Writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Moderator: Shelley A. Saltzman
Presenters: Shaoyan Qi & Sophie Queuniet

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a statement of teaching philosophy?
An opportunity

An opportunity to articulate
- What you teach.
- How you teach.
- Why you teach the way that you do.

Situates your teaching

The statement may situate your teaching within a tradition of
- research
- theory
- and/or practice.
FAQ 2

Why does the Standing Committee on Language Lecturers require the submission of a statement of teaching philosophy?

The statement of teaching is like the commentary that accompanies a film. It sets the scene, explains what is happening, and why you chose to shoot the scene…
The statement helps the committee understand your dossier as a whole and see evidence of the philosophy throughout the dossier. It provides a snapshot of your classroom from your perspective.

FAQ 3

*The Procedures for Review state that the Standing Committee is looking for “consonance between pedagogical practices and the candidate’s statement of teaching philosophy.” What exactly does that mean?*
PREACH WHAT YOU TEACH.
TEACH WHAT YOU PREACH.

Consonance

Specific comments by students or peer reviewers can demonstrate that your philosophy effectively guides your teaching.
FAQ 4

Is there a template for the statement of teaching philosophy?

Various Forms

There is no preferred form. It may (or may not) be in one of the following forms:

- bullet points (Korb)
- narrative (Lane)
- essay (Anon)
Sample Bullet Points (excerpt)

Since there are as many ways of learning as there are students, I try to continue to review and update traditional methods, for example, most recently by:

- Supplementing multiple-stage essay assignments with peer-writing conferences and holistic grading,
- Encouraging mini-presentations in small groups that allow students to rehearse, give each other feedback and increase overall production and comprehension,
- Introducing more reading and reading strategies from elementary German onwards,
- Developing pedagogically sound uses of new technology supporting primary skills and encouraging inquiry and lifelong learning (Wimba, Websearch, Courseworks),
- Using portfolio evaluations beginning at the intermediate level, and
- Individualizing language support to advanced students so that "bridge courses" really lead to successful communicators.

Sample Narrative (excerpts)

The first English-as-a-Second Language class I ever taught was a group of low-intermediate students in . . .

My level leader observed that class and we met afterwards. Looking back…

That class and that meeting began a long and continuous journey. . . .

A second issue that was not apparent to me after that first class was the role of
Sample Essay Form (excerpt)

…As a result, creating a comfortable and non-threatening learning environment, teaching appropriate usage of vocabulary and grammar, and providing consistent error correction are the foundation of my teaching beliefs.

The more comfortable and involved students feel, the more likely they are to take risks and become active participants in class activities. Treating students with respect by

FAQ 6

What does one write in a statement of teaching philosophy?
FAQ 6

Are there techniques that can help me get started?

No Template

No two statements are identical. Each must reflect the individuality of the instructor and, most importantly, be reinforced by the other parts of the dossier.
Common Elements

Some statements include all, some, or none of the following:
- Learning environment
- Teacher-student relationship
- Goals
- Strategies
- Techniques

Ways to Get Started

- Reflect on your teaching
- Speak with your colleagues
- Observe other language instructors
- Attend peer mentoring workshops
- Read your department’s mission statement
- Read other statements of philosophy
- Re-read your student evaluations
Play to your strengths

Language Instruction
Please rate the usefulness of the following components of the course:
1. Speaking the language
2. Listening to the language
3. Reading the language
4. Writing the language
5. Grammar instruction
6. Authentic cultural materials
7. Media and Technology
8. Availability of in-class activities
9. Please comment here on the relative amounts of time devoted to components listed above

FAQ 5

Are there sample statements of teaching philosophy that I can peruse?
Sample Statements

• Available at today’s workshop
• Available at the LRC


• Available online
• Available from colleagues

FAQ 6

Are there websites that will help me discover and articulate my philosophy of teaching?
Helpful Websites

- http://ucat.osu.edu/teaching_portfolio/philosophy/philosophy2.html
- http://sunconference.utep.edu/CETaL/resources/portfolios/writetps.htm
- http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/philosophy.htm

Caveat

The statements of philosophy shown are not models or templates. They are simply examples. We cannot stress enough that what is truly important is that the statement mirrors your teaching and is consonant with your dossier in every way.
FAQ 7

Will modeling my statement of teaching philosophy after those presented here today guarantee that my statement will be treated favorably by the committee?

Disclaimer

Sorry, No.

The statement of teaching philosophy remains a highly personal document that underscores one’s entire teaching experience at Columbia. It works only in the context of the entire dossier.