

Awarding teaching excellence for impact and strategic alignment: Insights from the Irish context



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Aims of a teaching award system

- To encourage and valorise teaching
- To recognise diversity
- To be inclusive
- To foster ownership at institutional and disciplinary level
- To empower and respect students
- To promote and share excellent practice
- To acknowledge, celebrate and learn
- To focus on impact – past, present and future



Some thoughts on awarding innovative use of technology in teaching and learning

- Terminology and the language of the award is important
- Focus on value and impact
- The individual innovative teacher working with the system and with others
- Institution curriculum development as well as teaching provision
- Incorporate building digital skills, digital literacy and digital awareness
- Threshold concepts and signature pedagogies
- Learning analytics
- Technology to enhance engagement, attention, motivation, commitment, endeavor



Key questions we considered

- 1 How can the award system align with strategic objectives at departmental, institutional and national levels?



Key questions we considered

- 2 How can the practice of award winners impact on the practice of other teachers within and beyond their disciplines?

Key questions we considered

- 3 How do we avoid awarding innovation for its own sake, and focus on innovation that has a demonstrated impact on learning?



Key questions we considered

4 What should the routes and mechanisms for shortlisting be?



Key questions we considered

- 5 What evidence should candidates be required to present, and how should that evidence be reviewed and assessed – ensuring non-partisanship, objectivity and credibility?

Learning Impact Awards

Teaching Heroes
Student-Led

Teaching Experts
Institution-Led

TRACE+ (The Recognition
of an Active Commitment to
Enhancement)

Discipline-led
(Launch March 2017)

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NATIONAL AWARDEES OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION



Ireland's National Learning Impact Awards

- **Teaching Heroes** – student-led, heavily supported, strongly criterion-orientated, qualitative testimonials, inclusive, diverse, 'light touch'
- **Teaching Experts** – institution led, evidence based, discipline specific, outcomes-focused, resource producing, disseminative. (Individuals and Teams, Special commendations)
- **TRACE⁺** – Awarding a discipline focused approach to teaching and learning enhancement



THE CASE OF THE TEACHING HEROES LEARNING IMPACT AWARD PROCESS

- Working with students in partnership to develop, promote, recognise and learn from excellent teaching



Sectoral Concerns

- Popularity contest
- Diverse institutional context - fairness and objectivity
- Feedback fatigue
- Concerns about trustworthiness of process, data





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www.teachingandlearning.ie

LECTURER?
SUPERVISOR?
INSTRUCTOR?
TECHNICIAN?
TUTOR?

WHO IS YOUR TEACHING HERO?

MY TEACHING HERO GAVE ME THE CONFIDENCE TO...

MY TEACHING HERO GAVE ME SELF-BELIEF.

MY TEACHING HERO INSPIRED ME TO...

MY TEACHING HERO REALLY CARED WHEN...

MY TEACHING HERO MOTIVATED ME TO...



Identifying the Teaching Heroes from each Institution

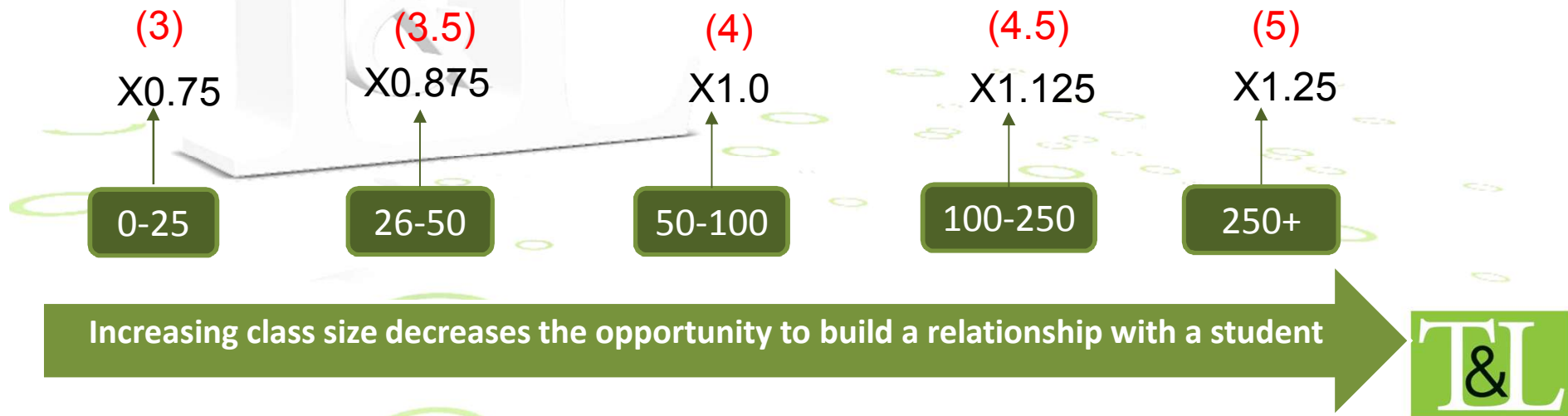
- Once the campaign was completed the dataset of nominations is generated for that institution. . Student’s union team scored each nomination from 1-4.

