

STATEMENT OF

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Writing Your Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Many students wait until they are required to provide a Statement of Teaching Philosophy before embarking on the journey of writing one, but for most students there is value in taking time to reflect on your teaching throughout your graduate program.

Know Your Audience

The members of the hiring committee are looking for their next colleague, each with different ideas about whom that might be, but with a shared desire to hire someone who feels like a “good fit.” They are quite likely wondering about:

- Will you be able to handle all aspects of the job?
- Do you really want to teach or is it a means to another end?
- What pedagogical methods do you employ?
- What influences your teaching?
- What do you bring to the department?
- What opportunities do you bring to the students you will teach?
- How will you respond to the day-to-day tasks associated with teaching?
- How will you navigate competing priorities?

Once in job search mode, conduct research about the institutions and departments to which you are applying by:

- Visiting an institution’s web site and exploring the words and phrases used to capture its mission and to describe the educational experience and learning environment;
- Looking at web pages in the department to which you are applying and gathering an understanding about what aspects of the academic experience are emphasized;
- Viewing the curricula vita of various faculty members within the department. These can often be found on faculty web pages or with an Internet search;
- Identifying the professional associations in which faculty members have involvement and also looking for indications of expectations for involvement outside the department and classroom;
- Using LinkedIn or ResearchGate as a tool to learn more about your potential future colleagues.

What Do I Write About?

Though there are so many different directions in which you can take your Statement of Teaching Philosophy, there are also key questions that you can ask yourself to give focus to your writing. Before writing your first draft, consider reflecting on how you would answer the following questions:

- What are your objectives as a teacher?
- What skills do you desire to facilitate in your students?
- What are your responsibilities and what are the responsibilities of your students?
- In what ways do you orient your students to the nuances of the academic field?
- Are there national issues and trends that inform your teaching of your discipline? What are they and what impact have they had?
- What are the methods and technology that you use to reach or exceed your goals?
- What are the methods you use when you encounter challenges in delivering content?
- Identify detailed examples of how you have utilized specific strategies, under what circumstances and what were the outcomes or results?
- How do you make decisions about what to teach and the content you will use?
- How does your teaching adapt to learners and environments?
- How do you measure your effectiveness?
- What mechanisms do you use to assess students and evaluate levels of performance?
- What do you need to improve upon in your teaching?
- What is the fit with your teaching, research, publications and presenting?
- What is your view about your role outside the classroom?
- What approach would you take to teach a course you have never taught before?
- What lasting impressions do you want to have on your students, within your department and discipline?
- What have you learned about teaching?
- What have you learned about students?
- What’s your approach to diversity in the classroom?
- What is the role of academic technology in the classroom?

You won't write about everything on which you reflect, but as you take time to think about what defines you as a teacher and candidate you can make note of content that you would like to include in a first draft version of your Statement of Teaching Philosophy. This type of reflection will also enhance your ability to answer future interview questions.

Content Areas

The most effective style is one that is narrative, example-based, and reveals both your development and competencies as a teacher.

Introductory Paragraph Possible Content

Consider featuring one or more of the following in relationship to the position to which you are applying: overall teaching philosophy, goals in your role, sense of purpose, perspectives and experience that you bring.

- Grab the attention of the reader with an impactful first sentence.
- Project enthusiasm and fit.

Main Body Paragraph(s) Possible Content

Provide examples of how you employ various teaching and classroom engagement strategies, share a teaching or classroom challenge and how you resolved it – featuring a positive outcome and your growth in teaching and learning.

- The reader needs to be able to visualize the student experience in your classroom and understand the skills you possess through the examples and results/outcomes you share.

Concluding Paragraph Possible Content

Summarize and share where you are heading in the development of your teaching, mention future goals and what you intend to accomplish in the position to which you are applying.

- The reader wants to get a sense that your development as a teacher is always moving forward.
- If asked to share ideas about future classes you would like to teach, you could include that content in this paragraph.
- You might want to tailor this paragraph to the specific university or college to which you are applying, making a connection between what they value and seek, and your experience.

Tips

- Write a couple of drafts before you ever need a final version.
- Involve others, who have experience in your discipline, in reading your Statement and ask for input.
- Invite others who do not know you well, to read your Statement and ask them to share what they learned about you.
- Follow guidelines and page length if provided (typically not more than 1-2 pages).
- Focus on creating a vivid impression of what makes you unique.
- Make sure you have used evidence-based examples.
- Ask several people to proofread your writing.
- When applying to specific positions become knowledgeable about the values and/or goals that the department and institution express as being important to the education of their students.
- Schedule a review of your Teaching Statement at the Center for Career Development.