



What Makes for a Model College Teacher?

Gurung, R. A. R., Richmond, A., & Boysen, G. A. (2018). Studying excellence in teaching: The story thus far. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 156, 11-19.
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In this lead article to the special issue on "Habits and Practices of Master Teachers: International Perspectives on Excellent Teaching," Gurung and colleagues review ideas about teaching excellence and identify common themes around successful teaching. More specifically, they lay out the following Model Teaching Criteria (MTC) which encompass six key elements of effective teaching in the field of psychology.

Training. The best college teachers do two things to stay on top of their profession. First, they maintain expertise in their subject-matter area through publishing and continuing education. Second, they seek training and/or engage in self-training in pedagogy by taking courses, attending conferences, and taking part in research on effective teaching and learning.

Syllabi. Highly effective teachers create learner-centered syllabi (see [IDEA Paper #60](#)) that contain clear objectives. Their syllabi provide course transparency and offer a cognitive map and learning tool for the course. At the end of each semester syllabi are modified based on student feedback.

Instructional methods. Successful teachers use a variety of teaching methods across a variety of settings. They strive to improve their teaching skills.

Course content. Course content and learning objectives are aligned with disciplinary guidelines. Just as importantly, model teachers teach essential lifetime skills such as communication, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Assessment process. Excellence in teaching requires making student assessment a high priority. Assessments are aligned with learning objectives, and feedback to students is timely and constructive. Model instructors also use assessment results to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and to make appropriate changes.

Student evaluations of teaching. In spite of the controversy surrounding summative student evaluations of teaching, the authors found in their research that "model teachers tend to use this feedback to make concrete changes in lessons, course structure, assessments, and assignments" (p. 15).

Support for the MTC comes from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology and the American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs. In addition, the authors reported in a related study that 77 percent of college and university teachers of psychology reported consistently applying the MTC. Moreover, the criteria distinguish between tenured and non-tenured faculty and between those who have won teaching awards and those who have not.