How do students define 'excellent teaching'? Using student-led Teaching Awards to enhance learning

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Shaping the Student Experience Together: 20 Years of Enhancement
Introduction
Overview of the presentation

- Introduction
- Main themes of “excellent teaching”
  - Care (Individual care & Caring attitude)
  - Students as contributors and collaborators
  - Adaptation of learning materials and learning-enhancing activities
- Enhancing Teaching
  - Examples
  - What have we learned?
- Further Guidance
- Q&A
Learning Objectives

• An understanding of the students’ view of “excellent teaching”

• Knowledge of how student-led Teaching Awards can be used to enhance learning.
Overview of our process

- Teaching Award Nominations
- Funding proposal and hiring
- Develop research methodology and questions
- Coding and thematic analysis
- Report and presentations
- Enhancing Teaching
Main themes of “excellent teaching”
Main themes

1. Care

2. Students as contributors and collaborators

3. Adaptation of materials and learning-enhancing activities
Care
Defining care

"She has been incredibly supportive, and I always feel I can ask for her help and advice, whether in class, through email or office hours. <...> Throughout the semester I have been incredibly stressed about an assignment, yet she has been absolutely fantastic at helping me navigate my way through the task and has really helped calm my nerves."

- Nomination 18
Some features associated with care have been mentioned in 82% of the nominations:

Caring attitude

+

Acts of individual care

- Responsiveness to emails
- Useful feedback
- Individual discussion of ideas and suggestions for future research
- Checking up on students in difficult circumstances
Creating caring atmosphere in a class

"She always encouraged students to reach out to chat about any issues and offered comforting and wise advice every time."

- Nomination 98

"Although I personally never requested any extra sessions, she made it abundantly clear there was no shame in asking and that she would be more than happy to oblige."

- Nomination 12
- **Timely responses**

"Whenever I contacted her, her replies were quick and so friendly. It is obvious that she genuinely cares about the wellbeing of her students, and this is very refreshing to see within a university setting."

- Nomination 232
Students as contributors and collaborators
Mentioned by 69% of the nominations

- Treating students’ contributions as valuable
- Keen interest in students’ views and perspectives
- Approachability
- Participatory, democratic, respectful atmosphere
"As he cheers us on, he also reminds us to not be so hard on ourselves as beginner students, and as someone who struggled with self-doubt at the beginning, I cannot thank him enough. I believe that he deserves to be nominated because he gave me something that I was severely lacking in my subject: self-confidence."

- Nomination 145
- Early and mid-semester feedback

"She has provided strong assembler feedback as well as collective feedback and had engaged with us asking what assessment style we would like before making the executive decision. This made us feel included and prioritised."

- Nomination 161
Students as contributors and collaborators - Conclusion

- Affirmed Representatives’ behaviour (e.g. mid-semester feedback)

- Shared investment in the learning environment

- Practical approach for shaping “how” students learn
Adaptation of materials and learning-enhancing activities
Mentioned by 48% of the nominations:

**Practical elements of teaching**

- Style of delivery of lectures
- Supplementary materials
- Activities which diversify a module or expand beyond it

Individual approaches and adjustments implemented by a teacher within a module or a school
Not just about being 'creative' or 'unique'!

"Her curricula are designed with great purpose <…> and she is able to explain how each reading and lecture contributes to overall learning goals."
- Nomination 29

"The module itself is also delivered and structured in a way that makes learning from it so easy and enjoyable <…>"
- Nomination 302

Coherence
Evident module methodology
"His dual delivery of lecture content, and the use of presentations designed to aid students with dyslexia have made the material more accessible"

- Nomination 249

"He does everything in his power to make his courses inclusive, as well as making any students with disabilities feel welcome in the department."

- Nomination 139
No special practice!

- A practical theme that’s based on principles
- Students value:
  - Coherence
  - Organisation
  - Inclusivity
Care

Adaptation of materials and learning-enhancing activities

Students as contributors and collaborators
Enhancing Teaching
Teaching Awards Enhancement Cycle

1. Nominations & Awards
2. Researcher Onboarding
3. Coding
4. Analysis & Theme Setting
5. Report Writing
6. Enhancing Teaching
Enhancing Teaching: Examples

Student Reps

Gather student examples of what exemplary feedback from staff looks like; distil good practices and present this at student/staff meetings.

Work with staff on improving the feedback guidelines for your School

Teachers

What specific materials and activities do students look for?

- Evident module methodology & structure
- Materials that can be revisited
- Actualised knowledge
Uniquely Positive

- Untapped wealth of student-generated data
- Empowers students
- A resource for teaching staff
- Snapshot of student views
- Thematic research questions
Further Guidance
Further guidance

- Check out the **sparqs Resource Library** for guidance on:
  - modifying your award process;
  - onboarding a researcher;
  - conducting the thematic review
  - Utilising findings to enhance teaching
5.3 Practical steps

The analysis of student satisfaction and feedback highlights the importance of active engagement and meaningful learning activities. Students value opportunities to participate actively in their learning, engage in discussions, and have the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas. These activities not only enhance the learning experience but also foster a sense of community and collaboration among students.

Main Themes

Three main themes have been identified in the course of analysis of Teaching Awards nominations:

### Individual care and caring attitude

Students value teachers who demonstrate empathy, understanding, and support. Teachers are seen as not only educators but also mentors who are approachable, respectful, and willing to help students overcome challenges.

### Students as collaborators and contributors

The teaching approach and methods are seen as crucial for student engagement and motivation. Teachers who encourage students to take an active role in their learning, provide opportunities for group work, and foster a collaborative environment are appreciated.

### Adaptation of materials and learning-enhancing activities

The use of diverse teaching methods and materials is valued. Teachers who are adaptable and willing to incorporate technology, real-world examples, and interactive exercises are seen as effective educators.

The first theme appeared in 82% of the nominations, emphasizing the importance of individual care and a caring attitude. Additional themes in 75% of the nominations highlighted the significance of students as active collaborators and contributors in their learning processes. Lastly, in 70% of the nominations, the adaptation of teaching materials and learning-enhancing activities was recognized as a critical aspect of effective teaching.

In conclusion, these themes represent the core values in students’ perceptions of excellent teaching and are not occasional or accidental. They reflect the continuous focus on enhancing the learning experience and ensuring that teaching is responsive and inclusive of diverse student needs.
The idea of “excellent teaching” can feel subjective or intangible, but this process can help break the student view into thematic building-block with names and examples.
Thank you

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