

Brief Advice for Teaching Dossiers

February 2020

Teaching and Learning Services

What Is a Teaching Dossier?

A teaching dossier may be used for a variety of purposes: applying for a job, making your case for tenure and promotion, or being considered for a teaching award. Each type of dossier will have its own expectation or restrictions. Be sure to consult with someone who knows what the review process will entail and be sure to follow any guidelines that you've been given by the search or evaluation committee. The advice contained here is general, and may not apply perfectly to every situation.

The Teaching Philosophy Statement

The anchor for a teaching dossier is the teaching philosophy. This 1-2 page statement should reflect your goals and values associated with teaching, how those values inform your choices about methods or policies, and what outcomes you use to determine your success. For example, if your primary goal is for students to learn to think critically then you should emphasize the types of teaching activities and assignments that promote critical thinking, and then indicate how you evaluate whether students have learned this skill. Your philosophy should also give your readers a sense of what motivates you to teach, and what experiences are important to you. Each teaching philosophy will be very personal, and the key value is to set readers up to understand the rest of the dossier.

Thus, the rest of the dossier should support and connect to the teaching philosophy. The reader should be able to examine all of your documents and see a coherent description of who you are as an educator. You can do this explicitly, by writing your teaching philosophy in a way that points to subsequent sections or specific quotes. You may choose to be less 'obvious' as you structure your dossier, but you should make sure that there is a high degree of internal consistency between what you say you value, and the evidence that you provide.

For guidance on dossiers for tenure and promotion at MacEwan, please see the Dossier Guidebook that is posted in the portal (Faculty > Resource Materials > Tenure & Promotion).



Samples & Resources

For sample teaching philosophies and dossiers, we recommend resources created by colleagues at the Taylor Institute, at the University of Calgary: <https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/resources/teaching-philosophies-and-dossiers>

Perna, L.W. (2005). Sex differences in faculty tenure and promotion: The contribution of family ties. *Research in Higher Education*, 46, 277-307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-004-1641-2>

Perna, L.W. (2001). Sex and race differences in faculty tenure and promotion. *Research in Higher Education*, 42, 541-567. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011050226672>



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Compiling Your Teaching Dossier

What to Include?

Start with a list of items requested or required by the job ad, committee guidelines, or collective agreement. Common pieces of evidence include sample assignments, sample exam questions, quotes or copies of student evaluations (either official ones, or those that you've gathered informally), samples of student work (with permission), copies of peer evaluations, letters of support. Don't include every document you've ever used for teaching. Be selective, and think about how specific items will support the statements you've made in your philosophy or satisfy specific requirements by a reviewer or committee. Where possible, provide summaries of multi-year data and give your readers enough context to understand your discipline and your own career trajectory.

Because you cannot include every possible piece of evidence, you should include clear statements about why you selected the information that you did. For student evaluations of teaching, if you quote selectively or summarize information, be sure to indicate how you sampled, and whether complete evaluations are available if the committee requests them. You don't want to give the impression that you are only including the most favourable documents or evaluations, or that you see no room for development, so be sure to comment on things that have improved over time or goals that you have for future teaching.

General Organization

To organize the dossier, it is recommended that you start with the teaching philosophy, followed by summary statements that you write about your teaching experience, methods, and goals. These statements can be followed by the various pieces of

evidence, including student evaluations, teaching materials, and other documents. Most dossiers are at least 15-20 pages long, and many are much longer, so a good Table of Contents will help you to organize your materials and help your reader to navigate.

For more specific guidance on dossiers for tenure and promotion at MacEwan, please see the Dossier Guidebook that is posted in the portal. (Under the Faculty tab, select Resource Materials, and then click on Tenure and Promotion.)

