

Teaching Philosophy: Purposes and Rationale

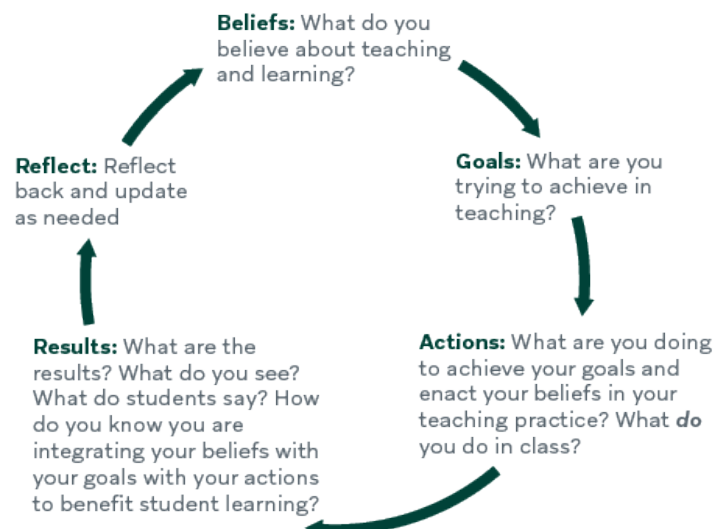
A *Teaching Philosophy* is a reflective narrative illustrating both what you, as a post-secondary educator, believe about teaching and learning and how you enact it in your classrooms or learning environments.

In it, you may describe your beliefs, how you came to those beliefs, discuss what you try to achieve with your students, and give examples of how you have achieved and created this in your teaching context. A teaching philosophy should go beyond values to action, giving concrete examples of how you accomplish what you believe and the impact this has on students.

What is a Teaching Philosophy

Normally a written document (1-2 pages), a teaching philosophy should be an authentic representation of who you are as an educator. They are intended to be continuous works in progress engaging feedback from trusted sources as you grow and develop as an educator.

In addition to providing a clear statement (free of jargon) of what you believe as an instructor, what you are trying to achieve with your teaching, and how you are working to achieve it, a Teaching Philosophy may also highlight your strengths and areas for growth. At the end, you should use your Teaching Philosophy to reflect and adapt your practice as you grow and change as an educator.



Benefits of Writing and Using a Teaching Philosophy

Teaching Philosophies may serve several purposes.

For Educators, Teaching Philosophies:

1. Ground our work in what we believe.
2. Provide a framework for our practice - bridging theory to practice.
3. Provide a foundation for reflective practice - useful for ongoing reflective practice tied to continuous development and individual goals.
4. Provide a foundation on which to critically assess and reflect on each year - this is also useful for composing Year-End Faculty Self-Reflective Reports to reflectively critique your year and set goals for the next year.
5. Make your teaching transparent -- many faculty share their Teaching Philosophies with their students and refer back to them over the term to frame the design of their course and teaching approach.

Teaching Philosophies are also used for:

1. Continuous Appointment Review (Portfolio) - a required element of the Continuous Appointment process at Red Deer Polytechnic
2. Teaching Dossier/Portfolio - as one of the pillars of a teaching portfolio, all evidence and examples help illustrate your philosophy and bring it to life for your audience; we recommend that all faculty keep an up-to-date Teaching Portfolio (ePortfolio)
3. Teaching Awards (Internal or External) - many teaching award applications require a Teaching Philosophy
4. Job Applications - many post-secondaries require applicants to provide a Teaching Philosophy (and often an EDII Statement)

Strategies and Considerations:

1. Your teaching philosophy should be an authentic first person introspective look at who and what you really are as an educator in your context. Avoid jargon - write your philosophy authentically and do not write in a way that you think a philosophy should be written.
2. Talk to your colleagues - Teaching philosophies are never written in isolation. They are meant to be shared, they are meant to be iterative, they are meant to be given to others and to get feedback on them. They should be shared with students. They should be shared with colleagues and feedback should be sought.
3. Make your teaching philosophy public in some sense. For example, share it on Twitter, feature it in your blog, highlight it in your teaching portfolio (online), etc. Teaching philosophies are meant to be a public statement about what you believe and how you approach it.
4. You should look at your teaching philosophy regularly and revise it as you

change and develop as an educator. What are you trying to achieve, how do you try to achieve it, what are specific examples of how you have done this?

5. Expect change: your teaching philosophy should change over time as you grow and evolve as an educator. It is unlikely that you will believe or enact the same things for your entire teaching career. Reflect and revise as your approach and beliefs change.

Additional Resource(s):

- [Six Questions That Will Bring Your Teaching Philosophy into Focus](#)
 - [Link to TPI Quiz](#)
 - [The TPI Explained](#)
 - [Assessing your Teaching Philosophy Draft](#)
 - [Teaching Philosophy Statement\(TPS\): Writing Prompt and Pre-Writing Strategies](#)
 - <https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/resources/writing-a-teaching-philosophy-statement>
 - [University of Waterloo Centre for Teaching Excellence: Contains reflective questions/exercises to assist in developing a statement.](#)
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How-Tos:

1. Take the Teaching Perspectives Inventory Quiz (free online): <http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/>
 - a. This may provide insights into your beliefs about teaching and learning and provide an avenue for reflection.
2. Review TPI Results (these will be visible immediately and emailed to you by the TPI system)
3. Review the resources on Teaching Philosophies
4. Ask yourself these questions (from Faculty Focus: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/philosophy-of-teaching/six-questions-will-bring-teaching-philosophy-focus/>). You may find it beneficial to discuss these with a colleague in conversation. A Learning Designer can discuss your teaching philosophy with you. These can also be used for personal self-reflection. Please refer to Faculty Focus for additional information on these guiding questions:
 - a. Describe the best learning experience you have had as a student.
 - b. Describe the best teaching experience you have had as an instructor.Are there any similarities to the learning experience you described above?
 - c. What are you trying to achieve in your students with your teaching?
 - d. Why is this important to you?
 - e. How do you achieve your objectives you wrote down for question #3

above? That is, what teaching strategies or approaches do you use in your classes that produce the learning environment or opportunities for your students to reach your teaching objectives?

f. Why do you use these particular teaching strategies as opposed to others that are available to you?

5. Using your TPI results and the Guiding Questions from Faculty Focus, and any other resources, write a draft of your teaching philosophy. After reflection upon the Guiding Questions (above), and your TPI results, you should have about 1-2 pages of typed Teaching Philosophy.
 6. Share it with colleagues to get feedback and make refinements accordingly.
 7. Write an Essence Statement: 1-2 sentences that fully capture your teaching philosophy (e.g. if someone said "What do you believe about teaching?" you would not hand them a 2 page document so what would you say?). You should also be able to boil your teaching philosophy down to 1-2 sentences that is the essence of what you believe about teaching and learning in your context.
 - a. Note: Do not summarize your 1-2 page document, rather develop an essence statement that would be used to describe what you really believe if someone were to ask you.
 8. Refer back to this and reflect on your teaching each term. What did you achieve? Was this in alignment with your Teaching Philosophy? If not, why not?
 9. Don't expect your teaching philosophy to stay the same -- as we grow and evolve as educators, our teaching philosophy will change too.
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