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Developing & Assessing Teaching Dossiers:

*A guide for University of Toronto faculty,
administrators and graduate students*

PUBLISHED BY

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Current version based on original publication by Emily Gregor-Greenleaf, with Megan Burnett and Pam Gravestock, Office of Teaching Advancement, 2008.

Please cite this publication in the following format:

Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. (2017). *Developing & Assessing Teaching Dossiers: A guide for University of Toronto faculty, administrators and graduate students*. Toronto: Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto.

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1. Introduction

For Faculty and Graduate Students

As described by Seldin, Miller and Seldin (2010) in *The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/ Tenure Decisions*, a teaching dossier contains “documents and materials which collectively suggest the scope and quality of a teacher’s performance” (p. 4).

To accomplish this, a teaching dossier:

1. Describes your approach to teaching;
2. Provides evidence of your teaching effectiveness and teaching outcomes; and
3. Documents your efforts at teaching improvement.

Teaching dossiers can serve multiple purposes and can be used both as a tool and a resource for your own teaching development, and as a means by which others can assess your teaching. The primary focus of this document is the preparation of a teaching dossier as part of the teaching assessment process for hiring, tenure review or continuing status review, and promotion.

Note that at the University of Toronto only Divisional Guidelines on the assessment of teaching have the force of policy. For this reason, faculty members should always refer to Divisional Guidelines as well as disciplinary norms or expectations when preparing a teaching dossier for the purpose of career advancement.

DID YOU KNOW

A thorough teaching dossier is a crucial first step in the preparation for award nominations for major institutional, provincial and national awards. The criteria for many prestigious teaching awards focus around elements that are either standard to teaching dossiers, such as the Statement of Teaching Philosophy, or that can be pulled from your evidence and documentation. For example, major awards often look at how instructors have improved their teaching in response to feedback, have participated in course or curricular renewal, or undertaken educational leadership initiatives (such as mentoring a colleague in teaching or sharing/disseminating educational materials). Tracking such accomplishments through the teaching dossier can provide an advantage when nominated for an award.

As a means of evaluating teaching, the teaching dossier emerges from the premise that there is **no single way to define effective teaching**. Within the context of departmental, faculty, or disciplinary expectations of what constitutes effective teaching, a dossier allows each instructor to highlight the approaches and strategies that have proven to be effective for them, and that demonstrate an ongoing commitment to teaching effectiveness and improvement. Dossiers thereby allow teaching to be evaluated systematically and rigorously while allowing for flexibility, innovation and contextualization of teaching goals and approaches. This means that in developing the dossier you must focus on demonstrating the effectiveness of your own approach to teaching by incorporating evidence of your own teaching successes throughout the dossier.

The teaching dossier combines two primary components:

1. Narrative

This written portion of the dossier comprises the **Statement of Teaching Philosophy** and additional narrative descriptions of your teaching, and length can vary greatly depending on teaching context and divisional requirements. This narrative piece gives you an opportunity to fully describe and contextualize your teaching approach, experience, and materials (see **Section 4: Possible Contents and Organization of the Dossier** and **Section 6: Developing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy**).

2. Artifacts (supporting documentation and appendices)

This portion of the dossier provides specific examples or pieces of evidence to support the claims you make regarding the approaches to teaching you espouse as effective, i.e. that they facilitate student learning. This evidence should be based on multiple sources, including peer and student evaluation of your teaching, sample course materials, and your own reflection on student engagement and performance. In choosing these supporting documents, you should be selective in providing representative evidence that aligns with and supports any claims about your teaching that you make in the narrative portion of your dossier. See Table 1 below for an illustration of how this alignment might work in your dossier. The artifacts and examples that you choose should communicate a clear and concise message about your teaching. Keeping in mind that the artifacts and examples chosen need to be selective and should highlight teaching accomplishments and teaching development, the length of this section is limited only by what a division requires as far as evidence of teaching effectiveness, and by what an individual faculty member deems appropriate for showcasing their teaching strengths.

Table 1- Teaching Dossier Alignment

Teaching Claim	Artifact/Action/Product	Supporting Data for Appendices
<p>SOURCE: data from oneself (personal teaching philosophy)</p>	<p>SOURCE: data from teaching practice</p>	<p>SOURCE: data from others or selected course materials</p>
<p>EXAMPLE: I strongly encourage students to appreciate alternative viewpoints.</p>	<p>EXAMPLE: I always include an in-class debate regarding a controversial topic (e.g., xxxxxx) in my courses. In these debates, students are assigned a role and asked to argue from a perspective other than their own.</p>	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions for the debate as given to students • Copy of the course outline for xxx • Student testimonials from course evaluation comments that mention in-class activities (and ideally, the in-class debate) • Copy of a reflective report written

Adapted from <http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/resources/idres/package/d.html>

For descriptions of the processes and procedures involved in tenure review, continuing status review and promotion, as well as associated timelines and criteria, please refer to the links below.

LINKS TO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- [Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments \(2015\)](#)
- [Policy and Procedures Governing Promotions \(1980\)](#)
- [Policies and Procedures Governing Promotions in the Teaching Stream](#)
- [Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty and Academic Life, Teaching Stream, Relevant Policies & Materials](#)
- [Divisional Guidelines on the Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness](#)



NOTE

PEER OBSERVATIONS
OF TEACHING

Some divisions require a classroom observation as part of the review process for tenure review, continuing status review, and promotion. In such cases, the protocol to be followed for the observation is laid out in the Divisional Guidelines. In all cases, a classroom observation is a recommended best practice, particularly at the interim review stage or probationary review stage when formative feedback on instruction can be highly beneficial. For information on processes and practices related to peer observation of teaching, please see the CTSI guide [Peer Observation of Teaching](#)

Please note that CTSI can conduct an in-class observation but only at the request of an instructor and only for formative professional development, not as part of a formal review process for tenure or continuing status review or promotion.

2. The Contents of the Teaching Dossier

At the University of Toronto, Divisional Guidelines on the assessment of teaching carry the weight of policy. Divisional Guidelines include a list of elements that must be included in the teaching dossier. This list is not definitive and will vary by discipline and from division to division. Please note that the list of items to be included in the teaching dossier is not necessarily ALL the information about teaching that a faculty member must submit to the review committee; some divisions request additional documents as well as the dossier. The material in the Teaching Dossier should include, as appropriate:

The material in the Teaching Dossier should include, as appropriate:

1. Candidate's curriculum vitae *
2. A statement of teaching philosophy
3. Representative course outlines, bibliographies and assignments, description of internship programs, field experiences, and teaching assessment activities
4. New course proposals
5. Digests of annual student course evaluations from students regarding teaching performance (as appropriate per divisional guidelines)
6. Applications for instructional development grants or similar documents
7. Documentation on efforts made (through both formal and informal means) to improve teaching skills or course design and a description of the outcomes
8. Awards or nominations for awards for teaching excellence
9. Documentation concerning innovations in teaching methods and contributions to curricular development, including activities related to the administrative, organizational, and developmental aspects of education and the teaching process
10. Examples of efforts to mentor colleagues in the development of teaching skills and in the area of pedagogical design
11. Evidence of professional contributions in the general area of teaching, such as presentations at pedagogical conferences or publications on teaching
12. Service to professional bodies or organizations through any method that can be described as instructional
13. Community outreach and service through teaching functions
14. Activities undertaken to enhance teaching and plans for developing teaching skills and/or future contributions to teaching

** In most cases this forms a separate document as part of the tenure/continuing status/promotion file: is not typically included in the teaching dossier.*

The [Provostial Guidelines for Developing Written Assessments of Effectiveness of Teaching in Promotion and Tenure Decisions](#) also state that each faculty member should maintain a Teaching Portfolio, or dossier, which should be updated annually and serve as a foundation for the documents that will be required for the interim review, probationary review, tenure or continuing status review, and promotion. It can also be used as a reference for academic administrators when evaluating faculty members for annual PTR (“promotion through the ranks”) awards. The general advice that should be given to all faculty, especially junior faculty, is to **keep any document that reflects success, experimentation and innovation in teaching.**

3. Defining Competence and Excellence in Teaching

Both Divisional and Provostial Guidelines include criteria for the assessment of teaching effectiveness, which are helpful to you in selecting and contextualizing the information in your dossier. These criteria will be assessed based both on the information in your dossier, as well as the information provided by your department. **Always refer to Divisional Guidelines when determining the appropriate criteria to target when preparing a teaching dossier for career advancement.** To help provide a sense of what these criteria might include, below are the more general criteria included in the Provostial Guidelines.

A faculty member demonstrates capabilities as a teacher in lectures, seminars, laboratories and tutorials as well as in less formal teaching situations, including directing graduate students and counselling students. The Divisional Guidelines for tenure review, continuing status review, and promotion prescribe in detail the procedures to be followed in the evaluation of teaching activities. The level of achievement deemed necessary will depend on the rank being sought. Accordingly, there will be some variation in the components and emphases of the documentation collected for each process, reflecting the different stages of an academic career.

