

Teaching Dossier Preparation

A Guide for Faculty Members at the University of British Columbia

Prepared by: Gail Riddell, Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth, with valuable assistance from Judith Johnson, Audiology and Speech Sciences and William Webber, Anatomy (date: May, 1999)

INTRODUCTION

Scholarship at the University of B. C. embraces teaching, research and service. Evidence of performance in these categories is sought when documenting achievement, especially for purposes of tenure and promotion. The five aspects of teaching that are publicly accountable are: vision, design, interaction, outcomes and analysis (Carnegie Foundation). Evidence of teaching effectiveness and student learning are most often gathered through the use of student, peer and self assessment, using a set of agreed-upon teaching criteria.

This guide has been developed to help you systematically gather selected information and materials in support of teaching activities as you experience them. Self-analysis and reflection are the keys here, and the outcomes of that analysis are twofold: you make a strong case to others about your teaching competency, and you help yourself to understand and improve your approaches to teaching and learning.

Some form of the Teaching Dossier (or Teaching Portfolio, as it is called in the US and UK) is either required or strongly encouraged in a large number of universities for both reflection and assessment, and the numbers are growing. There is some evidence to support the claim that individuals using the Dossier demonstrate improvement in levels of teaching and learning (Seldin and Associates, 1993).

THE TEACHING DOSSIER DEFINED

"The Teaching Dossier is a comprehensive record of teaching activities and accomplishments drawn up by the professor". (1990 Dalhousie University Senate)

The Dossier is not a container into which you drop everything that defines you as a teacher. By selecting and highlighting strengths and achievements in a way that only the individual can do, another dimension of the teaching activity is available to those charged with sound decision-making about teaching activities. At the same time it provides you with more insight about your own teaching approaches and values. When combined with student feedback that focuses on their learning and with broadly-based peer feedback, the Dossier becomes an important factor in assessing meritorious performance.

The Dossier is a map or template, helping you to organize, articulate and support your teaching contributions and documentation. It is a cumulative document, updated at least yearly, and parts of it can form the 'teaching' component of your curriculum vitae. This guide takes you through the steps of Dossier preparation.

WHAT DOES A DOSSIER LOOK LIKE?

This is your chance to make a case for your effectiveness as a university teacher. Think about your Dossier in much the same way that you approach a research question, and build a case to support your 'effective teacher' thesis. First, you will wish to think broadly about what the act of teaching means to you. Later you can reflect upon and describe the sorts of evidence chosen to support your case. It is useful to have a set of widely-used effective teaching criteria against which to measure yourself. Our Web site <http://www.cstudies.ubc.ca/facdev/> contains a set of key teaching principles and practices adapted by a recent UBC Senate ad hoc committee (look under [Senate Evaluation tools](#)).

Next, you will collect and analyze the evidence and create a document which uses the supportive evidence to make conclusions about your teaching. In doing so, you will wish to look at the unique elements of your teaching role, for example; the sizes and levels of the courses you teach, the ways that you plan, conduct and evaluate them, and the goals, strategies and philosophy that underpin your efforts to help students learn. To support your thesis, you will wish to supply evidence to show that the course aims have been met, and that students have achieved the learning objectives. You will also wish to document and highlight your involvement in all teaching-related activities, such as curricular revision, teaching evaluation or teaching award committees.

This guide helps you to collect evidence from a variety of sources; the rest is up to you, with the help and support of your more experienced colleagues and your department head.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND HELP IN DEVELOPING A DOSSIER?

The Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth (TAG) Resource Room contains books, articles and sample dossiers and excerpts which provide key information and examples to aid in your dossier development. It is located in the basement of the David Lam Centre under Trekkers (entrance on Agricultural Road). Our web site (address in the section above) contains the text of this guide. In addition, the Centre offers seminars for faculty and for graduate students, in which the development of Teaching Dossiers for all disciplines is discussed.

Please note that several departments and faculties have developed their own teaching documentation forms, and the relevant academic administrator should be consulted about dossier preparation in those departments. This dossier is not meant to replace those forms, but rather to augment and expand upon them.

