# An Instructor Guide for Documenting Your Teaching

for Annual Review or Multi-Term Review

KU Center for Teaching Excellence

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his guide is intended to help **instructors** identify and organize the information they provide for review and evaluation of their teaching. To support effective documentation and evaluation of teaching, CTE developed a framework called [**Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness**](https://cte.ku.edu/benchmarks-teaching-effectiveness-project)**.** This guide is designed to help you use the framework to document and represent your own teaching. [**Part I**](#_I._What_Material) gives an overview of what material you as an instructor can submit to document your teaching. [**Part II**](#_Part_II:_Self-Reflection) provides two possible tools that can help you provide statements, evidence and reflections related to the Benchmarks framework.

## About Benchmarks

Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness posits that effective teaching involves the alignment of course goals and instructional practices, the creation of motivating and inclusive 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. 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

The framework also specifies evidence that can speak to each dimension, including information from the instructor, peers, and students. Per KU policy, faculty evaluation should draw on these multiple sources. This guide focuses on the information provided by you, the instructor.

Benchmarks was initially developed in 2016 based on the literature on teaching effectiveness, with input from CTE Department Ambassadors, department chairs and pilot departments. But because Benchmarks is designed to capture the intellectual work of designing and redesigning course components**, it is well-suited to documenting and rewarding faculty efforts to adapt their teaching during the pandemic.** CTE has a collaborative [NSF grant](http://www.teval.net) to explore how we can use this framework to improve teaching evaluation at KU, CU Boulder and UMass Amherst.

## I. What Material Can You Use to Document Your Teaching?

We recommend two components: instructor statements and supporting documentation.

### Component 1: Instructor Statement(s)

This is centerpiece of instructors’ documentation of their teaching. The statement(s) 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 structure these reflective statements. Here are two approaches (Part II provides tools to guide both):

* **A single integrated statement** describing how and why you have designed, implemented and adjusted or improved the courses you teach, how you approach mentoring, and your contributions to teaching community and leadership. The Self-Reflection Narrative Guide in Part II can help you create a statement.
* **Short individual statements on each Benchmarks dimension** (or bullet points, if acceptable to your department). The Self-Reflection Short Form in Part II can help you generate these statements. This approach may be easier for both instructors and reviewers, especially if a department elects to focus on a subset of dimensions each year, cycling through all over them over time.

### Component 2: Supporting documentation

Materials from your courses can provide supporting evidence and examples related to your responses to the Benchmarks prompts. The tools in Part II provides a list of possible supporting documentation or evidence relevant to each Benchmarks dimension. In your statement, point the reviewer to the relevant supporting documentation. Here are three recommendations for supporting documentation of increasing depth and informativeness.

* **Basic Documentation.** Include a syllabus for each course mentioned
* **Moderate Documentation:**  For an example course (or courses if, for instance, you teach a graduate course and a large undergraduate course, include:

1. *Syllabus* (or screenshots from course LMS)
2. *Sample course materials*, such as a sample assignment with rubrics or criteria, and a sample instructional activity that helps students acquire the skills/knowledge needed for the assignment.

**Even better… include:**

1. *Representations of student learning*, such as summaries of student achievement on different rubric dimensions, or annotated samples of student work (see [this consent form](https://cte.ku.edu/sites/cte.ku.edu/files/docs/Branding/CTE%20Website%20Student%20Consent%20Form.pdf) for permission to use student work). See [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.
2. *Student feedback* (if available) and your reflections on it

* **Thorough Documentation:** A Course Portfolio that provides examples and evidence for one or more example courses. The Course Portfolio organizes the above information into a coherent package framed by a brief narrative):

1. *A course narrativ*e(1/2 page or less) that provides a guide to the rest of the materials. Key framing questions include:What are your goals for students in this course? What assignments and activities do you use to accomplish these goals? How do you create a motivating and inclusive environment for students to progress toward course goals? How do you know if students are meeting your goals? What future changes will you consider and why?
2. *Syllabus* (or screenshots from course LMS)
3. *Sample course materials*, such as a sample assignment with rubrics or grading criteria, and a sample instructional activity that helps students acquire the skills/knowledge needed for the assignment.
4. *Representations of student learning*, such as summaries of student achievement on different rubric dimensions, or annotated samples of student work (see [this consent form](https://cte.ku.edu/sites/cte.ku.edu/files/docs/Branding/CTE%20Website%20Student%20Consent%20Form.pdf) for permission to use student work). See [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.
5. *Student feedback*(if available) and your reflections on it

## II: How to Produce Statements and Documentation

Here are two guides that can help you produce statements and documentation of your teaching. The Self Reflection Narrative Guide can help you produce a single integrated statement about your teaching, and the Self Reflection Short Form can help you produce short statements and documentation about individual dimensions of teaching.

