

Winning Ways

A Workshop on Developing Applications

For

the ALTC Citations

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

The approach informing this workshop is that awards for academic teaching, grounded within the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), are an important and valuable expression of professional recognition.

Only a few years ago, teaching awards in Higher Education generally were poorly perceived by academics. Such schemes as existed, were often arbitrary and the number of awards limited. However, in the last few years, particularly through the work of Paul Ramsden et al. (1995), and the imaginative programs of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), staff have come to appreciate the importance of a well-designed, scholarly, and accessible awards scheme. Some of the more important benefits can be summarised as follows:

- Merited Recognition – from peers, management, discipline, and across the sector.
- The development of a personal philosophy and critical approach, that enhances reflective practice.
- Building a culture of evidence-based T&L.
- The benchmarking of good and excellent practice.
- The dissemination of better practice, thereby building T&L capacity.
- Promotion of excellence in teaching and quality student learning outcomes that helps to position institutions at both the national and international levels.

Such awards are designed to recognise *excellence* in T&L, not merely the ‘competent’ or ‘good’. However, far from being awards only for the privileged few, many, perhaps the majority, of academic teachers should have the confidence that at least some area, if not necessarily every aspect, of their practice and the learning outcomes they have facilitated, merits reward and recognition at the institutional and/or national level.

This workshop is aimed at helping applicants to achieve that recognition at the national level, through the Australian Awards for University Teaching administered by the *Australian Learning and Teaching Council* (ALTC); in particular the *Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning* (hereafter ‘Citations’).

Progress to the Citations usually occurs subsequent to recognition through institutional schemes. Most Australian universities now have award programs that closely articulate with the corresponding ALTC programs. Hence the principles discussed in this workshop generally will be of value to applicants at both the institutional and national levels. We want to encourage prospective applicants by clearly indicating what needs to be done and how to do it in order to develop a competitive application. We will identify and explain the conceptual and practical aspects of designing and writing an application for the Citations.

While the focus is on the Citations, most of what we will cover applies equally to other ALTC awards, so it’s worth briefly orientating ourselves to the structure of the ALTC Scheme, an summary of which can be found at:

<http://www.altc.edu.au/types-of-awards>

On the basis of the ALTC Summary, what feature seems to distinguish the Citations from the other awards?

2. The Citations in Summary

From the Citations Guidelines 2011, please identify:

- Who is eligible to apply? (§4.1)

- What is the Early Career category? (§4.3.6)

- What are the three overarching criteria or considerations against which the application will be judged? (§4.2)

- What is the maximum length (pages) of the application? (§4.4)

- What is the ‘Citation’? (§4.4)

- What are the other three sections of the Written Statement? (§4.4)

- Where does the synopsis appear? What is its length? (§4.4)

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- What is the function of the Nomination summary form? (§4.4)
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3. General Strategies

- Start with a positive attitude—and cultivate it! The process has challenges, but it is worthwhile, interesting and of considerable professional value. Moreover, your University has strategies in place to support you throughout the process.
- Prioritise your time. Schedule time each week. Break the writing task into short manageable stages. Allow time to collect the evidence, data and literature needed.
- Approach referees early (they will often give you valuable insight into various strengths and weaknesses that should be addressed).
- Stick to the rules. For example do not exceed the limit—material over the limit will not be considered by the panel.
- Get feedback – lots of feedback - on your application. Share it with colleagues for their feedback, and don't leave it to the 'last minute'. Use the critical feedback support that the University provides. Show your drafts to partners, former award or grant winners, and Academic Developers. Submitting your application to critical review is simply part and parcel of good scholarly practice. We all learn and benefit from the process.
- Approach awards strategically. They are competitive processes. Not everyone will be successful first time. Remember it is a process, and that it may take a couple of attempts before your application is competitively successful. Applicants who commit themselves to a longer-term outlook, and who are open to feedback and development, will generally be successful.

4. Approach

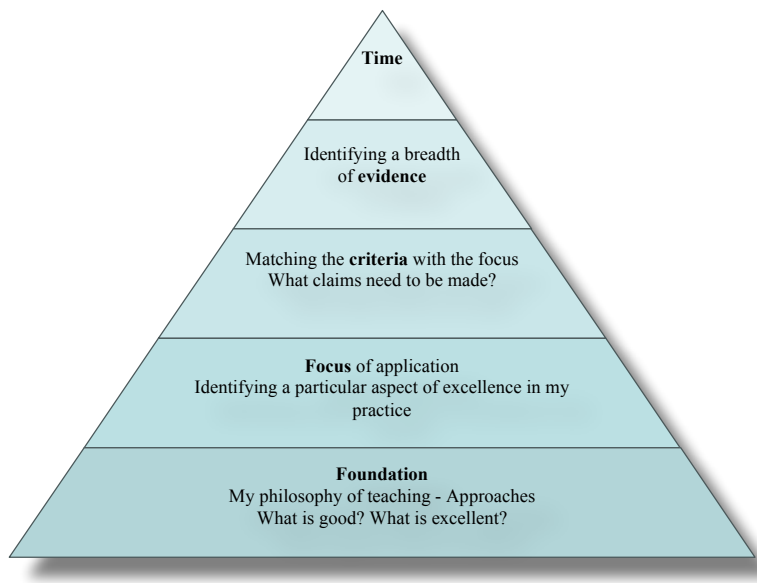
Developing a competitive application for teaching awards starts with carefully reflecting on one's practice and the learning outcomes of students. What is it that you wish to be recognised for? How will the claim be made and supported? At the outset you will need to think through the following points:

