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Guide to Preparing a Nomination for the 2024-25 President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning

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Award Description

The President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning is the highest honour awarded for teaching excellence at McMaster University.

Each President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning recognizes the sustained contributions of an individual or group to education through innovation, continued excellence in teaching, and enhanced student learning. Since 1993, the award has affirmed the value McMaster attaches to its educational function and celebrated those who, through innovation and commitment, have significantly enhanced the quality of their students' learning experience. As such, the award prioritizes sustained and effective achievement, with weight given to evidence of continuing effort and outstanding contributions by an individual or group over a period of at least five years.

Outstanding contributions to teaching and learning may be demonstrated in several ways including, but not limited to, evidence of the intellectual growth of students resulting from innovative teaching in the classroom, the mentorship of students through involvement in research or practical experience, the development of novel and effective educational materials, and/or other forms of educational leadership that promote teaching and learning within or beyond McMaster. Outstanding educators nominated for this award also commonly hone their expertise through continuous professional learning and development.

Recipients of the President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning receive:

- A citation of excellence and certificate to be presented at Spring Convocation;
- An honorarium in the amount of \$3,000;
- An inscription of the recipient's name on a permanent plaque bearing names of all previous award recipients;
- An invitation to the annual President's Retreat;
- Membership in McMaster's community of award-winning educators.

Each year, the number of awards fluctuates depending on the pool of applicants. In previous years, 1-8 awards have been bestowed annually.

Selection Committee

The Selection Committee is approved by the President and will normally include the following members:

- Chair: Appointed by the President
- One faculty member, external to McMaster
- One faculty member, internal to McMaster
- Two previous teaching and learning award recipients (i.e. President's Award, OCUFA, 3M, D2L)
- One student representative
- Grants and Awards Specialist, Office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning (non-voting position)

Timelines and Key Dates

September 2024: Call for Nominations is circulated.

28 October 2024: Nomination Briefs and abridged CVs are due to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning.

Early December 2024: Nominees approved to proceed to Stage 2 are notified.

24 February 2025: Full nomination portfolios are due to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning.

May 2025: Recipients of the 2025 President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning are notified.

June 2025: Recipients attend the President's Retreat with senior leadership.

Eligibility

All current full-time and part-time faculty and staff (including those who are on contract) who contribute to teaching and learning at McMaster are eligible.

A previous recipient remains eligible, but only based on work completed since the previous award. The nominee and nominator must reference the previous award and clearly identify how the work included in the new portfolio differs from previous work already recognized through this award.

Senior administration (i.e. Associate Deans, Deans) are not eligible to apply for the award while they hold their positions but are encouraged to support and nominate outstanding faculty for the President's Award. In exceptional circumstances, chairs and directors may be nominated, but must demonstrate

outstanding contributions to teaching and learning through beyond their regular responsibilities as chair or director.

Given the highly competitive nature of this award, it is critical that all nominations demonstrate why nominees are uniquely effective educators who stand out from others within their discipline supported with a compelling suite of evidence.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should act as nominator?

Though nominators are usually the nominee's Chair or Dean, anyone can nominate an individual or group for this award. Nominators should have good familiarity with the nominee's work and should be able to provide evidence for their teaching effectiveness.

Can a student serve as a nominator?

Yes! If a student would like to submit a nomination, they are encouraged to get help from the nominee, as well as the Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching. We do not encourage students to nominate professors by whom they are currently being taught.

How do I nominate an individual or group if they have received this award previously?

As stated above, a previous recipient (individual or group) remains eligible, but only on the basis of work completed since the previous award. This means that the nomination portfolio should not include references to work included in the nominee's previous portfolio. You may also be asked to provide a copy of the previous nomination portfolio for comparative purposes.

How do I nominate a group?

If nominating a group, the nomination should clearly explain the collaborative teaching initiative engaged by a group or team of educators and why this group of instructors are being nominated together, as opposed to individually, with a compelling suite of evidence.

Can a candidate be nominated if they do not teach a registrar-managed course, or if they are in a staff position and not a faculty position?

Yes! Any individual who makes outstanding contributions to teaching and learning is eligible for this award. That said, nominators and nominees are

encouraged to think carefully about what types of evidence they can provide to show the nominees impact on student learning.

Can a candidate be nominated in the year they are scheduled to retire?

Yes! Although this is not a lifetime achievement award, there are no restrictions preventing nominees scheduled to retire from applying for this award.

Can an individual nominate themselves?

No, self-nominations are not permitted for this award.

The Nomination Process

The President’s Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning is a two-stage process.

