

PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES
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, to capture what makes your work worthy of recognition. Most important is evidence of the ways you support your students' learning and achievement.

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. Whatever material you include as evidence of teaching excellence should be accompanied by an explanation/reflection; be sure that the reason(s) that you have included particular materials is clear to your reader.

Portfolio Criteria

Your portfolio should paint a compelling picture of you as a teacher, using whatever organizational or structural framework makes sense to you. You might elaborate on themes that emerged in your teaching statement, engage in a case study approach to a particular class or learning situation, build on a narrative or metaphor, or choose another approach. It's important keep in mind the evaluation categories for the portfolio:

- **Criterion 1:** Evidence of growth and reflective practice as an educator
- **Criterion 2:** Evidence of support for student learning and engagement, via assignments, activities, and/or feedback
- **Criterion 3:** Evidence of identification and measurement of student learning
- **Criterion 4:** Evidence of teaching effectiveness and impact

See more information on these criteria below.

Portfolio Structure

Your portfolio, in print or in PDF, must include the sections listed below.

We shall **strictly adhere to the page limit requests**; that is, 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 (see below for information about submitting a PDF portfolio). **Please format all written materials in 11-12 point font with 1" margins.** Single-spaced text is acceptable. Appropriate use of pictures, graphics, and charts can help make the material easier to understand.

- 1) **Introduction / Cover Letter** (*maximum 1 page*)
- 2) **Table of Contents**
- 3) **Teaching Statement** (*maximum 5 pages, same as—or revised from —the November version*)
- 4) **Teaching Vita** (*maximum 5 pages*)
- 5) **Main Body of Portfolio: Evidence and Reflections** (*up to 200 pages; see “Notes” below*)

The main body of your portfolio should speak especially to the first three evaluation criteria:

- A. How have you learned to become an effective educator? What has contributed to and represents your growth, development, and identity as an educator? (Criterion #1)
- B. How do you engage students within and outside the classroom to facilitate their learning? (Criterion #2)
- C. How do you know what your students are learning and achieving? (Criterion #3)

In addition, the committee notes that portfolios which ***interweave evidence with explanations*** are generally more effective than portfolios that rely on a single narrative section that refers readers to multiple attachments or clusters of evidence. You don't need to write a long essay for each section; your explanations might take the form of one or more of the following:

- a. Briefly annotated tables-of-contents for sections that help reviewers see why Document X was included and how it showcases evidence of teaching differently from or complementary to Document Y
- b. Short paragraphs or bullet-lists that highlight key features of the several syllabi or other documents that follow
- c. Show-and-tell sections that intersperse brief explanations or narratives with short syllabus excerpts, screen shots, student commentary, or assignment prompts
- d. Annotated assignments or student work, where headers, margin comments, textboxes, or sticky notes identify places where reviewers can see teaching or learning happening

- 6) **Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness & Impact** (*maximum 25 pages; also addresses Criterion #4*)
 - A. **Required: Summary** of student ratings from university evaluations (*maximum 3 pages*) that includes all courses taught in past three years; summary should indicate class size.
 - B. Optional: Testimonials (*maximum 10 pages*), which may include letters of support from students (graduate and undergraduate), colleagues, department chairs/deans, or other collaborators internal or external to the institution; student emails, comments from course evaluations, or thank you letters; reports of peers and administrators about your teaching, coaching/mentoring, advising, teaching-related administration, and classroom observations.
 - C. Optional: Evidence or explanation of the impact of your mentoring, curriculum or program development, or scholarship that integrates with your classroom teaching and extends your teaching impact, if not already included elsewhere in your portfolio.
 - D. **Required: Closing statement**, with reflection and commentary on evidence from this section (*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 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.)

Overall, you are asked to use discretion and selectivity: *more* is not by itself *better*.

If you have any questions about the preparation of your portfolio, please contact the Stearns Center at 3-6200 or 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. The selection committee will be paying special attention to the quality of your evidence, so be deliberate and selective in your choices. For each section of evidence—which may or may not be organized by major criteria—you should provide a brief commentary about why you made these choices and what they illustrate for your readers. For ideas about the diverse ways to provide this evidence, please see the online resource at 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.

Identity, Growth, and Reflective Practice as an Educator

- Offers evidence of growth, risk-taking, and/or development as educator, over time and/or in relation to a single course
- Shows self-awareness of his/her educational values, goals, strengths and weaknesses
- Seeks out and builds on new knowledge to support his/her teaching
- Seeks out and builds on feedback on his/her teaching, from colleagues and/or students
- Articulates a distinct, integrated educational identity, pathway, or plan

Support for Student Learning via Assignments, Activities, and Feedback

- Designs course materials to connect students with crucial aspects of a subject, field, and/or profession
- Links student learning to big-picture, real-world, and/or individually relevant situations
- Facilitates students' active learning, participation, excitement, and exploration, in and beyond the classroom, via a range of strategies and modalities
- Works to create inclusive, engaging, and flexible spaces for student learning, to reach a range of students
- Uses scaffolding, collaborative learning, guided inquiry, and/or project-based learning to move students into more complex understandings or achievements
- 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

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