STARTING WORK ON A DOSSIER

For the body of the document, you will wish to focus on your approaches to teaching, and make appropriate references to supporting documentation appearing in the Appendices. The brevity of the primary document allows for its passage through the system from Department, to Dean, to Senior Appointments Committee, where relevant.

The primary document should be from five to eight pages in length, which includes the philosophy and approaches to teaching statements, summary of teaching activities and summary of evaluation tools. Supportive documentation is located in the Appendices. This longer dossier is normally submitted at the departmental level. It is in your interests to insert a two or three-page summary of the Dossier directly into your curriculum vitae, so that evidence of your teaching activities, accomplishments and reflections go forward to the Dean and to the Senior Appointments Committee. At this time (May, 1999), and for most faculties, the full Teaching Dossier goes only as far forward as the departmental promotion and tenure committee.

ASSEMBLING THE DOSSIER

Before you begin, remember:

1. Understand the context. Consult with your peers, department head and promotion/tenure committee to determine the type of Dossier that suits your unit's needs. It pays to familiarize yourself with University and Faculty mission statements and the Academic Plan - your teaching may exemplify aspects of that mission.
2. Know which teaching criteria your department and faculty use to assess instruction. If no written criteria exist, check the TAG Centre's Web site under the heading "Senate Evaluation Tools". Prior to beginning the data collection process, think about the areas that you wish to highlight in your teaching practices.
3. As mentioned in the Introduction of this document, the five aspects of teaching which are publicly accountable are: your vision; your ability to design courses, materials, student opportunities; the interactive qualities of learning, within and outside of the classroom; student learning outcomes; the analysis and reflection that takes place about your teaching. You may wish to represent each of these areas in your Dossier.
4. Think about documentation. Each area that you choose to highlight will require supportive documentation in the Appendices. For example, you may wish to show evidence of improving student knowledge and skills acquisition, or of moving away from instructor-centred and towards student-centred teaching, or provide evidence of your clearly-defined student learning objectives and the assessment techniques supporting the learning.
5. Assume nothing. Begin now to collect any information pertaining to teaching, and err on the side of documenting and saving too much, since you will need to base your case on evidence. You can, and should, discard some of the material later. For example, retain copies of all items referred to in this guide, including exemplary course outlines and learning objectives, innovative assignments, samples of student projects, and more. Check your updates annually, just as you do for your curriculum vitae.
6. Brevity is the key. Five to eight pages tell the story of your teaching, supported by additional documentation and information in the Appendices.

Now you may wish to follow, in whichever order or form works for you and your department, the procedures laid out in the next five sections (A-E). If you have items which cut across teaching and another scholarship category (e.g. service), select the category that seems to fit best and cross-reference the items.

A SUGGESTED TEACHING DOSSIER FORMAT

A. Approach to Teaching

1. Philosophy

To introduce the reader to your views about teaching, learning and students, it is important to begin the Dossier with statements about your goals and vision of teaching. You are charged with demonstrating to the reader your commitment to the practice of teaching. While this introduction is meant to reflect your talents, certain guidelines apply:

- make the statement reflective and personal; for example: what skills and values do you bring to the instructional aspect of your job? What is your goal with respect to student learning? What qualities would you like to be remembered by as a teacher?
- the statement should be brief, from a few paragraphs to one or two pages, depending upon your situation
- use a straightforward narrative (first-person) style
- avoid technical language and use broadly-applicable language and concepts, since not everyone reading the document is an expert in your field

To assist you in writing your statement of teaching philosophy, please refer to the Supplementary Questions for Reflection on page...of this document.

2. Teaching goals and strategies

This can be a separate section, or can be combined with (1), above. After reflecting on your teaching role, you will wish to examine how it is put into practice in your work. For example: how does learning occur with your students and which actions do you take to facilitate the process? How does your teaching help students to master concepts and promote understanding of theory and practice? How do your courses contribute to students' achievements in their university program, and after their return to the community? How do you nurture intellects in a setting where grades can be the key student motivator to learning? Note: please refer to the Supplementary Questions for Describing Teaching Goals and Strategies (page...) of this document for more issues that you may wish to address.