### Self-Reflection Narrative Guide

The prompts below can help you think through how to write about your teaching related to each of the Benchmarks dimensions. 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. Therefore, for each dimension of teaching, we’ve also included suggestions of the sorts of materials that could speak to that dimension (ideally, these materials could be organized into a brief “course portfolio”).

#### How many courses should you write about?

This may depend on the expectations set by your department, and the similarity in approaches you use across the courses you teach. One recommendation is to address each prompt with a response that is representative of your approach across all of your teaching, and then provide examples and evidence from one sample course, or two sample courses if you’d like to highlight very different approaches.

Start with an overview of your teaching responsibilities: What courses do you teach? For each one, what is the typical enrollment? Who takes the course and why? What role does it play in the program?

### 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?

#### Draw Evidence or examples from

* Course goals in syllabus
* Sample course materials (e.g., rubrics, assignment sheets, readings)

### 2. Teaching Practices

What activities and assignments do you use in and out of class time to help students reach those 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 or examples could come from

* Syllabus or course schedule
* Sample class activities and assignments
* Lesson plans
* Examples of feedback on student work

### 3. Class Climate

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

#### Evidence or examples could come from

* Syllabus (diversity or climate statement)
* Lesson plans or sample activities
* Reflections on student feedback

### 4. Achievement of Learning Outcomes

How do you know how well your approaches to teaching are working? Which assignments are most central and best illustrate student learning (particularly in relation to the goals you have already articulated)? Does the student work on these assignments meet your (or other stakeholders’) expectations and course learning goals? How do you know?

##### **Evidence or 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.

### 5. Reflection and Iterative Growth

Have your approaches to teaching described above changed over time, either within a semester or from one semester to another? If so, what prompted the changes? Did they yield the outcomes you wanted? Are there things you’d like to change in future versions of your course?

##### **Evidence or 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

### 6. 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? Are there other ways in which you have supported students?

##### **Evidence or examples could come from**

* Number of undergraduate mentees
* Number 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

### 7. 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 or 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

## Self-Reflection Short Form

The prompts below can help you produce short statements (or bullet points, if acceptable to your department) about each of the Benchmarks dimensions (or a selected subset of them). In your response, you can point reviewers to examples or additional materials (ideally these could be organized into a short Course Portfolio, as suggested above). For each Benchmarks dimension, we’ve included suggestions of the sorts of materials that could speak to that dimension. 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 language for representing teaching contributions. Feel free to use the language from the rubric in your responses, but it will be important that you also point to specific examples and evidence along with that language.

**Course number(s) and name(s) that are the focus of this report:**

For each course, what is the typical enrollment? Who takes the course and why? What role does it play in the program?

### 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?

#### Draw Evidence/ Examples from

* Course goals in syllabus
* Sample course materials (e.g., rubrics, assignment sheets, readings)

##### If you want to go deeper

* *How are your goals related to department, university, or discipline goals?*
* *Do they match your students’ needs?*
* *What perspectives do course material represent?*

### 2. Teaching Practices

What activities and assignments do you use in and out of class time to help students reach learning goals?

#### Draw Evidence/ Examples from

* Syllabus or course schedule
* Sample class activities and assignments
* Lesson plans
* Examples of feedback on student work

##### If you want to go deeper

* + - *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?*

### 3. Class Climate

How do you encourage motivation, inclusion, and a sense of belonging among your students?

#### Draw Evidence/ Examples from

* Syllabus (diversity or climate statement)
* Lesson plans or sample activities
* Reflections on student feedback

##### If you want to go deeper

* + - *What strategies do you use to communicate with students?*
    - *How do students interact with each other?*
    - *Are there things you are doing to build a sense of community?*
    - *Are there things you are doing to support struggling students?*
    - *How has student feedback informed the way you teach?*

### 4. Achievement of Learning Outcomes

Does the student work on these assignments meet your (or other stakeholders’) expectations and course learning goals? How do you know?

#### Draw Evidence/ Examples from

* Rubrics and samples of student work (assignments, blogs, etc.)
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##### If you want to go deeper

* + - *Which assignments are most central to the course and best illustrate student learning?*
    - *Do you know if there are any inequities in student performance? If so, have you taken any steps to address them?*

[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.

### 5. 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? How did you adapt your teaching because of the pandemic? How effective were the changes you made? Did you learn or try anything that you will continue to do post-COVID?

#### Draw Evidence/ Examples 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

##### If you want to go deeper

* + - *How has student feedback or evidence of student learning informed your teaching?*
    - *What changes have you made in this course from previous semesters? Why?*
    - *Did the changes yield the outcomes you wanted?*
    - *Are there things you’d like to change in a future version of the course?*

### 6. 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? Are there other ways in which you have supported students (particularly during the pandemic)?

#### Draw Evidence/ Examples from

* Number of undergraduate mentees
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