A) Evaluation of competence in teaching requires demonstration of:

1. Success in stimulating and challenging students and promoting their intellectual and scholarly development
2. Strong communication skills
3. Success in developing students' mastery of a subject and of the latest developments in the field
4. Success in encouraging students' sense of inquiry and understanding of a subject through discovery-based learning
5. Active engagement with students' learning progress and accessibility to students
6. Promotion of academic integrity and adherence to grading standards of the division and, as appropriate, the ethical standards of profession
7. Creation of opportunities which involve students in the research process
8. Creation of supervisory conditions conducive to a student's research, intellectual growth and academic progress consistent with the School of Graduate Studies Guidelines for Graduate Supervision

B) Evaluation of excellence in teaching requires, in addition to the requirements for teaching, demonstration of some combination of the following:

1. Superlative teaching skills
2. Creative educational leadership
3. Successful innovations in the teaching domain, including the creation of new and innovative teaching processes, materials and forms of evaluation
4. Significant contribution to the technological enrichment of teaching in a given area, for example, through the development of effective new technology or the use of new media to fullest advantage
5. Publication of innovative textbooks and/or teaching guides
6. Development of significant new courses and/or reform of curricula
7. Development of innovative and creative ways to promote students' involvement in the research process and provide opportunities for them to learn through discovery-based methods
8. Significant contribution to pedagogical changes in a discipline

*** See Table 2 and 3 (pg. 12 & 13) for ways in which materials included in a dossier can be reviewed in relation to evaluation criteria.*

More Links to Relevant Policies, Guidelines and Procedures

- [Provostial Guidelines for Developing Written Assessments of Effectiveness of Teaching in Promotion and Tenure Decisions](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on Academic Appointments \(PPAA\)](#)
- [Tenure Stream/Tenured Appointments](#)
- [Teaching Stream Faculty](#)
- [Tenure Review](#)

Table 2- Teaching Competence: Evidence and Sources

Competence In Teaching	Possible Evidence Includes:	Source
1. success in stimulating and challenging students and promoting their intellectual and scholarly development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responses to relevant questions on course evaluations • inclusion of teaching beliefs and strategies related to student development and learning goals in narrative statements 	Instructor Students
2. strong communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant questions on student and peer evaluations • guest lecturing and additional invited teaching activities 	Instructor Students Colleagues
3. success in developing students' mastery of a subject and of the latest developments in the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching materials (e.g., syllabi include up-to-date readings and topics) • examples of student success in narrative statements (e.g., undergraduate students who significantly improved their academic performance) 	Instructor Students Colleagues
4. success in encouraging students' sense of inquiry and understanding of a subject through discovery-based learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching materials (e.g., examples of inquiry-based assignments and resulting student work) • inclusion of goals and strategies related to inquiry- and discovery-based learning in narrative statements 	Instructor Students
5. active engagement with students' learning progress and accessibility to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching goals and strategies related to active and student-centred learning • responses to relevant questions on course evaluations 	Instructor Students
6. promotion of academic integrity and adherence to grading standards of the division and, as appropriate, the ethical standards of profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching materials (e.g., statements and policies on syllabi about avoiding plagiarism) • grading and assessment examples and strategies • professional development activities (e.g., seminars or workshops on ethical teaching) 	Instructor Students

7. creation of opportunities which involve students in the research process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaching experience (e.g., the development of or participation in research-oriented courses) teaching materials (e.g., research based or experiential assignments) 	Instructor Students
8. creation of supervisory conditions conducive to a student's research, intellectual growth and academic progress consistent with the School of Graduate Studies Guidelines for Graduate Supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples and strategies for graduate teaching and research in narrative statements graduate teaching materials (e.g., examples of feedback provided on graduate student work) examples of graduate student success (e.g., job placement, published work) 	Instructor Students Colleagues

Table 3- Excellence In Teaching: Evidence and Sources

Excellence In Teaching	Possible Evidence Includes:	Source
1. superlative teaching skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> student and peer evaluations with sustained high ratings in multiple types and levels of courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Colleagues
2. creative educational leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaching experience (e.g., as a course coordinator) professional development activities (e.g., offering seminars or workshops about teaching in the department or institution-wide) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructor Colleagues
3. successful innovations in the teaching domain, including the creation of new and innovative teaching processes, materials and forms of evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaching materials (e.g., descriptions of new courses and assignments) descriptions of the effect of experimenting with new teaching techniques on student learning grants for teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructor Students Colleagues
4. significant contribution to the technological enrichment of teaching in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaching materials and strategies that incorporate the use of technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructor Students Colleagues

Excellence In Teaching	Possible Evidence Includes:	Source
a given area, for example, through the development of effective new technology or the use of new media to fullest advantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grants for the development of/use of educational technology 	
5. publication of innovative textbooks and/or teaching guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examples of textbooks or guides and reviews • examples of the use of teaching materials in instructor's or others' courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor • Colleagues
6. development of significant new courses and/or reform of curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching experience highlighting new or redesigned courses • teaching materials (e.g., course syllabi) • professional development activities (e.g., participation in departmental or divisional curriculum committees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor • Students • Colleagues
7. development of innovative and creative ways to promote students' involvement in the research process and provide opportunities for them to learn through discovery-based methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching experience with research-based courses • teaching materials (e.g., research-based assignments) • description of teaching strategies that incorporate inquiry-based learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor • Students • Colleagues
8. significant contribution to pedagogical changes in a discipline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peer evaluation attesting to contributions to curriculum, courses, or teaching approaches in the department or discipline • professional development activities (e.g., sharing pedagogical ideas and innovations in professional societies related to teaching) • teaching materials that demonstrate pedagogical innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor • Colleagues

4. Possible Contents and Organization of the Dossier

While the Provostial and some divisional guidelines include a list of items to include in a teaching dossier, an effective teaching dossier is not merely a filing system for materials related to teaching. The contents of a teaching dossier should be chosen and organized to provide a coherent and unified statement about who you are as a teacher and what it is like to be a student in your courses.

There is no single way to organize a teaching dossier that is particularly conventional or successful. Different teaching careers and approaches require different material and emphases. The following suggestions for content, therefore, are not intended to suggest a particular organization for your dossier or that each item must necessarily be included.

The [Canadian Association of University Teachers](#) includes a list of 49 possible items for inclusion in a teaching dossier. Most (but not all!) effective dossiers, however, include some combination of the following. These broader categories do not directly parallel the individual requirements of the Provostial guidelines but would provide you with an opportunity to include all the information required in the guidelines. Details about developing each of these sections follows.

1. A CV, which can help to contextualize teaching within your broader career. (In many cases, this will be provided elsewhere in a job application or tenure package, in which case it need not be duplicated in the teaching dossier unless this is specifically requested.)
2. The narrative section of the dossier, which normally includes:
 - a. A statement of teaching philosophy. This might include a discussion of specific successful teaching strategies, though these are often included as a separate statement. (See **Section 6: Developing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy** for strategies for developing a statement of teaching philosophy.)
 - b. A detailed description of your teaching experience and responsibilities, including a list of courses taught and, where relevant, descriptions of:
 - i. Your work in course development and course redesign;
 - ii. Curriculum development efforts; and
 - iii. Your approach to graduate supervision.
 - c. Evidence of teaching effectiveness, including summaries and a narrative contextualization of student evaluations, peer evaluations, or teaching award details.
 - d. Evidence of leadership in and professional contributions to teaching in your field
 - e. Evidence of professional development, including plans for future pedagogical and professional development.

3. Supplementary materials: representative and annotated teaching, course development, and assessment materials.

Teaching materials and other examples of teaching strategies or evidence of teaching effectiveness might be referenced or described in the narrative section, but the actual documents (e.g. example course syllabi) are usually most usefully included in an appendix. The following sections of this document will guide you through the process of collecting, developing, and organizing these materials for your dossier.

Sample Table of Contents for a Teaching Dossier

- I. Statement of Teaching Philosophy
- II. Teaching Responsibilities
 - a. List of courses taught
 - b. List of graduate students supervised (as appropriate)
 - c. Course development
 - d. Curriculum development
 - e. Approach to graduate supervision (as appropriate)
- III. Evidence of teaching effectiveness
 - a. Narrative contextualization of course evaluation data
 - b. Summary of course evaluation data
 - c. Teaching awards
 - d. Additional evidence of teaching
- IV. Leadership in and professional contributions to teaching
 - a. Publications/presentations on teaching and learning
 - b. Innovations in teaching and learning
 - c. Outreach to the community/service to professional organizations/associations
- V. Professional development undertaken to enhance teaching
- VI. Appendices

5. Getting Started: Identifying and Collecting Materials for your Teaching Dossier

For most instructors, the most important first step in developing a dossier is to collect all available course materials, student information, evidence of teaching effectiveness, and other information about their teaching.

