



# Online Teaching Excellence Award 2026

Mason Online | George Mason University

## Portfolio Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

The Online Teaching Excellence Award (OTEA) recognizes outstanding online teaching at George Mason University. Your portfolio should tell a clear, compelling story of how you engage, support, and inspire learners—and how your online courses and teaching demonstrate measurable impact on student success.

If you have any questions about the OTEA Portfolio, please contact Darlene Smucny, Assistant Director, Quality in Online Instruction, Mason Online at [dsmucny@gmu.edu](mailto:dsmucny@gmu.edu)

### 1. Portfolio Overview

Your portfolio is a curated showcase of your online teaching practice. Organize it into **four sections**. Whether you submit separate PDFs or an online digital portfolio, each section should be clearly labeled and include multimedia artifacts (links, images of screenshots, videos, rubrics, etc.).

- **Section 1: Philosophy of Online Teaching & Mentoring**
- **Section 2: Teaching Vita & Acknowledgments**
- **Section 3: Evidence of Online Teaching Excellence & Innovation**
- **Section 4: Evidence of Online Teaching Effectiveness & Impact**

### 2. Format Options for Your Portfolio

- **PDF Documents:** Submit each section as a separate PDF, named “LastName\_Section1.pdf,” etc.
- **Digital Portfolio:** A website or interactive document may include embedded media. Please provide the URL and any access credentials (i.e., password).

Make sure that each section is clearly labeled and organized. Please include a table of contents to clearly organize your portfolio contents.

**Resources for Digital Portfolios:** [Google Sites Portfolios](#); [Canva- Free Portfolio Website Builder](#); [Wix: Free Portfolio Website Builder](#); [WordPress Website Builder](#).

### 3. Section Details

#### **Section 1: Philosophy of Online Teaching & Mentoring**

*Recommendation: Up to 3 pages*

- Articulate your guiding principles for online teaching and explain your mentoring approach for supporting online students.
- Reflect on your growth as an online educator.
- Be specific, be memorable, be concise.

**Resource:** [Writing a Teaching Philosophy](#), Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning.

#### **Section 2: Teaching Vita & Acknowledgments**

*Recommendation: Up to 5–7 pages*

##### **A. Teaching Vita**

- Teaching vita should focus on your experiences as teacher and educator.
- Include contact info, education, employment history.
- List courses taught, highlighting fully online courses.
- Note your participation in mentoring roles, online curriculum design, Masson initiatives.
- List pedagogy publications or presentations., particularly those focused on online courses.

##### **B. Acknowledgments**

- Credit your collaborators (such as instructional designers, colleagues, partnerships).
- Specify your responsibilities in developing online courses and/or mentoring online teaching.

**Resource:** [Documenting Your Teaching> Preparing Your Teaching Vita](#), Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning.

### **Section 3: Evidence of Teaching Excellence & Innovation**

*Recommendation: Up to 10–15 pages, plus representative course syllabi*

- **Syllabus:** Include most recent and/or representative version (does not count toward page limit).
- **Innovative Strategies:** Describe and explain your innovative strategies, such as active learning, personalized learning paths, community-building, gamification, microlearning, collaborative learning.
- **Artifacts & Commentary, please include:**
  - Major assignment prompts, rubrics, feedback samples
  - Screenshots of interactive tools, multimedia content
  - Explanations of how each artifact demonstrates your teaching principles.

**Resource:** [Choosing Appropriate Artifacts to Represent Your Teaching and Annotating Them Effectively, Iowa Center for Teaching](#)

### **Section 4: Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness & Impact**

*Recommendation: Up to 5–7 pages + support letters + closing statement*

#### **A. Effectiveness Data**

- Summarize student evaluations (four most recent online semesters, class sizes).
- Show improved learning outcomes (pre–post tests, grades).
- Highlight course completion and engagement metrics.

#### **B. Support Letters**

- Two letters ( $\geq 1$  from a colleague or administrator who has reviewed your online teaching).

#### **C. Closing Statement** (*Max 2 pages*)

- Reflect on your data and letters.
- Outline plans for how you will enhance your online teaching skills and improve online courses, including integration of new approaches, tools, and technologies.

**Resource:** [Documenting Evidence of Effective Teaching, Boston College](#)

## Portfolio Submission Deadline

- **Deadline:** February 7, 2026 (firm deadline)
- **Submission Site:** You will be rostered to a special Canvas course site by end of January.
- **Consultations:** Optional one-on-one reviews available starting in January 2026.

*Tip: Review past winners' portfolios posted to the Canvas submission site for inspiration!*

## Portfolio Review Criteria

Your portfolio will be scored on four core dimensions. Use the summary table below to align evidence with each criterion. [Detailed tables follow on pages 5 and 6 of these guidelines.](#)

**Summary Table of Portfolio Review Criteria**

Review Criterion	What to Show	Where to Include in Your Portfolio
1. Growth & Reflective Practice	Professional development, feedback loops, course revisions	Section 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Student & Learner Engagement	Inclusive design, community-building, instructor presence	Section 1, 3, 4
3. Assessment of Learning & Achievement	Formative/summative assessments, rubrics, feedback strategies	Section 3, 4
4. Teaching Effectiveness & Impact	Evaluation summary data, course completion rates, support letters	Section 2, 4

## Overall Advice for Preparing Your Portfolio

- **Think About Your Audience:** OTEA Selection Committee members span disciplines—therefore explain any jargon or disciplinary-specific information.
- **Be Selective:** Curate and choose artifacts that best illustrate your online teaching.
- **Be Clear & Authentic:** Write in a direct, engaging voice.
- **Annotate:** For every artifact, include a brief caption or description explaining why it matters.