- a) My philosophy of teaching. Is the focus on what I do, or on how and what my students learn? What is good in my practice (i.e. professional competence at my level), and what goes beyond 'good' to setting a higher standard (i.e. 'excellent')?
- b) What will be the focus of excellence in my application?

- c) Where does my particular focus of excellence ‘fit’ in the awards scheme? What award should I be attempting? If there are optional criteria (as in the Citations), which should I select to address?
- d) What are the sources of evidence that will support my claim? What type of evidence have I got and what do I need to get?
- e) Time considerations. While time itself is not a conceptual factor, nevertheless it is the time management factor that single-handedly accounts for applications either not being completed or submitted, or else not being adequately developed in terms of the awards scheme requirements. Hence you need to consider: How can I best manage completing the application within the context of my current workload? Making an early start and scheduling regular times to work on the application are two of the better strategies to address this problem.

Figure 1 below, illustrates the conceptual considerations that applicants need to clarify for themselves. Note that a sound philosophy and approach to teaching underpins the structure, while time (management) is the capstone required to complete the structure.

Figure 1: *Conceptual considerations*



5. What is Teaching Excellence?

Scholarly teaching awards serve the purposes of helping to identify, recognise and benchmark ‘best practice’. Hence awards tend to be described in qualitative terms: ‘*outstanding* contributions to student learning’, ‘teaching *excellence*’ or ‘*enhancing* learning’. Consequently it follows that applicants need to have a clear idea of what comprises teaching excellence and the ways in which it may be quantified and demonstrated. The difficulty commonly faced is that while we may have a sense of what teaching excellence is in ourselves or in others—‘I know it when I see it’— it is much harder to express as a concept or to objectively measure.

However teaching excellence may be defined, the consensus view is that any claim to excellence ought to be evidenced with reference more to student learning as adduced by a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators. It is a positive aspect of the ALTC Citations that applicants are able to make a case for teaching excellence on their own terms, by addressing relatively broad criteria, by drawing on a variety of approaches, and by citing a broad range of evidence.

In order to arrive at an understanding of what comprises ‘excellence’ in university teaching, and to offer a theoretical discussion that may help award applicants to better reflect on the question of teaching excellence, it may be helpful to deal with the problem from the meta-understanding and attributive approaches.

A meta-understanding of teaching excellence

Alan Skelton tabulates four meta-understandings of teaching excellence as follows:¹

Table 1. *Four meta-understandings of teaching excellence in higher education*

	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Performative</i>	<i>Psychologized</i>	<i>Critical</i>
Who for?	Social elite	Meritocracy	Individuals	Informed citizenry
Where located?	Disciplinary knowledge	Rules and regulations	Teacher-student relationship	Material conditions
Epistemology?	Pursuit of truth	Knowledge that works	Subjective interpretation	Social critique
Indicative method?	Lecture	Work-based learning	Group work	Participatory dialogue
Teacher’s role?	Subject expert	Enforcer of standards	Psycho-diagnostician	Critical intellectual
Purpose	Cultural reproduction	System efficiency	Effective learning	Emancipation

The Traditional understanding of teaching excellence reflects the historic notion of the university in Western Europe: “Logical analysis fostered intellectual precision which was considered to be key in the search for universal truths. The application of rational argument to intellectual propositions and the whole training in arts was thought to be just as valuable and useful as ‘vocational’ subjects such as law and medicine.” This general approach was thought to suffice to prepare for all the professions and therefore was viewed as having direct community benefit.²

Performative understandings of teaching excellence have arisen in a climate of globalisation and governmental reforms which have sought to make educational systems more productive by drawing on human capital theory. The performative university is able “to contribute directly to national economic performance through teaching which is relevant to commerce and industry.” It encompasses work-based learning, ‘employability’ and ‘entrepreneurship’. It stresses a student-centred style of education “that is individualized and flexible, and is designed to enhance the individual’s opportunity for employment.” It is able to attract students in the global marketplace. In this environment teaching may be “regulated by the state to maximize individual, institutional and system performance,” and teachers may be encouraged to become excellent against such measures through processes of continuous improvement and self-regulation.³

Psychological constructions of the teacher and learner, a ‘technology of behaviour’, underpin psychologised understandings of teaching excellence. “From this perspective,

¹ Alan Skelton, *Understanding teaching excellence in higher education*. (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 35 (Table 2.1).

