

Faculty of Science Excellent Teaching Award: Terms of Reference

The Award

The Faculty of Science stresses excellent teaching in its courses and recognizes the commitment by its academic staff to high standards in teaching. The Award for Excellent Teaching is given to recognize outstanding teaching and the key role it plays in allowing the Faculty to attract and develop excellent students.

Normally, only one award per year will be made. However, in years in which the Awards Committee feels there is more than one exceptional nominee, up to three awards may be given.

Each award consists of a plaque and a prize of \$2,000.00, which will be a one-time addition to the winner's salary. If the award is given to more than one winner, each winner will receive an individual plaque and an equal portion of the \$2000.00 prize. If the award is given to a team, each member of the team will receive an individual plaque and an equal portion of the \$2000 prize.

Eligibility

Nominees for the Faculty of Science Award for Excellent Teaching must have held a full time Faculty appointment in the Faculty of Science at this University for at least five years prior to nomination. Temporary academic staff (Contract Academic Staff and Sessionals) with at least 3 years teaching experience, who have taught at least 18 credits of coursework, are also eligible for this award. Previous nominations may be submitted, but previous winners of the award are excluded from further competition.

General Criteria

Nominees for the award must have the respect of their colleagues and students in the Faculty of Science. Thus, nominees must have satisfied their Department Chair and colleagues that they are fulfilling all their duties to the Department and Faculty while demonstrating outstanding qualities in primarily undergraduate teaching. Evidence of such respect should be included in the nomination package.

Nominees who are full-time Faculty should have significant experience in teaching junior-level courses as well as senior-level ones and should have taught undergraduate courses for at least five years before nomination. Success in a variety of courses is generally more significant than success in one course.

Nominees for the award must be judged by their Department Chair and colleagues to conduct their courses at the desired level. Nominees must be judged by the Department Chair, colleagues and students as having an interest in and establishing a satisfactory rapport with the class or classes that they teach. Above all, nominees must be judged by the Department Chair, colleagues and students to be excellent instructors.

In summary, nominees should have the reputation of teaching academically sound courses with the ability that causes their colleagues and students to regard them as excellent instructors.

There is no requirement of particular teaching technique, as long as the methods are exceptionally effective, and no requirement of particular personal qualities. If good rapport is established with the students and the instructor is regarded by staff and students as outstanding, the further details of their personal qualities are irrelevant. Exceptional interest in teaching and the devotion of exceptional amounts of time to teaching are not adequate qualities in themselves for nomination for the award. It must be agreed by staff and students that the teaching is of an exceptionally high professional standard before a nomination is made.

Finally, it is believed that the selection of an excellent teacher by staff and students is a matter of judgment. If such a judgment is made consistently for a period of three to five years or more in undergraduate courses of all levels, it is almost certainly valid. Any attempt to set more extensive criteria for the evaluation of exceptional instructors is not likely to produce a better selection.

Nomination Procedure

Normally two nominations can be made by each Department in a given year according to procedures agreed upon by the staff of that Department.

Nomination documents should include a list of courses taught over the past three (temporary academic staff) to five years (faculty) with enrolments. Student course evaluations should be included or at least summarized. Nominations are also strengthened by the inclusion of letters, preferably from more than just one course, from current and former students (for the latter, letters attesting to the effectiveness - not just popularity - of the instructor may be especially helpful). Letters from colleagues who have knowledge of the nominee's teaching performance are also welcome.

Any group of ten undergraduate students in the Faculty of Science may submit nominations for this award to the Chair of the Department in which the instructor teaches by the last Friday in October.

Departments wishing to renominate a candidate for the following year should provide new or updated nomination documents.

Selection Procedures at Faculty Level

Awards will be made by the Faculty of Science Excellent Teaching Awards Committee which consists of six members and the Chair. Two of the members are to be undergraduate students in the Faculty of Science, two are to be alumni of the Faculty of Science and two are to be chosen from among those members of the academic staff, either current or retired, who have previously won a Faculty of Science Teaching Award themselves.

The academic staff appointments are to be made by the Dean or delegate and ratified by the Chairs' Committee of the Faculty of Science subject to the restriction that both academic members cannot come from the same department. The student members of the Committee would be recommended by the Faculty of Science undergraduate student society.

Members of the Committee will normally serve a two-year term.

The Chair of the Committee will be the Dean or delegate.

The Committee's functions every year will be: to receive nominations, seek other information, if any, they deem necessary and select the recipient of the award(s). The procedures to be followed for determining the recipient of the award(s) are to be established by the Committee itself.

Previous winners of the award are excluded from further competition.

Approved by Faculty Council - 15 May 1979

Amended by Faculty Council - 24 May 1991

Amended by the Chairs Committee on behalf of Faculty Council - 27 September 1994

Amended by the Chairs Committee on behalf of Faculty Council - 13 February 1997

Amended by Faculty Council – 24 May 2001

Amended by Faculty Council – 29 May 2003

Recommended to Faculty Council – Winter, 2015

Guidelines for Assessing Candidates

- (a) Thorough knowledge of subject matter.
- (b) Classes are well prepared, logically organized and the different topics are well integrated. Engages students in the topics of the course.
- (c) Enthusiastic about the subject and instills interest in their students via this and other routes. (d) Capacity to inspire students to have interest in the subject after the course is finished.
- (d) Should be an effective communicator. This implies the capacity to present abstract ideas and theories in a clear and interesting manner.
- (e) Exhibits fairness and appropriate academic standards in assignments, examinations, disputes and grading.
- (f) Has good rapport with students.
- (g) Encourages students to be critical and to think for themselves.
- (h) Students' questions and opinions are encouraged.
- (i) Available for consultation outside of lecture hours and is helpful.
- (j) Has a concern for students' progress in the course.
- (k) Should set out the objectives and aims of the course clearly during the first lecture, explaining what is required of the students.