Excellence in teaching is increasingly considered a desired quality in the hiring of new faculty. As part of the job search process, you’ll most likely be asked to provide a teaching statement focusing on how you teach and why.

While it may be true that your teaching statement won’t guarantee you a tenured faculty position job, it most certainly will improve your ability to discuss your teaching coherently. Simply put, writing a teaching statement will help you more persuasively articulate your goals, beliefs and values about teaching and student learning.

When writing your teaching statement, make clear why, how, and what you teach. These four questions should be addressed:

What do you want students to be able to learn (or do)? What are your objectives as a teacher? Do you want students to learn the fundamental concepts, develop life-long learning skills or problem-solving strategies? What should they be able to do after they’ve taken a class from you? You can speak to a specific course or talk more generally about student learning. Do you have different goals for freshmen, for majors or non-majors?

What methods do you use to help students achieve these goals? What teaching strategies do you use and why? How do you actively involve students in their own learning? You should be able to connect learning theory and curriculum design, give examples of specific strategies or learning exercises, discuss group work or collaborative learning techniques, and propose new ideas you have for teaching in your area. You might discuss how different learning environments or students’ learning styles influence your teaching.

How do you know when/if students have learned something? How do you assess and evaluate student learning (and your teaching)? What evidence do you have? Discuss how assessment relates to student learning and your stated learning objectives. Discuss how you use student evaluations to inform your teaching, what you have learned about your teaching from assessing student work, and how these lessons have changed your teaching.

Why is teaching important to you? What do you get out of it? What are your plans for developing or improving your teaching? How do you assess your teaching?

Other tips for writing your teaching statement:

Keep it short. A concise 1-2 page statement organized around the four points listed above will help you write an organized description of how you teach.

Be specific and concrete. Including brief examples of how your teaching style plays out in the classroom will help your readers visualize your teaching. Show rather than tell the reader what your teaching looks like and what the resulting student learning/performance looks like (give concrete examples of what students do, learn, etc.). If you say you encourage discussion and collaboration in the classroom, then explain how you do that.

Don’t rehash your vita. "As a TA at UNL, I’ve taught six semesters of Political Science 101” – We can see that on your CV; instead tell us what you’ve learned about effective teaching (based on your experiences in the classroom) and how you implement it..

Tailor your statement. Your teaching statement should be written to match the mission of the university and department to which you’re applying. Do your homework. Know the institution you’re applying to and its mission; address the mission in your statement (yes, you may have to write several different statements, although the core stays the same).

Get feedback. Ask other people to read your statement. Show it to your mentors, other faculty members, and peers. Let them read it, and then go back to it a week later and revise it. Then have somebody else proofread it before you send it out.

Teaching is about student learning. New teachers often devote their statements to showing that they can be innovative or that they can incorporate sophisticated concepts in a classroom, but they seldom mention how students react to those innovations and concepts. The best teaching statements are organized around one’s goals for student learning, are concrete and specific, and demonstrate a sincere commitment to teaching.