² Skelton, p. 27.

³ Skelton, pp. 29–30.

teaching excellence is relational: it does not reside in either the teacher or the student; rather it can be found in the interpersonal relationship that develops between them.” The teacher understands the individual needs of students and therefore selects “appropriate methods and learning experiences from their ‘toolbox’ of available processes, techniques and activities,” with the intent of facilitating ‘deep’ learning and the achievement of predicted outcomes. This understanding recognises that what is taught is often very different to what is learned. It embraces student-centred approaches and ‘constructivist’ ideas and theories.⁴

Critical understandings of teaching excellence “are informed by a range of critical theories (for example, critical theory itself, neo-Marxism, feminism, anti-racism, Freireism)... [which] all share an interest in and commitment to emancipation. Teaching from this perspective is therefore regarded as an inescapably political act rather than as something that is neutral or value-free.” The teacher’s aim, then, is to support a process of student emancipation by acting as a critical or transformative intellectual. “Teaching excellence involves not only increasing access to courses to groups of people who have been historically under-represented, but also in enhancing participation through the creation of inclusive learning environments.” It involves broader questions about the purposes of higher education and educational values: “it inevitably involves moral questions about what it means to be educated.” It questions established practice and goes beyond the ‘dominant ideology’ into areas such as the material conditions of higher education.⁵

The purpose in providing the foregoing summary is not necessarily to support Skelton’s classifications, much less to privilege any one understanding over another. Indeed, one may argue that the classifications provided are merely artificial constructs. In practice most university teachers would recognise something of themselves in each of the understandings that Skelton describes, without necessarily adhering to the philosophical presuppositions of any one in particular. At the same time, the summary does serve to alert remind that a personal notion of teaching excellence will be predicated to some extent upon the pre-understanding of the teaching task that we bring to our practice. Equally, ideas about what constitute teaching excellence will be shaped by contextual considerations, such as the views of our colleagues, disciplinary cultures and priorities, and the nature of the institution in which we teach.

In this connection it may be noted that Gibbs and Habeshaw make the observation that an excellent teacher “uses techniques and approaches for learning, teaching and assessment which are ‘fit for purpose’ and appropriate for the context and mission of the university.”⁶ If the observation is sound, then it follows that we ought to reflect on the extent to which being part of UniSA shapes our ‘internal’ concept of teaching excellence; whether that of the individual academic or in the perspectives formed at various organisational levels within the University. To what extent do the distinctive characteristics of the University shape the practices of its teachers? What does it mean to teach in an applied university that trains students for the modern professions, and that has specific commitments to the embedding of indigenous perspectives and to issues of equity? How should we define teaching excellence against measures such as the Graduate Qualities and the new Teaching and Learning Framework?

An attributive understanding of teaching excellence

Another approach to teaching excellence is to consider the attributes or characteristics of teachers who have been recognised as excellent in terms of student learning outcomes. While readily admitting, as Skelton serves to remind us, that there are many diverse factors which impact upon the practice and evaluation of university teaching, nevertheless it

⁴ Skelton, pp. 31–32.

⁵ Skelton, pp. 32–34.

⁶ G. Gibbs & T. Habeshaw, *Recognising and rewarding good teaching*, 2nd edn. Milton Keynes: TEQF National Co-ordination Team, Centre for Higher Education Practice, The Open University, 2003), pp. 12–13.

remains that, when interrogated, the relevant literature tends to the conclusion that practitioners, students and pedagogical scholars generally settle on a core set of attributes and approaches when attempting to define ‘teaching excellence’. Table 2 following attempts to offer a synopsis of such ‘generic attributes’:⁷