B. Teaching Activities

Now that your philosophical 'scaffolding' is firmly in place, you can build a case and provide evidence about your commitment to teaching. How do you choose or emphasize course content? How do you teach so that students master the knowledge, skills and new perspectives indicated in your course aims and intended learning outcomes? How do you evaluate student progress? What are your classroom approaches? How have you used innovative practices in your teaching, and why? In which ways have you tried to improve instruction? What approaches worked or failed to work and why? How did you learn from this experience?

Appendices II to VI of this guide suggest sample evidence which may be collected to illustrate your own contributions. Again, much of this data should appear in your Appendix. Use summaries or examples of the information to address the questions listed above, and the additional ones that you devise to exemplify your teaching activities. Place the rest, with proper referencing, in your Appendices. Remember, quantity is not synonymous with quality - use summaries of student feedback, brief examples of course outlines and outcomes, brief forms of activities that you have used to actively involve students in learning.

Again, questions in the section entitled [Supplementary Questions for Describing Teaching Goals and Strategies](#) may help you to develop this section.

1. Teaching Responsibilities

For the Dossier, you may wish to provide a brief summary of course types and any revisions, together with the rationale for change, the types of teaching that you do based on such issues as class sizes, times, course goals (are you providing information, coaching, encouraging self-direction?). [Appendix II](#) provides examples of supportive evidence that include details of all of your teaching activities.

2. Supervising and Advising Students

Here you will set the context for your supervisory duties, including graduate and undergraduate responsibilities, average supervision load for your department, and the normal nature and extent of your duties. [Appendix III](#) of the guide provides a list of supervisory activities which you may wish to summarize in the Dossier, and document more fully in your Appendix.

3. Activities Engaged in to Improve Teaching and Learning

Professional development encompasses all steps taken to improve an instructor's effectiveness. Much of this section will appear in the body of your Dossier in summary form. The means by which you seek to improve your teaching and students' learning follow quite directly from your philosophy and teaching strategy statements in Part A. of this guide. This is your opportunity to focus upon your efforts to improve the classroom climate, to 'trouble-shoot' in problematic courses, to solicit feedback from students about these issues.

Now is also the time to summarize your attendance in any teaching-related seminars, workshops or conferences, and to explain how you used new information in the classroom. [Appendix IV](#) for a list of suggestions.

4. Committee Service (Teaching and Learning issues)

A variety of activities do not take place in classrooms but do provide important support for teaching. Some of these departmental, faculty and University-wide activities which contribute to strengthening teaching are described in [Appendix V](#). Again, you will wish to highlight your involvement in the Dossier, and provide details on names, dates and contributions in the Appendix.

You may also be engaged, at the departmental level, in course and curricular revision, or in the development of new programs. You may wish to include in the Appendix, a letter describing your committee work, written by a senior member of the curriculum committee.

5. Publications and professional contributions

Other activities taking place outside the classroom context include publications (such as curriculum materials or workbooks and conference papers that relate to teaching or student learning). You will also wish to discuss and provide supportive documentation about any involvement you have had developing and teaching seminars or workshops. Any direct involvement in writing and running a Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund project should be described and documented here, as well. See [Appendix V](#) for details.

For this section, much of the supportive data will appear in your own Dossier Appendix. A summary of those methods, materials, procedures and developmental issues should appear in the body of the Dossier. C. Assessing and Reflecting Upon Teaching

Normally, during a formal review process, much of the above documentation is collected by your own unit. It includes student and peer teaching evaluations, , and other indicators of teaching. You are invited to comment on the documentation in this section. For example, you may wish to flag two sets of course evaluations in which marked improvement is shown in the second after the curriculum or teaching approach was modified.

In this section you will also wish to describe any teaching awards received. Nominations for awards also enhance your reputation as a teacher.

See [Appendix VII](#). for examples. As with other sections, a summary of this section may appropriately be placed in the body of the Dossier, supported by evidence in your own Appendices.