Stage 1: Nomination Brief and Abridged CV

A nomination brief is typically submitted by the respective Chair or Dean but can be proposed by members of faculty, students, and/or staff. The nomination brief attests to the nominee’s achievements and effectiveness in teaching, as well as the impact that the nominee, or group of nominees, has had on student learning and the teaching and learning culture at McMaster or beyond. The nomination brief must be attended by an abridged CV of the nominee or group of nominees.

General Formatting

The nomination brief is typically written as a letter addressed to the President’s Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning Selection Committee. It is generally two-pages long, single spaced, and introduces the nominees to the Selection Committee, making a compelling case for why the nominees achievements make them a deserving candidate for the award. Strong nomination briefs also commonly demonstrate clear connection to McMaster’s values and strategic priorities.

The nomination brief and abridged CV must be submitted in a single PDF file to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning by 28 October 2024 by 11:59pm. A shortlist of nominees will be approved by early December to advance to Stage 2.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do you submit an abridged CV for an individual?

For individual nominations, the abridged CV should be 10 pages or less and narrowly focused on innovative teaching and learning accomplishments. Please do not submit a full unabbreviated CV for this award.

How do you submit an abridged CV for a group?

For group nominations, please provide abbreviated biographical notes for each educator within the group or team being nominated, highlighting their current positions or roles, and key teaching and learning accomplishments relevant for their candidacy in the context of this award.

Stage 2: Nomination Portfolio

Nominee's approved by the Selection Committee to proceed to stage 2 will be required to submit a 25- to 35-page nomination portfolio.

A nomination portfolio is not a curriculum vitae and differs from a typical teaching portfolio for tenure, permanence, and promotion in its purpose and structure.

Please read the following guidelines closely. Incomplete portfolios will not be circulated to the Selection Committee, and portfolios which do not follow this structure may not score as well as those that abide by these guidelines.

General Formatting

- **25-35 pages maximum**, inclusive of all letters (nomination brief, letters of support) – **the Selection Committee will not review past page 35**
 - Table of contents, cover page, and divider pages (if applicable) are not included in the 35 pages
- Sans-serif font, 12pt, single-spaced
- **Letter-sized pages** (8.5 x 11 inch or 21.59 x 27.94 cm)
- 1-inch or 2.54 cm margins
- **Hyperlinks may be included** – The Selection Committee will consider online links. However, **each hyperlink will count for three pages in the nomination portfolio**
- **Images may be included**, with clear image descriptions embedded
 - Please do not include a photo of the nominee(s)
- Nomination portfolio must be submitted as a **single PDF file**

General Guidelines

- Good nomination portfolios are well-organized and aligned, reflective and scholarly, and narrate the journey and development of a nominee – or group of nominees – as educators.
- Tangible evidence of teaching innovation, effectiveness, and teacher development are more impactful than general exclaiming of a candidate’s excellence. Often, the strongest evidence is multi-faceted and includes the perspective of others.
- The most successful portfolios contextualize teaching contributions within the specific discipline or Faculty, explaining how they go “above and beyond” in expanding disciplinary norms to the benefit of students and the overall improvement of teaching and learning within or beyond McMaster.

Sections and Content

The nomination portfolio must include the following 6 sections:

1.0 Nomination Brief (2 pages)

The nomination brief submitted in stage 1 should be reincluded in the nomination portfolio submitted in stage 2. However, it is strongly recommended that the nomination brief be updated and revised by the nominator. Nomination briefs, when set within the context of a nomination portfolio, should serve as an executive summary of the portfolio and a candidate’s teaching excellence, directing the Selection Committee to important evidence and accomplishments found within the portfolio. Nominees and nominators do not need to reinclude the abridged CV in the nomination portfolio.

2.0 Statement of Teaching Approach or Philosophy (2 pages)

A teaching philosophy or statement of teaching approach should be a very personal and reflective piece of writing, written in first person by the nominee. It serves to communicate the beliefs, actions, impacts and goals of a nominee, or shared by a group of nominees. Each teaching philosophy statement is unique and reflects the personal journey and experience of the nominees as educators.

Many teaching philosophy statements are grounded in scholarly research to situate and support stated values, beliefs, and approaches. Importantly, the views expressed in the statement of teaching approach or philosophy should clearly align with subsequent sections of the nomination portfolio to demonstrate how the teaching approach or philosophy has been realized in practice.

