

Module 2 Section 1: What is a Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP)?

Module 2: Developing Your Statement of Teaching Philosophy (Page 1 of 8)

Introduction

Welcome to **Module 2: Articulating Your Teaching Values and Practices: Developing Your Statement of Teaching Philosophy**. Watch the [welcome video \(00:43\)](#) to learn about this module.

For closed captioning, click on "CC" or the subtitles button at the bottom-right of the video interface (beside the gear icon), or download the transcript ([PDF](#) | [DOCX](#)). **PDF files** will open in a new tab and **DOCX files** will download automatically.

In this module, we examine the purposes, components, and format of a Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP). We consider how to reflect and talk about teaching with varying experience levels and explore the three elements of a successful teaching dossier and effective STP: **Values + Practices + Evidence**.

Module Learning Objectives

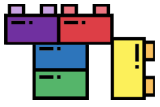
By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- describe the characteristics of an **effective Statement of Teaching Philosophy** and explain its purpose;
- draft **your own Statement of Teaching Philosophy** that applies knowledge and strategies;
- demonstrate **self-reflection through reflective writing** to identify transferable and teaching skills; and
- relate individual **teaching practices and values** to include in your Statement of Teaching Philosophy.

Key terms and acronyms that are examined in this module are listed in the glossary ([PDF](#) | [DOCX](#)). The glossary also includes an H5P glossary that provides instruction on navigating through the module and using the interactive H5P tools.

How much time do I need?

This module will take approximately **60 minutes** to complete.



Module Sections

This module is comprised of the following sections:

- Getting Started: Welcome to Teaching Dossier Training!
- Section 1: What Is a Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP)? **(you are here)**
- Section 2: Values, Practices, and Evidence
- Section 3: Writing Your Statement of Teaching Philosophy
- Module Summary and Certificate of Completion

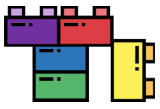
Section 1 Overview (Page 2 of 8)

Section Overview

In the first section of the module, we will examine the basics of the **Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP)**, including:

- its **purpose, components, and format**; and
- an introduction to **reflective writing**.





What is a Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP)? (Page 3 of 8)

What is a Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP)?

A Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP) (a.k.a. Teaching Philosophy Statement) is a **short personal essay** that emphasizes the most **important components of effective teaching** and describes their **impact on student learning**. They are often **systematic and critical** in the sense that they:

- explain what the author's teaching values and beliefs are;
- identify examples of teaching practices and approaches; and
- demonstrate why the practices and approaches are effective and how they support student learning.

An STP should consider the **context**. This means that the author should, for example, consider which teaching approaches are most effective in their specific discipline or which teaching approaches might be most effective for a job they are considering applying to. The "best" STP is one where **the reader can visualize who has written the statement**. If a statement is too generic (e.g., "good" teachers make the classroom fun), then it lacks authenticity.

Therefore, be sure to effectively highlight and communicate your personal philosophy of teaching (i.e., which teaching approaches you believe are most effective) while providing examples from your own practice and/or from evidence-based research (in Higher Education, this field is referred to as the "Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SoTL)").

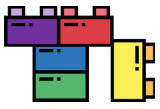
Key Considerations

A Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP) should:

- be 1–3 single-spaced pages;
- be personal, concise, organized, and free of highly technical jargon; and
- connect values with practice and show their impact on student learning.

Source

Schönwetter, D. J., Sokal, L., Friesen, M., & Taylor, K. L. (2002). Teaching philosophies reconsidered: A conceptual model for the development and evaluation of teaching philosophy statements. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 7(1), 83–97.



What are the purposes of an STP? (Page 4 of 8)

Activity: What is the purpose of writing an STP?

Let's explore some reasons for writing an STP. **Which of the reasons listed below are most important to you? Why?** After exploring each reason, you will have the opportunity to write down your reflections.

As you progress through the module, we invite you to document your reflections and notes. You can accomplish this in several ways.

- **Option 1:** Use our documentation tool (featured below) and type your reflections and notes in the text boxes. The tool allows you to export and save your text as a Word document.
- **Option 2:** Document your reflections and notes as a text document on your computer or as written texts on paper or in a notebook.
- **Option 3:** Record your reflections and notes as audio recordings on your device (phone, computer, etc.). Alternatively, you may find it helpful to have a conversation with your colleagues, peers, friends, or family. Use the activity questions to start the conversation.

Experiment with these various options and **find the strategy** that best works for you. **Good luck!**

Demonstrate teaching skills

Demonstrate teaching skills for academic and non-academic jobs

Most, if not all, academic job postings require an STP.

In some cases, you may be required to submit a full teaching dossier. A strong STP will outline which **skills you possess** as a teacher and which teaching **values and strategies** you find to be most effective and why. Similarly, an STP is a good way to identify and articulate teaching-related skills.

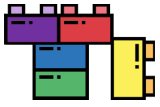
Prepare learning experiences

Prepare learning experiences (e.g., classes) more effectively and efficiently

Writing an STP allows you to reflect on:

1. **what you value** as a teacher, and
2. **what you want** your students to take away from your class.