D. Providing Evidence of Student Learning

When appropriate, discuss any objective indicators of student progress (such as students' standing on a nation-wide examination), or of teaching which has contributed to honours, awards or employment for students. In doing so, you may wish to describe the various types of learning which took place, such as knowledge, concepts, abilities, performance, skills, or new perspectives. See [Appendix VIII](#) for more examples.

E. Teaching Reflections

You may wish to make some concluding remarks that tie together the philosophy, approaches, evidence and evaluative sections. At this point it is also prudent to detail a plan for future actions, including your motivation and challenges, as well as short and long-term teaching goals. These remarks belong in the body of the Dossier.

Questions to help you write the narrative portion of your dossier

1. SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

These questions originated at Cornell University, and are to be used as a tool for approaching your Statement of Philosophy.

Discipline and Classroom Approach

- within your discipline, which area do you regard as your strongest? areas that need improvement?
- what is your greatest asset as a classroom teacher? Your greatest shortcoming?
- which teaching approach works best for your discipline? Why?
- how do you change teaching methods and strategies to meet new classroom situations? (give a recent example)

Instructor-Student Rapport

- how would you describe the atmosphere in your classroom? How do you think your students would describe it?
- what is your primary goal with respect to your students?

Questions about Teaching

- what is the one thing that you would most like to change about your teaching? What have you done about changing it?
- in which ways has your teaching changed in the last five years? Are they changes for the better (for you, for your students)? Explain
- what would you like your students to remember about you as a teacher ten years from now?

2. SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FOR DESCRIBING TEACHING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Adapted from Developing a Teaching Portfolio - Queensland University of Technology from materials originally compiled in the UK by Graham Gibbs.

Students

- who are they? what are their goals?
- how do you motivate them to think, articulate, learn?
- how often and under what circumstances are you available to them?
- how often do you request feedback on your teaching from students? What do you do with the information?

Course content

- how do you keep current in your field (reading, research, conferences)
- is the content that you teach relevant to students' needs? (do you update and prune?)
- how might your colleagues judge your knowledge of the field?
- under what circumstances do you discuss course content with colleagues (form or take part in networks and discussion groups, both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary)?

Course design

- where do you start? What are you trying to achieve in your teaching?
- how do you decide what set of skills students need to master in the program/course?
- how do you design the learning opportunities so they can master them?
- what are the aims and intended learning outcomes for the courses you teach, and how did you choose them?

Teaching Strategies

- how do you help students to know what aims and intended outcomes exist for the course?
- how do you help students to learn those aims and outcomes? (teaching methods)?
- what steps do you take to encourage higher level learning (such as synthesis, analysis, application, problem-solving, etc.)?
- what is 'active learning' and how do you use it in the classroom and in assignments?
- how do you test the learning outcomes? (evaluation of learning)?
- how do you help students to learn new attitudes and perspectives?
- how do you promote diversity and inclusivity in and beyond the classroom?

Teaching Resources

- how do you decide which course materials, learning resources or technologies to use?
- what are some examples of materials, resources or technologies that you have designed and/or employed?

Assessment of student learning

- what range of assessment methods do you use and why?
- how have you changed your approach over the years?
- how do you know that your assessment methods are effective?
- how do you give feedback to your students on their assessment results?

Evaluation of your teaching

- how do you monitor and evaluate your own teaching?(e.g. peer feedback, ongoing student feedback, videotaping a class, kept records of changes resulting from feedback?)
- what does this evidence tell you about your teaching?

Continued study of teaching and learning

- have you been involved in any 'action research' on your classroom teaching, and if so, what have you learned?
- have you attended seminars and workshops on teaching? How have you implemented what you learned?
- have you taught in any professional development seminars on teaching and learning? Examples?
- have you written about teaching for your department, faculty or beyond? (teaching journal, discipline journal on teaching). If so, on which subjects?

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION FOR YOUR APPENDICES

Provide a table of contents for the documentation which you have selected to support your accomplishments. Most of the narrative for the Dossier should appear in the body - this section is for documentation supporting your description of accomplishments.

