

**PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES**  
**ADJUNCT FACULTY TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD**  
**George Mason University**  
(Updated Fall 2017)

An effective teaching portfolio captures the scope and complexities of your teaching, documenting the various approaches, successes, ongoing refinement, and excellence of your educational work. It is a carefully crafted document that presents your teaching through a particular lens, which you define. This is an opportunity to share what is unique about your teaching in relation to your discipline and the learning of your students—your goal is to capture what makes your work worthy of recognition. Most important is evidence of the impact you have on your students' learning and achievement. The four criteria that will be used to evaluate your teaching portfolio are described later in these guidelines.

Your portfolio must include the following sections, placed in the binder that we will provide for you or submitted via PDF (see notes below).

We shall **strictly adhere to the page limit requests**; we shall not read beyond the maximum number of pages for a section, so follow those closely.

You are welcome to save paper by printing double-sided, but a double-sided page will count as two pages. **Please format all written materials in 11-12 pt. font with 1" margins.** Single-spaced text is acceptable. Appropriate use of pictures, graphics, and charts can help make the material easier to understand.

Portfolio Sections

- 1) *Philosophy of Teaching and Mentoring* (**maximum 3 pages**): This document should express the philosophies and practices that shape your teaching and include a reflection on your professional growth and development.
- 2) *Teaching Vita* (**maximum 2 pages**): This document should include your contact information, employment history, a list of courses taught, and a list of any students mentored.
- 3) *Course as Case Study* (**maximum 30 pages**): Pick one course that you can use to best illustrate how you meet the evaluation of teaching excellence criteria. In addition to the syllabus (*required, but does not count as part of your page limit*), documents that you might provide include prior iterations of portions of the syllabus or a discussion of course development and evolution; illustrative course materials such as major assignment descriptions, exercises, activities, student resources or handouts, exam questions, or homework assignments; and sample feedback to students.

It is important that you provide commentary on these documents that contextualizes your materials, explains how they serve as evidence for the evaluation criteria, and discusses how they illustrate key principles and practices of your teaching. The committee advises that you look for ways to ***interweave evidence with explanations*** rather than relying on a single narrative section that refers readers to multiple attachments. Not every document needs a separate explanation; explanations might take the form of short headnotes, margin comments, sticky notes, or text boxes.

- 4) *Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness & Impact*:
  - a) *Summary* of student ratings from all university evaluations for your most recent 6 semesters at Mason; summary should indicate class size. (**maximum 2 pages**)
  - b) Two support letters from Mason colleagues, administrators (department chair, program director, teaching unit coordinator, dean, etc.), or former Mason students or

mentees. At least one must be from a colleague or administrator and can, if available, be informed by teaching observations.

- c) Closing Statement: Reflection and commentary on parts 4a & 4b (**maximum 2 pages**)

**Note for Print Portfolios:** Your total portfolio must fit comfortably in the 1" binder that is provided to you. You may use tabs or dividers as those seem useful, but please do not insert pages into plastic sleeves. If you have a few materials that are so unique and experiential in nature that they cannot be conveyed through text you may include a limited number of those in electronic format.

**Note for PDF Portfolios:** We are happy to accept PDF portfolios—in total, or with one or two supplemental artifacts that cannot be PDF'd—as long as they follow the page-length and organization guidelines above. Because “flipping back and forth” in a PDF document is more challenging than in print, the committee’s advice about integrating explanations and evidence is even more relevant. If you work on a PC and can easily export clickable Table of Contents sub-headings to a PDF, we recommend you do so. (This is more difficult to achieve without extra software on a Mac, though Adobe Acrobat has a useful bookmarking function.)

Remember that the purposes of the portfolio are to record your efforts and achievements as an educator, to evidence your reflective practice and consequent improvement of both your teaching and student learning, and to document your teaching for external reviewers. Your portfolio should paint a compelling picture of you as a teacher while demonstrating evidence of the evaluation criteria for the portfolio.

