To: Heads of Department and Heads of Learning Support Services
Chairs of Boards of Studies
YUSU and GSA
Cc: Departmental Managers and Administrators

Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Awards 2016

We would like to invite your department/learning support service to make nominations for Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Awards 2016. The Awards, presented at the summer graduation ceremonies, celebrate colleagues’ achievements in teaching and learning support across the University, and provide an opportunity for departments to demonstrate the excellence of their learning and teaching provision. The deadline is MIDDAY on Monday 21 March 2016.

There are two routes for nomination. The first route is familiar from all previous rounds of the Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Awards (VCTA); the second, established last year, encourages Departments to establish their own awards and nominate an outstanding awardee to the VCTA. Appendix 2 introduces this second route.

Under the first route the panel will be looking for three key qualities:

1. Evidence of sustained excellence across a range of teaching/support activities and over a reasonable period of time.\(^1\)
2. A creative approach to teaching and/or learning support, focused on student learning needs. This need not necessarily involve technological wizardry or cutting-edge experimentation.
3. Evidence that nominees make an impact on colleagues as well as students.\(^2\)

We invite applications from the full range of colleagues involved in teaching and/or learning support at York, including postgraduates and postdocs who teach/demonstrate. Team applications are also welcomed. Previous recipients are eligible to apply for a second Award once a gap of at least three years has elapsed since their last Award. The panel would expect such nominees to have developed their learning and teaching practice significantly in the intervening time.

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\(^1\) We would usually expect to see a track record of excellence at York of at least three years, and across a variety of activities (i.e. not just referring to a single module) - with the exception of postgraduates or postdocs who teach. The panel will take account of all nominees’ opportunities to contribute to learning and teaching, and recognises in particular that the types of teaching activities undertaken by postgraduates/postdocs who teach/demonstrate will vary between departments. For a nomination made in relation to a particular programme of study, we would expect the programme to have run through at least one cohort.

\(^2\) This should be understood in a professional sense; we would not seek to reward, for example, a 24 hour open door policy for students.
There is no limit to the number of candidates a department or learning support service may put forward. **We encourage all departments to submit at least one nominee.** In making your nominations, we ask you to seek input from both staff and students. A suggested nomination route for academic departments is included in the attached Appendix. Nominations must include a brief account of how the nominee was selected, including whether the nomination was initiated by students and/or staff, or by the candidate putting him/herself forward for consideration.

Under the **second route**, Departments will have established their own scheme to recognise excellence, either in teaching in general or in a particular aspect of teaching such as laboratory demonstration. Departments are invited to identify whether the strongest candidate from their own scheme has made a truly outstanding contribution and to nominate them for a VCTA, making the case for exceptional performance. The selection panel will judge these nominations by considering the rigour of the departmental selection criteria and the nominee’s level of achievement in relation to those criteria. This approach acknowledges that the criteria will necessarily vary between Departments. It will still be possible for demonstrators to apply for a VCTA through the first route, and they may also be eligible for recognition through the YUSU award scheme.

Nominations should be via a completed **application form** (included as a separate document and from the website), which includes two substantive elements:

1. A statement (up to 1,000 words) from the nominator (Head of Department, Chair of Board of Studies or Chair of the Departmental Teaching Committee), making use of comments from students and colleagues, and providing evidence of the nominee(s)’ excellence either under the three criteria listed overleaf, or according to the criteria of the Department’s own award scheme, which must be stated in full. This statement should be endorsed by the Head of Department if they are not the author.

2. A statement (up to 600 words) from the nominee(s), describing his/her/their approach to learning and teaching and how they have developed their practice.

Further guidelines are provided in the attached Appendix.

Nominations will be considered by a panel convened jointly by Teaching Committee and the Learning and Teaching Forum, and candidates will be notified of the outcome by the end of April.

We look forward to receiving your nominations.

**JOHN ROBINSON**  
Chair, University Teaching Committee

**PHIL LIGHTFOOT**  
Chair, Learning and Teaching Forum
Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Awards 2016

Submitting a VCTA nomination: further guidance

Nominations should be informed by input from both staff and students.

A suggested process for selecting departmental nominees is as follows:

1. The Head of Department
   a) asks the staff lead of the Staff-Student Forum to consult the group and suggest possible candidates, in order of priority;
   b) (as appropriate) consults the most recent list of winners of a department Demonstrator award for the strongest candidate and adds them to the list of possible nominations;
   c) invites potential candidates to self-nominate to the Head of Department.

2. A small representative staff group, consisting of the Head of Department, the Chair of the Board of Studies and (where relevant) the Chair of the Departmental Teaching Committee, meets with the Staff-Student Forum staff lead to consider the suggested candidates. Consideration should be given to sources of evidence which support each claim including PST activity; student feedback scores; recent learning and teaching projects undertaken within the department; etc. Further possible sources of evidence are listed below.

3. The group draws up a shortlist of nominees.

4. The shortlisted nominees are contacted to ask if they are willing to be put forward, and then nominations are finalised and an application form prepared as per below.

(Please note that if a candidate is to be considered both as part of a team and as an individual, two separate applications will be needed.)
Application form guidance

An application form should be completed for the nominee with the following information:

A1. Administrative information (this is not included in the word limit)
Name and contact information for the candidate and the nominator.
A brief account of how the nominee was selected, including whether the nomination is a result of:
   o nomination by students and/or staff (include an indication of the process of selection);
   o the candidate being acknowledged via an internal / department award scheme for demonstrators (attach the criteria for the scheme);
   o by the candidate putting him/herself forward for consideration.