Appendix I: Teaching Goals, Strategies and Evaluation Methods

- curricular and course content approaches - evidence of how you arrived at determining course content and knowledge base required in relation to other courses in the program or discipline
- course materials, special notes, handouts, problem sets, laboratory books, computer manuals, portfolios of student work, etc. relevant to your teaching methods
- procedures used to assess or evaluate student learning, and evidence of learning described. Arrangements made to accommodate needs of special students
- teaching developments undertaken (course design, curricular changes to include gender issues, student diversity, subject matter, methods of presentation, methods chosen or developed to enhance student learning, evaluation procedures, specially designed assignments, teaching methods geared to developing critical skills, as well as developments involving teaching resources such as films, computer materials and other learning technologies, and where possible, evidence of the effectiveness and impact of the teaching developments you have undertaken
- research activities related to teaching and student (includes action, or classroom, research)

Appendix II: Teaching Activities

- actual teaching methods used in the classroom (e.g., collaborative inquiry, problem-based learning, case studies, lecture, small group discussion, problem-solving, project-based, student presentations or other critical thinking pedagogies)
- titles and numbers of courses taught, including graduate, undergraduate, and reading courses. Make this very brief - focus on courses that you have developed or substantially revised. This is often the place where extraneous material creeps in, resulting in a dossier that is unwieldy.
- number of students in each course. Describe your workload including, where appropriate, the number of teaching assistants assigned to assist you in the course and the nature of their involvement
- details of other teaching activities such as seminars, advising students, supervision of a teaching or research practicum, athletic coaching, field placement supervision, and coaching or studio teaching in the performing arts
- exemplify teaching practices such as, the design of an unusual course or assignment, ways that course aims were adapted to meet needs of students, ways that faculty member is accessible to student
- coordination of multi-section, sequenced, or interrelated courses
- teaching involvement outside your unit

Appendix III: Supervising and Advising Students

Documentation of supervision activity includes names of those supervised and the nature and extent of the supervisory activity. It is also useful to indicate the outcome of the supervision (e.g. the thesis title and acceptance date, the citation information of a student publication, or the date and venue of a public performance). Remember to detail you supervision 'load' within the context of the average departmental load.

- Ph.D. thesis supervision (indicate whether supervisor or committee member)
- Masters' thesis supervision (as above)
- Honours thesis supervision (as above)
- supervision of graduate and undergraduate independent study or directed readings
- advisement on program of study, courses, or career and professional advice undertaking of formal or informal student mentoring
- supervision which has contributed to publications, exhibitions, performances and conference presentations by students

Appendix IV: Activities Engaged in to Improve Teaching and Learning

- steps taken to assess and respond to general problems arising in a course, which may necessitate redesign or refocus of course content and/or teaching methods
- results of student ratings or questionnaires designed by you to solicit assessments of your teaching effectiveness
- description of efforts made to improve the classroom climate or your teaching methods. You may wish to consider items such as steps taken to ensure free and open participation and the comfort of all learners regardless of gender, ethnic origin, class, age, sexual orientation or ability
- seminars, Instructional Skills Workshops, and conferences on teaching and learning approaches and techniques (internal and external) attended

Appendix V: Committee Service (teaching and learning issues)

It may be useful to include details such as names of committees, dates, and the nature of your contribution here.

- all activities concerned with teaching that you have undertaken as a member of a faculty, department, or cross-disciplinary committee, subcommittee, ad hoc committee, or task force. If relevant, consider membership in the Senate, Board of Governors, library committees, teaching and scholarship committees, Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, Advisory Boards (such as the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth), Presidential or Vice-presidential committees on teaching, learning technologies, Teaching awards committees (faculty awards, university awards, special awards e.g. TA teaching) and other committees working on academic policy, curriculum, review, planning and implementation as they pertain to the teaching activity.

