Reflection and Evidence to consider when writing a Teaching Award application.

Teaching awards are about teaching excellence. They are not about whether you behave as a nice person or your assessment tasks are a breeze compared to everyone else's!

You are nominated for a teaching award because your students and/or your colleagues believe that you have made a significant contribution to student learning so it's an honour to have your teaching viewed in this way!

Writing for an award application is not the same as writing an academic paper, a project grant proposal, a briefing document, a research proposal, a promotion application, or a conference paper. Each of these documents requires a different approach.

- A Teaching Award Statement describes your work, places it in a context, and provides significant evidence for the assertions you make about your work.

- The format for a Teaching Award Statement is dictated to somewhat by you having to answer the criteria required, but it can be a discursive document, peppered with feedback comments and bullet points if necessary.

- What is important that you write clearly, succinctly and convincingly and write not one word more than the page limit.

- When writing an award application document think about the reader first. Will what you have to say make sense to someone outside your discipline area, what is unique or special about what you do, and have you articulated the context for your work?

- Plan your statement to address the criteria that you are required to use and leave space for an introduction and summary.
Reflecting on how and why you have taught and taken the approaches you have, is a crucial first step. For example the following points are a short but not exclusive list of starting thoughts for you to consider:

- Are you teaching in a way that is different or radical in your discipline terms?

- Have you made improvements to the way your subject matter is taught?

- Have you referenced your work against what is happening locally and nationally?

- Have you instigated a special project or course that students have told you has changed their approach to learning?

- Have you team taught as a new approach and have found something unique in this approach?

- Have you developed a particular way to work with large classes that is successful?

- Have you engaged with technology in a way that has been particularly important for your students? It is not enough to say you use the DLS or have all your course materials online.

- Have you shifted your approach to assessment tasks which has improved student learning? Have you used action based learning, action based research, or peer review in your teaching practice?

- Have you engaged in work placements or work integrated learning projects that have been useful to altering student perceptions of ‘real world scenarios’?

- Have you used feedback to reflect in changes you have made in your teaching practice?

- Have you involved your colleagues in discussion about what you are doing and used their feedback to reflect on your work?

- Have you understood where your teaching practice can be referenced against theoretical educational approaches?

- Can you prove what your students have learnt?

- What evaluation have you undertaken of your practice?

- How do you plan to go on improving your own practice, or that of the discipline or the institution?
It is important to understand that any award that you may submit an application for, either internal or external to the University, needs to be validated with as much evidence as you can include.

Evidence comes from many sources:

- peer comments
- external peer references
- student feedback
- international colleagues
- industry partners
- published papers and books
- feedback from other discipline staff
- team teaching staff
- citations in referenced journals or books.
- Use of your materials or approaches by other staff.

Assess the evidence you have at hand and include the evidence that makes the strongest case for the excellence of your teaching. The evidence should point to the IMPACT of your work locally and more broadly if possible.

Student feedback comments can be included in italics in the body of the text and without naming the students. It is wise to include a footnote that will provide the reader with the location of the feedback in your files/program log.

Supplementary material can be provided if it gives further evidence of your teaching practice. It is not useful to include course documents such as course guides or videos of you talking about your work. A video of colleague/students/industry person talking about the impact of your practice could be useful, but always remember that your written statement is the most vital part of your application.

Good luck with the writing and ask a colleague to provide feedback on it before submitting it!