

The Step-by-Step Creation of a Teaching Dossier

Though the compilation of documentation is an on-going activity, sooner or later you are faced with the preparation of an up-to-date dossier for presentation and review. This material, adapted from a Guide published by the Canadian Association of University Teachers,* simplifies the task by proposing a step-by-step approach to creating the teaching dossier.

- Step 1. Clarify teaching responsibilities
- Step 2. Describe your approach to teaching
- Step 3. Select items for the teaching dossier
- Step 4. Prepare statements on each item
- Step 5. Order the items
- Step 6. Compile back-up evidence
- Step 7. Incorporate dossier into curriculum vitae
- Step 8. Append exemplary materials

Additional information on the teaching dossier and advice on how to compile one may be obtained from the Centre for Learning and Teaching in the Killam Library, 6225 University Ave, Suite G90, phone 494-1622 and ask for Suzanne Le-May Sheffield.

Step 1. Clarify teaching responsibilities. There often exists an informal understanding concerning teaching responsibilities and criteria for judging teaching success. The first step in preparing the teaching dossier is to summarize these understandings in a short paragraph or two. Points covered might include specific duties, how students are to be evaluated, and the nature of progress expected by students. Where there is no informal understanding, the consequence can be arbitrary and shifting evaluation criteria; in such cases, you should include a brief statement of your own assumptions concerning responsibilities and obligations.

Step 2. Describe your approach to teaching. Keeping in mind the summary of teaching responsibilities outlined in Step 1, prepare a brief statement (1 - 2 pages) of your teaching goals and philosophy. This statement provides an explanatory framework for the information on your teaching accomplishments, which follows. It gives you a chance to explain your approach to teaching and how this relates to your work with students.

Step 3. Select items for the teaching dossier. The list of possible items for a teaching dossier is examined. Paying particular attention to the statement in Step 1, the individual selects those items, which are most applicable to his or her assigned teaching responsibilities. Item choice should also accommodate the individual's personal preferences and teaching style.

Step 4. Prepare statements on each item. Prepare a statement about activities, initiatives, and accomplishments in each area, referring to back-up documentation when appropriate.

Step 5. Order the items. The statements are arranged in the order which best fits their intended use. For example, if you are trying to demonstrate improvement in teaching, entries accenting improvements would be emphasized.

Step 6. Compile back-up evidence. You should keep copies of all printed items referred to in the dossier. These would include such things as examination papers, original replies to course evaluation questionnaires or official summaries of summative evaluations, letters from professors with whom you cooperate and students you teach, and samples of student work. These materials are not part of the dossier, but are back-up information in case original documentation is required.

Step 7. Incorporate dossier into curriculum vitae. Insert the completed dossier into the cv under the heading "Teaching" or "Instruction." This step is optional, as the teaching dossier can also exist as a stand-alone document.

Step 8. Append exemplary materials. The Teaching Dossier may be accompanied by material which constitutes evidence supporting claims: an exemplary course outline, a reading list, an examination keyed to objectives, a numerical summary of student course evaluations or unsolicited letters of praise from students. This step is likely to be especially important when you are applying for a position.

* Shore, Bruce, Stephen Foster, Christopher Knapper, Gilles Nadeau, Neill Neill, Victor Sim, and with the help of faculty members of the Centre for Teaching and Learning Services, McGill University. (1986). The Teaching Dossier: A Guide to its Preparation and Use. Ottawa, ON: The Canadian Association of University Teachers.