

# Learning Commons

Academic Writing Center - Graduate Students



## Teaching Portfolio Rationales

An important aspect of any teaching portfolio is effective rationales accompanying your materials. Rationales provide context for the reader and guide them through the materials you've carefully selected to show that you are a teaching superstar. Use the information below as a guide on what to include in different rationales.

### Teaching Experience Rationales

A teaching experience rationale accompanies each syllabus you include in your portfolio. These rationales vary in length, but they are generally a paragraph to a page long. Here are some important aspects to cover:

**What:** What material did the course cover? What were the learning objectives of the course? How long was the course (e.g. a semester)? What level was the course?

**Who:** How many students were in the course? Were they all majors in the field or from all different departments? What level students was the majority of students (e.g. first-year)?

**What:** What was your role in the class (i.e. were you the sole instructor? A grader?)? How involved were you in designing the curriculum? Did you create materials? Did you find different texts to bring into the classroom? Did you hold office hours? What kind of teaching methods did you use?

### Course Materials Rationales

A rationale accompanies each item you include in your course materials section to explain how and why the material was used. Generally rationales for course materials should be around a paragraph. Be sure to address:

**Who:** Who used the material/who was the audience?

**Why:** Why did you use this specific material?

**How:** How was the material used in the context of the course?

**How:** How was the material effective/how did it help your students learn?

### Teaching Effectiveness Rationale

A teaching effectiveness rationale provides a summary and reflection about feedback you have received on your teaching (from evaluations, observations, etc.). Some people choose to organize feedback around certain themes (e.g. "Students say I am helpful and approachable") and then elaborate on those themes using quantitative and qualitative data. Here is some important information to include when discussing student evaluations:

**How:** How was the feedback collected? (Were the evaluations mandatory? Were they electronic or handwritten? What kind of scale system was used?)

**When:** When do you collect evaluations? (At the end of the semester? Middle?)

**What:** In addition to your strengths as a teacher, what is a weakness and how have you worked to address it?

### Further Resources:

Ohio State University, University Center for the Advancement of Teaching – "Teaching Portfolio"

University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Office of Graduate Studies – "Constructing a Teaching Portfolio"

Vanderbilt University, Center for Teaching – "Teaching Portfolios"

## Questions?

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