Information for Referees of Applicants for the RMIT Teaching Awards 2009

Thank you for your participation in the RMIT Teaching Awards through your role as a referee. The following is general information which may be of assistance.

1. Teaching Awards Overview

RMIT Teaching Awards recognise, reward, and celebrate excellence in teaching practice and exemplary support services which enhance the student experience and the quality of teaching and learning.

Within six categories, there are twenty awards acknowledging the work of Higher Education and TAFE academic and teaching staff, sessional and general staff involved in making the student experience meaningful and successful.

Teaching awards provide a benchmark for recognition of outstanding practice. The process of developing an application provides an opportunity for reflection on practice, and encourages all members of the RMIT community to review, improve and celebrate our individual and collaborative achievements.

In 2009 there will be up to one Award and up to two Certificates of Achievement in each of the twenty subcategories. Awards carry a monetary prize of $3000, and Certificates of Achievement $500, to be used by the recipients in the development of teaching, learning and professional practice.

The Vice Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award recognises an academic or teacher with an exceptional record of advancing student learning, educational leadership and scholarly contribution to teaching and learning. The Vice Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award consists of a trophy and a grant of $20,000.

2. Applications

Depending on the category or subcategory under which the nominee is applying, the applications will differ slightly. There are, however, common elements to all applications:

Written Statement
A written statement is required, addressing the selection criteria for that category/subcategory. This statement contains the claims made by the applicant regarding their teaching, or the initiative or support program under consideration. These claims must be supported and validated by evidence. This evidence may be in the form of qualitative data such as comments derived from student and staff feedback, descriptions of impact and outcomes of initiatives and strategies, demonstrated scholarship of practice through action research and sharing with the teaching and learning community. Quantitative evidence includes data from the Course Experience Survey, and any other sources relevant to the application.

Supporting Evidence
For most awards up to 10 pages of printed material can be included to provide additional evidence to substantiate the claims made in the written statement. In the case of Category P, Programs that Enhance Student Learning, applications may also include a CD-ROM or DVD, and a single URL web site. This additional material should demonstrate reflection on the evidence provided to substantiate the claims.
References
The applicant is required to supply two references, or in the case of the Vice Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award three references. In all cases the referee’s report must be no more than one A4 page, and should directly comment on the nominee’s contribution to student learning against the nominated selection criteria.

1. One referee must be the head of the nominee’s faculty, department, school or administrative unit.
2. One referee should be a colleague (not necessarily from the RMIT community) who is familiar with the nominee’s work and is able to comment on the contribution the nominee has made.

If the nomination relates to a team, the references should apply to the team.

These references are solicited by the nominee, and open to the nominee (that is, these are submitted by the nominee as part of the application, not directly to the Awards Co-ordinator).

3. Preparation of References

The reference forms a vital part of the application. It provides:
- Validation and verification of aspects of the claims and the evidence supplied by the nominee
- Additional information on the nominee
- An objective and informed perspective on the nominee(s) contribution

As the reference is ‘open’ to the nominee, it is also an excellent opportunity to provide feedback and undertake reflection and evaluation of the nominee’s work and contribution.

While the content of the reference is essentially at your discretion, you are encouraged to examine the nominee’s application and respond directly to the claims and evidence provided by the nominee under the selection criteria. Each award application calls for a response to specified criteria. By commenting directly on these you will provide substantive and valuable additional evidence by which the Selection Panel can assess the application.

The nominee should provide you with a copy of their application (even if it is draft form) to assist in your preparation of their referee report.

4. Format of References

To ensure equity across all applications, we ask that the referee reports be prepared in a standard format:

- The reference must be no more than one A4 single sided page.
- For reasons of equity, it would be appreciated if Arial Narrow 11 point font is used, and the page margin is no less than 2 cms.
- All references must be on Letterhead (in the case of RMIT, on current letterhead), dated, signed, and the position and qualifications of the referee stated.

For further information contact the College Teaching Awards Co-ordinator, or Felicity Prentice of the Learning and Teaching Unit, felicity.prentice@rmit.edu.au, ext. 54306.