Table 2: *Teaching excellence: a synopsis*

Field	Attributes	Approaches
Discipline / subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An in-depth subject knowledge. • Know how to simplify and clarify complex subjects • Think about their own thinking (‘meta-cognition’) within the discipline. • Makes a recognised contribution to the learning, teaching and assessment of the subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop techniques that assist students to grasp principles and to organise concepts. • Work on the assumption that learning is as meaningful when it produces a sustained and substantial influence on the way people think, act and feel. • Regularly update knowledge
Student-centredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe that teaching is as intellectually demanding and important as their research and scholarship. • Enthusiastic and energetic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough preparation of teaching. • Begin with questions about student learning objectives.
Expectations of students as learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect ‘more’ of students, in terms of stimulating high achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favour the types of objectives that embody the kind of thinking and acting expected for life.
Support for students as learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that people learn by confronting intriguing, beautiful, or important problems, and authentic tasks that will challenge them to grapple with ideas, rethink their assumptions, and examine their mental models of reality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a “natural critical learning environment”. • Support students: to feel a sense of control over their education; work collaboratively; believe that their work will be considered fairly and honestly;
Trust in students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat students (and colleagues) with respect and decency. • Approachable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display openness with students. • Encourage students to be reflective and candid
Reflection and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematically check their progress and evaluate their efforts. • Willingness to confront own weaknesses and failings. • Don’t blame the students for any difficulties encountered. • A strong sense of commitment to the academic community, seeing their own efforts as part of a larger educational enterprise. • Authentic: find own genius by adjusting every idea to who they are and what they teach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid assessing students on arbitrary standards but against primary learning objectives. • Support students to try, fail, and receive feedback from expert learners in advance of and separate from any summative assessment of their effort.

⁷ The synopsis initially was based on Ken Bain, *What the best college teachers do* (Cambridge Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 2004), and has been supplemented from other sources.

6. Putting it together

6.1 Finding the focus

We've spoken at length about teaching excellence, because the Citation is an award for excellence (“Outstanding contributions to...”), and it requires the applicant to claim and justify for some specific aspect of excellence in their practice.

Hence, the first step of writing an application is to identify and develop a focus of teaching excellence which will comprise the ‘theme’ of the written application. One way of identifying the focus is to ask what in my approach, strategies, or other practice has and is having the greatest IMPACT on students and their learning?

If you asked:

Undergraduates

They would say _____

Graduates

They would say _____

Teaching Colleagues

They would say _____

Professional/disciplinary Peers

They would say _____

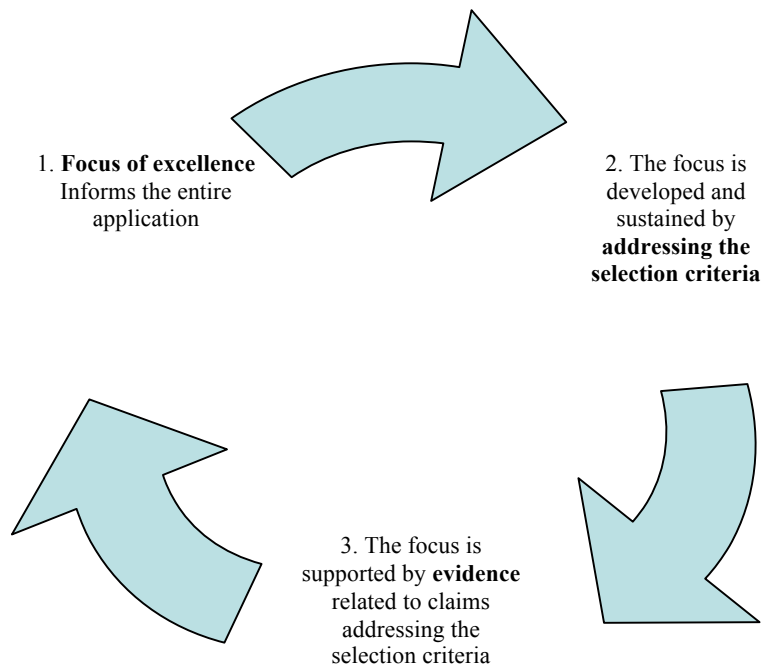
A reflective reading of the specific award criteria also may help you to identify an appropriate focus of excellence that can be sustained and developed throughout the award application.

You might also think of the focus of excellence as the point of intersection between: 1) ‘Teaching passion’—what educationally you are enthusiastic about; 2) ‘Best approach’— the strongest and most effective aspect of your approach; and 3) ‘Best learning outcome’— what stands out in terms of student learning outcomes.

It is important to find the right focus – one that supports a claim for excellence and which, in turn, can be adequately evidenced. The focus you identify must run as a theme throughout your application. It will be presented to the reader at the outset in the wording of your proposed 25 word citation. Throughout, you should be returning to and reinforcing the theme as you unfold your claim. The written application may range over a broad spectrum of an applicant’s teaching practice, but the focus of excellence must serve as the ‘hook’ on which all else hangs.

The focus is the premise that runs through and unites the argument of the application. It is this focus that is to the fore and developed as you address the selection criteria, and which will be supported by the evidence adduced. Figure 2 following illustrates this approach.

Figure 2: *The focused application*



Write a brief statement, of no more than 25 words, which might form a proposed citation for your application.

For _____

Which one of the 5 main criteria does your statement best fit? _____

6.2 Overview

The Overview summarises the particular contribution and describes the specific context for the contribution.

