

OLT Citation and Awards Workshop 2012

Hi, my name is Bernadette McCabe. Early in the first semester of 2012 I was asked to give a brief 10 minute presentation outlining my experiences and success in the last ALTC citation round. In this recording I will share with you some ideas and outline some application tips which I found useful.

A bit of background to begin with. My discipline area is science, specifically microbiology and biochemistry and I actively research in the field of environmental microbiology and biotechnology. My teaching areas are both in health and environment & sustainability. As well as teaching into Department programs I also service teach a science foundation's course to nursing students.

My successful 2011 ALTC citation titled "*For sustained, continuous development of innovative and inspiring approaches that address the discipline specific needs of nursing and science students within the biosciences*" focussed on 2 specific courses to showcase engaging and effective learning and teaching approaches which meet the distinctive requirements of nursing and science students.

In this presentation I have chosen to share my experience of the application process as a flow diagram rather than a series of PowerPoint slides.

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Looking back on my personal experience in writing an application I see it as a 2 stage process. Firstly, it is a reflective process in developing the main ideas. Secondly, armed with all the basic foundation material, you then set out to write the actual application.

In the first reflective stage you start to look at your application as one which tells your story. One of the first things you need to do is to gather your ideas and evidence. For example, SELTS, scholarly activities (publications, conference presentations etc.) and recognition (Faculty, USQ, L & T grants etc.). Then you need to determine how all these ideas relate to each other. At this stage you will find you need to construct and reconstruct your story. Don't be reluctant to throw away any ideas that don't gel with the story that you are trying to tell or to alternatively add weight to others. Remember; focus on a few good ideas that tell your story with conviction. The main outcome at this stage is the development of a unifying theme, one that draws together all your ideas and evidence into a tightly focused application. Continually ask yourself 'what is outstanding in my teaching?' 'What makes it unique? All of this aids in deciding what criteria you will address in your application. It can be difficult to decide, particularly if your application spans over a couple of criteria. The guideline stipulates 1 or max 2 criteria out of a possible 5. From my own experience choosing just one enabled me to develop more tightly focused application.

The second stage of the application process is the actual writing of the application. The general mechanics of the application involves 3 parts.

1. The proposed citation wording
2. Synopsis
3. Statement

The proposed citation wording is 25 words maximum and needs to encapsulate all key points of the citation. Be flexible with your wording at the start – keep it fluid. You'll probably find yourself tinkering with it quite a bit along the way. The synopsis is probably the last thing you will write. The synopsis must be written in the third person and is a requirement of the nomination. The word limit is strictly 100 words – which includes the 25 word citation. The remaining 75 words should describe the nominee's contribution to student learning and engagement and the resulting impact on students.

The core element of a nomination for a citation is the written statement in which nominees describe their contribution to student learning. The written statement is limited to 4 A4 pages. The written statement should have 4 components:

1. The proposed citation describing the distinctive contribution of the nominee
2. A summary of the particular contribution and its specific context
3. Statement addressing the chosen selection criteria
4. Evidence of success

In writing the actual statement I found it useful to apply the subheadings 'Why', 'How' and 'Evidence of Success'. Under the 'why' heading I introduced the particular teaching context and why I need to implement the specific learning and teaching approaches. For example, in your citation you may be addressing a certain need or problem? The next part of the statement which links back to the criteria is the 'how' i.e. how did you implement these ideas/teaching approaches.

The fourth component of the statement is providing evidence for the ways in which your contribution has:

1. Influenced student learning and engagement and/or the overall student experience
2. Been recognised by fellow staff, the institution, and/or the broader community
3. Has been sustained over time.

Again using subheadings around these 3 points will help to make your application easier to read.

The key to writing the statement is that the unifying theme that you developed back in the early stages needs to come out in your writing. The 4 page statement needs to be well organised, consistent and clear. An application that is inconsistent and all over the place lacks a unifying theme. The first stage of laying the foundations is a critical step and that you'll find that you will be working between the two stages; constructing and reconstructing to develop your story, continually fleshing out the main ideas and removing any latent/underutilised ideas. An integral part of the 4 page statement is to draw together the 'why' and the 'how' with the 'evidence of success'. Integrate to tighten the focus – always reminding the assessor why you are putting forward the application. For example, cross reference evidence to terms/concepts that you introduced in earlier sections to make the application easier to read and help the application flow better.

The following is the link to the 2012 OLT Australian awards for University teaching – nomination instruction and supporting information.

I hope that some of my experiences in the application process may help you in writing your learning and teaching story!

Thank you.