Documenting Evidence of Good Teaching Practice: Strategies for Academic Staff

Context and Key Issues

Gathering and documenting evidence of good teaching practice is a key dimension of academic work. It is important for academics at all stages of their career to document their teaching development and achievements for such purposes as performance review meetings and promotion. Evidence of success in the research domain is determined through such criteria as number of refereed journal articles and amount of external competitive funding. However, evidence of excellence and success in teaching is often more complex to define and document, for teaching in higher education is a multifaceted phenomenon. It may include:

- subject matter expertise;
- skills in curriculum and assessment design;
- skills in classroom teaching/lecturing and student advising;
- management and organisational skills;
- mentoring and supervision of colleagues, graduate students and students in practical or professional workplace settings;
- personal and professional development intended to enhance one’s own teaching practice;
- departmental development that enhances teaching policies and practices at department level; and
- contribution to the wider community through teaching and sharing of expertise beyond the university.

(adapted from McAlpine & Harris, 2002)

The following six areas are designed to give you a few starter ideas for the range of ways in which you might document evidence in relation to your teaching practice. The relevance of these strategies for individual academic staff will vary according to such contextual factors as career stage and discipline.

Strategies for Success

1. Articulate your teaching philosophy
   - Develop a brief introductory statement of your intentions as a teacher in higher education. This statement may evolve over time as you teach in different contexts and develop more expertise. Simple examples of a ‘philosophy’ statement include:
     a. “The degree to which students are engaged with the subject material is fundamental to their effective learning. Participation and interactivity are principal agents in stimulating this engagement…” In my teaching I seek to…”
     b. “For the past decade my primary teaching goal has been to capture the educational potential of new technologies…”

2. Keep systematic records of your teaching, course reviews, leadership and service
   - Keep a record of courses taught and of learning and teaching materials developed
     This list should include details such as student numbers and teaching mode in order to establish context and to provide evidence of the breadth of your experience. When you design resources such as course notes, student workbooks or problem sheets, make a note of these.
   - Systematically collect and respond to student evaluations of courses and teaching
     Keep any hard copies you have of evaluations for future purposes. For each set of evaluations, document (even briefly) what you have done in response to feedback. What improvements have you made? How has your teaching and curriculum design developed as a result of student feedback?
   - Comment on the currency of your curriculum content and learning objectives
     How and when do you review content and learning objectives? What are your sources for benchmarking and keeping up to date with developments in the field?

3. Describe how you implement a student-centred approach to teaching
   - Reflect on your availability to students and strategies for connecting with students
     Document the strategies you employed to facilitate student contact and advising.
   - Keep a record of your students’ accomplishments beyond the classroom
     Make a note of students’ professional or research achievements, awards and publications.
   - Document your strategies for working with individual students or special student groups
     How do you cater for international students, students with disabilities or students from diverse cultural backgrounds?
   - Document approaches to providing student feedback
     When and how do you provide feedback to students and what is the impact of this approach?
4. List examples of scholarship in your discipline and in learning and teaching
   • Argue for your scholarly approach to teaching
     This may include your own research into learning and teaching or perhaps evidence-based approaches that inform curriculum design.
   • Document professional development you have undertaken
     This may include courses completed, conferences attended, or online professional development.
   • Demonstrate how you address the learning and teaching priority areas of the University
     This could include scholarly approaches to the implementation of WIL, research-based learning, blended learning, internationalising the curriculum, public scholarship, community engagement etc.
   • Articulate how and why you use technology in your teaching
     What impact has the use of ICTs had on student learning, attitudes and outcomes?
   • List your conference papers and research publications related to learning and teaching
     Outline these in such a way as to include reference to formal feedback and recognition from peers.
   • Keep track of all awards, citations and invitations to speak on teaching
     e.g. ‘My national reputation as a teacher is evident in the regular invitations I receive to…’
   • Include findings from evaluations and comment on actions taken in response to these
     This could include student surveys, peer review, observations, self-review. e.g. ‘Evidence of the high standard of my face-to-face teaching is as follows …’

5. Outline innovations you have developed in your teaching
   • Document innovations in teaching or grants received for innovation
     e.g. ‘I have been active and successful in applying for funds to address the following issues in relation to student learning in my discipline …’
   • Comment on how you achieve teaching-research linkages in your practice
     e.g. ‘I have introduced the following strategies to ensure that my first year students benefit from my disciplinary research program…’
   • Outline ways in which you have adapted curriculum to address the learning and teaching priority areas of the University as appropriate
     What adaptations have you made to include international perspectives? How have you modified the curriculum in your discipline and courses to include blended learning approaches?

6. Describe examples of your leadership in learning and teaching
   • Identify your leadership in teaching in the discipline
     Provide details of any textbooks you have written or to which you have contributed (especially those in widespread use – Who uses them? How many universities? International distribution?)
   • Document your influence on the departmental context (and beyond)
     e.g. ‘As a direct result of my influence/input on …’
   • Document courses and programs designed, reviewed and revised
     To provide evidence of your leadership in teaching, it is worthwhile to document your role in developing new courses or programs in your discipline.
   • Look for opportunities to demonstrate leadership
     Outline any strategies you have for identifying opportunities to initiate change in teaching, curriculum design, and culture in relation to approaches to learning and teaching in your Department.
   • Document your postgraduate supervision responsibilities
     List the number of students you have supervised and the outcomes of their research in terms of completions, publications etc.

Final suggestions for presenting evidence of good teaching practice
   • View your documentary evidence as an argument and a narrative – tell the story of your teaching and its development. Provide compelling evidence.
   • With regard to your contribution to teaching, focus not only on the scope, quality, effectiveness of your work but also the increasing sophistication of your contribution. Trace the increasing complexity of the tasks, document the leadership demonstrated, identify the growing knowledge base required.
   • Keep returning to your main theme/organising principle — aim to bring coherence to your argument.
   • Strategically select supporting evidence and examples and be sure to keep documenting your evidence in a methodical, easy-to-access way each semester.


Prepared by Kerri-Lee Krause - Griffith Institute for Higher Education, Griffith University (January 2008)
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