As a *summary*, the Overview summarises the particular aspect of your contribution which you are claiming as excellent – it is not a statement of your role in total, much less a CV.

The Overview should be designed to capture the attention of the reader from the outset. Mount a powerful case especially in your opening paragraph. Use the Overview to clearly spell out why your approach to learning and teaching is memorable, distinctive, and worthy of recognition. Both the first and last paragraphs of the Overview should reinforce the idea that your practice is *outstanding* and indicate that you have a compelling case for an award.

The Overview should also set the context for your application. This context may be intellectual (what you believe about your teaching and why you teach, and/or disciplinary concerns); physical (where you teach); personal (whom you teach, and what they are like as learners); institutional (the nature, mission and challenges shaping teaching in your university). More likely than not, you will want to say something about each of these areas.

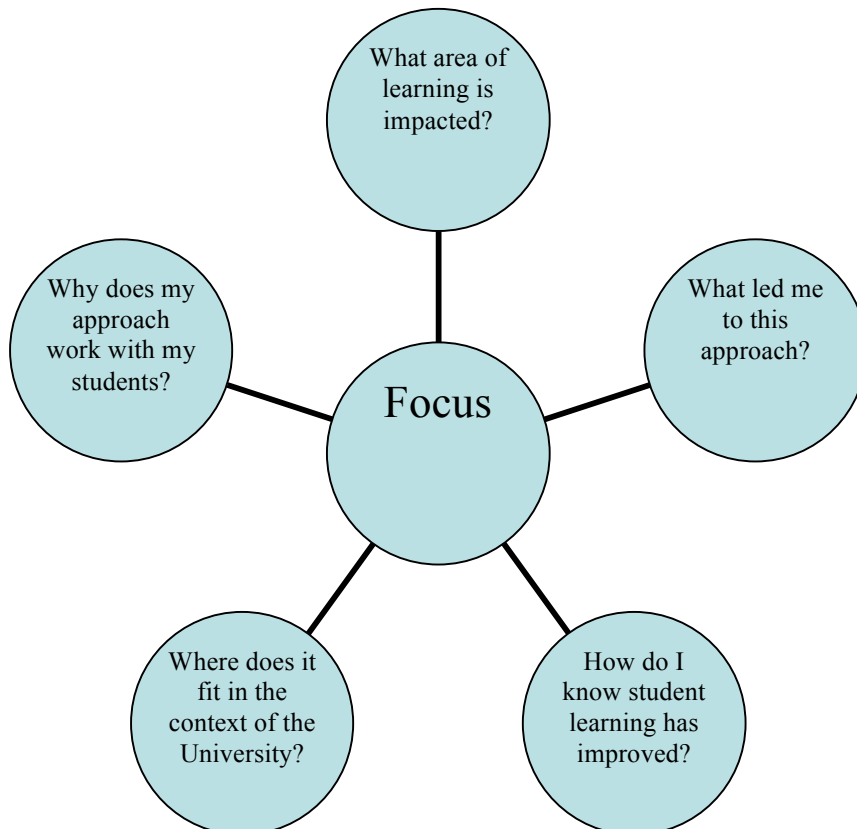
That's OK provided you keep relating the contextual issues to the focus. For instance, the Overview is a convenient place to *succinctly* state your teaching philosophy and values. However, if in the remainder of the application you do not explain how your philosophy has informed your approach and practice, then its elaboration is of little use. The Citation is not the place for a lengthy theoretical discussion about T&L, but rather a carefully argued and evidenced description of academic practice that has produced better student learning outcomes. Also, when discussing your teaching philosophy, keep the language accessible. If you need to elaborate on pedagogical theory, get an Academic Developer to review this aspect of your application.

The key elements of a good Overview are:

- It grabs the reader's attention at the outset
- It sets the focus or principal claim of the application against a background of broad and sustained professional practice and reflection
- It places the applicant's claim in context
- It uses evidence appropriate to the purpose of the overview
- It is concluded in a way that will prepare the reader for the specific arguments made in support of the applicant's claim that follow
- It leaves the reader feeling that they something about the applicant.

In developing your Overview, consider Figure 3 below. As the Figure serves to illustrate, it is by asking questions as to why you have determined a particular focus that you will then arrive at an outline for the Overview.