3.0 Innovative and Effective Teaching

This section should outline, with reference to specific examples and evidence, pedagogical innovations and teaching practices that nominees have been responsible for and/or developed individually or with others. It is here in the nomination portfolio where nominees describe, elaborate, and most importantly, reflect on how they have put the core values identified in their teaching philosophy into practice over several years, with sustained impact and evidence of effectiveness on student learning and their own personal growth as educators.

Nominees may wish to discuss a variety of pedagogical approaches, methods, designs, tools, materials, technologies, and/or assessments used, or significant challenges addressed, in their teaching. In doing so, this section should contextualize the nominee's teaching achievements for the Selection Committee, outlining how these pedagogical practices are considered "innovative" and "effective" within their discipline or field.

Evidence of teaching effectiveness is multi-faceted and will vary depending on the types of teaching activities undertaken, but may reference and include:

- Student evaluations of teaching (see FAQ section for more guidance)
- Student course experience surveys (see FAQ section for more guidance)
- Peer observations of teaching (see FAQ section for more guidance)
- Awards and recognitions received for teaching and learning
- Media publicity
- Grants or funding

Please keep in mind that bulleted lists of evidence or examples of innovation or effectiveness in teaching – be it courses taught, student data, awards, publicity, or funding – generally means little to a Selection Committee on its own. Rather, nominees should provide a narrative that elucidates why this evidence is being presented in the nomination portfolio, what it reveals about the impacts of their teaching on student learning and experience, and how that evidence has contributed to their development as educators over time.

4.0 Mentorship and Leadership

This section is intended for nominees to showcase important contributions that extend beyond the classroom in areas of mentorship and educational leadership.

Typically, it is within this section that nominees will provide a narrative that describes and reflects on their contributions as mentors that foster growth in others, as well as forms of educational leadership that foster broader

contributions and change in teaching and learning at institutional, provincial, national and/or global levels.

Forms of mentorship and educational leadership commonly contained in this section can include, but are not limited to:

- Mentoring, supervision, and/or partnership with students, colleagues, peers, or other stakeholders;
- Involvement in collaborative, community-engaged, teaching and learning projects or initiatives;
- Service and/or committee work directed to policy change and/or enhancements in teaching and education;
- Contributions to the development of courses, curricula, or programs (including programs to improve teaching and learning) within a Department, Faculty, McMaster, or community external to the University.

A nomination portfolio is strengthened by the perspective of others who can attest to the nominee(s) influence and impact as a mentor and/or educational leader. Evidence or examples that demonstrate the sharing and adoption of innovative teaching practices, programs, or initiatives will also help strengthen a nomination.

5.0 Professional Development and Research on Teaching & Learning

Outstanding contributions to teaching and learning often extend to other practices and communities including professional development and research in education. In this section, nominees are invited to share with the Selection Committee, from an individual or group perspective, how they have contributed to scholarly developments in teaching and learning that may include, but are not limited to:

- Professional development offerings in teaching
- Presentations on teaching and learning
- Reports or publications on teaching and learning
- Pedagogical research/scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)

Nominees should describe how professional development and/or scholarly contributions have influenced their multifaceted roles as teachers, mentors, and leaders. Reflections on what nominee(s) still hope to learn and contribute to as educators are also encouraged in this section.

6.0 Letters of Support

Most nomination portfolios for this award include up to 5 letters of support from a diverse array of constituents including former students, as well as letters of

support from colleagues, peers, and/or other stakeholders highly familiar with the nominee's work. Letters of support should not be solicited from current students the nominee is actively teaching or supervising. Letters of support should be aligned and referenced within the nomination portfolio to substantiate claims of the nominee(s) outstanding contributions to teaching and learning.

The nomination portfolio must be submitted in a single PDF file to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning by 24 February 2024 by 11:59pm. Nominees and nominators will be notified of results in April 2024.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do groups approach the development of the nomination portfolio package?

Nomination portfolios submitted as a group should provide the Selection Committee with a clearly articulated vision for the philosophy, description of practices, and approaches shared by the group towards teaching, mentoring, educational leadership, and/or research and professional development. The nomination portfolio should outline a holistic and collective group vision, in other words, detailing how the group has shared a teaching philosophy or approach, and worked as a team to realize it in practice, with sustained evidence of impact and effectiveness in teaching and learning.

Groups who have applied together in the past have approached the nomination portfolio in a few helpful ways. First, groups commonly select an individual to lead the coordination and composition of the portfolio and to liaise with the nominator. Once a lead is identified, this individual will help assign other members of the group to collaborate and compose various sections of the portfolio, to solicit letters of support, and/or to assist in collecting and summarizing evidence or data. As a team, it will be helpful to decide on some internal deadlines for bringing drafted sections of the nomination portfolio together to have time to properly review and edit the portfolio into a cohesive document ready for submission. Please list all members of the group as authors when submitting the nomination portfolio and/or indicate authors for various sections, as applicable.

