

UNDERSTANDING TEACHING DOSSIERS AT RYERSON

Individuals applying for promotion and tenure at Ryerson are required to have a teaching dossier. Teaching dossiers are intended to provide a description and record of a member's major teaching accomplishments and strengths in a manner that conveys the scope and quality of the faculty member's teaching. Dossiers vary widely between faculties; however there are a few basic guidelines that every dossier must meet. These guidelines are set out in Article 5.8.C of the RFA Collective Agreement. The intent of this document is to help those examining a dossier (e.g. DAC members and Faculty Promotion Committee sub-committee members) to better understand what is typically included in a dossier and to assist in their assessment of the candidate's teaching competence. Please note that this guide is instructional in nature and the terms of the collective agreement prevail if any discrepancy is identified.

Getting Started

While the goal of DACs and FPC sub-committees is to assess the quality of teaching, a dossier can assist with this goal. However, different departments and faculties have different teaching practices (e.g. methodologies differ in terms of lecture, studios, labs) and these differences are usually reflected within a dossier. In order to ensure consistency, department or teaching committees should discuss with their members what they were expecting to see within the dossier. To begin this process, each department or teaching committee must decide:

- a) What they want to learn from the dossier.
- b) What should be included?
- c) What they believe would show the quality of teaching within the dossier?

In general, an effective dossier will have the following qualities:

- a) The dossier is organized, formatted, in sections and has a table of contents
- b) Typical dossiers are 5 to 10 pages with approximately 30 pages of appendices.
- c) Dossiers are succinct and usually written for a particular audience (e.g. for tenure committees, promotion committees or award committees)
- d) Personal beliefs about teaching backed up by solid research
- e) A variety of evidence provided to support claims made in the teaching philosophy is given
- f) Usually evidence that the faculty member's teaching has improved over time is included (e.g. show professional development)

Reviewing Each Section

1. Teaching Philosophy

As stated in Article 5.8.C.1 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section should include "a statement of the faculty member's philosophy, objectives and methods of teaching."

Reading a Teaching Philosophy

Teaching philosophies are typically around two to five pages, single-spaced. The LTO has collected [teaching philosophies from winners of the Ryerson Faculty Teaching Awards](#) to be used as examples when reviewing teaching philosophies.

A teaching philosophy should:

- Discuss the faculty member's view of teaching and learning.
- Contain reflections on the faculty member's experiences teaching.
- Describe learning environments the faculty member works in.
- Demonstrate the faculty member's understanding of teaching practices.
- Discuss relations between the faculty member and their students.
- Show knowledge of the faculty member's discipline.
- Demonstrate the faculty member's desire to grow as a teacher.
- Show the faculty member's understanding of the institutional climate.

When reading a teaching philosophy, keep an eye out for claims that aren't backed up with solid evidence. The philosophy should reference the items included in the body of the dossier, bringing the document together as a whole.

An effective teaching philosophy should:

- Define good teaching in conjunction with the faculty member's personal goals as a teacher.
- Draw a connection between a faculty member's teaching strategies and the evidence of their effectiveness.
- Reflect on the faculty member's professional development in teaching.

Kaplan et al. (2008) have divided the content of a statement of teaching philosophy into five characteristics that can be measured with a [rubric](#). As part of their research, Kaplan et al. asked search committees to rank the most important characteristics of a statement of teaching philosophy. Based on this, a teaching philosophy should:

1. Offer evidence of practice; including specific examples of how theory is linked with actual teaching experiences
2. Be student centered, attuned to differences in student ability, learning style or level; including specific evidence of methods of instruction and assessment that go beyond traditional lecture and testing methodology, and that address the diversity of the student body
3. Demonstrate reflection; including specific examples of struggle with instructional challenges and how they were resolved, changes made, and an outline of future development as a teacher

4. Convey valuing of teaching including setting a tone or language that conveys enthusiasm for teaching and of considering it on par with research pursuits
5. Be well written, clear and readable.

2. Undergraduate and Graduate Courses

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section should include “list of undergraduate and graduate courses, including directed studies and thesis supervisions, taught by the member.”

Reading the Undergraduate and Graduate Courses section

Along with the names of courses taught, this section usually includes:

- enrollments;
- contact hours;
- years taught;
- teaching format (lecture, clinical supervisor, lab supervisor, studio teaching, etc.);
- content, classroom methodology, and forms of assessment.