## Teaching Portfolio Criteria and Examples of Evidence

**NOTE:** This list of evidence is not meant to be exhaustive, nor are nominees expected to address each piece of evidence mentioned in this table.

Criterion #1	Possible Examples of Evidence <i>An excellent online instructor...</i>	Where You Might Include Evidence for Criterion # 1 in Your Teaching Portfolio
<p><b>Growth and Reflective Practice as an Online Educator</b></p> <p>One of the purposes of the portfolio is to track the evolution and enhancement of your online teaching and learning practices. Each of you has had a unique set of experiences, key learning moments, and challenges you have encountered; this criterion affords you the opportunity to provide a dynamic portfolio of who you are as an online educator and how/why you have come to be that person.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays openness to online education.</li> <li>• Demonstrates self-awareness of values, strengths, and weaknesses as an online educator.</li> <li>• Explores new, creative, and innovative strategies, tools, &amp; technologies, guided by learning outcomes.</li> <li>• Seeks feedback from students and peers to improve quality in online course design and online teaching (<i>i.e.</i>, engages in cycle of continuous course improvements).</li> <li>• Acknowledges the contributions and assistance of others to support online teaching.</li> <li>• Participates in professional development for teaching and learning, particularly regarding online teaching.</li> </ul>	<p>Section 1) Philosophy of Teaching and Mentoring Section 2) Teaching Vita (listing professional development for online teaching &amp; learning) Section 3) Evidence of <b>Teaching Excellence &amp; Innovation</b> Section 4) Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness &amp; Impact</p>
Criterion #2	Possible Examples of Evidence <i>An excellent online instructor...</i>	Where You Might Include Evidence for Criterion # 2 in Your Teaching Portfolio
<p><b>Online Student and Learner Engagement</b></p> <p>Research has shown us that learning is significantly enhanced when students are engaged with the course, the subject areas, and the online learning environment. The selection committee will be looking for evidence of your approaches to ensuring student and learner engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates an accessible and inclusive online course that follows universal design standards.</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for instructor-student, student-student, and student content interaction, to foster mastery and application of course material.</li> <li>• Demonstrates online instructor presence by engaging actively and frequently with learners throughout the online course.</li> <li>• Builds an online learning community, creating an inclusive, supportive, and engaging climate for learning.</li> </ul>	<p>Section 1) Philosophy of Teaching and Mentoring Section 3) Evidence of Teaching Excellence &amp; Innovation Section 4) Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness &amp; Impact</p>

<b>Criterion #3</b>	<b>Possible Examples of Evidence</b> <i>An excellent online instructor...</i>	<b>Where You Might Include Evidence for Criterion #3 in Your Teaching Portfolio</b>
<p><b>Assessment of Online Student Learning and Achievement</b></p> <p>One of the most difficult tasks for us as educators is to provide evidence of student learning and achievement. That is, what knowledge, competencies, practices, and meaning are students taking away from our time spent teaching, advising, and mentoring? How do you know?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designs and implements activities, assignments, and assessments that are meaningful, purposeful, and relevant to the course learning outcomes</li> <li>• Includes activities, assignments, and assessments that leverage the online environment.</li> <li>• Uses a variety of methods to assess student learning &amp; mastery of content.</li> <li>• Uses formative and summative assessments.</li> <li>• Makes evaluation criteria clear to students (<i>e.g.</i>, use of rubrics; tutorials; models of exemplary assignments).</li> <li>• Provides prompt, clear, useful, and constructive feedback to online students.</li> <li>• Shows how learning was transformative in the online course.</li> </ul>	<p>Section 3) Evidence of Teaching Excellence &amp; Innovation</p> <p>Section 4) Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness &amp; Impact</p>
<b>Criterion #4</b>	<b>Possible Examples of Evidence</b> <i>An excellent online instructor...</i>	<b>Where You Might Include Evidence for Criterion # 4 in Your Teaching Portfolio</b>
<p><b>Online Teaching Effectiveness and Impact</b></p> <p>Teaching effectiveness is ideally demonstrated through the examination of multiple sources, including feedback from students, peer/colleagues, supervisors, and/or community members. The selection committee is interested in the evidence you include in this section and your reflection/commentary on your choices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receives favorable student ratings from university evaluations, and positive student feedback &amp; comments.</li> <li>• Includes summary of student ratings from university evaluations for at least four semesters of online teaching, noting class size.</li> <li>• Impacts of online teaching quality at Mason through service to the Mason online faculty community (<i>e.g.</i>, mentoring other online faculty, serving as online course reviewer, sharing best practices for online teaching with Mason online faculty).</li> <li>• Demonstrates <b>online course design and teaching quality</b>, as described in <a href="#">Mason Online's Quality Checklists</a></li> <li>• Includes two support letters which make a compelling case for online teaching effectiveness.</li> <li>• Provides a clear closing statement, reflecting on summary of student ratings &amp; support letters, as well as plans for teaching improvements.</li> </ul>	<p>Section 1) Philosophy of Teaching and Mentoring</p> <p>Section 2) Teaching Vita (listing professional development for online teaching &amp; learning)</p> <p>Section 3) Evidence of Teaching Excellence &amp; Innovation</p> <p>Section 4) Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness &amp; Impact</p>