Figure 3: *Focus – the key to the Overview*



EXAMPLE 1: The Overview

Citation

For leadership in the development and delivery of planning education that links theory and practice, and instills in students a passion and enthusiasm for environmental planning

Overview

'As my first environmental planning lecturer, JILL was instrumental in providing me with opportunities to explore and understand the planning field, and in inspiring me to continue my studies in planning. JILL provided me with material that made me eager to engage in further study, and helped me learn to appreciate and enjoy the idea of environmental planning. The range of areas I covered in JILL's classes, and the reality-based subjects we looked at, made these planning classes interesting and enjoyable, and put me in a good position for future studies and jobs. JILL is an excellent lecturer.' (Student feedback 2006)

In a professional program such as environmental planning, bringing real-world experience into the classroom is essential in engaging and motivating students. Likewise, taking students outside—to see how theory works in practice—instills in them a passion and commitment for planning and sensitizes them to their role in creating a better future. I am a passionate advocate for the planning profession striving to introduce students to this exciting, challenging and diverse field. The learning and teaching environment I seek to create encourages the exploration of planning theory and practice inside and outside the classroom. I believe that a critical planning education rather than a technical one can increase job satisfaction and help planners develop the skills to understand their role within the planning process. Moreover, planning education should be about empowering planners to play active

entrepreneurial roles in urban and environmental planning, and is not simply a matter of producing competent planning technicians.

Good planning education motivates and inspires students. It provides the skills to understand and solve complex planning problems, and to work in sensitive political environments where multiple and competing interests are present. It is in this context that I create a lively and interesting learning environment where students explore the links between theory and practice.

I do this through:

- Using different media (newspapers, photos, videos, documentaries, current affairs programs and case studies) to illustrate practical applications of theory;
- Interactive classroom discussions, electronic discussion boards and student focus groups;
- Presentations about my own consulting experiences;
- Guest lectures; and
- Field trips and other experiential learning (e.g. model building, mental maps).

My teaching approach and philosophies are informed by 20 years of professional experience and reflection. Over this time, I have seen the administrative and political dimensions of planning become increasingly complex. Substantive knowledge and creative problem solving have been replaced by a focus on process. My approach to teaching is based on the belief that planners can and should be more than process-oriented regulators and technicians. My teaching reflects a belief that:

- Good planners should act as entrepreneurial change agents, informing planning debates and assisting decision makers.

- Good planners should be reflective of their own values and beliefs and how these influence planning practice.
- Good planners should have a range of generic and interpersonal skills enabling them to operate in highly political environments.
- Good planners should have a good grasp of planning theory and methods, which will be complemented by strong critical thinking skills.

My commitment to planning education has also been recognised at an institutional level. In 2004, I won a Muggleworts University Award for Teaching Excellence. In 2003, I and two Muggleworts colleagues won a Urban Institute of Australia Award of Excellence for a website and high school geography teaching materials designed to motivate and inspire high school students to choose a career in

planning. In recognition of my commitment to planning education, in January 2006, I was appointed to the Urban Institute of Australia's National Education Committee. I am also Editor of both *Australian Urban Manager*, and *Disneyland Planner*, professional journals of the national and state urban institutes, respectively. My leadership in planning education was also recognised in my appointment as Head, Environmental Planning in the Muggleworts School of Environment in 2011. I am also actively involved in consulting activities, in researching planning practice and in the development of the profession. I also maintain an active research profile, having published both teaching resources and peer-reviewed academic manuscripts in regional planning and policy.

List THREE things you would include in your Overview , relevant to the focus of your proposed citation. Provide a paragraph for each point, explaining why it is important to your claim.