“Collecting” here is meant quite literally, in two ways: 1) at this stage, the emphasis is on identifying and putting together in the same physical or virtual location all available information, however coherent, positive, or valuable – the sorting process will occur at a later stage. Furthermore, 2) “collecting” also emphasizes that, as much as is possible, this process should occur over time - the earlier in your academic career that you can begin, the more efficient and effective will be the process of putting together your eventual teaching dossier.

Because the contents of a dossier should be selective and coherent, the more you begin with, the more judicious you can be in choosing the pieces that most accurately and completely represent your teaching strengths, innovations, and development.

Steps to Collecting Dossier Material:

1. Identify one place to store paper materials (a banker’s box or empty filing drawer) and one place to store electronic files (a folder on your computer or a web space).
2. During the semester, copy and file in one of these two places:
 - a. All course materials – syllabi, handouts, lecture notes, assignment information, tests and exams.
 - b. TA training and course co-ordination materials.
 - c. Feedback you’ve provided on student work that you feel was particularly representative or effective.
 - d. Student work that demonstrates that students have met your goals for the course or for their learning.
 - e. Information from mid-course evaluations.
 - f. Any emails from students or colleagues about your teaching or mentorship.
 - g. Materials from teaching-related committees, grant or teaching award applications, or other teaching-related administrative work.
 - h. Any notes or journal entries about potential changes to your courses or teaching strategies, or observations of strategies or activities that were particularly successful (or that were particularly unsuccessful!).
 - i. Any results and feedback from in-class observations.
3. After the semester, add:
 - a. Raw data and summary sheets from your student evaluation results.
 - b. Records of student final grades (these might be useful in demonstrating the effectiveness of future changes or new strategies).

- c. Any reflections or ideas you develop for changing a course or your teaching strategies.
4. Throughout the year, also add:
 - a. Details, materials, and letters of attendance from any teaching workshops or other professional development activities you attend or deliver related to teaching.
 - b. Any information you receive about student outcomes or student activities related to your teaching or mentorship: acceptance into graduate.
 - c. Information on participation in professional organizations related to university teaching or to teaching in your field.
 - d. Information from any outreach or non-university teaching activities (e.g., copies of lecture notes, flyers advertising a lecture).
5. Once a semester, or year, review the materials that you've added. Make a note (perhaps with post-it notes or a particular file name) of materials that you think might be best suited to your eventual dossier. Also note any observations about your own teaching innovations or successful approaches that emerge from this review.

By collecting and storing such materials, when it comes time to compile your dossier you will have a wide range of valuable and representative teaching materials to use as evidence of your teaching effectiveness or as illustrations of your individual approach to teaching.

6. Developing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Your statement of teaching philosophy is a short document that should function both as a stand-alone essay that describes your personal approach to teaching, and as a central component of the teaching dossier. Your statement should not simply describe your experiences and initiatives in teaching, but, as Schönwetter et al. (2002) write, should provide “a systematic and critical rationale that focuses on the important components defining effective teaching and learning in a particular discipline and/or institutional context” (p. 84). It is personal and reflective, drawing on your own experiences as a teacher.

Purposes

Your statement of teaching philosophy does several things for you. It can:

- Clarify what you believe good teaching to be
- Explain what you hope to achieve in teaching
- Contextualize your teaching strategies and other evidence of teaching effectiveness
- Provide an opportunity for reflection on and the development of your own teaching

Components

A statement of teaching philosophy can be successfully constructed in a number of different ways. One way in which statements of teaching philosophy vary is in whether or not they include descriptions of an instructor’s specific teaching strategies (e.g., a description of a particular assignment or class activity), alongside the instructor’s teaching beliefs. Some instructors prefer to integrate these strategies into the philosophy statement; others prefer to describe them in a separate document (a “Statement of Teaching Practice”). Other common components of a statement of teaching philosophy include:

1. A brief description of your teaching context, including the elements of your field that most shape your approach to teaching. This might also include a description of your students, and their most important learning goals and challenges.
2. Your definition of good teaching, with an explanation of why you have developed or adopted this definition.
3. A discussion of your teaching methods: how do you implement your definition of good teaching?
4. A discussion of your evaluation and assessment methods and a description of how they support your definition of good teaching.
5. A description of your teaching goals: with what content, skills, or values should students leave your classroom? What are your goals for improving your own teaching?

Format

As concise as possible: 2-5 pages single spaced is common as a minimum length, but there is no set length for the statement. The document may be longer, for example, if it includes information on specific teaching strategies.

Include generous white spaces between paragraphs to allow for ease of reading.

Written in a personal, relatively informal tone, usually in the first person. Sometimes mentioning the names of scholars who have been particularly influential to your teaching can be valuable, but the statement should generally not include a substantial review of relevant research.

Steps to Completion

1. Identify your teaching context.

Consider how the following elements shape your teaching:

- Content: What do you teach?
- Methods: How do you teach? What are some of the common teaching approaches in your discipline?
- Learners: Who do you teach?
- Context: When do you teach?
- Instructor: What is your role?
- Ideals: What guides your teaching? Why do you teach?

2. Articulate your teaching beliefs.

Write some notes in response to one or more of the following guiding questions:

- What do I consider unique about myself as a teacher?
- What is my greatest challenge when it comes to teaching?
- What is challenging about teaching in my discipline?
- When I am a student, what conditions are necessary for me to really learn?
- Who is my model of an effective teacher and what made them a good teacher?
- What is challenging about learning in my discipline?

3. Write a teaching claim.

Using your notes in response to one of the guiding questions, formulate a claim about your teaching approach or beliefs. You might use or modify one of the following prompts:

- “I believe the role of a university instructor to be...”
- “My goal as an instructor of graduate students is to...”
- “I can identify three main challenges for undergraduate students in my field:...”
- Use metaphor if appropriate: “I see my role as that of a guide...”

4. Demonstrate how this teaching claim is implemented in your teaching.

What are some teaching strategies/activities that you've used as an instructor or experienced as a student that support the kind of learning or teaching described in your teaching claim?

5. Add evidence of effectiveness.

How do you know this teaching method supports the kind of learning or teaching described in your teaching claim? This evidence can be anecdotal, derived from evaluations of your teaching, or located in your supporting materials.

6. Repeat!

Try to identify at least 3 or 4 core teaching beliefs, write corresponding teaching statements, and identify relevant teaching methods and evidence.

7. Reflect and connect.

How are these ideas connected? What kind of instructor do they describe? These connections can help you come up with a "thesis" about who you are as an instructor that can form the introduction to your statement and provide an overall narrative and structure for your dossier.

8. Review.

Do these statements accurately capture who you are, or want to be, as an instructor? Is any thing missing? Are these teaching claims appropriate to the types of teaching contexts where you will be teaching?

9. Have someone else read the statement.

This might be a colleague or mentor in your field, in another discipline, or someone from CTSI.

Avoiding Common Pitfalls

Some common complaints from people who evaluate teaching philosophy statements include:

1. **Too general:** A statement that does not reflect the particular beliefs, experiences, and circumstance of the author.
2. **A statement that is not reflective:** it simply lists teaching techniques or experiences, but does not describe how these techniques or experiences have contributed to the author's beliefs about what constitutes effective teaching.
3. **A statement that dwells too much on negative experiences or circumstances.**
4. **Too clichéd:** A statement that expresses a belief in a popular contemporary approach to teaching without establishing how that approach has been integrated into the author's teaching.
5. **Too oblique:** A statement that references a philosophy or belief but never describes it outright.

6. **Too few examples:** A statement that does not include information about how the author knows his or her teaching to be effective.
7. **Too much jargon:** A statement that includes too much jargon (e.g. relating to pedagogical or disciplinary research) may be less accessible to your readers.

Additional Resources on Developing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Websites:

Angelo, T.A. & Cross, K.P. (1993). [Teaching goals inventory](#).

Pool, Gregory. (2011). [The deep end: Self-reflection: Easier said than done](#).

Pratt, D.D. & Collins, J.B. (2011). [Teaching perspectives inventory](#).

University Center for the Advancement of Teaching, Ohio State University. (2017). [Guidance on Writing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement](#).

Articles & books:

Chism, N. V. N. (1998). Developing a philosophy of teaching statement. *Essays on Teaching Excellence*, 9(3), 1-2. Nederland, CO: Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education.

Grundman, H. (2006). [Writing a teaching philosophy statement](#). *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*, 53(11), 1129-1133.

Schönwetter, D., Sokal, L., Friesen, M. & Taylor, L. (2002). Teaching philosophies reconsidered: A conceptual model for the development and evaluation of teaching philosophy statements. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 7(1), 83-97.