| 1 - Non-specific endorsement | 2 - Competent | 3 – Excellent | 4 - Outstanding |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Not enough information about the nominee or too vague.</p> <p>Example: 'She was amazing!'</p> | <p>The nominee sounds like a really good educator who does their job well. But there’s no evidence they go above and beyond what is expected.</p> <p>Example: 'He came to class on time, spoke clearly, made notes available and was available during his office hours'.</p> | <p>The nominee sounds like they really had a lasting impact on the students’ learning.</p> <p>The student goes beyond 'She was amazing!' and gives examples of the nominee’s impact on their learning.</p> | <p>Nominees in this category are exceptional.</p> <p>They have had a positive <i>transformative</i> impact on the students’ learning.</p> |



Finalizing Teaching Hero Scores

Balancing the opportunity a teacher has to impact a student with the opportunity for an increased number of nominations



Endorsement, celebration, sharing, 'leavening'



What an Analysis of the Student Nominations told us

hero

approachable helpful
engaging kind amazing
encouraging interesting
excellent inspiring passionate
understanding



Extrapolating from the round

- CARE
- COURAGE
- COMMUNICATION
- CREATIVITY



Key to Good Teaching – From the Student data

Establishing and maintaining a good quality relationship with students

The importance of grounding teaching in authentic and practical learning linked to the real world.



What our research with the Heroes themselves told us



Experience – An Important Characteristic

- Almost half had over 15 years experience
- Almost 85% had 6 or more years experience
- The majority were full-time
- In terms of background they are equally experienced and formally qualified in teaching



Interesting Dichotomy

- *“All this guff that you read – self directed this and Socratic Method that – its nonsense in my view.. Students learn when they want to, when they are inspired to, and when you remove barriers to them learning.”*
- *‘So while the group is strongly-oriented towards student centred effective learning relationships they approach this from different bases.’*



What influenced them most?

The most influential factors were experiences, observations and feedback from their personal lives, their students and peers.

“Observing a fellow lecturer opened my eyes widely. I thought because I knew a topic that I was explaining it well. It made me reappraise everything from scratch”.



Ireland's National Learning Impact Awards process – Teaching Experts

Experts – academically led, evidence based, discipline specific, outcomes-focused, resource producing, disseminative. (Individuals and Teams, Special commendations)



Teaching Experts

Process

- Institutional Nomination (Lim. by student no.)

