

Introducing your teaching approach in an Award application

A teaching award application needs to engage the reader from the beginning. Strong submissions usually start with a brief summary of the context of your teaching, your approach/conception of teaching and learning, a description of how you teach, and a justification for why you teach that way – that is, your teaching philosophy. Each submission will tell a unique story.

The prompts used below are designed to help you write the first part of the submission (usually called the ‘**summary statement**’). Usually this is only $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ page so the content needs to be succinct and flow well. The summary statement sets up the submission for more detailed examples and evidence of influence on student learning in the remainder of the submission. It also provides a ‘touchstone’ to be referred to throughout so that the reader can see your examples as part of a deliberate, connected and developmental narrative, created with intent, underpinned by your values and aligned with the institution’s.

This first section often changes as you write the application and realise there may be a more focused way of presenting your approach. To get started, reflect on why you teach and how you teach. Write some notes down so that you can refine the sentences of your teaching philosophy later on.

1. *Introduction*

Describe the context of your teaching e.g. discipline, year level, type of student cohort, class size if important, how long you have been teaching, what kind of knowledge or learning is integral to this subject, what are the complexities/challenges with this teaching ...

2. *Your teaching philosophy*

This needs to be succinct and clear to an outsider. Your philosophy needs to describe what drives what you do and why you are successful/make a difference. Usually, there are values statements and beliefs embedded here, ideally also with some reference to educational literature. Describe how you engage with the teaching and learning process, how your approach is appropriate in your teaching context, and why teaching is important to you.

The use of educational jargon is appropriate as long as it can be understood by the assessors. Usually you would include some references to show your approach is scholarly. Ensure the full reference is included at the end of the document. You then need to ensure that in the main section your examples of teaching practice link back to your teaching philosophy.

3. *Your teaching approach*

Describe how your teaching approach draws on particular learning methods/approaches such as developing resources to suit different learning styles, active learning, collaborative learning, research/teaching nexus, transformative learning, case studies, group work, simulations, interactive lectures, learning/reading circles, application of real-life examples to theory etc. When doing this, you should seek to convey that these cohere together to form your overarching integrated strategy. Avoid describing the methods themselves as “strategy” or “strategies” – your overarching strategy is bigger than the application of any one method/approach.

You may also want to stress particular values, such as respect for individuals, acknowledgement of diversity, etc.

It is also appropriate to reflect on how your teaching approach has evolved over years of teaching and with different cohorts of students.