7. Teaching Responsibilities

The teaching responsibilities section of your dossier serves both to outline your teaching history and to demonstrate your teaching effectiveness within your specific teaching context. It should therefore:

1. Provide an overview of the depth and breadth of your teaching experience, both in terms of courses taught and in terms of other types of teaching relevant to your academic position (for example, supervisory work, public lectures, etc.); and,
2. Highlight examples of any pedagogical or curricular adaptations, innovations, or successes that you believe demonstrate your teaching effectiveness or your contributions to pedagogy in your discipline.

Definitely Include:

A list of all courses taught, arranged if possible in **table form** by:

- **Course** (this is the most useful organization if you have taught the same set of courses multiple times), **date**, or **role**.

In your list of courses taught, include:

- **The course code and the full course title.** Make sure the level of the course is clear. If you are listing courses from another institution or where the level of the course is not clear, include this information in an additional column;
- **A clear indication of your role in the course** (e.g., instructor, co-instructor, guest lecturer, teaching assistant);
- **Enrollment numbers.** If you taught one section of a larger course (e.g., in a tutorial or laboratory), including enrollment numbers both for the course as a whole and for your tutorial or laboratory section;
- **A description of the course.** You can include the calendar descriptions or a brief summary from the syllabus; and
- Details about **Teaching Assistants** and your involvement with **tutorials** or **laboratories**, if relevant.

Table 4 - Sample Table of Courses Taught

Course Code	Dates Taught	Course Title	Course Level	Role	Enrollment	Description
ABC 1111	Fall 2007, Spring 2009, Fall 2010	Introduction to XXXX	First-year undergraduate	Instructor; supervised seven teaching assistants	350	[Brief description from calendar.] Weekly lectures with weekly laboratory sessions.

Course Code	Dates Taught	Course Title	Course Level	Role	Enrollment	Description
ABC 5000	Fall 2007, Fall 2008, Fall 2010	Special topics in XXXX	Graduate	Instructor	25	[Brief description from calendar.] Weekly seminars.

Where Relevant, Also Include:

Details about your teaching appointment. Take the opportunity to describe the role of teaching within your broader professional responsibilities and to explain any gaps in your teaching history so that those reviewing your dossier understand the scope and scale of your teaching role:

- How many courses do you teach in a typical year?
- Have you ever had a teaching or course release?
- What kinds of courses (introductory, seminar, graduate) do you most frequently teach?
- What kinds of students (majors or specialists, first-year students) do you typically teach?

Some instructors address these questions briefly in their statement of teaching philosophy or statement of teaching.

Descriptions of successful or innovative teaching, course development, or assessment strategies, with relevant examples of materials. Many people find that the most effective way to present this information is to include a paragraph or half-page description of innovations in each course that they have developed or substantially redesigned. Alternatively, you might outline some of your most successful practices and identify the courses in which you apply them.

This information might include, for example, particularly successful assignments or in-class activities, assessment schemes (e.g., rubrics or feedback forms), or details of curricular innovations (for example, incorporating service learning into an existing course). Include a description of how you know this particular activity or initiative has been successful pointing to, for example, results from student or peer evaluations or by including examples of student work (with an introduction or annotations that highlight evidence of success) in an appendix.

Additionally, as you describe your innovative teaching practices and course development efforts, you might include:

- **Example course syllabi.** If you have successfully designed or substantially revised a course, include a copy of the syllabus in an appendix with an introduction that outlines the changes you introduced and any evidence you have of their success. It is not

necessary to include copies of multiple versions of syllabi from a single course, unless this is a) specifically requested, or b) you wish to provide comparative samples from a particular course (for example, to demonstrate how you have revised the course over a period of time).

- **Course websites.** If you use a course website or LMS site to communicate with students, include a link or a printout of the site in an appendix, with an introduction that describes how you and students use the website in the course, and any evidence (e.g. usage statistics) of its contribution to student learning.

Graduate supervision (NB: In some fields, this is included in your research dossier. Clarify with your unit head where your description of graduate supervision strategies, if applicable, should go. In many cases, this is included in the teaching dossier).

- Definitely include: Number of advisees, their thesis or dissertation titles, and any professional accomplishments (e.g. publications, teaching awards, job placements).
- You might also include a description of your supervisory strategies. For example, how do you select or recruit advisees? How often do you meet with them? What kind of feedback do you think is most useful for graduate students? What evidence (for example, success on the job market, feedback from your students) do you have that this approach is successful? Some instructors include a description of their supervisory strategies in their statement of teaching philosophy if graduate teaching is a central component of their appointment or a priority to their own teaching.

Undergraduate research, co-curricular teaching, and support. Include descriptions of any curricular or co-curricular developments or innovations related to undergraduate research, advising, or co-curricular involvement. This might include, for example:

- The development of undergraduate research opportunities, including field courses, guided research courses, or the supervision and support of students' independent research projects. You might include examples of student research or co-publications in an appendix.
- Involvement in clubs and extra- and co-curricular projects. For example, advising a club for majors or specialists in your department, supporting or organizing volunteer or supplementary lecture activities related to your field, or working with students on a project or activity.
- Support and advising for particular populations. You may, for example, provide advising and support for first-year students, for students in a particular demographic group, or for students with particular academic interests.

Non-university teaching/lectures and presentations. Include, if applicable, brief descriptions of public lectures, work with secondary schools, or interviews and publications in the popular press, provided these activities have a clear instructional focus in addition to the dissemination of your research.

8. Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

An essential element of your dossier is the compilation and presentation of evidence that demonstrates that your approaches to teaching contribute to student learning or that students are meeting the goals that you set for their learning and the expectations for teaching set by your department, faculty, or discipline. This evidence can come from colleagues or from students, and can be in the form of references and testimonials, or examples of students' work and success. The following list provides examples of items you might include:

Course Evaluation Summaries and Contextualizing Narratives

Student course evaluations can be a valuable source of information about your teaching, but are best put to use when they are not left to speak for themselves. Instead, you can use summaries of your student evaluation data, alongside a contextualizing narrative introduction, to highlight those elements of your course evaluations that provide evidence of your teaching effectiveness, demonstrate your commitment to teaching development and improvement, or connect new teaching strategies to improved student learning.

Definitely Include:

- **A summary chart of your course evaluation quantitative data.** You might also include summary sheets of your raw evaluation data from individual courses in an appendix.
- **An accompanying narrative contextualization.** This narrative statement discusses your evaluation scores in the context of your teaching (e.g., new courses, different groups of students, changes in teaching strategies or approaches) as well as in the context of your own approach to teaching, providing evidence of your teaching strengths or your efforts at teaching improvement.

You can use this statement to address any inconsistencies or concerns that you feel might emerge from your evaluations (for example, you might note that your lowest score was for a course where you had experimented for the first time with a new type of assignment, and after modifications based on student feedback, scores improved the second year). You can also use this statement to highlight:

- ✓ Responses to questions that demonstrate that you score well on teaching approaches or strategies that you have highlighted as important to you in your teaching philosophy or teaching experience sections.
- ✓ Evidence that your evaluation scores have improved over time, linked to changes in the course or in your approach to teaching.

You Might Also Include:

- **Qualitative evaluation data.** These comments might be discussed in your narrative statement or be given a narrative section of their own.

If you include student comments, it is normally best to include – and note that you have included – **all comments from a particular year, course, or set of evaluations**, rather than selected comments. You should also note explicitly if you have edited any comments for length or clarity.

Some instructors find it useful to **group comments by theme**, which can also facilitate the interpretation of the comments. These themes might parallel the strengths or gaps in your teaching that you have identified elsewhere in your dossier.

When Applicable, You Might Include:

Peer assessments, conducted by a colleague or by a teaching support office. This is normally in the form of a written letter produced after one or more visits to your classroom and pre- and post-visit discussions between you and the observer about your teaching.

Student outcomes. This might include, for example, information about students who have been accepted into graduate programs or are pursuing other competitive post-graduate activities; examples of student success in courses that follow yours; evidence of students who have pursued a program of study because of your teaching.

Examples of student work. You might choose work that provides an example of a student performing the kind of intellectual work you have set as a goal for your course or an assignment, or work that, alongside your feedback, demonstrates a student's improvement over the length of the course.

See **Section 11: Creating Materials for Your Dossier** for additional information about including student work, and **Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions about Dossiers** for privacy considerations in including student work.

Information about teaching award nominations or successful applications. Include a description of the award and an overview of the nomination and selection process. Institutional acknowledgement of teaching excellence. This might include, for example, representation on committees related to teaching.

Relevant course materials. Please see the description of "Appendix Materials" (**Section 12: What to Include in an Appendix**) in this document for more detail on contextualizing such supporting materials. Relevant course materials might be identified in the narrative section of a dossier in the context of a particular claim about teaching strategies or assessment methods; the documents themselves may be included in an appendix.

