

Use of Teaching Portfolio to Capture Your Scholarship in Teaching

Teaching is a very complex task which involves much more than mere instruction in class. Developing, reviewing and redesigning courses, revising curriculum, developing teaching materials, supervising teaching assistants, advising and monitoring students both in and outside of classroom, advising students in their research project or laboratories, are just some of the obvious ones on the long list of “Work of Teaching”. In order to keep themselves up-to-date, faculty attend to all kinds of professional development activities; conduct instructional and classroom research; conduct self-review and evaluate the teaching of other colleagues.

While doing all these, faculty are demonstrating their different capacities “to draw the strands of a field together in a way that provides both coherence and meaning, to place what is known in context and open the way for connection to be made between the knower and the known; to represent a subject in ways that transcend the split between intellectual substance and teaching process, usually having to do with metaphors, analogies and experiments used; and to help students make meaning out of whatever the teacher says or does” (Edgerton, Hutchings and Quinlan) . In other words, faculty are demonstrating their scholarship in teaching through many different tasks.

As scholarly teachers, how can you capture the essence of these capacities and portray the richness and complexities of your achievements in teaching? A teaching portfolio is a good way to do so. It is “a coherent set of materials, including work samples and reflective commentary on them, compiled by a faculty member, to represent his/her teaching practice, as related to student learning and development.” (O’Neil & Wright) It is a summary of major accomplishments drawn from different sources, such as information from your peers and students, findings from self-appraisal, records of your teaching responsibilities, materials used in teaching, etc. It allows you to reflect on the complexity of your teaching situations and your teaching accomplishments. It supports your effort to improve your teaching, as well as to assess its effectiveness. And the most important of all—it places responsibility for evaluating teaching in the hands of the faculty.

What to include in the Teaching Portfolio?

Kelly and Lo differentiated the core and additional elements in a teaching portfolio:

Core Elements—information that all faculty members could be expected to provide

1. Summary of Teaching Responsibilities and Brief Description of Teaching Activities in the current academic year

For example:

- Course Title
- Students per semester
- Lectures/tutorial/laboratory sessions per week
- Brief description of course level, content, teaching methods plus any other exceptional features
- Supervision of teaching assistant and/or students in laboratories, fieldwork and research projects and
- Other course-related responsibilities such as acting as course co-ordinator, working in the Course Review Committee, etc.

2. Your Teaching Outcomes and Evaluation of Teaching

Your major teaching outcome would be your students' learning and achievement in the course. Some examples are their project reports, assignments, and commendations on practicums. You can also refer to the performance of students who have successfully completed the course, your graduate students, and careers of your past students.

As for evaluation of teaching, ratings and written comments can be collected from various sources, such as students' course-end evaluation, peer review and classroom observations, as well as critique on course materials.

3. Critical Self Appraisal

This is an important part of the "Teaching Portfolio". You should discuss what you intend to achieve through your teaching activities and what steps you have taken to reach your teaching goals, for example:

- What do you want your students to achieve?
- How do you keep your courses up-to-date?
- What kind of evaluations do you conduct?
- How do you approach assessment of learning (both formal and informal assessment)?
- What resources do you use in teaching, for example video, outside speakers, study guides?
- Do you conduct on-going classroom-based research to improve teaching?
- What kind of access do students have to you outside scheduled classes?

Additional Elements—which may or may not apply to any particular situation

4. Course Design and Modification

You can record your efforts in writing or re-writing the course plan and its detailed specification, or your work with the Course Planning or Review Teams here.

5. Development of Learning and Assessment Activities

For example:

- new learning exercises, field trip, or laboratory sessions
- efforts to improve test construction and validity
- new feedback mechanisms
- revised grading criteria
- findings from related studies

6. Development of Teaching Materials

Describe any teaching resource materials that you have developed for students, stating why they were developed and in what context they are used. Some examples are:

- teaching manuals
- text adaptations and handouts
- study guides
- computer software
- audio-visual material

7. Professional Development Activities Related to Teaching

Include all your professional development activities related to teaching, for example:

- attendance at workshops, seminars or a formal program on teaching and learning
- membership of associations which deal with educational aspects of your discipline or higher education in general
- educational journals which you read or subscribe to
- subscriptions to electronic discussion lists on aspects of teaching and higher education

8. Presentations, Research, and Publications on Teaching

Here you should list activities intended to contribute to the development of teaching in higher education in a general sense, for example:

- workshops and seminars conducted by you
- publications in relation to teaching
- software developed to assist teaching or assessment in general
- lectures given to professional groups
- teaching-related conferences which you have organized or assisted in organizing

9. Administrative and Committee Work Related to Teaching

List relevant committees in which you are involved both inside and outside the University, for example, external examiner duties, service on departmental teaching committees.

The list is adapted from:

Kelly, M. & Lo, T. "What to Include in Your Teaching Portfolio" in *Access*, Volume 5 No. 1, Professional Development Unit, City University of Hong Kong, April 1994, pp. 4-5.

How to create a teaching portfolio?

Steps suggested by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT):

Step 1 - Clarify teaching responsibilities

With the help of your department head and with reference to existing records, you can clarify and document your responsibilities and obligations in the department. Where there is no understanding, you can include a brief statement of your own assumptions concerning your responsibilities and obligations.

Step 2 - Select criteria for effective teaching

Paying particular attention to the statement in Step 1, you can refer to the above list of elements in a teaching portfolio and select those items which are most applicable to your assigned teaching responsibilities. Prepare a statement about accomplishments in each area.

Step 3 - Order the criteria

Arrange the statements in order that best fits your purpose, for example, in terms of their relative importance. Add brief elaboration or annotations to items which constitute major evidence to your accomplishment.

Step 4 - Compile back-up evidence

Originals such as evaluation questionnaires, samples of student work, examination papers, letters, etc. are back-up information which should be made available on request.

Step 5 - Incorporate portfolio into curriculum vitae

Summary

The process of creating a teaching portfolio provides the best opportunity for you to reflect on your teaching and see ways to improve. The product itself is a useful tool to document the complexity and richness of your teaching accomplishment and show your scholarship in teaching. It takes time to develop, but the effort and time spent is just another exemplification of your commitment and seriousness towards your teaching.

Seldin suggested to start the process in consultation with others, such as a department chair, an experienced colleague or a faculty development specialist, who can help you to focus on the key issues related to your teaching. It's worth a try!

References

Edgerton, R., Hutchings, P. & Quinlan, K. "Teaching as a Scholarly Act" in *The Teaching Portfolio—Capturing the Scholarship in Teaching*, American Association for Higher Education, 1991

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