Your portfolio should speak to the following questions, in relation to the four criteria described in the following pages:

- How have you learned to become an effective educator? What has contributed to your growth, development, and identity as an educator?
- How do you engage students within and outside the classroom to facilitate their learning?
- How do you know what your students are learning and achieving?

If you have any questions about the preparation of your portfolio, please contact the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning at 703-993-6200 or [stearns@gmu.edu](mailto:stearns@gmu.edu).

**CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION  
TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD PORTFOLIOS**

Below are the descriptions for the **four** criteria that will be used to evaluate your teaching portfolio and that should be demonstrated throughout your portfolio, particularly in your course as case study. The selection committee will be paying special attention to the quality of your evidence, so be deliberate and selective in your choices. You should use your commentary throughout the portfolio to identify why you made these choices and how they demonstrate for your readers your achievements related to the criteria below. For ideas about the diverse ways to provide this evidence, please see the online resource at [stearnscenter.gmu.edu](http://stearnscenter.gmu.edu) under “Teaching at Mason → Documenting Your Teaching.”

The selection committee will also be looking for clarity in the communication and documentation of your claims, so please keep in mind the following as you frame your case for teaching excellence.

- Consider your audience. The selection committee consists of faculty members from diverse backgrounds and disciplines who share your enthusiasm for teaching but may not share your expertise.
- Be authentic. Just as in the classroom, being yourself in your portfolio is critical.
- Write with as much clarity as possible. It is important to portray a clear sense of purpose, engagement and passion while consistently communicating your key ideas. Your portfolio should be coherent and present a lucid and cohesive picture of you as an excellent educator.
- Balance principles with practices. Your framework of *why* you choose a teaching approach and your examples of *how* you implement a teaching approach are equally valuable.

**Note:** This list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive; nominees are not expected to address every bullet point.

<b>Identity, Growth, and Reflective Practice as an Educator</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offers evidence of growth, risk-taking, and/or development as educator, over time and/or in relation to a single course</li><li>• Shows self-awareness of his/her educational values, goals, strengths and weaknesses</li><li>• Seeks out and builds on new knowledge to support his/her teaching</li><li>• Seeks out and builds on feedback on his/her teaching, from colleagues and/or students</li><li>• Articulates a distinct, integrated educational identity, pathway, or plan</li></ul>
<b>Support for Student Learning via Assignments, Activities, and Feedback</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Designs course materials to connect students with crucial aspects of a subject, field, and/or profession</li><li>• Links student learning to big-picture, real-world, and/or individually relevant situations</li><li>• Facilitates students’ active learning, participation, excitement, and exploration, in and beyond the classroom, via a range of strategies and modalities</li><li>• Works to create inclusive, engaging, ethical, respectful, and flexible spaces for student learning, to reach a range of students</li><li>• Uses scaffolding, collaborative learning, guided inquiry, and/or project-based learning to move students into more complex understandings or achievements</li><li>• Provides a variety of systematic, ongoing feedback to students to support their confidence and growth as learners and their increasing competencies in the subject area</li></ul>

### **Identification and Measurement of Student Learning**

- Demonstrates a broad view of student learning, including knowledge mastery, procedural competencies, creative capabilities, emotional engagement, and/or reflective understanding
- Defines a range of goals for learners within courses, including subject-matter goals, personal goals, and/or professional goals
- Is transparent in sharing goals, criteria, and assessment processes with students
- Employs a range of strategies to assess student learning, in-process and/or for final products
- Chooses and adapts assessment strategies to match specific activities, assignments, courses, goals, and/or student groups

### **Impact of Teaching In and Beyond the Classroom**

- Elicits positive responses from students and/or from faculty peers
- Mentors graduate or undergraduate students, and/or mentors other faculty members
- Engages in curriculum design or revision, or participates in educational program leadership
- Designs, integrates, and/or supports extracurricular or off-campus learning experiences
- Shares educational knowledge and experiences with other instructors
- Engages in scholarship of teaching and learning
- Includes two support letters, and they make a strong case for teaching effectiveness