

Teaching Dossier: A Guide for Documenting Teaching

At Ontario Tech University, we strive to support and promote the highest quality teaching and learning within our programs. Good teaching not only involves those activities that stimulate and engage students in the understanding and application of the course material, good teaching also involves critical reflection on what you are seeking to achieve in your teaching, the different ways in which you may reach those goals, critically assessing your progress, and documenting your results.

This guide will assist you in documenting and assess your teaching accomplishments and contributions in a systematic way. It also forms the basis for ongoing teaching improvement and development and serves to ground the decisions you make about your teaching practice. Additionally, this guide provides a template for gathering and presenting your teaching contributions and accomplishments for teaching award nominations, grant proposals, third year reviews, and tenure and promotion applications. As always, this is simply a guide and we recommend you consult your faculty and other sources to determine the best way to document your teaching for specific purposes.

1. PURPOSE AND USE

A teaching dossier provides a summary of your major teaching accomplishments and strengths in the form of selected short descriptions of activities and achievements that convey the scope and quality of your work. Unlike a teaching portfolio, your dossier should present a selection of information about your teaching (not an exhaustive compilation), which systematically connects decisions that you have made about teaching and your development as a teacher with your teaching philosophy. Revising and refining this document is an ongoing scholarly process.

While no single perspective accurately reflects the complexity of teaching, informed judgments on teaching quality can best be made when multiple sources of evidence and criteria are brought to bear on the full range of your accomplishments and contributions to teaching. Course planning and development, classroom performance and research and papers on teaching and learning are some activities that are considered in an assessment of teaching quality. A teaching dossier provides a succinct and coherent overview of these numerous sources.

2. GETTING STARTED

Ideally, you will be collecting artifacts from your very first teaching assignment and continue to gather supporting documentations on an ongoing basis either in a big box or electronically on your desktop. Your collection might include course outlines, course evaluations, letters or emails from students or others who give you feedback about your teaching, samples of student work, samples of resources, learning aids and learning objects that you have created, modified and/or used with your courses, course notes, etc. You will want to gather evidence of your activities and professional development so that when you are ready to create your dossier, you have a broad

range of materials in your collection that will inform and support your dossier.

3. COMPONENTS OF A TEACHING DOSSIER

Part 1: Approach to Teaching (approximately 4 pages total)

The items in this section provide a basis for judgments on the information presented in the remaining sections and enable you to direct attention to the areas that you see as most important to your teaching practice.

A. Statement of Teaching Philosophy (approximately 1/2 page)

A statement of teaching philosophy is a personal statement that sets out the central components of what you are trying to achieve in your teaching and in the learning goals you have for your students in the context of your discipline. Your teaching statement serves as a thesis statement supported by the subsequent sections of your dossier with evidence of specific practices and strategies you use in your courses, the scope of your responsibility and contributions and your success in achieving your teaching and learning goals.

Listed below are a few questions that you might find helpful in developing your teaching philosophy.

- What are your learning goals for your students? For yourself? Why?
- How are these goals reflected in your courses?
- How would you describe the ideal learning environment?
- How do you conceptualize learning? Teaching?
- How do you embed learning technology into your courses?
- How do you engage students in your subject/field and make your teaching inclusive?

B. Teaching Strategies (approximately 1-2 pages)

This section provides evidence on *how* you bring your teaching philosophy to life, identifying the key strategies and methodologies that you have integrated into your courses, including the use of learning technologies. For each of these key strategies, provide a brief description and explain how it advances your teaching goals. You might include such aspects as how you structure your course; how you make decisions about course content, resources, technology integration and assignments; how you respond to different learning needs; how you assess students; and how you integrate students' feedback and encourage participation.

C. Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Student Learning (approximately 1-2 pages)

This section measures the success of your teaching strategies (section B) in light of your teaching philosophy (section A), and provides an analysis of the evidence that documents your success in fostering and supporting students' learning. To document your success, you should collect and synthesize information from a variety of sources such as individual student achievements, learning outcomes, class outcomes and course evaluations. The results of any classroom research you have undertaken can be used to demonstrate your students' learning and achievements. In addition, you should outline steps you have taken to adjust your teaching because of your self-evaluation and students' feedback and how it relates to your teaching strengths and areas for attention.