Data from mid-course feedback. If you administered a mid-course evaluation to obtain formative feedback from your students on the course and/or your teaching, you might wish to include a summary of the collected data. It is also useful to comment on how you responded to

the student feedback to make any modifications to the course at the time or for future iterations. Please consult the CTSI guide [Gathering Formative Feedback with Mid-Course Evaluations](#) for suggestions on how to collect and use such data.

N.B. instructors should note that a review committee will solicit letters from a random sample of your students and may not permit the inclusion of solicited letters from students or colleagues in a teaching dossier submitted for the purposes of tenure review, continuing status review, and promotion. In these cases, it is often still possible to include unsolicited letters and emails from students and colleagues about your teaching, but always confirm with your Chair or Dean what is acceptable/allowed according to divisional processes/guidelines.

See **Section 11: Creating Materials for Your Dossier**, below, for more information about soliciting student letters about your teaching

9. Evidence of Leadership in Teaching

This section of your dossier is an opportunity for you to demonstrate how you have contributed to the improvement of teaching beyond the classroom: by serving as a mentor to other faculty or graduate students, by collaborating on pedagogical projects with faculty across the university and at other institutions, or by conducting and publishing research on teaching.

Not all instructors – especially those near the beginning of their careers – will have information for this section of the dossier. In some cases, however, evidence of teaching leadership is a criterion for tenure, continuing status and promotion. To determine whether this is the case, refer to the guidelines for tenure review, continuing status review, and promotion as well as to expectations articulated by your department and by colleagues in your field.

Where Applicable, You Might Include:

- Descriptions of any workshops, presentations, or publications about teaching that you have given or developed.
- Descriptions and examples (in an appendix) of any teaching materials you have developed that are available for use by others – for example, textbooks, online materials, or video demonstrations.
- Collaborative work with other faculty members. For example, you may have partnered with another faculty member to teach a first-year seminar in your field or developed a course for your institution in partnership with a faculty member at another institution.
- Information on participation in any formal or informal mentorship programs. Describe the program, your role, and any successful outcomes (e.g., the successful tenure of a junior faculty mentee.)
- Information on funding or grants received to develop teaching and learning materials, educational technologies or initiatives.
- Participation in teaching/curriculum committees/initiatives within your department, faculty, institution, or disciplinary professional organizations.
- Leadership in professional organizations related to teaching in your field (for example, the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English).
- Publication of scholarly research on teaching. This may be in a newsletter (e.g., the Teaching Professor), the journal of a professional society devoted to university teaching (e.g., the Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning published by the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education) or a disciplinary journal (e.g. Teaching Sociology). You might include copies of any publications in an appendix.

10. Evidence of Professional Development

Including a description of professional development you've undertaken related to teaching demonstrates your commitment to continual teaching improvement and to teaching in general. Additionally, it is a means for you to describe and demonstrate how you have identified and worked to develop as a teacher.

Definitely Include:

- **A list (with brief descriptions) of any workshops, seminars, institutes or courses on teaching in which you've participated.**

This might include workshops or seminars offered by your department, by CTSI or another office of teaching support, or by a professional association, and could include both workshops on technology or teaching strategies and discussions about, for example, the content and structure of introductory courses in your discipline.

- **Information on mentorship you've sought from colleagues in your department or elsewhere.**

You Might Also Include:

- **A narrative description of your professional development trajectory and goals.**

In particular, if student or peer assessments of your teaching have identified any areas of concern, a narrative overview of your professional development activities can be a good opportunity to demonstrate that you are working to improve your teaching in these particular areas.

For example, you might note that the results of end-of-course or mid-course student evaluations in your first year of teaching identified a challenge with managing student discussions and that as a consequence you participated in relevant workshops. You might then describe any strategies you subsequently implemented in your classroom, and point to any evidence (e.g., improved scores on related course evaluation questions) that your teaching in these areas has improved as a result. Additionally, you might note any ongoing goals that you have for your teaching improvement and describe the strategies or activities you plan to pursue to meet these goals.

11. Creating Materials for Your Dossier

If you are a new faculty member with limited years in the classroom, drawing on a limited collection of course materials and evidence of your teaching effectiveness, or an experienced instructor who feels that the materials you have available don't accurately reflect the scope of your teaching, you might find it useful to develop additional materials specifically for your dossier. This might include:

Mid-Course Evaluations

In addition to including the results of your formal, end-of-course evaluations, you might consider developing and administering mid-course evaluations. These evaluations, which are generally formative and often more qualitative than end-of-course evaluations, can provide you with additional evidence of your teaching effectiveness. Importantly, you can also develop evaluations that provide feedback on specific teaching approaches or strategies that are important to you and that you have highlighted elsewhere in your dossier. For suggestions on developing and administering mid-course evaluations, see the CTSI instructional guide [Gathering Formative Feedback with Mid-Course Evaluations](#).

Excerpts From a Teaching Journal

A teaching journal can help you record and illustrate specific examples of particular teaching approaches or of your process of reflecting on and improving your teaching. A teaching journal is also a place to note ideas for changes to your course content or teaching strategies. You can use the teaching journal as a place to brainstorm ideas for your statement of teaching philosophy or strategies or as a place to collect anecdotes and examples that can be used to illustrate the claims throughout your dossier. For example, you might record the results of a particularly successful class activity or assignment with examples that you can insert into your description of teaching strategies. Alternatively, you might reflect on an unsuccessful class discussion to try to identify the reasons it did not work, identify strategies you hope to try in the following class session, and then note the results of those changes.

Communications From Students

It is possible to include in your dossier examples of communications – written notes, emails, etc. – from students that were not solicited by you or on your behalf. When including a communication from a student, be sure to select a note that highlights something specific about your teaching. Perhaps a student in your class struggled with one particular assignment but was able to improve by the end of the term thanks to targeted feedback from you. If an email communication refers to this support and consequent improvement, then it is a good example to include with your supporting documentation. Similarly, you may want to include an exchange you had with a student over email in order to illustrate how you interact with

students through a semester, how you advise them with regard to career development or course selection, etc. The point is to always be judicious when including such communications – the examples need to point to something specific about your approach to feedback, or working with students, or assignment design, or learning support, etc. Generic notes of thanks or appreciation, while pleasing, are usually not powerful enough to include in the dossier as evidence.

Three Important Things to Note About Student Communications:

1. When considering whether to include these kinds of student communications in your dossier, **always check with your Chair/Program Director/Dean** to ensure this is an accepted practice in your unit or division.
2. If including such communications is possible, best practice is to seek permission of the student and to anonymize the communication – although, if the student grants permission, it is possible to include an email communication in your dossier “as is”, i.e., the full email text with name and subject/date indicated.
3. You should not solicit letters from students at any stage of your formal tenure review, continuing status review, or promotion review. Departments and divisions have processes in place to ensure feedback is collected from your students during the formal review process. They will take care of contacting your students. Please note that if you do solicit letters from students, these students may become ineligible to provide feedback on your teaching during the formal review.

Examples Of Student Work

Student work can be used to demonstrate that students are meeting the educational outcomes of your courses or that the feedback you provide contributes to the development of students’ skills. The excerpt below from Dalhousie University’s guide to developing a teaching dossier provides details on incorporating examples of student work into your dossier:

From O’Neil, C. & Wright, A. (1999). Recording Teaching Accomplishment. Office of Instructional Development and Technology, Dalhousie University.

What are the possible ways to document successful student work or projects?

Evidence of student accomplishments can be provided in a number of ways, including student examination scores, a record of pre- and post-tests results, copies of students’ papers, journal, workbooks, etc. (“before” and “after” work can be used to illustrate students’ intellectual and skill development), lists of your students’ publications, research, and other academic work, and so on. Some professors include examples of a range of student work, accompanied by the feedback given to students (e.g., comments on papers, suggestions for how to improve). You might also ask colleagues who teach courses for which yours is a prerequisite to comment on how well prepared our students are for further studies. Evidence obtained from students and about students is intended to illustrate how your teaching contributed to meeting course

and/or departmental learning objectives and to student development. Reference to student work would be made in the dossier itself, whereas the work samples would normally appear as appendices.

12. What to Include in an Appendix?

Items included in your dossier's appendices should be selected to complement the portrait of your teaching developed in the narrative section. As noted above, the appendices should provide specific examples or pieces of evidence of the claims about your teaching that you make in the narrative section, provide evidence of your teaching strengths, and document your efforts at teaching improvement. Ideally, every document you include in an appendix will have been mentioned in the narrative section of your dossier. Note: Appendices should reflect judicious selection and avoid including too much information.

