

Writing a referee report for a teaching award applicant

Referee reports for teaching award applicants must only be provided by people who are able to comment authoritatively on the applicant's outstanding contribution to student learning against the nominated selection criteria. Given the competitive nature of these awards, referee reports need to strongly endorse the content in the application, and also provide extra insights into the quality and impact of the candidate's work. It is not necessary or desirable for referee reports to re-state what is in the application. Rather, the referee can usefully provide some insight into the quality of the applicant's work, its impact (e.g. on student learning) and broader recognition or application of the applicant's work.

Applications for any of ACU's range of awards for excellence in teaching require two referee reports. One is usually either the Head of the applicant's School, Dean of the Faculty, Associate Dean Learning and Teaching, or Director of the professional unit. The second referee report typically comes from an external referee. This helps to indicate peer recognition from outside the university. Alternatively, the second reference could be from a well-respected colleague who can provide specific insight into the excellence of the applicant's work.

A referee report from a student, or past student, is generally not appropriate, because it is more helpful to the selection panel to see such comments within the text of the application.

If the application is made by a team, the referee reports should apply to the team.

To assist the referee the applicant should give plenty of notice that a referee report will be required so that the referee can allocate time to write it. An applicant must provide a copy of their application (a near final draft is appropriate) so the referee can read it and write a reference that supports the claims made in the award application. In addition, the applicant could also be asked to provide some dot points that indicate the key activities or outcomes that are the basis for their claim to teaching excellence. The applicant should not be pressured to draft a reference for him/herself. In part this is because applicants are not the best placed to contribute information that goes beyond what they will have already stated in the application itself.

Some suggestions for a strong reference:

- Referee reports must be on letterhead and signed by the referee. Electronic signatures are acceptable.
- Commences with a strong introductory paragraph that establishes the relationship of the referee to the nominee, confirms the role of the nominee and the main thrust of the nominee's application.
- Focus on the nominee's contribution to student learning against the assessment criteria.
- Highlight the particular strengths of the contribution to learning and teaching.
- Emphasize the importance and relevance to ACU of the particular teaching philosophy/ approach adopted e.g. active learning to engage first year students, authentic assessment to build work readiness skills etc.
- Consider making an additional comment about a specific and impressive aspect of the work (e.g. huge turn around in retention, improvement in final results, evidence of improvement in learning a specific skill, improved placement experiences etc.)
- Consider strengthening the report by acknowledging the sustained contribution of the applicant, supported by evidence such as student survey data, embedded evaluative processes and peer recognition, including external presentations, publications and industry collaborations.

The final paragraph usually re-affirms the referee's view that the candidate is worthy of the award.

The following examples may be useful. *They are provided as examples; sentences are not to be reproduced in their entirety.*

Reference for an ACU Citation

It is my privilege to write this reference for, who for 13 years has been a valued teaching staff member at ACU. When I started at ACU late last year, very quickly I realised that is one of the most effective, knowledgeable leaders I have come across in my career because of her vast experience as a teacher, researcher and innovator in tertiary education.

What makes such an effective innovator in curriculum design is her genuine respect for disciplinary differences, which is vital when working in interdisciplinary faculties such as ... She has been responsible for overseeing course reviews in disciplines as diverse asIt is hard to imagine any more different disciplines. Yet staff in all these disciplines have regularly praised ...for listening to their concerns, for her approaches to learning and teaching, and her various workshopping exercises with staff to develop curricula that satisfy disciplinary, faculty, university and sector requirements. Her innovative approach to embedding graduate attributes into disciplines through the implementation of introductory and capstone units is one example of how she works with colleagues to balance flexibility with regulatory requirements. It is this respect for disciplinary differences which has raised ... standing within the field of tertiary education research. Colleagues at other Australian institutions have sought out her expertise, evidenced by her role as investigator and leader on ALTC and OLT team grants and co- authored publications in a variety of specialist and interdisciplinary journals. Her commitment to disseminate that scholarship is exemplary, whether at conferences, workshops with faculty staff, or inter-university workshops bringing together disciplinary practitioners. This track record in scholarship of teaching is exactly the sort of track record that ACU should be proud of, as it aligns with the aim of the university's strategic plan to support "a high-quality academic environment that is informed by scholarship." Her particular attention to Indigenisation of the curriculum is commendable and aligns with ACU's Statement on Reconciliation and the Mission's commitment to social justice and the common good.

It is especially pleasing that has taught during her tenure as ...which is uncommon at ACU. This shows her dedication to the student experience and has also provided the opportunity to innovate, evaluate and construct curricula on the ground. Given how excellent ... is at listening to staff and students, it is unsurprising that the unit she has thrived in is Interpersonal Communication.

