

UCW Sessional Teaching & Learning Excellence Award Guidelines

February 2024

University Canada West (UCW) recognizes teaching excellence and values teaching that is student-centered, inclusive and promotes student engagement and lifelong learning. Continuing professional development, critical reflection, and leadership in teaching practice within the University and discipline are also important facets of excellence in teaching. ***This award recognizes a sessional instructor in teaching excellence at UCW.*** Awards are presented during convocation (2x/year).

Benefits to Receiving the Award

1. Awards contribute to the UCW community by raising awareness, recognizing, and celebrating the tremendous efforts and teaching excellence within UCW.
2. Receiving an institutional-level award provides a basis for recipients to apply for external awards and recognition external to UCW.
3. The recognition can be listed on the recipient's CV.
4. The recipient will be recognized at upcoming fall and spring convocation ceremonies. (Where applicable, efforts will be made to present the award at the ceremony for the program in which the recipient teaches).
5. Recipients will be showcased to the broader community by the UCW & GUS through various means such as newsletters, stories, or presentation opportunities.
6. Recipients will receive a monetary prize of \$1,000.
7. Recipients will have a reason to pause, reflect, and celebrate their successes when putting together the nomination package.
8. The award may be noted and contribute to future continuing employment.

Community Opportunities for Award Recipients

The awards are designed to promote a culture of high-quality teaching, learning, and related research, and to stimulate sharing of ideas on innovation and excellence in teaching and learning. Award recipients will have the opportunity to make their teaching philosophies and/or practices more widely known throughout the University. Activities may include seminars/workshops on a specific aspect of teaching, sharing created resources, assisting colleagues in professional development, mentoring, etc.

Eligibility

- Nominees must be ***sessional faculty or sessional UAP instructors***, currently employed at UCW.
- Nominees must have ***completed 4 teaching terms at UCW with a minimum of 4 courses*** by the time of the nomination deadline.
- Re-nominations of previously unsuccessful nominees are welcomed and encouraged.
- Recipients of other awards are eligible.
- Past recipients of this award are not eligible to receive it a second time.

Criteria

1. **Student and learning effects** (including course and teaching evaluation summaries, evidence of achievement of learning outcomes) and associated critical reflection by the applicant.
2. **Degree of innovation** (application of new or different pedagogical approaches, technologies, course design, and assessments).
3. **Commitment to UCW goals** to foster a diverse and challenging learning environment focused on the practical application of knowledge, be relevant, accessible, and innovative, and build student competencies in scholarship, leadership, and responsible citizenship.
4. **Sessional teaching and learning excellence** at UCW. *Definition:* Excellence in teaching and learning encompasses a comprehensive approach to education that fosters deep understanding, critical thinking, and intellectual growth among students. It involves not only the delivery of high-quality instruction but also the creation of a supportive and stimulating learning environment that promotes academic achievement and personal development. Additionally, excellence in teaching and learning involves reflective practice and a commitment to continued growth and mastery in teaching.
5. **Contributions** to the teaching community (departmental, institutional, external), if applicable.

Sessional Teaching & Learning Excellence may be demonstrated through a variety of ways:

1. **Student-Centered Approach:** Excellent teachers prioritize the needs and interests of their students and tailor their instructional methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities.
2. **Content Mastery:** Teaching excellence requires deep knowledge of the subject matter being taught. Effective teachers continuously update and expand their expertise to stay current with developments in their field.
3. **Effective Pedagogy:** Excellent teachers employ a variety of instructional strategies to engage students, promote critical thinking, and facilitate deep understanding of the content. They use active learning techniques, incorporate real-world examples, and encourage student participation.
4. **Continuous Improvement:** Excellent teachers commit to ongoing professional development and seek out learning opportunities, such as attending workshops, pursuing certificates or advanced degrees, participating in peer collaboration, and reflecting on their practice.
5. **Relationship Building:** Effective teachers build positive relationships with their students based on trust, respect, and empathy. They create a supportive classroom environment where students feel safe to take risks, ask questions, and express their ideas.
6. **Differentiation and Personalization:** Excellent teachers recognize and respond to the individual needs and strengths of their students. They differentiate instruction to accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds, and they provide personalized support to help each student reach their full potential.
7. **Assessment for Learning:** Teaching excellence involves using formative assessment techniques to monitor student progress and provide timely feedback. Effective teachers use assessment data to adjust their instruction, identify areas for improvement, and celebrate student successes.
8. **Collaboration and Professional Learning Communities:** Excellent teachers collaborate with colleagues, administrators, and community members to enhance their teaching practice and improve student outcomes. They participate in professional learning communities to share ideas, resources, and best practices.
9. **Adaptability and Innovation:** Teaching excellence requires flexibility and openness to change. Effective teachers adapt their instructional methods and strategies to meet the evolving needs of their students and incorporate new technologies and pedagogical approaches to enhance learning.

10. **Reflective Practice:** Excellent teachers engage in reflective practice, regularly reflecting on their teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and interactions with students. They identify areas for growth and set goals for continuous improvement.