Possible items that can serve as valuable appendices:

- **Course materials:** Samples of syllabi, communications with students, lecture notes or slides, outlines of class activities. See **Section 7: Teaching Responsibilities** for more details about which course materials can be useful to include.
- **Student assessment:** Samples of assignment and examination descriptions and instructions, marked assignments (perhaps demonstrating the improved work of a student over the course of a semester or year).
- **Feedback on teaching:** Full digests of qualitative course evaluation comments; solicited and unsolicited written feedback on teaching from students, colleagues, and teaching support staff.
- **Professional development:** Copies of certificates of attendance or completion, workshop descriptions, and examples of course materials that employ ideas or strategies gained through professional development activities.
- **Teaching research and scholarship:** Copies of journal or newsletter articles, grant applications, and descriptions of conference presentations.

You might organize your appendices based on the sections of the narrative dossier (e.g., Teaching Responsibilities, Professional Development, Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness) or by the materials included in the appendices (e.g., feedback on teaching, course materials, student assessment, etc.).

Your supporting materials should not speak for themselves. Each piece (or collection of pieces) of evidence should be labeled and introduced by a brief (1-2 paragraph) contextualizing statement that illustrates its connection to the claims made about your teaching in the narrative section of the dossier.

For example, if you include an example of an assignment developed for a course you've substantially revised, you might describe the ways in which the assignment reflects your approach to teaching described in your statement of teaching philosophy. Similarly, you might highlight particular examples of student work that affirm the improvement in particular skills that you've described in your description of assessment methods.

Even if you have already provided this contextualization within the dossier, provide a brief reminder to your reader of the significance of each piece of supporting documentation within the appendix itself.

13. Developing and Revising Your Dossier

Dossier Timeline

At a minimum, you should plan to spend between 2-6 months compiling, writing, and revising your dossier (although you won't be working on it that entire time!). More generally, however, you should always have the dossier at the back of your mind so that you can be proactive about collecting and indeed developing appropriate dossier materials. For example, if an assignment works particularly well, make copies of examples of student work. If a new class activity is a success, jot a note about it or ask a colleague to sit in on another section of the course to provide a brief written assessment of your teaching. Maintain a folder, box or computer file in which you can collect these documents, and once a semester or year, review what you have added to this file and update your dossier.

If possible, it can be very useful to develop a rough draft (or even an outline) of your dossier well before you will be required to submit it for any purpose. Developing a dossier draft and receiving early feedback will help you see what kinds of documents will be most useful to collect or develop. A basic structure for your dossier, and the deeper understanding of your teaching approaches and priorities that often follows the development of a dossier, will help ensure that the dossier you ultimately submit is rich and comprehensive.

Tips And Strategies

Adapted from The Teaching Dossier, Teaching Support Services, University of Guelph.

- Develop a set of labeled files to build and organize your dossier (e.g., course outlines, student letters, course evaluations, etc.)
- Document your teaching like you document your research. Regularly add to and update your teaching commentary and instructional documentation.
- Maintain a journal to reflect upon your teaching and learning practices and experiences both in and outside of the classroom.
- Work on your dossier a little at a time - don't wait until the last moment (less daunting). Your philosophy statement is a reflective piece that takes time and effort to prepare.
- Regularly revisit your teaching philosophy statement. It's a continually evolving document.
- Talk to faculty both in and outside of your department to learn what they do in preparation for their review.
- Present your teaching dossier in a neat, organized manner that is easily accessible by the reader/reviewer. Place your portfolio in a document holder, duotang, or three-ring binder. Format your dossier using clearly marked sections (headings, numbers, letters, etc.) and labeled appendices. Don't forget to include a table of contents.

Reviewing And Getting Feedback on Your Teaching Dossier

Once you have completed a draft of your dossier, consider having it reviewed by a colleague in your department – if possible, someone who has themselves evaluated dossiers on a tenure review, continuing status review, or promotion committee. Alternatively, CTSI is pleased to review your statement of teaching philosophy or full dossier or provide consultation and feedback at any step in the dossier development process. Please submit a [consultation request form](#) to set up an appointment. Please provide a minimum of 3 weeks' notice when arranging a dossier consultation. Please note that at this time CTSI does not review teaching dossiers being prepared for a job application process.

Pitfalls And Criticism

As you compile or review your dossier, you may wish to keep in mind some of the common pitfalls and criticisms of teaching dossiers:

- **Lack of coherence.** This usually manifests as a dossier that asks the reader to do the work of connecting your teaching experiences by presenting a series of seemingly unconnected documents and statements or where, for example, the approach to teaching described in your statement of teaching philosophy is not reflected in the rest of your dossier or appendices.

The most common cause of this pitfall is a philosophy that isn't sufficiently grounded in your own teaching experiences and evidence of your own teaching successes. If you suspect that this might be a problem with your dossier, review the materials you've selected and your description of your teaching experiences and innovations, and see whether the themes that emerge are adequately represented in your teaching philosophy.

Alternatively, this problem sometimes emerges because the appendices were not appropriately selected or contextualized (see Section 12: What to Include in an Appendix?). This in particular is a common symptom of a teaching dossier assembled at the last minute as faculty use evidence that is available rather than that which has been specifically identified for the dossier. Again, this can usually be resolved by adopting a "bottom-up" approach and assessing what the material available says about your teaching and working that back into the narrative elements of the dossier.

- **A dossier that includes too much.** Similar to the issues above, make sure that everything included in a dossier or its appendices contributes to the selective, coherent portrait of your teaching developed in the narrative section of your dossier. Include the syllabus from the course that you feel best represents your teaching approaches and priorities rather than syllabi from all courses taught. Include selected samples of student

work that best reflect achievement on assignment outcomes or constructive feedback you've provided rather than samples from an entire class. The one exception to this is the results of course evaluations; you should compile all quantitative evaluation results available, and if you include qualitative comments you should include, at a minimum, all comments from a particular course or set of courses.

Questions And Concerns

Adapted from Knapper, C. & Wilcox, S. (2007). Preparing a Teaching Dossier. Queen's University

Won't it take too much time?

Documenting teaching properly will certainly take some time, especially if you have not collected relevant evidence over the years. But a good deal of material is probably already in your files (e.g., student evaluations, letters from former students). Once the first dossier has been prepared the process becomes much easier and can also have important benefits in helping you reflect on teaching and make improvements.

How can I document successful student learning?

Evidence might include exam scores (e.g., on independently marked professional exams), exemplary student work (e.g., project reports), student publications based on work done in a course or on a thesis you supervised, or student achievement in further courses. Be sure to get student permission for material you use.

What do I say about course innovations that backfired?

Documenting these efforts shows your concern for improving teaching and can provide useful contextual information for judging future changes. Documenting partial failures as well as successes gives evidence for a dossier that gives an honest depiction of your teaching accomplishments.

Should I include only information that is flattering to my teaching?

Colleagues will quickly spot obvious omissions (e.g., missing teaching evaluations) and a dossier should give a valid overall picture of your teaching while stressing the successes and achievements. (After all, a research vitae does not generally list papers rejected or negative comments of referees.)

Should dossiers stress effort or accomplishment?

Ideally both. To assess accomplishment it is very helpful to have clear criteria for effective teaching and learning that are endorsed by the institution and the department.

I'm too modest to make a good case

Baseless claims will not impress the chair or colleagues, but if you want your teaching efforts to be recognized, be prepared to put your best foot forward, as you would for research accomplishments.

Presentation will win out over substance

Department heads, deans, and colleagues on review committees are better than you might think at interpreting documentation and assessing quality performance. They will likely spot misinformation and omissions just as they would with spurious research claims. On the other hand, a poorly organized or overly long dossier may undermine your case.

How can use of dossiers be reconciled with need for standardized evaluation procedures and criteria?

If the institution, faculty, or department has adopted teaching goals these can serve as general criteria against which to judge the evidence presented in a dossier. At the same time, individuals can differ in the ways they meet these criteria, just as they will do in the case of scholarly accomplishments.

In the end, it's all subjective

All evaluation is a matter of judgement, but the better the evidence, the more reliable the decision.

14. Developing A Teaching Dossier: Additional Resources

Other Institutional Guides to Developing a Teaching Portfolio

Other institutions might have different expectations, standards or conventions, but much of the advice in these guides is transferable. These guides might provide you with alternative perspectives on or ideas for selecting and organizing the information in your dossier.