Shortlist

- NF Talk
- Teaching Exemplars x2
- Group interview with International Panel

Awards with Special Commendations



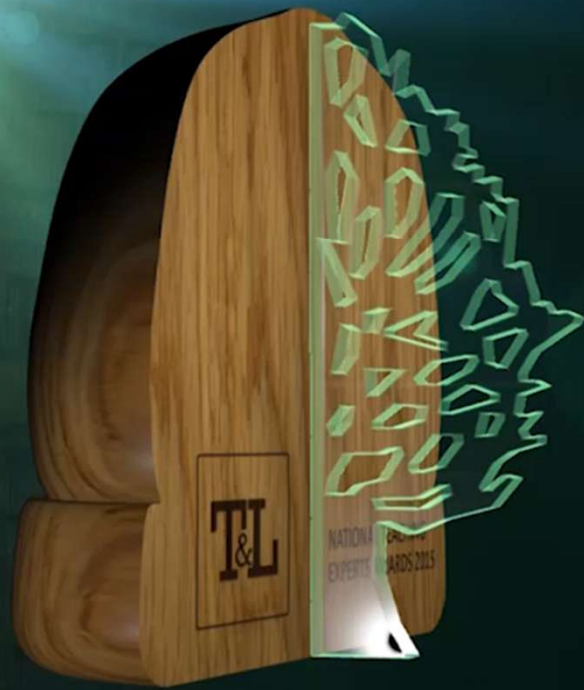


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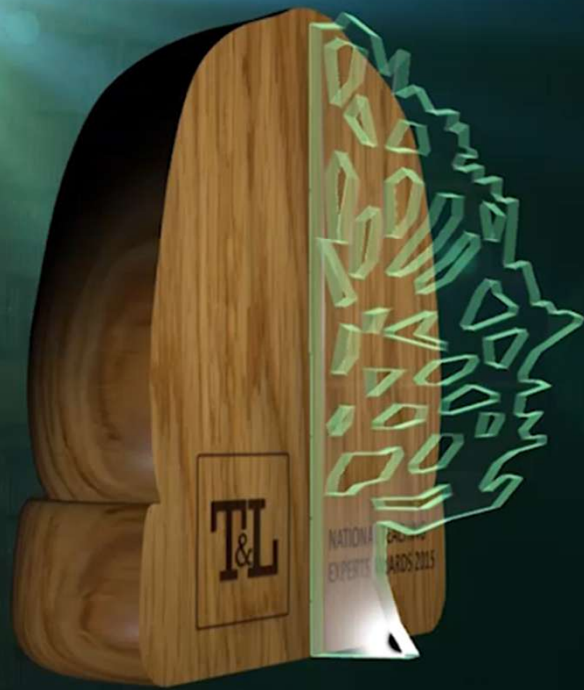
NATIONAL FORUM TALKS

Colm Kelleher

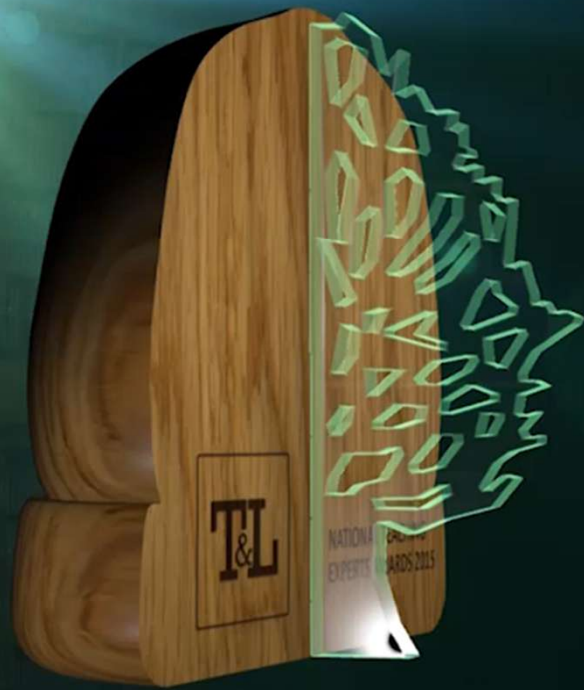
Galway Mayo Institute of Technology



The National Teaching Expert Awards 2015



The National Teaching Expert Awards 2015



The National Teaching Expert Awards 2015

TRACE⁺

(The Recognition of an Active Commitment to Enhancement)

- Launching in March 2017 as the final aspect of Ireland National Learning Impact Awards
- Discipline-led
- Celebrates discipline groups that demonstrate and outstanding commitment to teaching and learning enhancement



What will a successful award system look like?

- More teachers will be encouraged to develop and showcase their work
- Awards will be credible, impactful, valued and sought after by teachers from all disciplines and institutions



What will a successful award system look like? -1

- That a wide diversity of teaching, learning and learner support activity is recognised
- That all disciplines and learner support domains engage in and value the teaching and learning awards process



What will a successful award system look like? - 2

- Institutions and departments are more active in promoting excellent teaching
- There is a robust, widely understood and yet also flexible set of criteria
- A team-based, collaborative, design-orientated approach to teaching is fostered



What will a successful award system look like? - 3

- The student voice is central to considering which applications to award but that other sources of evidence are also used
- That excellent teaching is disseminated and actively shared





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Thank you

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