



Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement

Your teaching philosophy should reflect your personal values and beliefs about teaching. It is a self-reflective statement that describes what you believe and provides concrete examples of what you do in the classroom to support those beliefs. It is written in the first person and should convey a professional image of your teaching. A well-developed teaching philosophy will provide a way to purposefully assess your teaching approach and enable you to articulate your teaching beliefs and values to your students, your peers, and search or teaching award committees.

Most teaching philosophy statements are 1-4 pages long and cover three core areas (objectives, methods, evaluation). They tend to be discipline-specific and will have nuances that reflect that. A teaching philosophy is also a document in progress, and it should change and evolve as your teaching experiences build.

Did you know? Graduate Students and Post Docs may work with CCE's writing consultants to develop their teaching statements. To learn more, visit [ISU's Center for Communication Excellence website](#).

Core Areas

What are your objectives as a teacher?

It is important to start by describing where you want to end. In other words, what are your objectives as a teacher? The rest of your philosophy statement should support these objectives which should be achievable and relevant to your teaching responsibilities; avoid vague or overly grandiose statements. On the other hand, you will want to demonstrate that you strive for more than mediocrity or only nuts-and-bolts transference of facts.

Consider these writing prompts:

- Do you hope to foster critical thinking and problem-solving strategies, facilitate the acquisition of life-long learning skills, or prepare students to function effectively in an information economy?
- What is your role in orienting students to a discipline, to what it means to be an educated person in your field?
- How do you delineate your areas of responsibility as compared to your students' responsibilities?
- In what specific ways do you want to improve the education of students in your field?
- Are there discussions in academic journals or in professional organizations about shortcomings in the education of students today or unmet needs in the discipline and do you have ideas about how to address those shortcomings and needs?

How will you achieve those objectives?

Once you have a clear vision of your teaching objectives, you can discuss the methods you use, or will use, to achieve those objectives. Here is also where you can elaborate on your knowledge of learning theory, cognitive development, curriculum design, etc. as the topic(s) relate to the teaching strategies you implement.

It is useful to explain specific strategies or methods you use and tie these strategies directly to your teaching objectives. For example, if you include a field trip as part of your course, what are the learning objectives associated with the fieldtrip? How do you decide whether to use collaborative or individual projects based on your teaching objectives? When appropriate, relate your strategies to national-level needs for teaching in your discipline. If you have developed instructional materials that have been or could be disseminated, be sure to discuss them and how they support your teaching objectives and possibly national-level disciplinary objectives.

How will you measure your teaching effectiveness?

In this section discuss how you intend to measure your effectiveness relative to the objectives and methods you have outlined. Because your teaching objectives are most likely related to student learning, you will probably use measures of student attainment of learning outcomes, rather than simply how many chapters you can cover from the textbook. The end of semester course evaluations completed by students can also be used to measure teaching effectiveness. Consider having a peer evaluate your teaching and provide input on the quality of teaching materials you have developed as well as your effectiveness in the classroom. Having multiple methods of evaluation rather than just a single source provides a more comprehensive picture of your teaching effectiveness.

Why?

A final section to include in your teaching philosophy statement is quite simply- Why do you teach? Here is where you can be, if not grandiose, at least a bit grand. What, to you, are the personal rewards of teaching? How do you want to make the world or at least higher education better? When you are overworked and feel undervalued, to what ideals do you return in order to rejuvenate yourself and inspire your students? How do you want to make a difference in the lives of your students? Why does teaching matter to you?

Summary

Responses to all of these questions will require some reflective thought and you will likely benefit from discussing them with other faculty in your department. Consider bouncing your responses off of your colleagues, ponder their responses, re-evaluate your positions, revise, talk some more, etc. Over time your responses will change to reflect how you have grown and changed as a teacher. Think of your teaching philosophy as a work in progress over the course of your career.

Writing a Teaching Philosophy

Susan Yager, Professor in English, is a frequent lecturer in the CELT Preparing Future Faculty program on the topic of writing a teaching philosophy statement. In this 2013 [Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement video](#) (12m 31s), she shares her experience in developing her own teaching philosophy statement and tips for beginner writing for the first time.

After, [review the second video](#), which features Karen Bovenmyer, CELT Program Specialist and co-director for the Preparing Future Faculty program. Karen provides a step-by-step process for developing a teaching statement. You can follow along [using this PDF](#).



ISU Center for Communication Excellence (CCE)

Graduate Students and Post Docs have the ability to meet with CCE's writing consultants. To learn more, visit [ISU's Center for Communication Excellence website](#).

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