6.3 Evidence

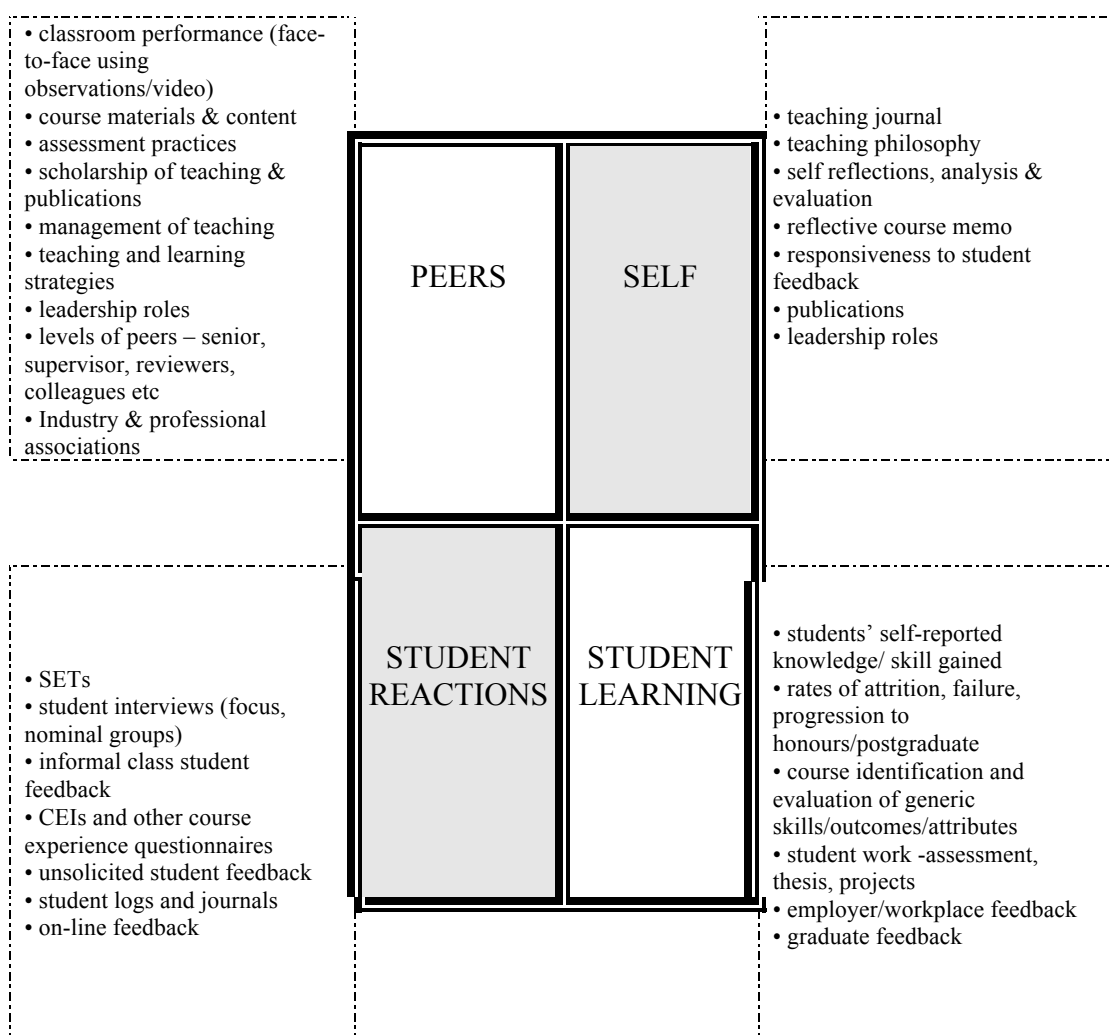
The ALTC competitive awards require a robust evidence-based approach. It is crucial to back up any claims made and to provide the reader with solid evidence of performance and outcomes. Those applicants who have kept evidence over the years, or even better, maintained a Teaching Portfolio, will be at an advantage here; and not only with respect to awards, but also to promotion and other PD activities.

Formal, quantitative evaluations are highly regarded by selection panels, but need to be clearly related to specific claims. *Summarise* evaluation outcomes in your statement where appropriate. A range of evidence is required.

Also, take stock as to how you are receiving feedback from students, past graduates and industry. It may be time to adopt some new strategies, such as online wikis and bulletin boards. Not only will your store of evidentiary materials increase, but learning and teaching benefits will accrue.

A holistic approach to evidence is required. A *variety* of evidences is required to build a cumulative body of support for the applicant's claim. The types of evidence which should be considered and used are summarised by the 'Evidence Grid' depicted in Figure 4:

Figure 4: *The evidence grid*⁸



⁸ Adapted from 'Sources of Evidence on Quality Teaching' © C. Nicols & C. Smith, 2000, used by permission.

Successful award applications use a variety of evidences, drawn from each of the four ‘quarters’ of the ‘Evidence Grid’. Not every type of evidence presented in the Grid need be used, but applicants should ensure that some items of evidence from each quarter of the Grid are used.

As well as a variety – breadth and depth – of evidence, wherever possible BENCHMARK by making comparisons, whether local or national. This is especially important when citing quantitative data.

Sifting through and selecting evidence to use is probably the single, most time consuming activity in preparing an award application. However, you ignore doing this at your own peril.

When using statistical data, including SETs and CEIs, check that (a) they actually support the claim(s) to which they are related; (b) that the figures stated are intelligible; and (c) that the significance of the cited data is immediately apparent to the reader. Summarise statistical data wherever possible. Use tables and diagrams wisely, remembering the limits on the space available to you. Where possible, include comparative data that shows you exceed the average for your School or Division.⁹

Applicants are under no obligation to include anything other than the really good evaluation data. Moreover, if SETs, CEIs or other instruments, do not give you data that adequately reflect the learning outcomes of your students as related to some particular aspect of your practice, then it may be worth considering running your own survey instrument (subject to University guidelines and ethical considerations).¹⁰ Indeed, data from informal surveys, especially if run over a number of teaching periods, is always a valuable source of evidence—not least by demonstrating that the applicant habitually gathers evidence in order to proactively and critically reflect on their own practice.