1. [CAUT Teaching Dossier](#), Canadian Association of University Teachers.
2. [Portfolios. From the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology](#), University of British Columbia
3. [Teaching Dossiers. From the Centre for Teaching and Learning](#), Queen's University.
4. [Teaching Dossier. Educational Development Resources](#), University of Guelph

Additional Resources

- Knapper, C.W., & Wright, W.A. (2001). Using portfolios to document good teaching: premises, purposes, practices. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 88, 19-29.
- Seldin, P., Miller, J.E. & Seldin, C. (2010). *The teaching portfolio: A practical guide to improved performance and promotion/tenure decisions* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

APPENDIX A:

Frequently Asked Questions for Graduate Students

Q. What counts as teaching experience?

A. Many things! In the approximate order in which they might usefully be emphasized in your dossier:

- Sole-responsibility Course Instructor for a course you designed
- Sole-responsibility Course Instructor for an already-established course
- Guest Lecturer in a course (temporarily replacing an instructor for one or more classes)
- Senior TA responsible for coordinating other TAs
- TA for a tutorial section or lab
- Project or research supervisor (for graduate or undergraduate students)
- Grader
- Mentor of fellow teaching assistants
- Tutor (of university undergraduate students)
- Non-postsecondary teaching experience
 - Teaching at the secondary school level or for continuing education programs
 - Tutoring secondary school students
 - Public lectures
 - Teaching or training for private sector, industry, or government agencies

Q. What if I don't have any (or very much) teaching experience?

A. Minimal teaching experience can make it more difficult to describe your approach to teaching or the teaching strategies that you believe to be effective. However, although you might not have substantial teaching experience, you do have substantial experience as a student, and you can draw on this to develop your teaching dossier. For example, reflect on your experience first as an undergraduate learner, then as a graduate student. What did you like best about your learning environment? What conditions were necessary in order for you to do your best work? Did you encounter models of good teaching in your past experience as a university student? Explain their teaching styles. Relate how they taught to how you learned in their classes. Contrast your experience as an undergraduate with your experience as a graduate student. What is different? What works better for you as a graduate learner? What doesn't work as well? Who inspired you to pursue graduate studies? Why?

You can also seek out ways to collect some teaching experience without a full TA or course instructor position. For example, you can:

- Ask the instructors of undergraduate or graduate courses aligned with your area of specialization whether you can conduct a guest lecture during the semester.

- Seek out opportunities to mentor graduate or undergraduate students.
- Seek out opportunities to tutor secondary or undergraduate students.
- Volunteer to teach writing or math skills.
- Identify any other occasions in the past when you have participated in activities related to leadership and teaching others:
 - Training of fellow staff members at a non-university job
 - Peer counsellor
 - Instrument lessons (piano lessons, etc.)
 - Coaching (swimming lessons, teams, etc.)
 - Camp counsellor

Furthermore, even without formal teaching experience, you can begin developing teaching materials. For example, you could:

- Design a sample quiz or activity or experiment that you would like to use when you start teaching
- Design a sample course outline
- Compile a sample reading list

Q. What do I do if I don't have any student evaluations?

A. If you do not have any formal course evaluations, you can request feedback from students, peers, and faculty that will provide a similar portrait of the effectiveness of the teaching strategies you employ in the classroom. For example, you can:

1. **Develop and summarize the results of a mid-course evaluation.** (See **Section 11: Creating Materials for Your Dossier**). Please only do so with the express permission under the guidance of your course coordinator or course instructor.
2. **Collect unsolicited and solicited student feedback.** (See below: Solicited Letters From Students).
3. **Request an in-class observation** from a faculty member, peer, or CTSI or Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP) staff member. You will receive written feedback if your observation is conducted by a member of CTSI or the TATP; if your evaluation is conducted by a peer or faculty member, ask whether they would be willing to write you a short letter describing your teaching strengths and highlighting potential areas for improvement.
4. **Complete a microteaching session** through the [TATP certificate program](#) or organize one in your department. You will receive written feedback on your teaching from at least five other graduate students that can be included in your dossier.

Solicited Letters from Students - For a job application dossier

For graduate students and sessional instructors without access to summative evaluations of their teaching (e.g., from student course evaluations), or for those who wish to balance those

summative evaluations with a narrative description of the impact of their teaching, letters from your students affirming your teaching effectiveness and providing a student's perspective on the teaching approaches you outline in your dossier can provide a detailed and compelling portrait of you as an instructor. Such letters can also be useful for your own professional development, allowing you to gather additional feedback from your students on particular topics relating to your course, its delivery and your teaching.

Q. Which students should I ask for a letter?

A.

- Students who have provided you with unsolicited thanks and praise.
- Students who improved significantly while you were their instructor.
- Strong students and students who are good communicators.

Q: What information should I provide to students?

A. Because students generally do not have very much experience writing such letters, they may need some information from you in order to be able to provide an effective letter.

1. Inform students about how the letter will be used. Explain the purpose of the dossier, who will be reading it, and what they will be looking to see in your dossier: a portrait of you as an instructor and evidence of your teaching effectiveness.
2. Students should note the course and the role (e.g., course coordinator) in which they've interacted with you. Remind the student of this information – they may not recall or be aware of your exact title.
3. Let students know that specific, concrete examples are very beneficial to developing an accurate portrait. Suggest that students identify two or three examples representing elements of your teaching that were exceptional or unique.

How to use the letter in your dossier?

- Clearly label the letter as solicited.
- Include the letter with any unsolicited letters and other teaching evaluation data.
- You may wish to provide additional information about your relationship with the student. For example, if the student's grades improved dramatically over the course of the semester, you may wish to describe the role you played in this process. You can also include supporting materials for any items the student describes in the letter (e.g., handouts, an assessment rubric or, with their permission, an example of their graded work).

Do you have an additional question not answered here?

Please email ctsi.teaching@utoronto.ca

APPENDIX B:

CTSI and the Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP) Services to Help You Develop Your Dossier

Resources and services for **faculty** developing their teaching dossiers offered by the **Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation**:

- Teaching dossier workshops and clinics, held approximately once per semester. Check the [CTSI events page](#) for details
- Customized dossier workshops or clinics, on request, for your department or division.
- Confidential individual consultation on your dossier at any stage of its completion. Complete the [CTSI online consultation request form](#)
- Instructors wishing to receive an assessment of their classroom performance can request an in-class observation, followed by a confidential consultation. CTSI staff can provide you with a [written assessment of your teaching](#) to include in your dossier. **Note:** CTSI does not conduct in-class observations as part of a formal review process for tenure review, continuing status review, or promotion.
- A CTSI Faculty Liaison can help you to develop an assessment plan and collect data to assess particular elements of your course or instruction. These results can be included in your dossier. Complete [the online consultation](#) request form.

Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP) resources and services for **graduate students and teaching assistants**:

- Teaching dossier workshops and clinics, held approximately once per semester. Please check the [TATP workshops page](#) for details.
- If you are a graduate student enrolled in the TATP Advanced University Teaching Preparation certificate program, you can request a teaching dossier consultation and feedback. A TATP staff member will meet with you at any stage of the development of your teaching dossier to discuss its content or review the material you've developed. TATP staff can also conduct a formal evaluation of a completed dossier, indicating potential areas for revision and improvement. Please see the [TATP information page on teaching dossiers](#).

for information on the TATP dossier review process. Again, this service is only available to AOTP certificate registrants.

- Microteaching. For those enrolled in the [Advanced University Teaching Preparation \(AOTP\)](#) TATP certificate program, a microteaching session typically involves recording a short lesson in front of a small peer group in order to receive feedback on one's teaching style. This exercise gives participants the opportunity to practice teaching and receive feedback in a non-threatening and supportive environment. Microteaching also allows participants to gain a new perspective on their teaching through simulating the perspective of the student. Please see the [TATP information page on microteaching](#) or check the [TATP workshops page](#) for upcoming sessions.

APPENDIX C:

Frequently Asked Questions About Dossiers

Q. Where are the data from my student course evaluations stored?

A. For instructors teaching in divisions that are using the institutional online system, course evaluation data, in the form of your past Instructor Reports, are always available through the “Course Evals” tab on the U of T Portal. For instructions on how to access, view and download your reports, please see the CTSI information page on [Course Evaluations for Instructors and Administrators](#). Note that you will be asked to log in with your UTORid. For instructors teaching in divisions not yet on the online system, the location and process for maintaining evaluation data may vary by department and division. However, in general, after evaluation results have been processed/reported for your department, instructors are usually provided with a summary sheet that includes frequency scores and means, and with the original evaluation forms completed by individual students.

Departments often also maintain copies of evaluation records, but it is nonetheless **important that individual instructors collect and store their own evaluation data**. Instructors whose courses are evaluated through the institutional online system should download and save their Instructor Reports as soon as they are emailed the link to access the reports. For instructors teaching in divisions not yet using the institutional online system, check with your department administrator to see how you can obtain your evaluation results if you do not receive evaluation results by the beginning of the following semester.

Q. Are there any guidelines for including students’ work in my dossier?

A. Yes. Privacy considerations and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) suggest the following guidelines:

- Unless there is a compelling reason not to (unless, for example, the student has contributed a solicited letter about your teaching, and you wish to link their work to the letter), you should anonymize the student work by obscuring or changing their name. CTSI can clarify the regulations for your particular context if there is a case in which you would prefer not to anonymize student work.
- If possible, do ask students whether they are comfortable with you including their work in your dossier. This can be done informally after you have identified the work you wish to include (alternatively, if you wish, you can let students know at the beginning of the semester that you might want to use their work, and allow them to communicate whether or not they are comfortable with this). This is, however, simply a courtesy and not a regulation.
- Keep students’ work secure. For example, do not include their work – even if anonymized – in a publicly-accessible electronic version of your dossier (e.g., posted on

a departmental website). This could make students' work vulnerable to appropriation by others.

