

WHAT IS A REFLECTIVE TEACHING STATEMENT?

The Reflective Teaching Statement (RTS) is a short reflective essay that describes your teaching philosophy, strategies, methods, and objectives. This statement (sometimes called a teaching philosophy statement) typically includes your beliefs about optimal teaching and learning, examples of how you put these beliefs into practice, and your goals— both your teaching goals and your goals for students' learning. It gives a search committee an idea of what you do in the classroom and why.

WHY DEVELOP ONE?

Increasingly, job search committees are requesting these statements as a part of job application materials, in the first or subsequent rounds. They are also required (or encouraged) by many institutions as part of a faculty tenure or promotion packet. They have a range of purposes, including the following (adapted from Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher*, 1990):

Personal purpose: Explaining clearly “*why you are doing what you are doing*” can be significant for your personal sanity and morale. (p. 16)

Political purpose: Communicating that your teaching practices derive from a well-developed and carefully conceived philosophy is more likely to garner “*a measure of respect for your thoughtfulness and commitment*,” which is important both for your self-esteem and for your political survival.” (p. 17)

Pedagogical purpose: Teaching is about making an impact, so that the world is different than it was before you practiced your craft. Knowing clearly what kind of impact you want to make means you must continually ask yourself, “What effect am I having on students and on their learning?” (pp. 18-19)

WHAT TYPES OF INFORMATION ARE INCLUDED?

There is no standard format for Reflective Teaching Statements. Their structure, content, and wording varies by individual and disciplines. What brings a teaching philosophy to life is the extent to which it creates a vivid portrait of a person who is intentional about teaching practices and committed to his or her career. Despite these differences, there are a few rules of thumb for formatting:

Know your audience, which may often be an interdisciplinary group unfamiliar with your specialty.

- Choose language & concepts that can be broadly appreciated
- Avoid technical terms or jargon
- Avoid clichés or “hot button” words

Keep it brief (1-2 pages). For some purposes, an extended description is appropriate, but length should suit the context.

Be yourself.

- Use narrative, first-person approach
- Make it reflective, clear, and personal
- Show your passion, creativity, and enthusiasm

Brag (but just a little).

- Showcase your strengths and accomplishments
- Adopt a tone of humility

Be specific.

- Avoid empty or generic statements
- Use concrete examples of things you have done
- Explain disciplinary practices
- Connect your teaching and research

Remember: teaching is about student learning.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT RTS?

Look at statements written by others in your department or by applicants to your department.

Search hiring institution's website for information about their mission and goals, or sample faculty teaching statements to get a sense of what aspects of teaching are emphasized at that institution.

[*The Chronicle of Higher Education*](#) (UVA Library subscribes) frequently features articles on this topic. Search for "Teaching Philosophy" or "Teaching Statement."

The Academic Job Search Handbook by Julia Miller Vick & Jennifer S. Furlong (4 ed., 2008): This book covers all aspects of the job search. The chapter devoted to CVs includes 50 pages of examples for a wide variety of disciplines.

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