Teaching Assistant professional training, orientation, or development

- attendance at professional training, orientation, or development sessions for faculty, such as orientation sessions for new faculty, and sessions that introduce or raise consciousness about teaching techniques or learning technologies
- involvement in the Mentoring Program or the Teaching Support Group of the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth, or similar departmental or faculty-based mentoring or teaching support programs. This may include providing consultation or review to instructors in other units in improving teaching effectiveness
- involvement in establishing, adjudicating, or administering awards or honours recognizing and celebrating student achievement
- observing others teaching as part of formal or informal evaluation and feedback regarding teaching effectiveness
- serving on accreditation committees, curriculum planning/review committees, task forces, program revision committees
- organization of retreats and strategic planning sessions (as they relate to teaching)
- development of department teaching resources such as computer instruction projects, a teaching materials resource centre, a reference map collection, a visiting scholar program
- use of your teaching materials by instructors in other departments, faculties, colleges or universities
- development of widely-used student ratings of instruction or other assessment instruments

Appendix VI: Publications and Professional Contributions

It is helpful to include information about the nature of your audience and your contribution.

- workshops and seminars about teaching that you designed and instructed (section V deals with those that you attended for professional development reasons)
- curriculum materials - details of published and unpublished curriculum materials, textbooks, workbooks, case studies, class notes, lab manuals, and other classroom materials which you have developed
- research and professional contributions related to teaching - books (including chapters in books, edited books, and special issues of journals); articles (indicate whether refereed, solicited, or non-refereed); papers in conference proceedings (indicate whether refereed or non-refereed); bibliographies; newsletters; unpublished conference papers
- funding related to teaching - internal and external teaching development grants, fellowships, including Teaching and Learning Enhancement funds

Appendix VII: Assessing and Reflecting Upon Teaching

- departmental teaching evaluations (initiated by the unit)
- peer evaluations or reviews based on visits to your classroom and/or scrutiny of your course materials. Note: before peer observations are undertaken, your department should be clear about the teaching aims and student learning outcomes that apply to your undergraduate or graduate program.
- teaching awards received by you including departmental, faculty, and University of BC awards, and external awards (professional association, national and international teaching awards). Nominations for awards also indicate your reputation as a teacher
- unsolicited and solicited letters from students (initiated by the unit)
- student-initiated feedback

Appendix VIII: Providing Evidence of Student Learning

- objective indicators of student progress, where available (proficiency tests, students' standings on nation-wide tests, etc.)
 - feedback from supervisors or employers of graduates (particularly valuable in professional programs like the health sciences and applied sciences)
-

Several publications were consulted during the preparation of this guide, and we wish to acknowledge their contributions to the field:

O'Neil, Carol and Wright, Alan (1992). *Recording Teaching Accomplishments: A Dalhousie Guide to the Teaching Dossier*. Dalhousie University Office of Instructional Development and Technology, Halifax.

Ross, Dorene et al (1995). *Guidelines for Portfolio Preparation: implications from an analysis of teaching portfolios at the University of Florida*. *Innovative Higher Education* 20 (1), 45-62.

Seldin, Peter and Associates (1993) . *Successful Use of Teaching Portfolios*. Anker Publishing, Bolton, MA.

Shore, Bruce M., et al (revised 1986, reprinted 1991). *The CAUT Guide to The Teaching Dossier. Its Preparation and Use*. Canadian Association of University Teachers, Ottawa, Ontario.

Teaching Documentation Guide, (1993). Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning, York University, Toronto.

Teaching Dossier: A Guide, (1996). University Teaching Services, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

Urbach, Floyd, (1992). *Developing a Teaching Portfolio*. *College Teaching* 40 (2), 71-74.

Weeks, Patricia (1998). *The Teaching Portfolio: a professional development tool*. *International Journal of Academic Development*, 3(1), 70-74.

ALL OF THE PUBLICATIONS LISTED ABOVE ARE AVAILABLE FOR READING FROM THE [TAG RESOURCE ROOM](#).

(1999 UBC Teaching Dossier Preparation: A Guide for Faculty Members is published and distributed by the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth for the UBC academic community, The University of BC, 6326 Agricultural Road, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2. If you have comments or suggestions, please contact the Centre Director at (604) 822-9164.