

## Drafting a Teaching Portfolio

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**Objectives:** This document will help you learn about...

- What constitutes a (strong) teaching portfolio
- Benefits of preparing teaching portfolio
- Opportunities to develop your teaching skills

A teaching portfolio is “a coherent set of materials, including work samples and reflective commentary on them, compiled by a faculty member [or applicant or non-faculty teacher] to inquire into and represent [their] teaching practice as related to student learning and development” (Pat Hutchings (1993), American Association of Higher Education). While often associated with faculty job searches, a teaching portfolio is an opportunity for you to demonstrate how you use pedagogy and best practices in your teaching, whether you are applying to academic jobs, securing a promotion, or being nominated for a teaching award or are looking for personal reflection and professional growth.

Your teaching portfolio, especially if submitted for a job application or for an award nomination, should convey to the reader that you are an effective teacher, similar to how a scientific manuscript should convey that you are an effective researcher who has published sound scientific findings. The make-up of these two documents is also similar, as shown below:<sup>1</sup>

### Teaching Portfolio

Teaching statement  
Pieces of evidence  
Description, analysis of evidence  
Conclusion  
Supplementary information

### Scientific Manuscript

Abstract, Introduction  
Results  
Discussion  
Conclusion  
Supplementary information

Together, the components of the teaching portfolio give you the opportunity to reflect on your teaching experiences and show how you implement them effectively.

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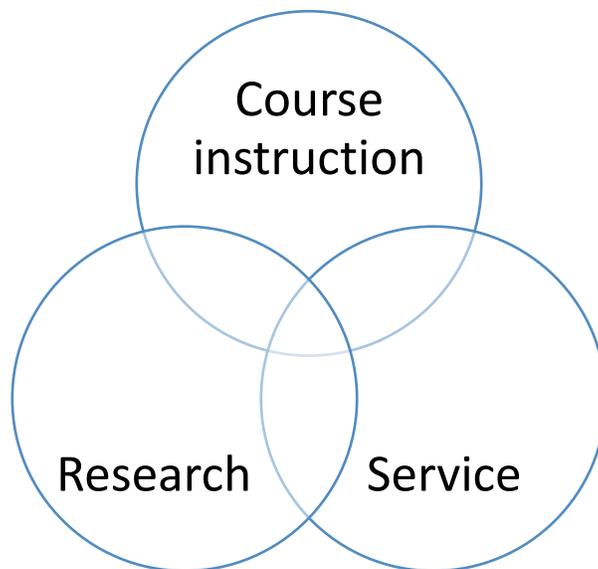
<sup>1</sup> K. R. Bain and J. M. Lang, *Recasting the Teaching Portfolio* (1997)

## Teaching Statement

The teaching statement, also called a teaching philosophy or statement of teaching philosophy, sets the tone for your entire portfolio. In it, you should include the objectives of your teaching, how you achieved those objectives (**evidence** and briefly, **analysis of evidence**), and why you want to achieve those objectives, perhaps with respect to a job for which you are applying (**conclusion**). In these pieces of the teaching statement, you demonstrate teaching pedagogy and best practices you implement in your teaching.

## Evidence

Your portfolio should emphasize your teaching-related activities beyond what you can fit into the teaching statement. Teaching isn't just course instruction; you might include examples of teaching in research and service activities (e.g. outreach for K-12 students, guest lectures) in addition to the teaching you do in the classroom.



## Analysis of Evidence

Examples of evidence include feedback from a variety of sources—from students or other “audience” members, such as attendees at an outreach event, to instructors for whom you were a teaching assistant or other supervisors. Feedback can be solicited or unsolicited (or a combination of the two) and may take the form of written comments or ratings (e.g. from teaching evaluations).

While presenting evidence in your teaching portfolio is useful, it is only as effective as the story you tell about it. For instance, you could merely include a printout of your teaching evaluations...