Please state if the candidate has previously received a Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Award, and the year.

A2 Please give a brief indication of the nominee(s)’ core role within the University in relation to teaching/learning support including, where relevant, the range of modules they are involved in.

For postgraduate/postdoc applicants, please state what their teaching or demonstrating experience has been, and what level of responsibility they have had in delivering or supporting teaching / demonstrating.

A3 Nominator statement, of up to 1,000 words, in support of the application - from the Head of Department, Chair of Board of Studies or Chair of the Departmental Teaching Committee.

Provide evidence of the nominee(s)’ excellence either:

(a) under the three criteria:
   1. Sustained excellence across a range of teaching/support activities and over a reasonable period of time.
   2. A creative approach to teaching and/or learning support, focused on student learning needs.
   3. Evidence that nominees make an impact on colleagues as well as students.

Or
(b) under the criteria of the Department’s own award. In this case, the panel will need to judge the expectations and rigour of the Department’s own award against those of case (a), so Departments should state the criteria clearly and explain why the candidate is outstanding according to those criteria. The discussion of evidence below is directed towards case (a), but submissions under case (b) should also try to draw on such evidence where available.

The evidence you draw on needs to include feedback from students. This should include quantitative results as far as possible, placed in their wider context such as where the scores fall in the general distribution, with qualitative comments to elaborate. For central learning support staff who may not have direct contact with students on a regular basis, you are asked instead to provide evidence of students’ assessment of the value and quality of support provided.
Other sources of evidence might include:

- Specific examples of the nominee’s approaches to teaching/learning support, explaining how they are focused on student learning needs, and providing evidence of their impact.
- Evidence of the nominee’s impact on students’ module/dissertation choices, assessment results and progression to higher level study.
- Examples of their influence on colleagues/other postgraduates or postdocs who teach within the department/learning support service/across the University, e.g. through:
  - Involvement in Peer Support for Teaching activities;
  - Involvement in module/programme revision and/or design;
  - Involvement in development of resources/approaches used by other colleagues across the department/the University;
  - Team teaching and/or peer observation of teaching;
  - Any administrative roles undertaken within the department and/or the University which have had an impact on learning and teaching practices;
  - Involvement in internal learning and teaching projects;
  - Mentoring/training/development responsibilities relating to learning and teaching;
  - Contributions to discussions, workshops and/or conferences relating to learning and teaching, within the department and/or the University.
- Comments from colleagues / mentors / other postgraduates or postdocs who teach as supporting evidence.
- Any achievements relating to learning and teaching at national or international level e.g. publications, projects, outreach work, other awards, conference presentations.

B. Statement from the nominee(s)

Word limit: 600 words (including quotations)  APPENDICES ARE NOT PERMITTED

The statement from the nominee is required for all submissions, including those nominated as outstanding winners of departmental awards.

B1 Please characterise your approach to learning and teaching i.e. philosophy and methods, and outline what you consider to be your key strengths, with supporting examples, including evidence of positive feedback from students.

B2 Describe your approach to developing your teaching practice, for example:

- Examples of how you have reviewed, critically reflected upon and refined your own practice, including aspects of teaching/learning support which you have found problematic; and the impact this has had on student learning;
- How you have used pedagogic theory and research, or innovative practice from elsewhere, to inform your teaching practice;
- Participation in the PGCAP (formerly known as YCAP) and/or PFA programmes, or other training and development opportunities relating to learning and teaching;
- Examples of conferences and workshops you have attended and / or participated in / contributed to;
o Membership of professional bodies or discussion groups relating to learning and teaching.

B3 Nominees who have previously received an Award should indicate how their teaching practice has developed in the intervening time.

COMPLETE application forms must be submitted electronically, to learning-and-teaching-forum@york.ac.uk by MIDDAY on Monday 21 March 2016.

If you have any queries, please contact Janet Barton, learning-and-teaching-forum@york.ac.uk.
Revisions to the Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Award (VCTA) Scheme

In 2014 a second route was introduced to ensure the VCTA scheme is more accessible to student demonstrators, to recognise the important contribution of this role to teaching and to student learning.

Whilst the VCTA scheme has not excluded demonstrators, it is recognised that the nature of this role makes it difficult to provide sufficient evidence of excellence and impact under the scheme’s criteria, and thus for awards to be made. There is also an imbalance between the teaching opportunities available to PGWTs in the Arts and Humanities (which can more readily be related to the VCTA criteria) and the prevalence of demonstrator roles in the Sciences.

Some Departments already have their own awards for demonstrators who have gone over and above what is expected of them. The selection process involves laboratory co-ordinators and an evidence base which includes student feedback. We wish to encourage those Departments who do not currently have their own awards for demonstrators to develop such a scheme.

Departments are invited to identify whether the strongest candidate from their own scheme has made a truly outstanding contribution and if so nominate them for a VCTA, making the case for exceptional performance. The VCTA panel will judge these nominations by considering the rigour of the departmental selection criteria and the nominee’s level of achievement in relation to those criteria. This approach acknowledges that the criteria will necessarily vary between Departments.

It will still be possible for demonstrators to apply for VCTAs through the usual route. They may also be eligible for recognition through the YUSU award scheme.