Faculty members provide a list of other teaching activities, such as student supervision, practicum supervision, or coaching. A list of supervisory activities can include:

- The names of those supervised and the extent of the supervisory activity. Faculty members should indicate the outcome of the supervision (e.g. thesis title and acceptance date, the citation information of a student publication, or the date and venue of a public performance).
- Ph.D., Masters, or Honors thesis supervision (faculty members should indicate whether they were a supervisor or committee member).
- Supervision of graduate and undergraduate independent study or directed readings.
- Advisement on program of study, courses, or career and professional advice.
- Formal or informal student mentoring.
- Supervision which has contributed to publications, exhibitions, performances and conference presentations by students.

3. Currency in Teaching Field

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section should include “an explanation of the ways in which the member has maintained currency in his/her teaching field(s).”

Reading the Currency in Teaching section

As related to teaching these activities might include:

- books (including chapters in books, edited books, and special issues of journals);
- articles (should indicate whether refereed, solicited or non-refereed);
- papers in conference proceedings (should indicate whether refereed or non-refereed);

- bibliographies;
- newsletters;
- unpublished conference papers;
- workshop presentations;
- unpublished professional reports;
- professional development in teaching;
- teaching conference attendance;
- activities related to teaching (e.g. assistance in professional workshops);
- explanations of currency in the field being taught.

4. Course Outlines, Assignments, and Examinations

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section should include “examples of course revision, curriculum development, and teaching methods as evidenced by course outlines, assignments, final examinations and other materials the member deems appropriate.”

Reading the Outline, Assignments and Examination section

In this section faculty members can include teaching strategies, evaluation methods, and any changes they have made that improve the learning experience of their students. Evidence should be included showing the effectiveness and/or impact of these teaching developments.

Examples of what might be included in this section:

- Teaching methods (e.g. lecture method, small group/discussion methods, project-based approaches, student presentations).
- Procedures used to evaluate student learning, including an outline of the types of assignments and examination methods, where appropriate.
- Lists of course materials the faculty member created, such as special notes, handouts, problem sets, laboratory books, computer manuals, etc.
- Arrangements made to accommodate students' needs.
- Teaching developments undertaken. This may include:
 - course design,
 - curricular changes to be more inclusive,
 - updates to subject matter,
 - diverse methods of presentation,
 - new evaluation procedures,
 - specially designed assignments,
 - teaching methods geared to developing critical skills,
 - developments in teaching resources such as films, computers, and other audio-visual material).

5. Curriculum and Instructional Development

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section is “a record of the faculty member’s role in curriculum and instructional developments such as administrative

and committee service for the Department, Faculty, and/or University related to pedagogy, and including directing and coordinating programs, guest lectures, and other presentations.”

Reading the Curriculum and Instructional Development section

This section should include names, dates, and descriptions of the faculty member’s contributions to curricular or instructional development committees. Faculty members should mention any teaching related activities they have performed, including:

- Membership on a faculty, department, cross-disciplinary committee, subcommittee, ad hoc committee, or task force.
- Membership on the Senate, Board of Governors, library committees, teaching and scholarship committees, Advisory Boards, Presidential or Vice-presidential committees on teaching, learning technologies.
- Participation in teaching awards committees (faculty awards, university awards, TA/GA awards).
- Participation in student achievement award adjudication.
- Service on committees working on accreditation, academic policy, program revision, or curriculum review, planning and implementation.
- Teaching assistant professional training, orientation, or development.
- Attendance at professional training or development sessions for faculty, such as New Faculty Orientation or workshops on teaching and learning.
- Involvement in departmental or faculty-based mentoring or teaching support programs.
- Peer observation as part of formal or informal evaluation of teaching.
- Organization of teaching retreats and strategic planning sessions.
- Development of department teaching resources and any use of their teaching materials by instructors in other departments, faculties, colleges or universities
- Development of widely-used student ratings of instruction or other assessment instruments

6. Faculty Course Survey results

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section contains “the results of the Faculty Course Survey (Appendix F) and any letters and testimonials and an indication whether solicited or not solicited. The member shall provide information about measures of respondent confidentiality with regard to student evaluations, except in the case of the Faculty Course Survey (Appendix F).”

Reading the Faculty Course Survey section

Faculty Course Surveys and Teaching Assessments *must* be included in this section.

In addition, faculty members can include any teaching evaluations they have conducted beyond the official Faculty Course Survey. Faculty members can also include comments on the evaluations that help bring them into context, or create graphs, tables or other visualizations highlighting the effectiveness of their teaching methods.

Faculty members can also include the results of assessments, questionnaires, or data on completion rates for any supervision of graduate students.