Provide samples of indicators for this analysis, such as:

- Overview of course evaluation results (summarize the information in your course evaluations in a succinct and informative way, for example, on a graph or table, plot key questions relating to your teaching goals and strategies to show how they have developed over time, include response rates, comparative data, and rating scale if appropriate). **Note:** *High or low ratings in a single course or year do not provide conclusive evidence of exceptional or unacceptable teaching. In addition, results with low response rates are not valid predictors of effective performance;*
- Selected student comments;
- Summary of classroom research (e.g., one-minute papers, informal surveys, mid-year feedback, etc.);
- Other indicators of student achievement (e.g. professional competitions, graduate placements, best paper awards, etc.).

D. Professional Development of Teaching/Learning (approximately 1/2 page)

This section answers the question: how do you keep up with new developments in university teaching? It demonstrates your commitment to ongoing growth and improvement as a teacher through the acquisition of new knowledge, the examination of new approaches to teaching and learning, and participation in dialogue about teaching and learning (e.g., teaching development sessions, conferences, professional networks in which you have participated).

Part 2: Teaching Responsibilities and Contributions (approximately 4 pages)

The information in this section reflects your roles and responsibilities in your faculty and program, substantiates your professionalism as a teacher, highlights recognition received, demonstrates your leadership in this area, and identifies activities that have contributed to the strengthening the culture of teaching at Ontario Tech more generally. Items in this section combine with the previous section to provide a context to inform subsequent judgments about the quality of your teaching.

Many of these items will be listed in the teaching section of your *curriculum vitae*; however, you may wish to elaborate on specific items within the dossier to situate your contributions more fully. Subsections can include all or some of the following:

A. Courses Taught

- Include enrolment information, level of responsibility, co-teaching, supervision of TAs, etc.
- Provide a context for the courses, e.g., complexity of course content, course format, student demographics, special challenges, and whether they are mandatory or elective courses
- Detail other teaching activities, such as supervision of a teaching or research practicum, capstone projects, lab or thesis course component, coaching, field placement supervision, mentoring, etc.

B. Supervision

- Describe the nature and extent of your role as supervisor for advanced students preparing theses or dissertations, indicating your responsibilities and the level of study (whether doctoral, masters or undergraduate level)
- Indicate outcomes of your supervision e.g., theses title and acceptance date, citations of student publications, dates and venues of public presentations

C. Teaching Awards and Nominations

- List external and internal teaching awards, including date, sponsoring unit or organization, and how initiated (e.g., by students, peers, unit, etc.).

D. Teaching Related Contributions - Items may include:

- Mentoring TAs and/or colleagues on course development or teaching improvement, professional exchanges with colleagues inside or outside Ontario Tech on, for example, course materials or teaching methods, etc.;
- Instances where you played a leadership role or were recognized for your teaching ability (e.g., presentations on teaching, requests to demonstrate your teaching, workshop facilitation, etc.);
- Committee membership and the nature of your contribution (e.g., describe how you have made a difference to the committee and its work).

E. Curriculum Development and/or Development of Innovative Teaching/Learning Materials - Items may include:

- Revisions to or development of new courses and programs, individually or in collaboration with colleagues to align courses with program goals;
- Integration of new technology in own courses and/or support to others, promoting such approaches by others in your year, program or faculty;
- Development of curriculum materials and other teaching resources that have been acknowledged by others or have subsequently been used elsewhere, such as published or unpublished curriculum materials, textbooks, workbooks, case studies, lab manuals, etc.;
- Development and use of learning technologies.

F. Research and Publications Related to Teaching - Items may include:

- Research, conference presentations, articles, etc. appearing in general or discipline-specific publications on teaching;
- Grant and course releases for teaching projects.

Part 3: Appendices:

Multiple course summary

- Course evaluation reports from Ontario Tech and elsewhere, if appropriate
- Samples of other evaluations completed by students, if appropriate
- Examples of student achievement
- Other materials if referenced in dossier

For further information and assistance on developing your teaching dossier, Dr. Susan L. Forbes at susan.forbes@ontariotechu.ca