In summary, I am proud to work with such an engaging, generous, leading researcher and teacher. ... embodies teaching excellence, and I unreservedly support her application for an ACU Citation for Outstanding Contributions for Student Learning.

Sincerely,

Signature and Details of Referee

The contents of this document are provided as an example; sentences are not to be reproduced in their entirety.

Reference for an external national teaching citation

It is a pleasure for me to provide this reference for.....

..... is an experienced academic in the field of , who has shown a sustained contribution to the development of curriculum at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and the creation of authentic learning experiences to ensure that graduates of the are work ready – confident and competent as practitioners.

.....command of the field is evident in her capacity to fully engage students in the learning and teaching strategies she employs. Her focus on theory-based experiential learning, grounded in sound theoretical principles, ensures that her students are well equipped to transcend the theory practice gap. She is highly skilled in working with students to critically evaluate the experiences that she has created for them, both in classroom and in practical field settings.

It is through the innovation shown by that ACU is able to provide authentic learning experiences for students. The professional practice experience is an innovative and authentic activity that fully engages students. It is also an outstanding example of the capacity to work with the local community, who have acclaimed the benefits of this initiative, and demonstrates the powerful benefits of community engagement that is a central tenet of the ACU philosophy.

..... has received recognition for her sustained excellence in the field of both within Australia and internationally. She is regularly sought after by organisations such as She has also received All of these are testament to the high regard with which she is held.

..... is contributing to the scholarship of learning and teaching, particularly in critically reviewing the contribution of authentic learning experiences in the field. In addition to conference presentations, two peer reviewed articles have disseminated knowledge about the educational experience.

I have no hesitation in providing a reference for She is a worthy applicant for a National Citation; her command of the disciplinary field of is impressive and her contributions to the learning experiences of ACU students are nothing short of outstanding. Please note that I have been made aware of, and accept, the privacy notice associated with submitting a National Citation.

Sincerely,

Signature and Details of Referee

The contents of this document are provided as an example; sentences are not to be reproduced in their entirety.

Reference for an external national teaching citation - Early Career

I am very pleased to provide a reference for....., an early career academic who is passionate and enthusiastic about teaching and learning. She is committed to ensuring that the student experience of learning is a positive and engaging one.

..... led a national teaching team (across 5 campuses) in significantly changing an undergraduate capstone unit to provide an engaging student experience to challenge students to think critically whilst synthesising skills and knowledge learnt throughout their course utilised simulated case scenarios to accurately represent the clinical environment, ensuring that the students developed clinical reasoning skills which would be transferable into the clinical environment. Utilising best evidence and practice, was also well aware that the majority of student learning during

simulation occurs during the debrief process and therefore located and adapted a well-tested and researched debriefing model.

Such major redesign of unit content is not without its challenges. While the debriefing model provided the ability to enhance students' critical thinking, it was not easy for teaching staff with limited simulation experience to facilitate. In recognition of this, obtained funding to develop and implement an innovative training program to be delivered to all staff teaching in the unit. Her approach was to provide teaching staff with the experience of the actual simulation scenarios and debriefing model that would be delivered to the students. This proved to be a very innovative and successful approach as it a) targeted the staff directly involved in the teaching/facilitation of the scenarios and debriefing of students; b) by being a participant and experiencing what the students would be asked to do ensured staff obtained a deeper understanding of the student experience and the facilitators role; c) enabled fine-tuning of the scenarios to take into account each campus' individual context and facilities and d) allayed staff fears as they were highly anxious about again being asked to introduce a new pedagogy for teaching and learning without appropriate training and support.

That an early career academic has been able to undertake major curriculum renewal, providing innovative student experiences and staff training across five campuses is a major achievement. The student and staff feedback for this model of learning and teaching has been overwhelmingly positive. Both staff and students have engaged with the model and early evaluations and feedback from the clinical setting suggest that the learning of clinical reasoning skills has been transferable into the clinical setting. This attribute of clinical reasoning is seen as highly desirable by our clinical partners.

As further testament to the impact that has had within the School of over the last 3 years since becoming an academic (previously a clinician), she has consistently contributed to the development of additional learning opportunities and resources for students. These have particularly been in the area of medication calculation; remediation strategies for students who struggle; and the development of student professional ePortfolios..... has also led the way in embracing the use of

technology in utilising online quizzes for formative feedback; online marking and comment databases for providing consistency of quality feedback for students and the implementation of ePortfolios.

In summary..... expertise in simulation, organisational and interpersonal skills, and her commitment to learning and teaching have been recognised by the staff within the National School of.....and she is a worthy recipient of an OLT Citation.

Please note that I have been made aware of, and accept, the privacy notice associated with submitting a National Citation.

Sincerely,

Signature and Details of Referee