7. Special Contributions

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section contains “a record of the member’s special contribution to any teaching, including teaching awards, publications and presentations, instructional development grants, participation in conferences and seminars on education/pedagogy.”

Reading the Special Contribution section

Contributions can include, but are not limited to:

- curricular materials;
- teaching related conference papers;
- involvement in teaching seminars or workshops;
- SRC related to teaching;
- grants awarded for teaching focused SRC.

8. Teaching Assessments

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section contains “teaching assessments (where available) as well as any responses to those assessments and any letters giving reasons for non-assessments.”

9. Other materials

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, “a candidate may submit any other material that the Faculty member deems relevant to his/her teaching role.”

Reading the Other Materials section

This section typically includes additional evidence from students' work and success as related to the faculty member’s teaching, such as:

- Student essays and creative work (where there is evidence of significant effort and contribution by the faculty member, and where permission has been obtained from the student).
- Samples of student publications that resulted from the faculty member's courses or supervision.
- Letters of appreciation from students, alumni, community groups, and employers (faculty members should note whether solicited or unsolicited).
- Academic honours received by students.
- External comments on suitability of students' preparation for graduate work.

Example of a Rubric for Reviewing Teaching Dossiers

Adapted "Rubric for Statements of Teaching Philosophy," M. Kaplan, C. O'Neal, R. Carillo, and D. Kardia, University of Michigan, and "Rubric for evaluating teaching portfolios for M620 SOTL study," University of Alabama at Birmingham

The goal of any teaching committee is, of course, to evaluate the quality of teaching. However, a thoughtful and reflective teaching dossier that is supported with evidence can help a committee to better understand teaching quality. As such, the rubric below is intended to help teaching committees better understand this document and how it relates to the quality of teaching rather than for use in a strict evaluation of the dossier. The rubric might also be helpful to faculty developing a dossier.

Orienting to the document as a whole

Look at the structure of the dossier. Is it well-organized, well-written, and clearly understood?

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Organization	Documents are organized into clearly-defined and easily located sections (e.g. table of contents; tabs)	Documents are generally organized with some visual cues to organization, but the structure could be clearer.	Documents are inconsistently organized and/or the system of arrangement is unclear.	Documents are completely disorganized, with no system of arrangement.
Audience	Organization and overall selection of elements demonstrate understanding of audience and purpose (e.g. formative or summative evaluation)	Organization and selection of elements are generally purposeful, with some elements that are superfluous, tangential, or unclearly connected.	The purpose or audience for the portfolio is unclear, and/or there are many superfluous or unrelated elements.	The portfolio is a collection of documents with no sense of purpose or audience.
Integration	The teaching philosophy statement serves as a framework for the rest of the portfolio elements.	The teaching philosophy statement and portfolio elements are generally connected, although the connection may sometimes be weak or unclear.	The teaching philosophy statement and portfolio elements seem unconnected or unrelated to each other.	The teaching philosophy statement is not included in the portfolio.

1. Teaching Philosophy

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section should include “a statement of the faculty member’s philosophy, objectives and methods of teaching.”

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Inadequate
Goals for student learning: The faculty member demonstrates an understanding of the knowledge and skills necessary for student success in the discipline.	Goals are clearly articulated and specific, and go beyond knowledge level, including skills, attitudes, career goals, etc. Goals are sensitive to the context of the instructor’s discipline, and are concise but not exhaustive.	Goals are articulated, although they may be too broad or not specific to the discipline. Goals focus on basic, knowledge, ignoring skills acquisition and affective change.	Articulation of goals is unfocused, incomplete, or missing.
Enactment of goals: The faculty member discusses their teaching methods, including how they contribute to their goals for student learning and how these methods are appropriate for their discipline.	Enactment of goals is specific and thoughtful, and includes details and rationale for teaching methods. The methods are clearly connected and are appropriate to specific goals. Specific examples of the methods in use within the disciplinary context are given.	Description of teaching methods is not clearly connected to goals and/or not well developed. Methods are described generically, with no example of the instructor’s use of the methods within the discipline.	Enactment of goals is not articulated. If there is an attempt at articulating teaching methods, it is basic and unreflective.
Assessment of Goals: The faculty member is able to measure student learning and determine if their learning goals are being met. They describe the assessment tools they use and how these assessment methods contribute to student learning and communicate disciplinary priorities.	Specific examples of assessment tools are clearly described. Assessment tools are aligned with teaching goals and teaching methods. Assessments reinforce the priorities and context of the discipline both in content and type.	Assessments are described, but not in connection to goals and teaching methods. Descriptions are too general, with no reference to the motivation for the assessments. There is no clear connection between the assessments and the priorities of the discipline.	Assessment of goals is not articulated or is mentioned only in passing.

