[Indiana University Bloomington, Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning: Authentic Assessment](#)

[AAC&U Value Rubrics to evaluate student performance on essential learning outcomes](#)

4. Creating an inclusive learning environment

[University of Kansas, Center for Teaching Excellence: Resources for Inclusive Teaching](#)

[Brandeis University, Center for Teaching and Learning: Nine Evidence-based Teaching Practices That Combat Systemic Inequities in a Partially or Completely Online Setting](#)

5. Structure, rhetoric, and language

[Yale, Center for Teaching and Learning: Sample Structure](#)

[Make an appointment at University of Kansas Writing Center](#)

Review: Improve your statement through feedback

- Use the rubric to review your own draft and make modifications
- Ask your teaching mentors for feedback (you can even provide them the rubric to communicate what you are hoping to achieve in your statement)
- Request an appointment with a [Graduate Writing Coach](#)
- Schedule a consultation with CTE (email Kaila Colyott at KColyott@KU.edu)

Refine: Tailoring a general statement to a specific institution, department, and position

Below are some questions to get you thinking about how you might take a general statement and tailor it to a specific institution, department, and job call.

- How is the institution/department described in the job call?
- What does the call say about teaching responsibilities & where is the description of teaching placed in the ad? Generally job ads are organized in order of importance to the search committee, with highest priorities listed first. [Here is a quick breakdown](#) of how to read an academic job call.
- What does the mission and vision say about the institutions goals for students?
- What are the demographics of the students at the institution? Knowing this will allow you to better understand the barriers your students will be facing institutionally and in your classroom and allow you speak to how you will address these barriers in your teaching, mentoring, advising, etc.

Ramble on: Questions and answers from past workshops

Q: I read advice somewhere that said you should write your teaching statement to your students, is this how I should be writing my statement that I turn in for jobs and fellowships?

A: This may be a good strategy to use if it helps you start writing and uncovering what your values and beliefs about teaching are. However, everything that I have read about writing these statements suggests that you should consider and direct your statement at your intended audience (i.e., hiring committee, fellowship review committee). A hiring committee will be interested in both the theoretical conception of your teaching as well as the specific strategies you use in the classroom to support student learning. Also, when considering your audience you may want to do some research on the institution/unit you will be applying to (i.e., look for their mission) and align your statement with their mission.

Q: Some postings request a teaching statement and a cover letter, how do I balance what I say about my teaching across these two documents?

A: A cover letter is where you make your first impression to the committee, it is how you introduce yourself, and the other materials in your packet. Your cover letter should show your personality and passions and should be tailored to the job. It is where you will emphasize your achievements and experiences and how your past work (including teaching, research, service, non-academic work, etc.) has prepared you for and can be linked to the post you are applying for. So you can certainly reference your teaching and may want to include a short (few sentence) abstract of your teaching statement in your cover letter and use your teaching statement as a way to more deeply dive into your conception of teaching and learning, a description of how you teach, and a justification for why you teach the way you do.

Q: Should we reference teaching evaluations in the teaching statement? Or should these be supplemental/separate docs?

A: You can certainly reference these in your statement if you feel the evaluations say something important about student learning. For instance, you might discuss how you used student comments on a teaching method to adjust your teaching methods and how this improved student learning. I would not spend a ton of time talking about student evals but a summary statement about how you used the student voice to better your goals/methods/assessment/climate is totally appropriate. I think it is also important to say that teaching evals should never be submitted as a series of “raw results” from each semester you taught unless explicitly stated in the job advertised (i.e., submit teaching evals as received directly from your department/university). You should create a story with the results of the evals if you are going to include them in a teaching portfolio. What do the numbers or comments say about your growth as an instructor? You may choose to represent the data quantitatively as a graph/summary table and/or qualitatively by quoting students. If you are including student comments, never include comments that are not constructive. I have more content on this in “Curating Your Teaching Portfolio” workshop materials.

Q: How much pedagogical literature (if any) should we reference or cite?

A: You should certainly justify why you choose to use the teaching methods/assessments that you do but this does not have to be done by citing literature. If you want to say, for instance, “I use active learning strategies in my class because they have been found to be equitable teaching practices...” you could choose to cite specific literature if that is the reason you use these strategies but you may also choose to discuss the fact that the methods you use originated from your involvement with CTE or other pedagogical training or teaching interest groups you are involved in. Or perhaps your interactions with specific instructors or your department in general. I think also importantly in this example I chose, you would want to explain in detail what you meant by “active learning.” Similarly, “critical thinking” as a learning goal for students that is often discussed in teaching statements and should be described in detail.

Q: If you’re also explaining your teaching methods and providing examples in a teaching portfolio, how do you balance what you put in your teaching statement without it seeming repetitive across the two products?

A: It is certainly okay to be repetitive to some degree. In general, your teaching statement can help you weave a story about your teaching in general (goals set for students, methods used, assessments used, tools used to create inclusive climate) and help you tie together other documents in your job materials packet. In the research that I have done, it does not seem that many positions request a portfolio in the first round so you may want to create your statement as a stand-alone document. And then create your teaching portfolio as a way to expand on and bring in evidence that supports what is in your teaching statement.

Q: Do I need to discuss the result of the assessments? And how would I do that?

A: You could discuss the results of your assessments but I think it is more important for you to discuss what the assessment tools you use allow you to discover about student learning. If you discuss the results of your assessments, I think you would want to frame the results in a manner that shows you have looked at them and used them to assess how well your students are doing at reaching the learning goals you have set for them. Perhaps the first time you taught towards a certain goal, your assessments of student learning showed that students struggled with a particular concept/skill so you made adjustments and found that more students achieved the goal set for them. This could be supported by providing numbers or by telling a detailed story. We will discuss “reflecting on student learning” in more detail the “Curating Your Teaching Portfolio” workshops.