This reflective process can help you prepare classes more effectively and efficiently by recognizing which teaching strategies you might use in the classroom and which objectives you have planned for your students.



Reflect on teaching strengths

Reflect on teaching strengths and areas for improvement

Reflecting on your teaching is key to identifying your **teaching strengths and areas for improvement**. Drafting and reviewing your STP after receiving student or peer feedback can help you identify where you can improve your teaching and validate the parts of your teaching practice that are working well for your students.

For example, if in your STP you claim that you regularly incorporate active learning into your teaching practice, but you receive student feedback that shows that your students wished you incorporated more active learning into your teaching practice, then it is likely that you may need to incorporate more active learning into your teaching practice.

Alternatively, if in your STP you state that you use games to encourage engagement in the classroom and your students claim that they appreciate your gamified course material, then this is evidence that your STP aligns well with your teaching practice.

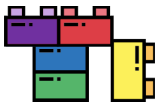
Strengthen overall teaching experiences

Strengthen overall teaching experiences for you as the instructor and learning experiences for students

An STP helps direct and guide your teaching practices in the classroom. It is a collection of your **values, beliefs, and experiences** regarding learning and teaching. Writing an STP allows for **deep reflection** on your teaching experiences, as well as student evaluations and feedback. This reflective process can help you identify where refinement in your teaching practices may be needed and also highlight what your teaching strengths are. This **iterative process** can strengthen your teaching experiences in the classroom and strengthen learning experiences for your students.

Your Reflections

Why are you writing an STP?



What are the components of an STP? (Page 5 of 8)

What are the components of an STP?

An STP is a flexible document and can be successfully constructed and utilized in several different ways.

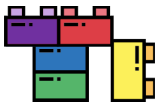
One way statements of teaching philosophy vary are whether or not they include descriptions of an instructor's specific teaching strategies (e.g., a description of a particular assignment or class activity) alongside the instructor's teaching beliefs. Some instructors prefer to integrate these strategies into the philosophy statement; others prefer to describe them in a separate document ("**Statement of Teaching Practice**").

Other common components of an STP include:

- Your **definition of good teaching** with an explanation of why you have developed or adopted this particular definition.
- A discussion of your **teaching methods**. How do you implement your definition of good teaching? Provide specific examples.
- A discussion of your **evaluation and assessment methods** and a description of how they support your definition of good teaching (i.e., how you assess student learning as well as your teaching).
- A **description of your students** and their most important learning goals and challenges.
- A description of your **teaching goals**. What content, skills, or values should students leave with at the end of a learning experience? What are your goals for improving your own teaching?
- **Scholarly research (SoTL)** as a form of evidence to support your teaching values and strategies.

Source

Kearns, K. D., & Sullivan, C. S. (2011). Resources and practices to help graduate students and postdoctoral fellows write statements of teaching philosophy. *Advances in Physiology Education*, 35(2), 136–145.



What is the format of an STP? (Page 6 of 8)

What is the format of an STP?

An STP should:

- **Be concise.** 1–3 pages single-spaced (the document may be slightly longer if it includes information on specific teaching strategies). A bibliography or reference page may also be added.
- **Include white spaces between paragraphs** to allow for ease of reading and to provide space for comments. The statement can also include subtitles/headings to organize the information.
- **Be written in a personal, relatively informal tone, usually in the first-person perspective (I, my, we, etc.).** Sometimes, mentioning the names of scholars or pedagogical models that have been particularly influential to your teaching can be valuable. Still, the statement should **not** include a substantial review of relevant research. Don't turn your STP into an academic paper!

How can an STP be used?

An STP is usually placed at the beginning of a teaching dossier (i.e., before you present evidence of your teaching responsibilities, teaching effectiveness, teaching innovations, professional development, and so on).

The STP can also be used to help you develop job application cover letters—outlining your teaching beliefs, experiences, and effectiveness.