How does the nominator contribute to the nomination portfolio?

For this award, nominators may be involved at two points: first, to draft the initial nomination brief or letter that is submitted alongside the abridged CV in stage 1 (required); and second, to update and revise the nomination brief for placement in the final nomination portfolio in stage 2 (optional).

The strongest nomination briefs align with the nomination portfolio, forecasting who the nominees are and their core teaching values, as well referencing important evidence and examples contained within the portfolio. It is highly recommended that nominees share their draft nomination portfolios with their nominators, and that nominators update their nomination briefs or letters accordingly for incorporation into the final submission.

Is the inclusion of student evaluations of teaching required? How should data be included?

No, the inclusion of student evaluations of teaching is not required. We recognize that student evaluations of teaching may not be fully representative of student learning or teaching effectiveness. Therefore, it is up to the discretion of the nominee, or group of nominees, to determine what student data is reported within the nomination portfolio that best represents the effectiveness of their teaching.

If student evaluations of teaching are used, they should not be submitted in the form of raw data, comments, questionnaires, or printouts. Instead, nominees should summarize student evaluations in a succinct and informative way. Nominees should also provide brief reflections to contextualize student ratings of teaching, fostered development within their teaching practices, and its significance for understanding student learning experiences in their classrooms.

Is the inclusion of student course experience surveys required? How should data be included?

No, the inclusion of student course experience surveys is not required. We leave it to the discretion of the nominee, or group of nominees, to determine what student data is reported in the nomination portfolio that best reflects the impacts and effectiveness of their teaching.

Like student evaluations of teaching, however, student comments and data drawn from student course experience surveys should not be submitted in raw form. Rather, nominees should summarize and provide brief reflections to contextualize the use of student course experience survey data in their courses, highlighting how student feedback has informed their development as teachers and growth as educators over time.

How do I account for deviations or dips in my student evaluations or student course experience surveys?

It is not uncommon for there to be deviations or dips in student evaluations of teaching that can be on account of unique contextual or disciplinary challenges, the integration of new pedagogical approaches, or experimental designs.

Whatever the case, it is best to be transparent and explain to the Selection Committee why those deviations or dips occurred, what the nominee has learned from them, and most critically, how the nominee responded and grew as an instructor based on student feedback. Often, sharing these teaching challenges, risks, or failures and how a nominee constructively developed from them only serves to make the narrative outlined in the nomination portfolio more genuine, compelling, and authentic to an adjudicating committee, and benefits the nominee by providing evidence of their initiative to address challenges and willingness to grow as an educator.

How do I include a peer observation of teaching?

The inclusion of a peer observation of teaching as evidence of teaching excellence is strengthened by the provision of context pertaining to how the observation was conducted, the scholarly quality of the teaching observation, and what changes the nominee (or group of nominees) made to their teaching following the observation process.

If including a peer observation of teaching, please include the full peer observation of teaching report with an identifiable author. If there is a need to have the observation abbreviated to fit within the 35-page limit of the nomination portfolio, please contact the author of the teaching observation to make amendments and obtain permissions.

Who can write a letter of support and how should letters be written?

Each letter of support should be varied and diverse, consisting of a variety of constituents (students, colleagues, peers or other stakeholders) that highlight distinct strengths or accomplishments outlined in the nomination portfolio. Most nomination portfolios for this award include up-to 5 letters of support. Letters should be solicited only from former students. Letters of support are typically 1-2 pages in length, single spaced, written on letter head with signatures, whenever possible, and addressed to the Selection Committee for the President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning.

Can you include an appendix?

Yes, an appendix can be included but it must conform to the 35-page limit. The Selection Committee will not consider any materials included in the nomination portfolio that exceeds 35 pages.

Can you include hyperlinks?

Yes, the Selection Committee will consider online links. However, each hyperlink will count for three pages in the nomination portfolio.

Supports

Still have questions? Need support?

The Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation and Excellence in Teaching is available to assist nominators in developing a nomination brief and nominees in developing a nomination portfolio.

To book a consultation, or for direction to further resources, please contact **Educational Developer, Jenny Blaney (blaney@mcmaster.ca)**, at the MacPherson Institute at the MacPherson Institute.

For information about timelines, submitting documents, and other administrative aspects of this award, please contact **Grants and Awards Specialist Sam Clarke (clarksl4@mcmaster.ca)** in the Office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning.