

## Teaching Citations and Awards at ACU: an overview

Teaching citations and awards are both a driver of, and (for some) a welcome recognition and reward for their career development and achievements. They should be used to support career development because the process of applying for an award provides a guided opportunity to reflect on the principles and scholarship that underpin good teaching practices. The practice of reflection on teaching involves the iterative collation and review of evidence. This practice is a 'way of being' in the teaching profession: it needs to be scholarly and sustained.

**Teaching development grants:** It is advisable and strategic to view citations and awards as one of many opportunities associated with the development of your teaching excellence. Another notable option is your engagement with Teaching Development Grants (TDGs). Successfully obtaining and completing a TDG is a targeted way to focus on teaching improvement that is scholarly and obtains rigorous evidence of teaching effectiveness. (For more information on applying for teaching development grants, see the 'Grants and awards' webpages or contact [awards & grants.LTC@acu.edu.au](mailto:awards&grants.LTC@acu.edu.au)).

**Fellowships and certification:** Before obtaining a TDG you could consider your engagements with other professional development opportunities related to your tertiary teaching capabilities, e.g.: the Higher Education Academy's Fellowship Scheme (contact [Fellowships.LTC@acu.edu.au](mailto:Fellowships.LTC@acu.edu.au)) or the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (contact [GCHE.LTC@acu.edu.au](mailto:GCHE.LTC@acu.edu.au)).

There is a range of teaching citations and awards available that span different career positions, and that also target specific aspects of teaching. Some of these are offered by ACU itself, others by institutions outside of ACU.

The main takeaway message is for you to take a long-term view of your professional development – and therefore to use multiple components to plan your developmental trajectory.

The Australian Catholic University's range of teaching citations and awards are all designed to:

- highlight the importance of high-quality teaching at ACU
- reinforce the values of the University and in particular the goals set out in the University's Strategic Plan, the Learning and Teaching Framework and other documents such as the Postgraduate Strategy
- promote, recognise and reward outstanding examples of practice that enhance student learning
- provide a scaffolded pathway through ACU citations and awards to external teaching citations and awards.

### Pathway of awards

The following teaching awards are listed in order of depth and experience required to substantiate the claims for high-quality teaching demonstrated through impact on student learning.

1. **Faculty Teaching Citations and Awards:** Generally staff are encouraged to apply for a Faculty teaching citation or award first because these are pitched at an introductory standard. However, historically at least, not all faculties at ACU have been able to offer this level of award every year. Where such citations and awards have been available, some have emphasised specific teaching priorities. To learn more about these citations and awards, and to plan your own development trajectory, it is important to consult with your supervisor and get advice. You can also consult with LTC – email [awards&grants.LTC@acu.edu.au](mailto:awards&grants.LTC@acu.edu.au) for guidance.

If you don't have the option of a faculty citation or award and you want to apply for an ACU teaching citation or award, it would still be advisable, to compete at this level, to have some kind of Faculty recognition (examples include completion of one or more Teaching Development Grants; a learning and teaching leadership position; faculty recognition for very high student evaluations; completion of a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education; award of a Higher Education Academy Fellowship).

2. **ACU Citations and Teaching Awards:** These are for staff with a minimum of 2- 5 years teaching experience. These awards start with the Early Career category and extend to the Vice-Chancellor's Awards. These citations and awards are at a more competitive level than faculty citations and awards. Remember also that both individuals and teams can apply for these citations and awards, and teams can be a mix of both academic and professional staff. Be sure to target any application you make at the citation or award which best suits the evidence you have for demonstrating a sustained positive impact on student learning.

A note about the Vice-Chancellor's Awards for excellence in teaching or postgraduate teaching: these are the most prestigious award that ACU offers, and there is substantial prize money associated with them. To be eligible to apply you must demonstrate a minimum of 5-years of teaching excellence. By comparison, to apply for any of the citations and awards managed under the broad heading of "Australian Awards for University Teaching" (AAUT – see below) a minimum of 3-years of teaching excellence is required. For this reason, you might consider applying for the Vice-Chancellor's award after AAUT.

3. **Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT):** These are highly competitive teaching awards that are managed externally to ACU by Universities Australia through Swinburne University. They consist of Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning, Teaching Awards, and Program Awards. Applicants need to be nominated by their Faculty before preparing an application, and there is an ACU process of quality assurance to ensure that only the very best applications are submitted for consideration. At this level you will need to already have some institutional recognition for your teaching excellence such as a faculty or ACU teaching citation or award. The Learning and Teaching Centre provides applicants with support during preparation of applications.

Preparing for a teaching award submission takes planning well in advance. Read the guidelines carefully to make sure you are eligible. Avoid jumping too quickly between levels of awards. Take time to build the strength and depth of your teaching practice as appropriate to the different levels.

## What goes into a Teaching Citation or Award application?

To apply for a Citation usually involves addressing one of several criteria (e.g. student learning, assessment, curriculum equity and diversity, scholarship of learning and teaching). The submission is usually 4–5 pages long.

To apply for an Award involves addressing multiple criteria, with a longer page limit – usually about 8 pages. Regardless of which citation or award you apply for there are always strict formatting requirements: be punctilious!

Your application needs to provide some background about the context and focus of your teaching, including your teaching philosophy. Then describe in more detail the specific and distinctive nature of your teaching practice that forms your claim for teaching excellence. Provide a broad range of data as evidence. The data needs to substantiate a sustained record of excellence in facilitating students learning, and ideally needs to be augmented by evidence of peer acclaim. Each application uniquely reflects a personal engagement and reflection on teaching practice.

## **Guidance for writing applications**

Your best approach begins with reading the guidelines associated with the citation or award scheme you intend to apply for. There is often a form to use as a template for your application. You should also read the document 'Writing an application for a teaching citation or award: tips and FAQs' prepared by LTC and consult with your supervisor and other trusted colleagues for peer support. LTC can also support you.

## **What if you apply and are not successful?**

There will always be more applications for these awards than winners. This is part of what makes them so valuable as a measure of peer esteem. The process is competitive, and it is not uncommon to make more than one attempt before being successful. So, if you are not successful the first time, do not give up! Depending on the feedback you get, the time and effort invested in your application justifies considering a second or even a third attempt. Treat the experience as just another part of your professional development: review the feedback carefully; discuss it with your supervisor and/or LTC; devise a plan, then apply again.

## **Resources**

LTC has web-based resources to guide you on the different citation and awards available, and also offers direct advice.

For further advice, email <mailto:awards&grants.LTC@acu.edu.au>