Benchmarks Instructor Guide:

Documenting Your Teaching in a Self-Reflection Narrative

KU Center for Teaching Excellence

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his guide is intended to help **instructors** represent their teaching for review and evaluation purposes. It is based on the [**Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness**](https://cte.ku.edu/evaluating-teaching) framework, which posits that effective teaching involves the alignment of course goals and instructional practices, the creation of motivating, respectful and welcoming learning climates, and consistent attention to and reflection on student learning and feedback. Benchmarks identifies seven dimensions of teaching to capture the full range of faculty teaching activities, including the intellectual work of designing course components and modifying teaching over time. A rubric articulates criteria for each dimension:

1. Goals, content and alignment
2. Teaching practices
3. Class climate
4. Achievement of learning outcomes
5. Reflection and iterative growth
6. Mentoring and advising
7. Involvement in teaching service, scholarship or community

Since 2017, CTE has been collaborating with colleagues at CU Boulder, UMass Amherst and Michigan State on the NSF-supported [TEVAL initiative,](http://www.teval.net)  to help departments and schools use this framework to improve teaching documentation and evaluation.

# The Self-Reflection Narrative

The instructor’s narrative about their teaching is the centerpiece of instructors’ documentation of their teaching. The narrative should go beyond philosophy of teaching. Use it to explain what and how you teach, giving specific examples to illustrate, why you use the approaches you do, and (very importantly) *how you know* whether those approaches are effective (i.e., the intellectual work involved in teaching). The Benchmarks dimensions and rubric can help you structure your statement.

You may choose to also include **supporting documentation**, or materials from your courses that provide supporting evidence and examples related to your responses to the Benchmarks prompts. The Self-Reflection prompts also include possible supporting documentation or evidence relevant to each Benchmarks dimension. If you include it, be sure to point the reviewer to the relevant supporting documentation in your statement. You can also create a **Course Portfolio**, which organizes your supplemental information into a coherent package framed by a narrative. See our Course Portfolio Guide for more details.

# Self-Reflection Prompts

The prompts below can help you think through how to write about your teaching related to each of the Benchmarks dimensions. For each dimension of teaching, we’ve included suggestions of the sorts of materials that could speak to that dimension (ideally, these materials would be organized into a course portfolio). You can use this document alongside the [Benchmarks for Teaching Excellence rubric](https://cte.ku.edu/sites/cte.ku.edu/files/docs/KU%20Benchmarks%20Framework%202020update.pdf), which provides further details and language for representing teaching contributions. Feel free to use the language from the rubric in your narrative, but it will be important that you also point to specific examples and evidence along with that language.

1. **Goals, Content, and Alignment.** What are students expected to learn in your course(s) and why? What content and materials do you use and why?

Evidence/ Examples could come from□ Course goals in syllabus □ Sample course materials (e.g., rubrics, assignment sheets, readings)

1. **Teaching Practices.** What activities and assignments do you use in and out of class time to help students reach learning goals? How do these activities and assignments provide opportunities for practice and feedback on important skills and concepts? What strategies do you use to help all students feel engaged and included?

Evidence/ Examples could come from□ Syllabus or course schedule □ Sample class activities and assignments □ Lesson plans □ Examples of feedback on student work

### Class Climate. How do you encourage motivation, a sense of belonging and mutual respect among your students? Are there things you are doing to enable students to interact with each other? To build a sense of community? How has student feedback informed the way you teach?

Evidence/ Examples could come from□ Syllabus □ Lesson plans or sample activities □ Reflections on student feedback

1. **Achievement of Learning Outcomes.** Which assignments are most central and best illustrate student learning? Does the student work on these assignments meet your (or other stakeholders’) expectations and course learning goals? How do you know?

Evidence/ Examples could come from□ Rubrics and samples of student work (assignments, blogs, etc.) □ Summaries/ analysis of performance on rubrics or other indicators of student achievement □ Item analysis of exam questions that are connected to learning goals □ Reflections on student learning

[This guide on how to represent student learning](https://cte.ku.edu/sites/cte.ku.edu/files/files/Examples-%20Representing%20Student%20Learning%20for%20Review.pdf) for teaching evaluation may help you address this section.

### Reflection and Iterative Growth. Have you changed your teaching over time, either within a semester or from one semester to another? If so, what prompted the changes? Did the changes yield the outcomes you wanted? Are there things you’d change in a future version?

Evidence/ Examples could come from□ Syllabi □ Sample assignments or examples of student work that highlight changes in course □ Changes in student achievement (e.g., assignment or exam performance, improvement in a rubric dimension) □ Reflections on student feedback

### Mentoring and advising. Describe your mentoring or advising of students for academic and career choices and for scholarship. How do you make yourself available and communicate with students? How do you support students’ professional development?

Evidence/ Examples could come from□ # of undergraduate mentees □ # of graduate mentees and status □ Service on graduate committees □ Letters of recommendation written for students □ Nomination of students for awards, grants scholarships □ presentations or publications with student co-authors □ letters from or surveys of student advisees

### Service, scholarship and participation in teaching community. In what ways do you participate in or contribute to the broader teaching community, both on and off campus (e.g., participation in CTE, CODL or IT workshops- see evidence/examples for more ideas)?

Evidence/ Examples could come from□Teaching/assessment committees □ Participation or supervision of co-curricular activities or experiential learning □ Participation in teaching community or development opportunities (e.g., CTE, CODL, IT workshops, teaching-focused conferences or networks) □ Leadership roles in teaching communities or development opportunities. □ Internal or external presentations or publications on teaching □ Internal or external grant applications related to teaching