Key Considerations

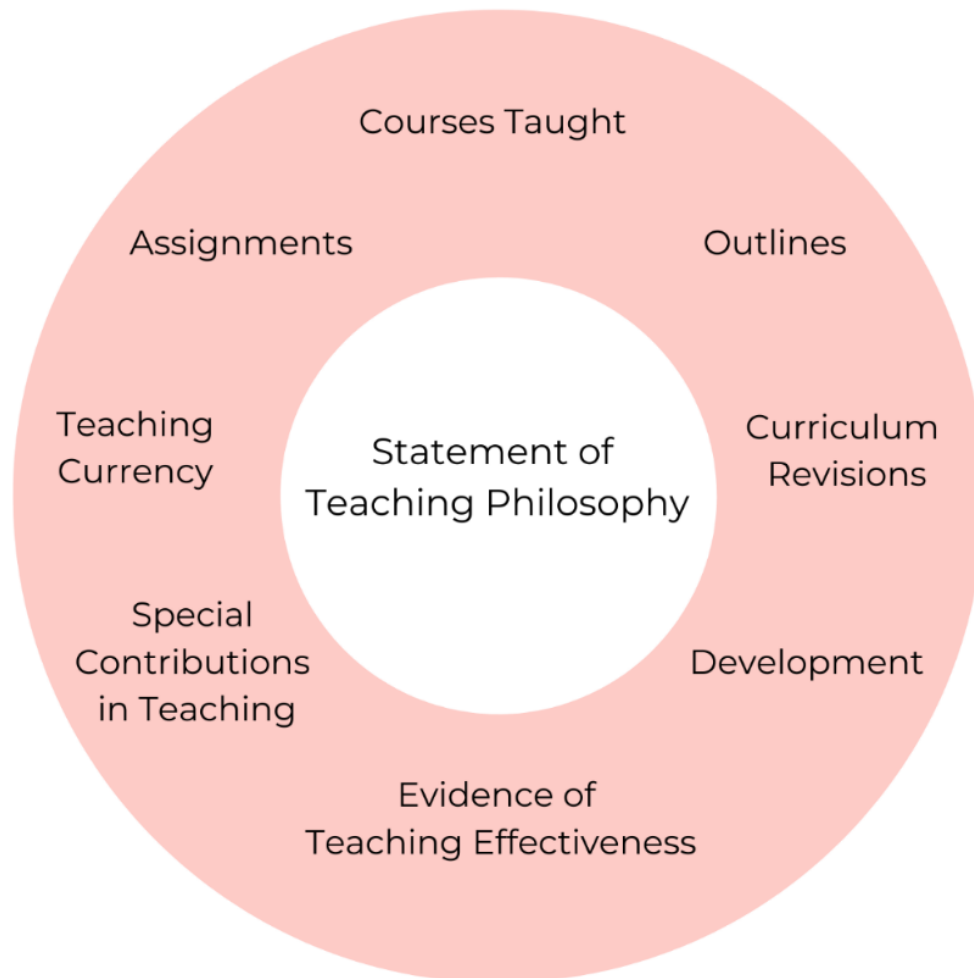
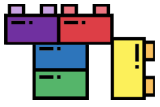
A Statement of Teaching Philosophy (STP) can be a:

- stand-alone document, or
- part of the broader teaching dossier (a.k.a. teaching portfolio).

Elements of a Teaching Dossier and Your STP

In addition to being a clearly reasoned personal essay, the **relationship between your STP and your teaching dossier** is similar to the relationship between a cover letter and a resume/CV. You should describe how your beliefs about teaching influence your teaching methods and provide direct examples that you can then discuss in your dossier.

The values presented in your STP are **evidenced in your teaching dossier elements**, such as courses taught, outlines, curriculum revisions, development, evidence of teaching effectiveness, special contributions in teaching, teaching currency, assignments, etc.



The formula for a successful STP is **Values + Practices + Evidence!** We will examine the connections between values, practices, and evidence later in this module.

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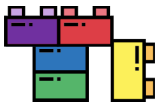
University of Toronto, Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. (n.d.). *Developing a statement of teaching philosophy*.

Introduction to Reflective Writing (Page 7 of 8)

What is reflective writing?

Watch the [video "Introduction to Reflective Writing" \(05:20\)](#).

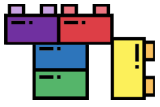
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Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988)

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle offers a framework for examining experiences. The framework shows the cyclic nature of the **six stages of reflection**: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.





- **Description:** What happened?
- **Feelings:** What were you thinking and feeling?
- **Evaluation:** What was good and bad about the experience?
- **Analysis:** What sense can you make out of the experience?
- **Conclusion:** What else could you have done?
- **Action Plan:** How will you deal with similar situations in the future?

Sources

Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit.

University of Edinburgh. (2020). *Gibb's reflective cycle*. Reflection Toolkit.

Starting Your Reflections (Page 8 of 8)

Activity: Starting Your Teaching Reflections

How do you start to reflect on your experiences and philosophies as an educator?

Below are two prompts to get you started.

Your Reflections

Think of a recent experience that required a teaching-related skill.

What were the contexts of the experience (who, what, when, where, why)?

What did you do, what **didn't** you do, and **why**?

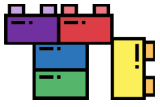
Consider the situation just described above.

What worked well?

What didn't work so well?

How did the actual experience differ from what you expected would happen?

What role did this experience play in your own teaching-skill assessment and/or development?



Bonus Resource: Reflective Practice Workbook

As a bonus activity to try after completing this module, download the **Strategies and Tools to Cultivate a Reflective Practice Workbook** ([PDF](#) | [DOCX](#)) for additional prompts, tools, and resources for your reflective journey. **PDF files** will open in a new tab and **DOCX files** will download automatically.

The bonus resource is not required to complete your certificate but is available to help you further develop your teaching practice.

Source

University of Toronto, Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, Teaching Assistants' Training Program. (2020). *TATP workbook: Strategies and tools to cultivate a reflective practice*.



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