Reflection on teaching: The faculty member is on an upwards trajectory, and can demonstrate consistency, success with particular teaching environments, and improvement over time. The faculty member can show how they improve or enhance their students' achievement of learning goals, how they are working to improve their practice, and how they are making their teaching public.

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs work	Absent
Teaching development	Identifies a specific aspect for teaching development (e.g. incorporating technology, improving discussion leadership).	Identifies a teaching aspect for development, although the aspect may be stated somewhat vaguely or generally.	Teaching aspect for development is stated too broadly or generally.	Does not identify a teaching aspect for development.
Development integration	Connects teaching development plan to teaching and learning goals.	Connects teaching development plan to teaching and learning goals, although the connection may not be well developed.	Description of teaching development plan is basic and unreflective, with few connections to teaching and learning goals.	Does not relate teaching development plan to teaching and learning goals.
Scholarly teaching	Demonstrates familiarity with pedagogical resources (general and disciplinary) to support teaching development.	Provides examples of pedagogical resources to support teaching development, although the examples may be somewhat limited or too general.	Provides few or very general examples of pedagogical resources to support teaching development.	Does not identify pedagogical resources to support teaching development.

2. Undergraduate and Graduate Courses

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement this section should include “a list of undergraduate and graduate courses, including directed studies and thesis supervisions, taught by the member.”

What is the breadth and depth of the faculty member’s teaching experience? Have they included the levels of courses taught (e.g. survey, upper-level, topics), their primary modes of instruction (lecture, discussion, lab/field/studio), and number and levels of students taught (e.g. majors/non-majors, first years/fourth years)?

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Specificity	Conveys specific information about the nature, purpose, and type of teaching roles and responsibilities.	Description of teaching roles and responsibilities are generally specific, though there may be gaps or questions about the information provided.	Descriptions of teaching roles and responsibilities are often too vague to understand their nature, purpose, and type.	Does not include a teaching history.
Organization	Teaching history is concise and consistently formatted.	Teaching history is generally organized, although it could use some revisions to make it more easily understood.	Teaching history is overly verbose, inconsistently organized, or needs a revised organizational structure.	Teaching history is a disorganized collection of job titles with no visual structure.

3. Currency in Teaching Field

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section should include “an explanation of the ways in which the member has maintained currency in his/her teaching field(s).”

The faculty member should include a summary of their publications, membership in professional organizations and societies, and participation in conferences and workshops. The faculty member should demonstrate how their scholarly activity is connected to their teaching, and is being used to meet student learning goals.

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Specificity	Provides a concise summary of research and professional development activities. Examples show a well-rounded and up-to-date knowledge of the discipline, and how this knowledge is being applied in the classroom.	Provides a summary of research and professional development activities, although the examples may not be current or relevant, or may not be applied in the classroom.	Provides examples of research and professional development activities, but examples are poorly organized, out-of-date, unrelated, or not applied in the classroom.	Provides no examples of research and professional development.
Integration	Connects research and professional development to teaching philosophy and learning goals.	Connects research and professional development to teaching philosophy and learning goals, although the connection may not be well-developed.	The connection between the research and professional development activities and the teaching philosophy and learning goals is vague or weak.	Does not connection research and professional development to teaching philosophy and learning goals.

4. Course Outlines, Assignments, and Examinations

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section should include “examples of course revision, curriculum development, and teaching methods as evidenced by course outlines, assignments, final examinations and other materials the member deems appropriate.”

Teaching Methods: The faculty member describes their teaching methods, and explains how these methods contribute to their learning goals for students. Teaching methods are appropriate for the discipline and specific class. The faculty member should include two or three sample activities.

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Selection	Presents examples of learning activities (e.g. sample lectures, discussion topics, classroom activities, group projects) representing different learning goals and environments.	Presents examples of learning activities representing different goals and learning environments, although the examples are sometimes similar in learning goals or environments.	Examples of learning activities are generally similar in learning goal or environment.	Provides no examples of learning activities.
Integration	Connects learning activities to teaching philosophy and learning goals.	Connects learning activities to teaching philosophy and learning goals, although the connection is not well developed.	The connection between the learning activities and teaching philosophy and learning goals is vague or weak.	Does not connect learning activities to teaching philosophy or learning goals.