Procedure

1. Candidates may be nominated or co-nominated by faculty or staff colleagues, academic administrators, or students. Self-nominations are **not** accepted. *Please ensure that the candidate is aware and agrees to their nomination and willing to contribute to the nomination package.*
2. Completed submissions should not exceed 20 pages. Ensure all material is strictly relevant to the award and note that linked material may not be considered by the committee.
3. Nomination packages must include the following:
 1. **Completed nomination form.** This includes sign-off from the nominee's chair or supervisor.
 2. **Nominator's letter:** A cover letter from the primary nominator(s) outlining the rationale for the nomination including evidence of the candidate's major strengths (approximately 2 pages).
 3. **Teaching and learning excellence statement:** A 1–2-page statement from the nominee 1. about their teaching philosophy (beliefs and assumptions about student learning and their approach) and 2. a rationale and overview on how they demonstrate excellence as a sessional which may include:
 - a. Changes made to teaching methods in response to student, peer, and self-evaluations
 - b. The relevance and impact of the applicant's work as a supervisor (where appropriate)
 - c. Steps taken to enhance the quality of teaching and learning
 - d. Professional development and leadership
 - e. Benefits from the nominee's teaching, mentorship, or supervision activities for students, colleagues, and the University
 4. **Evidence of teaching & learning excellence:**
 - a. **Documentary evidence** relevant to the nominee's work to advance their teaching and students' learning. This may also extend to their department, university, or beyond and may be individual or collaborative work.
 - b. **Teaching dossier:** a brief dossier (approximately 5 pages) emphasizing the nominee's contributions to the enhancement of teaching and learning. This is not just a listing of all courses taught at UCW, but rather a summary of the candidate's teaching contributions, any research or scholarly activity related to teaching and learning, professional development, leadership activities, case studies of courses or assignments that exemplify the applicant's teaching philosophy, contributions, and initiatives relevant to this award.
 - c. **Appendices:** For any additional related evidence that does not fit in the sections above, such as examples of before and after student achievements, screenshots/photos.
 5. **Letters of support:** A *minimum of 3 letters* of support from referees detailing the candidate's active involvement in advancing teaching and learning, related spaces or resources, or the teaching context at UCW or beyond (maximum 2 pages per letter). Referees may include:
 - a. UCW colleagues and/or administrators.
 - b. External colleagues, administrators, and/or community members.
 - c. Former students (individual or group).

Nomination packages are to be submitted electronically to the UCW Senate Secretariat at: senate@ucanwest.ca by the nomination deadline. The Awards Committee reserves the right not to consider applications that do not meet the criteria or missed components or deadlines.

Appendix: Examples of Evidence for Excellence in Teaching

Evidence of teaching effectiveness may include

- Assessment data, such as improved exam results over time, pre and post-test results, student performance by gender, ethnicity etc., or examples of high-quality student work;
- Analysis of and responses to student misunderstandings, confusions, successes, and insights as revealed in their work/performance;
- A summary of standardised student evaluation data, including response rates (%) and number of respondents. When student evaluations are provided as evidence, summaries **must be** included within the portfolio;
- Supplemental forms of evaluation, such as informal student feedback and peer observation;
- Track record in supervising students to timely completion;
- Students' academic and professional achievements, such as publications in academic journals, job placements or fellowships and grants received;
- Comments from community, industry, and professional partners, including graduate employers;
- Teaching honours and awards.

Evidence of learning outcomes achievement

- Evidence & Documentation section of [TeachWell@UoA](#) (p.11), University of Auckland
- [Documenting Teaching Effectiveness](#), Ohio State University
- Chapter III of Cornell University's [Teaching Evaluation Handbook](#)

Evidence of ongoing efforts to improve teaching and learning may include

- Inclusive teaching methods and assessment strategies;
- Course and curriculum design initiatives;
- Relevant professional development activities;
- Contribution to the teaching and learning environment within the University and the discipline, including mentoring and leadership in teaching;
- Leadership of or contribution to teaching collaborations which deliver enhanced learning outcomes;
- Development and/or implementation of teaching innovations that are pedagogically sound, informed by student feedback, sustainable and are transferable or may serve as a model for other areas.

Evidence of commitment to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

- Integration of Indigenous perspectives and world views;
- Promoting discussion and use of Indigenous teaching and learning frameworks;
- Contribution to the University's responsibilities to Indigenous students;
- Development of community relationships and teaching and learning practices that enhance participation and success.

Evidence of teaching scholarship may include

- Contributions to the scholarship of teaching and learning, such as articles or conference papers;
- Presentations of teaching methods and/or teaching innovation.

Evidence of leadership in teaching may include

- Instigation and/or coordination of major learning and teaching projects;

- Substantial contributions to course and curriculum review or other development initiatives (for example, converting a programme to new forms of delivery);
- A major role in initiating a step change in teaching and learning and/or in curriculum;
- Creation and maintenance of learning and teaching collaborations and communities of practice;
- Leadership and active involvement in the mentoring and development of other university instructors;
- Contribution to development of higher education teaching standards and/or teaching and learning;
- Significant leadership of engagement with industry to establish a professional/internship programme;
- Development of teaching materials to support university teaching that have been evaluated for their impact on learners (e.g., open educational resources/texts) and/or widely adopted by others (e.g., textbook publication);
- Public dissemination of innovative or experimental teaching practice and their impact, e.g., via research publication, conference presentations, invited lectures on teaching, visiting professorships focused on teaching, published reports, social media;
- Feedback from individuals or teams who have experience of the applicant's leadership.

References & Credits

These guidelines were adopted and adapted from the University of Auckland's website: *University of Auckland Teaching Excellence Awards* (July 23, 2022) <https://bit.ly/3zy2KwL> and the *University of Windsor, Educational Leadership Award* (February 22, 2024) <https://www.uwindsor.ca/ctl/422/educational-leadership-award>