

TEACHING DOCUMENTS

Teaching Statements

Sometimes called a Statement of Teaching Philosophy, this document—typically one to two pages—is where you bring your teaching to life for the search committee. A good teaching statement conveys your teaching experience, approach, and accomplishments. Sometimes applicants think that “teaching philosophy” means they are supposed to only describe their theories about teaching. On the contrary, your statement should illustrate your approach to teaching and student learning with evidence, anecdotes, and examples. Consider using the STARS method (page 33 of this guide) to organize your examples. Start early, write multiple drafts, and do not hesitate to seek another perspective from a career coach, or a writing consultant at the Hume Center for Writing and

Speaking of the School or Engineering’s Technical Communication Program.

Getting started is often the hardest part of writing a teaching statement—see the sidebar “Getting Started on Your Teaching Statement: Questions to Consider” for questions to jump-start your writing process.

BEAM has a packet of teaching statements from candidates in a range of disciplines. These examples can help you develop a statement that highlights your approach and strengths.

Teaching Portfolio

You may be asked to supply additional documents related to your teaching. This is often called either a “Teaching Portfolio”

or “Evidence of Teaching Excellence.” This is a curated portfolio that can include actual or sample syllabi, assignments you have designed, and student evaluations of your teaching.

Whenever you teach or TA a course, download your student evaluations from Axess and save emails sent by students. They will come in handy later to jog your memory, remind you of your strengths, and provide feedback for how you can grow and develop as a teacher. The quantitative scores can show your skill. Selected quotations can illustrate your strengths. It is permissible to curate your materials and note this with “Selected Comments.” Don’t send raw data files; they are too long and difficult for readers to understand. If your Portfolio is large, a short table of contents can help the reader.

Getting Started on Your Teaching Statement: Questions to Consider

Use these questions to get your ideas about teaching down on paper. Pick the questions that speak to you; no need to answer them all. The ideas you record will get you started as you write your teaching statement.

1. What attracted you to your field that you hope to pass on to your students? What are you passionate about?
2. How does/will your teaching contribute to your students’ education? Why should students care about your field?
3. How does your research inform your teaching and vice versa?
4. What opportunities have you had to teach something to someone (think outside the traditional classroom)? What approaches did you take to teaching in this context?
5. How have you approached your role as a mentor? What strategies did you use to encourage your protégé?
6. “I feel best as an instructor when...”
7. Think of concrete moments of your teaching. What examples come to mind that worked and highlight the very best of your teaching? Why were these moments so successful?
8. Think of a challenging situation in the classroom that turned out fine. What did you do to handle the challenge? What did you learn from it?
9. What learning goals do you have for your students? Think of a specific course. What should students be able to do at the end of your course? Why are these goals important?
10. How do you know that your students learn what they are supposed to learn? How do you assess student learning?
11. How do you engage your students in the classroom? How do/will you motivate them?
12. How do you take into account your students’ diverse backgrounds, experiences, and learning habits and skills?
13. Review your teaching evaluations: What are the highlights? Can you detect patterns in the comments? What are the areas students praise or want you to improve?
14. Which courses would you like to redesign or develop?
15. How do you grow as a teacher? How do you invigorate your teaching? What will you do to continue learning about teaching and student learning?

Adapted from the Stanford University Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning’s “Writing a Compelling Teaching Statement.”