

What is a philosophy of teaching statement?

- Your ideas about the teaching and learning process
- A description of how you teach and rationale for why you teach in a particular way

As part of the Academy of Teaching Scholars, participants in Tier One are required to complete a teaching philosophy within one month of joining the academy. Further, Tier One participants will submit a revised teaching philosophy at the completion of the program. This requirement is in place because a teaching philosophy statement helps faculty reflect on their teaching and make purposeful decisions about future teaching interactions. Also, a philosophy of teaching statement allows faculty to communicate their goals as educators and explain their instructional strategies, which have been informed by evidence about teaching and learning. Finally, a statement of this type can be used to inform award applications and promotion and tenure dossiers.

[Gail Goodyear and Douglas Allchin](#) (1998), in their study of the functions of a statement of teaching philosophy write,

"In preparing a statement of teaching philosophy, professors assess and examine themselves to articulate the goals they wish to achieve in teaching. . . . A clear vision of a teaching philosophy provides stability, continuity, and long-term guidance. . . . A well-defined philosophy can help them remain focused on their teaching goals and to appreciate the personal and professional rewards of teaching." (pp. 106–7)

What is the format of a philosophy of teaching statement?

[The University Center for the Advancement of Teaching at The Ohio State University](#) provides some overall guides that are helpful when working on your teaching statement, which you will find listed below.

There is no required content or set format. There is no right or wrong way to write a philosophy statement, which is why it is so challenging for most people to write one. You may decide to write in prose, use famous quotes, create visuals, use a question/answer format, etc.

It is generally 1–2 pages in length. For some purposes, an extended description is appropriate, but length should suit the context.

Use present tense, in most cases. Writing in first-person is most common and is the easiest for your audience to read.

Most statements avoid technical terms. Favor language and concepts that can be broadly appreciated. A general rule is that the statement should be written with the audience in mind. It may be helpful to have someone from your field read your statement and give you some guidance on any discipline-specific jargon and issues to include or exclude.

Include teaching strategies and methods to help people "see" you in the teaching setting. It is not possible in many cases for your reader to come to your classroom, clinic, or lab to actually watch you teach. By including very specific examples of teaching strategies, assignments, discussions, etc., you are able to let your reader take a mental "peek" into your teaching setting. Help them to visualize what you do and the exchange between you and your learners. For example, can your readers picture in their minds the learning environment you create for your learners?

Make it memorable and unique. What is going to set you apart? What brings a teaching philosophy to life is the extent to which it creates a vivid portrait of a person who is intentional about teaching practices and committed to his/her career.

What should content should I include in the statement?

Nancy Chism, an IUPUI faculty member in the School of Education and author of numerous articles and books about teaching and learning in postsecondary education, has outlined the main content that should be included in a philosophy of teaching statement.

Chism (1998), in her article, [*Developing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement*](#), suggests five major components.

1. Conceptualization of learning

Ask yourself such questions as “What do we mean by learning?” and “What happens in a learning situation?” Think of your answers to these questions based on your personal experience. Chism points out that some teachers have tried to express and explain their understanding of learning through the use of metaphor, because drawing comparisons with known entities can stimulate thinking, whether or not the metaphor is actually used in the statement. On the other hand, most instructors tend to take a more direct approach in conceptualizing learning, i.e., to describe what they think occurs during a learning episode, based on their observation and experience or based on current literature on teaching and learning.

2. Conceptualization of teaching

Ask yourself questions such as “What do we mean by teaching?” and “How do I facilitate this process as a teacher?” Chism suggests that personal teaching beliefs on how the instructor facilitates the learning process would be appropriate for this section. Again, the metaphor format can be used, but a common practice is a more direct description of the nature of a teacher with respect to motivating and facilitating learning. Along with the questions above, you may also address such issues as how to challenge students intellectually and support them academically and how the teacher can respond to different learning styles, help students who are frustrated, and accommodate different abilities. Furthermore, you may talk about how you as a teacher have come to these conclusions (e.g., through past experience as a student or teacher, or as a result of literature reading or taking classes).

3. Goals for students

This section should entail the description of what skills the teacher expects her/his students to obtain as the result of learning. You may address such issues as what goals you set for your classes, what the rationale behind them is, what kind of activities you try to implement in class in order to reach these goals, and how the goals have changed over time as you learn more about teaching and learning. For instance, you can describe how you have expected students to learn not only the content, but also skills such as critical thinking, writing, and problem solving, followed by elaboration on how you have designed/planned individual sessions towards accomplishing the goals.

4. Implementation of the philosophy

An important component of the statement of a teaching philosophy should be the illustration of how one’s concepts about teaching and learning and goals for learners are transformed into instructional strategies. Ask yourself, “How do I operationalize my philosophy of teaching in the classroom, clinic and/or lab?” and “What personal characteristics in myself or my learners influence the way in which I approach teaching?” To answer these questions, you may reflect on how you present yourself and course materials, what activities, assignments, and projects you implement in the teaching-learning process, how you interact with students in and outside class, and the consequences.

5. Professional growth plan

It is important for teachers to continue professional growth, and to do so, teachers need to set clear goals and means to accomplish these goals. Think about questions such as “What goals have I set for myself as a teacher?” and “How do I accomplish these goals?” You can elaborate this plan in your statement of teaching philosophy. For instance, you can illustrate how you have professionally grown over the years, what challenges exist at the present, what long-term development goals you have projected, and what you will do to reach these goals. Chism suggests that writing this section can help you think about how your perspectives and actions have changed over time.

In summary, these are the main questions Chism suggests to answer in a statement:

- How do people learn?
- How do I facilitate that learning?
- What goals do I have for my learners?
- Why do I teach the way that I do?
- What do I do to implement these ideas about teaching and learning in the classroom?
- Are these things working? Do my learners meet the goals?
- How do I know they are working?
- What are my future goals for growth as a teacher?

Are there examples I can review that will help me get started?

Yes! The Ohio State University has several examples available [here](#) that were

written by winners of the Graduate Associate Teaching Award.