

Teaching Award Tips

Distinctiveness

It is important to have a strong central theme to your application which unites all the parts together into a whole and this should show how your approach to learning is distinctive, but not necessarily unique.

Remember that at this level *all* other applications will be from enthusiastic teachers, who care about students and have strong student feedback scores – all of which are important but none of which will mark you out from the competition.

Your opening paragraph must summarise this distinctive theme and you must make sure that it is emphasised in each subsection.

Evidence of Student Learning

Evidence of Student Learning must be your mantra. A Teaching Award will not be made because of **what you do**. It is not enough that a particular strategy is clever, or interesting or innovative, it must also clearly enhance student learning. Everything you say must connect back to **student learning**. You will need to make this explicit.

You should back up claims with the **best possible evidence** that you have access to. Student survey figures and student comments are often a last resort as these do not necessarily demonstrate actual learning. Think about the other ways you might be able to evidence, including:

- Peer review comments
- Analysis of 'before' and 'after' snapshots which show what change has occurred and why
- Feedback from graduates (more objective than current student testimonials)
- Feedback from outside stakeholders – industry, profession, community. You can seek this as part of unit/course review.
- Analysis of student results, showing how innovation changed grades. This may not effect the higher grades, but you may be able to show improvement in the low to middle achievers.
- Analysis of completion/attrition figures
- Evidence a wider influence on other teachers, for instance publication of a text that is favourably received or online open resources that are frequently accessed.
- Winning grants on the basis of strategies
- Reports and analysis of and reflection on issues underpinning your innovations, best if published. This might be a report for your school/faculty and/or a journal article.
- Mechanisms that you have established to gather further feedback and evidence.

Evidence often takes time to collect so it is worth thinking about how your evidence gathering practices *now* are going to effect your potential evaluation in the future.

Miscellaneous Tips

Think about the reader, who may not be from your discipline, make sure everything can be understood by the intelligent layperson, is written clearly and don't be afraid to leave white space for clarity. You do not have to fill up every page with text.

Even though a layperson should understand the gist of your approach, don't be afraid to draw on specific examples of good practice to demonstrate the context of what you are doing and provide a distinctive flavour which the reader will remember.

Use subsections to organise and make sure that each links back to your central theme.

It is important to have a *philosophy* behind your approach and this should permeate the whole document, not be isolated in a separate section.

Avoid jargon and acronyms.