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Please rate the instructor's ability to clearly outline the objectives of this class.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤ | 8. Please rate the instructor's ability to interact respectfully with others.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤          |
| 2. Please rate the instructor's ability to speak in front of a group.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤                    | 9. Please rate the instructor's ability to effectively answer questions.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤               |
| 3. Please rate the instructor's ability to lead a group in discussion.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤                   | 10. Please rate the instructor's ability to encourage participation.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤                   |
| 4. Please rate the instructor's grasp of the material for this class.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤                    | 11. Could you confidently recommend this instructor to others?<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤                         |
| 5. Please rate the instructor's enthusiasm for this class.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤                               | 12. Would you take another class with this instructor?<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤                                 |
| 6. Please rate the instructor's preparation for this class.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤                              | 13. Please rate your satisfaction with this class based <b>only</b> on the instructor.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤ |
| 7. Please rate the instructor's availability.<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤  |   |

...but you could also take the time to explain how you addressed feedback (especially feedback that makes you aware of areas in your teaching that could be improved).

I often spent a lot of time writing helpful comments, suggestions and corrections on individual student assignments only to discover the students often never read them! For example, some comments I received were:

"It took a long time for me to figure out what was expected on the post labs and experimental sections..."  
- CHEM 241 student (FALL 2011)

"I thought she could give more detailed feedback."  
- CHEM 241 student (FALL 2011)

This prompted me to collate all my comments into one handout that I gave to the students with their graded work (See: Appendix A - Course materials, Samples of handouts). Feedback was unambiguously labeled as such. To my delight, variations of the comment...

"She provided useful feedback"

... were abundant in my formal and informal evaluations.

The latter demonstrates that you reflect on your feedback and use it to improve your teaching, a hallmark of a good teacher. You should also talk about what teaching practices you implemented and why they did (or didn't) work.

## Conclusion

While your teaching portfolio probably won't include a separate conclusion section, a strong teaching portfolio will include conclusions in both your teaching statement and in your analysis of evidence. In the teaching statement, your "conclusion" will explain why you want to achieve your teaching objectives and how you plan to apply teaching best practices to your work with students. When analyzing your feedback, your "conclusion" might explain why a change in your teaching was effective or how you plan to address feedback in the future.

## Supplementary Information

You should explain your approaches to teaching clearly in your teaching statement and in your analysis of evidence, but it is also often helpful to include concrete examples of what you did. Supplementary information serves to illustrate what types of materials you have implemented in your classroom or in other areas of teaching, and it also serves to share examples of your work while your reader's interest is piqued after reading the rest of your portfolio.

There are numerous examples of work you can include, but here are some examples:

- Course syllabi or assignments you designed or modified
- Plans for outreach activities
- Handouts or worksheets you developed
- Lesson plan for a guest lecture
- Materials from workshops you led, such as worksheets or lesson plans
- Examples of active learning activities you've planned or implemented, either in the classroom, at a seminar, or in outreach activities
- Excerpts of or links to teaching-related writing (reflective blog posts, journal articles)

You should be creative with your supplementary information and show examples of your work that will help you stand apart as someone who is thoughtful about designing a course or other teaching activity. Lecturing or TAing a course is not necessary; rather, demonstrating thoughtfulness and reflection on teaching pedagogy—in whatever context—is what makes for a strong teaching portfolio.

**It is important to review your teaching portfolio and identify gaps, after which you can fill them in!** On the following page is a chart you can use to reflect on the strengths of your teaching portfolio and to come up with a game plan for what you can do to make it even stronger, followed by resources you can use to fill in those gaps.

## Teaching Portfolio Reflection

| Component                 | What you have: | What you need: | What you'll do: |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Teaching statement        |                |                |                 |
| Evidence + analysis       |                |                |                 |
| Supplementary information |                |                |                 |

**At Caltech, there are numerous resources for building your own teaching portfolio.** You can consult with the Caltech Center for Teaching, Learning, and Outreach (CTLO, <http://ctlo.caltech.edu>) about teaching opportunities, implementing or revising effective teaching strategies in your own teaching, and feedback on your teaching portfolio and other teaching materials.

Opportunities include:

- The Caltech Project for Effective Teaching (CPET) two certificate programs in university teaching
  - Certificate of Interest
  - Certificate of Practice
- E 110 – Principles of University Teaching and Learning (winter term)
- Teaching statement workshop (summer and fall terms)
- ABCs of Course Design short course (fall and spring terms)
- Teaching a tutorial course (e.g. Ch 101, Bi 23)
- Designing outreach activities and implementing them on or off campus

Whatever you pursue, there are plenty of resources on campus to help you lay the foundation for your teaching portfolio!