Course Design: The faculty member has well-articulated learning goals for students that are keyed to course topic, course level, and student population. The faculty member should include two or three sample course outlines.

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Selection	Course outlines represent experience in designing courses for different student populations and topics.	Course outlines represent experience in designing courses for different student populations and topics, although the outlines may be similar in methods applied.	Course outlines are generally similar in learning goals and methods applied.	Does not include examples of course outlines.
Integration	Connects course outlines to teaching philosophy and learning goals.	Connects course outlines to teaching philosophy and learning goals, although the connection is not well developed.	Connection of course outlines to teaching philosophy and learning goals is often basic and unreflective.	Course outlines are randomly chosen, with no connection to teaching philosophy or learning goals.

Assessment: The faculty member can demonstrate how their goals for student learning are being met, and how their feedback to students is enhancing their learning and progress. The faculty member should include two or three examples of student work, and two or three samples of graded work.

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Selection	Presents examples of formal and informal assignments (e.g. tests, papers, portfolios, journals) representing different learning goals and environments.	Presents examples of assignments representing some different learning goals and environments, although some of the examples may be similar.	Examples of assignments are generally similar in learning goal or environment.	Provides no examples of assignments.
Integration	Connects assignments to teaching philosophy and learning goals.	Connects assignments to teaching philosophy and learning goals, although the connection is sometimes not well developed.	The connection between the assignments and teaching philosophy and learning goals is vague or weak.	Does not connect assignments to teaching philosophy or learning goals.

5. Curriculum and Instructional Development

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section is “record of the faculty member’s role in curriculum and instructional developments such as administrative and committee service for the Department, Faculty, and/or University related to pedagogy, and including directing and coordinating programs, guest lectures, and other presentations.”

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Selection	Presents detailed examples of curriculum and instructional development that show dedication to improving teaching at Ryerson.	Presents examples of curriculum and instructional development, although more details may be needed to show benefit to the university.	Examples of curriculum and instructional development activities may be poor or lacking in initiative (e.g. merely sitting on committees)	Provides no examples of curriculum or instructional development.
Integration	Connects examples of curriculum and instructional development to teaching philosophy and learning goals.	Connects examples of curriculum and instructional development to teaching philosophy and learning goals, although the connection may not be well developed.	The connection between the curriculum and instructional development activities and teaching philosophy and learning goals is vague or weak.	Does not connect curriculum and instructional development activities to teaching philosophy and learning goals.

6. Faculty Course Survey results

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section contains “the results of the Faculty Course Survey (Appendix F) and any letters and testimonials and an indication whether solicited or not solicited. The member shall provide information about measures of respondent confidentiality with regard to student evaluations, except in the case of the Faculty Course Survey (Appendix F).”

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Selection	Presents multiple forms of teaching evaluation data (e.g. student, peer and/or supervisor comments, student ratings)	Presents multiple forms of teaching evaluation data, although more details, examples, or balance may be needed.	Forms of teaching evaluation are significantly limited or unbalanced.	Provides no teaching evaluation data.
Presentation	Presentation makes trends in quantitative and qualitative evaluation data apparent and easy for reader to interpret.	Presentation of quantitative and qualitative data is generally clear.	Presentation of quantitative and qualitative data is difficult to interpret.	Quantitative and qualitative data have not been summarized visually.
Integration	Connects trends in teaching evaluation data to the teaching philosophy and learning goals.	Connects trends in teaching evaluation data to the teaching philosophy and learning goals, although the connection may not be well developed.	The analysis of the teaching evaluation data is basic and unreflective with few connections to the teaching philosophy and learning goals.	Does not include a reflection on teaching evaluation data.

7. Special Contributions

As stated in Section C of Article 5.8 of the RFA Collective Agreement, this section contains “a record of the member’s special contribution to any teaching, including teaching awards, publications and presentations, instructional development grants, participation in conferences and seminars on education/pedagogy.”

Component	Exceptional	Adequate	Needs Work	Absent
Selection	Provides examples of development in teaching in a variety of formats over time (e.g. grants, awards, SRC).	Provides examples of development in teaching, but more balance or more recent contributions may be needed.	Provides limited examples of development in teaching, with little detail or evidence of current work.	Provides no examples of development in teaching.
Integration	Connects examples of development in teaching to teaching philosophy and learning goals.	Connects examples of development in teaching to teaching philosophy and learning goals, although the connection may not be well developed.	The connection between the examples of development in teaching and teaching philosophy and learning goals is vague or weak.	Does not connect examples of development in teaching to teaching philosophy and learning goals.