

University Undergraduate Teaching Awards Candidate Packet Guidelines 2026

****This document should be shared with the candidate, packet preparers, and uploaders.****

The packet has been designed to ensure that packets are a reasonable length and that packets are consistent across candidates. Each packet should provide strong evidence that the candidate meets the high expectations specified in the [evaluation rubric](#).

The awards are very competitive, and we want you to submit the best packet possible. When packets do not conform to the guidelines below it makes the process unfair and introduces bias. If a packet does not follow the guidelines, it will be returned for correction (without a deadline extension).

- Please confirm that the candidate meets the eligibility criteria
- Candidates will be considered for all awards for which they are eligible. Do not label packets with a specific award name.
- Sample syllabus and assignment should appear as presented to students; no reformatting or editing required.

Please follow the font, margin, spacing guidelines & page limits. Packets that do not follow these guidelines will not be reviewed. No deadline extensions will be given to revise packets.

- ✓ 1" margins
- ✓ single-spaced paragraphs
- ✓ font no smaller than 11 pt. Aptos or Calibri
- ✓ follow section page limits

Section	Max. # Pages
Teaching Philosophy	1
Appointments & Courses Taught at Penn State	1
Undergraduate Teaching Improvement Activities & Service	2
Letters of Support	4
Subtotal	8
Sample Syllabus	N/A
Sample Assignment (same course as syllabus)	N/A

For questions, contact the Teaching Award Coordinator, Deidre Yingling, at day12@psu.edu.

Packet Sections

1. Teaching Philosophy Statement (1 page max.)

A teaching philosophy is more than beliefs about teaching and learning. It explains why a faculty member does what they do in their courses. Compelling teaching statements mention students and provide examples of how the instructor enables learning for all students. Effective statements do not focus on the faculty member's content expertise. Teaching philosophies of previous Atherton, Eisenhower, and Alumni Teaching Fellow recipients are available on the Penn State Teaching Awards website.

2. Appointments and Courses Taught (1 page max.)

a. Appointments

Please include only Penn State appointments and ranks in the format below:

20##-present Rank Title, Academic unit, Campus/College
20##-20## Previous rank/title, Academic unit, Campus/College

b. Courses Taught (one page)

Please include only one page of your most recent courses; we do not need a full list. Please follow font, spacing, and margin guidelines noted above. This will give reviewers an idea of the kinds of courses you teach. Please exclude independent study courses and those at other institutions.

Semester YYYY	ABBR ###, Course Name (short name OK)	Enrollment
Semester YYYY	ABBR ###, Course Name (short name OK)	Enrollment

3. Penn State Undergraduate Teaching Improvement Activities (2 pages max.)

a. Innovation in Teaching

Examples of innovation might include development of a new program, creation of new teaching materials (not updating old materials), significant revisions using evidence- or research-based pedagogical methods. Developing a new course is not necessarily innovative, but a candidate is free to make a case that it is.

b. Equity and Inclusion in Teaching

Candidates should identify steps taken to address inequities in students' access to opportunities, resources, and information (before and in-class), and how they ensure that students know they are welcome and that their contributions are valued. Examples might include communicating high expectations (and that students can meet them), reducing implicit bias and microaggressions, attending to representation in-class and in class materials, setting clear communication and behavioral norms, and offering opportunities for anonymous feedback. It could also involve course and assignment redesign to decenter whiteness as the academic norm and/or engage students in consideration of the impacts of those norms on those historically excluded from the field.

c. Service for Undergraduate Teaching and Learning

Include instruction-related committee service, contributions to program assessment, leadership of or participation in learning initiatives, at all levels (program, department, division, college, campus, and university).

d. Teaching and Learning Scholarship

Articles, conference presentations, instructional or teaching grants, and instructional websites/pages, blog posts, and podcasts related to undergraduate teaching and learning at Penn State.

e. Instructional Development Activities

Leading or participating in a teaching community, delivery of or participation in workshops or short courses, and teaching conference attendance

f. Mentoring for Teaching

Mentoring for teaching involves regular communication about undergraduate teaching over a period of time. Include mentoring i) other Penn State faculty for teaching; ii) being a teaching mentor for graduate and undergraduate students who teach. Please exclude undergraduate student advising and research mentoring from this teaching award packet.

****Eisenhower Award:** To be considered for an Eisenhower, the candidate must include evidence of service as a teaching mentor to:

- multiple Penn State faculty, and
- Penn State faculty during multiple years

Conducting required peer reviews of teaching does not constitute mentoring.

4. Letters of Support (4 letters max., 1 page each)

A **maximum** of **four** letters of support may be included in the packet. Each letter must include the writer's name and email address. **Please provide each letter writer with the following guidelines:**

Each letter of support should:

- state why the faculty stands out above and beyond all other good teachers;
- provide examples of teaching activities or behaviors that demonstrate the extraordinary teaching of the faculty member (expertise in the field and meeting with students are expected of all who teach); and
- be one page or less in length.

a. Recent Undergraduate Students (3 students max.; 1 page each)

Letters from three students who have taken an undergraduate course with the faculty member during the previous two years. If a student has graduated during the past two years, they may still write a letter as a recent undergraduate student.

Letters from the following are **not appropriate**:

- undergraduate Learning Assistant or undergraduate TA
- undergraduate research advisee
- graduate TAs or research advisees

b. Peer Review of Teaching Letter (1 page)

The letter author must have conducted a Peer Review of Teaching for an undergraduate course taught by the candidate. It may be based on a required peer review. However, it should be a new letter that addresses the [undergraduate teaching award criteria](#). It should include examples and discuss why this faculty member is an exceptional teacher.

5. Example Syllabus

The syllabus will be reviewed for alignment with the award criteria and teaching philosophy. Include a copy of one original course syllabus used by the instructor in an undergraduate course; no modification is necessary. Screenshots from Canvas are appropriate for courses without a syllabus document; please ensure that screenshots are readable according to the font guidelines above.

6. Example Assignment (from the same course as the syllabus)

The assignment will be reviewed for alignment with the syllabus, learning objectives, and teaching philosophy. A copy of one original undergraduate course assignment from the course which the above syllabus was submitted; no modification is necessary. The assignment may be an in-class or outside of class assignment.