Q. Can (or should) I include other media (such as a recording of me teaching) in my dossier?

A. This is more common in some contexts and for some purposes (e.g., some teaching awards) than for others. In general, while a video or audio file might be a great addition to your dossier, it is best not to include any essential information in a format other than that which can be easily reproduced or accessed, primarily because a review or hiring committee will need to distribute your materials to all evaluators. Rather than a physical object, you might consider including a link to an online video or audio file (include the actual location of the link rather than embedding it in an electronic document in case your dossier is printed and copied), but again recognize that not all evaluators may have access to a computer while they are evaluating your dossier.

Q. What if student evaluation questions don't reflect the way I teach?

A. Many course evaluation questions reflect particular teaching contexts and approaches to teaching that may not apply equally to every instructor's courses or teaching strategies. This can be particularly true for faculty teaching in courses with multiple instructors or in courses with some degree of alternative delivery – for example, courses that include a practicum or a service or experiential learning component. If you feel that the questions on your course evaluation instrument do not fully reflect the structure of your courses or your approach to teaching, there are several ways in which you can contextualize, present, and supplement evaluation data to better reflect your teaching:

- The interpretation of course evaluation data for courses with multiple instructors can be a challenge. In a course with multiple instructors, be sure to clarify, in contextualizing your evaluations, which questions reflect your own teaching, and which may reflect the course more broadly.
- Add additional questions to the standard evaluation form on specific issues of importance to you. For instructors teaching in courses that are evaluated through the institutional online system, you have the option in some divisions of adding additional items from an instructor item bank. You can select items that connect more directly to your teaching goals. For guidance on how to add items to your questionnaire from the instructor item bank, please see the CTSI information page on [Course Evaluations for Instructors and Administrators](#). Note that you will be prompted to log in with your UTORid. Other forms in divisions not yet using the online system will often have space to add additional items.
- Conduct a mid-course evaluation on issues not addressed in the standard evaluation form. See **Section 11: Creating Materials for Your Dossier** or the CTSI publication [Gathering Formative Feedback for Mid-Course Evaluations](#) for suggestions on developing and administering mid-course evaluations.

Q. I'm not sure whether a particular initiative should be classified as research or teaching for the purposes of evaluation for tenure or, continuing status review, or promotion. Where does research end and teaching begin?

A. There are particular aspects of many academic careers that blur the boundaries of research and teaching – indeed, arguably, this is a positive dilemma! This frequently occurs with issues such as the supervision of undergraduate and graduate research and course and curriculum development. In general, while most such activities certainly do belong in a teaching dossier (unless specified otherwise by your department or by convention in your field), they should be presented and their significance described in terms of **what they represent about your approach to teaching or your teaching effectiveness**. For example, you might include information about the publications of your supervised students, but this might be presented in the context of your particular approach to supervision or presented as evidence of your effectiveness in mentoring – instead of, for example, simply presenting the publications as a list organized by topic. It is equally important to highlight the scholarly activities you may have undertaken that serve to keep your teaching relevant and fresh, and that highlight your ongoing efforts to maintain currency with emerging research and important debates in your disciplinary field. Ideally, any mention of research activities in the dossier should highlight how the research has informed your teaching.

**Do you have an additional question not answered here?
Please email ctsi.teaching@utoronto.ca**

APPENDIX D:

Evaluating Teaching Dossiers for Department Chairs and Tenure, Continuing Status and Promotion Committee Members

The Purposes of Teaching Dossiers and of Dossier Evaluation

Well-constructed dossiers provide a substantive and coherent portrait of an instructor's teaching. The dossier brings together multiple types of information about teaching, including evaluations, teaching materials, and student work and assessment, alongside the instructor's own description and contextualization of this information. Dossiers allow teaching to be evaluated systematically and rigorously while allowing for flexibility, innovation, and individual and disciplinary variations in teaching approaches and activities.

The Format and Content of Teaching Dossiers

There is no set format for teaching dossiers. This flexible format allows dossiers to work as effective tools for showcasing individual approaches to teaching, but also complicates the evaluation process. This flexible format generally means that dossiers must be evaluated holistically, as the criteria used in teaching evaluation might be found in multiple parts of the dossier. That being said, teaching dossiers usually include most of the following components:

- Statement of teaching philosophy. This may also include reference to specific teaching strategies and to teaching goals, or these may be included as separate documents.
- Highlights of university teaching experience and responsibilities.
- Evidence of leadership related to teaching in a department, discipline, or institution.
- Evidence of professional development and ongoing learning related to teaching in the discipline or more broadly.
- Student and peer evaluations of teaching, including written reports, quantitative ratings and qualitative comments.
- Other evidence of effective teaching, such as feedback from peers or information about teaching awards.
- Sample teaching materials, such as syllabi, examples of student work or feedback on assignments (usually included as appendices).

More information about each of these components can be found in this [CTSI guide to developing a teaching dossier](#).

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Evaluating Teaching With a Dossier

In general, dossiers should tell you the following things about the instructor's teaching:

1. What it is like to be a student in that instructor's classroom as detailed in narrative statements and through supporting teaching materials. This allows the evaluator to assess how the instructor contributes to departmental and institutional goals and priorities in teaching. Does the instructor demonstrate the kinds of teaching most important to the institution (e.g., as defined by Provostial and Divisional Guidelines)? In what ways does the instructor contribute to the overall academic experience of students in his or her classroom and in other teaching contexts?
2. The instructor's strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, as identified both through self-reflection and with supporting evidence from teaching materials, students, and other evaluators. This allows the evaluator to ensure that the instructor meets institutional or divisional standards. The dossier allows instructors to highlight for evaluators what they consider to be their pedagogical priorities and contributions. As much as is possible, the dossier should be evaluated within the context of these priorities provided they fall within relevant guidelines for effective teaching. Instructors might also identify areas of their teaching that they are working to improve, through, for example professional development activities.
3. The instructor is committed to effective teaching and to ongoing teaching improvement. Such an approach to teaching leads to better instruction and promotes the value and status of teaching within the institution. Commitment to professional development helps instructors improve and establishes professional networks and engagement in teaching at the institution and beyond. Dossiers should also highlight an instructor's future plans for pedagogical and professional development.

The Evaluation Process

- **Evaluators should identify and review the criteria for effective teaching in their particular context.** This should include [Provostial](#) and [Divisional Guidelines](#). Individual departments may also have particular criteria and standards. These criteria should be the same as those communicated to faculty as they were developing their dossier.
- **Seek evidence of this criteria throughout the dossier.** As the examples in **Section 3: Defining Competence and Excellence in Teaching** (see Tables 2 and 3 on pp. 10-11) demonstrate, each component of effective teaching might be identified in multiple locations throughout the dossier. For example, evidence of stimulating and challenging students might be equally located in course evaluations, in teaching materials, or in narrative statements of teaching strategies and beliefs.
- **Not all information about teaching effectiveness needs necessarily be contained in the dossier;** instructors may submit additional information about teaching effectiveness in addition to the dossier.

Additional Recommended Resources

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan. (2016). [Evaluation of teaching](#).

Cornell University Center for Learning and Teaching. [Documenting Teaching with a Teaching Portfolio](#). [NB: Not all of the information contained in this handbook will be applicable to faculty and administrators at the U of T.]

Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life. [Academic Administrators Procedure Manual](#).

Seldin, P. (Ed.). (1999) *Changing practices in evaluating teaching*. Bolton, MA: Anker.

Seldin, P. (2004). *The teaching portfolio: A practical guide to improved performance and promotion/tenure decisions*. 3rd edition, Bolton, MA: Anker.

Tables 2 and 3 in Section 3: Defining Competence and Excellence in Teaching include representative examples of ways in which material included in a dossier might be matched with criteria defining effective teaching. This chart uses the [U of T Provostial Guidelines for Developing Written Assessments of Effectiveness of Teaching in Promotion and Tenure Decisions](#). Many divisions have also developed divisional criteria defining effective teaching; as intended, **Divisional Guidelines are more specific and relevant to teaching in those divisions and must be used when available as they carry the weight of policy**. Such guidelines, whether Provostial or Divisional, are indeed guidelines, and are not meant to delimit or identify all possible characteristics of effective teaching. These guidelines should be reviewed with instructors early in the tenure review, continuing status review, and promotion process. Evaluators might note that evidence for each criterion might be distributed in multiple components of the dossier and that certain aspects of effective teaching might be represented by additional evidence submitted with a tenure review, continuing status review, and promotion file but not included in the dossier.