6.4 Addressing the main criterion

Success in award writing requires an ability to adequately address the set criteria. Ultimately, the Citation will be achieved by adequately addressing the main selection criterion. Remember, you have five to choose from and must address at least one. This will cover the bulk of your application – usually around two and a half pages. These criteria are:

1. Approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn
2. Development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field
3. Approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning
4. Respect and support for the development of students as individuals
5. Scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching

Make sure you understand what the criteria require. In the Guidelines you will find descriptors given as suggested areas of activity for each of the criteria, but even these are not exhaustive.

⁹ Refer: <http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/staff/practice/evaluation.asp>

¹⁰ An example of one such class instruments can be located in David Kember with Carmel McNaught (2007), *Enhancing university teaching: Lessons from research into award-winning teachers* London & New York: Routledge, pp. 150–154.

Criteria need to be interrogated. Take them apart and think about what they are asking of the applicant, and then **SELECT THE ONE THAT BEST MATCHES YOUR CHOSEN FOCUS**, as expressed in your proposed citation. This process may involve thinking through how best to interpret a given criterion in order to advantage your application. Write to the criterion you choose, but don't write for it – i.e. always be yourself, tell your own story and keep your particular focus of excellence to the fore.

Break your case into sections, built around key examples. Ensure that in each section the information directly relates to the criterion that you are addressing and makes a claim for excellence. If not, then jettison it – **YOU ONLY HAVE SPACE TO WRITE ABOUT WHAT IS TRULY EXCELLENT, NOT MERELY WHAT IS GOOD or CORE BUSINESS**. A logical structure to your claim reinforces the idea that your teaching is equally well structured.

Do not ignore the 'why' of your practice. Explain the reasoning behind your approach to learning and teaching and how the values you mentioned in the Overview shape your learning and teaching strategies as you now address the main criterion.

The approach to addressing the criteria can be summarised as follows:

- ✓ STATE the claim
- ✓ ILLUSTRATE by giving examples
- ✓ SUPPORT by providing evidence
- ✓ REINFORCE by demonstrating the depth and breadth of your practice and student learning outcomes.

EXAMPLE 2: Addressing the Main Criterion

3. Statement on development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field

The success of my teaching of Indigenous tourism is underpinned by a teaching practice based on an Indigenist approach that incorporates Indigenous voices prominently in the curriculum, a credible research portfolio in Indigenous tourism, and a sustained commitment to Indigenous Australian rights. These factors reinforce my curriculum with a sound academic basis. They also have secured the support and involvement of Indigenous Australian academics, which makes this course unique in its field. Students receive a learning experience of considerable impact as a result.

A primary objective in this course is to adhere to appropriate practice as a non-Indigenous educator teaching Indigenous topics. I respect Professor Lester Smith's Indigenist paradigm, which challenges the historical dominance of non-Indigenous voices in Indigenous studies by demanding the “privileging [of] Indigenous voices in Indigenist research [and teaching]” (1997, p. 118). This approach is vital to the teaching of topics such as Indigenous tourism in order to avoid the distortion and “othering” that otherwise might occur (Dudgeon, 2008, p. 13).

In order to apply an Indigenist approach to the study of Indigenous tourism, I found it necessary to develop a book of readings and a detailed study guide. This effort was in effect developing a textbook for the students, providing them with unique insights gained from what I call an Indigenous rights perspective in tourism which foregrounds Indigenous self-determination and Indigenous benefit. This is a

unique approach in the conservative tourism discipline, which so far has failed to engage with the Indigenous rights movement. Dr. Heather Zog said of my curriculum:

The writing and presentation of the Study Guide to Indigenous Tourism is at the depth and level of critical analysis in a published tourism textbook, and features the Indigenous 'voice' on key issues. I commend Freya for her innovative teaching approach and Indigenist perspective adopted in the Study Guide for Indigenous Tourism (Peer Evaluation, 16 August 2007).

Following appropriate Indigenist practice, I have worked with staff of DUCIER in the development of the course curriculum and in the offering of the content each year by arranging a program of relevant Indigenous guest lectures. One academic who has been involved in this course from the beginning, Syd Smart, outlines the significance of my approach from an Indigenous Australian perspective:

I have been impressed with Hilda's sense of place, or in particular that she seems to know her place when researching and teaching matters of an Indigenous Australian nature. Her ethical approaches and methodology are exactly what many Aboriginal people want from researchers who are not Aboriginal but...teach in traditionally Aboriginal areas. Hilda is also an academic that teaches often in partnership with Aboriginal people and involves herself in and supports many Aboriginal functions and causes (Correspondence, March 2006).

My ability to call on Indigenous academics and experts for guest lectures has been a significant catalyst to student learning in the course. One stated, "I really enjoyed the guest lectures as I have learned a lot in the topic area from examples in the real world" (CEI, TOUR 2007, SP 1 2006).

The success of my adherence to the Indigenist approach is underlined by a peer evaluation from Professor Lester Smith of Clapham University's Yunggoendi First Nations Centre who stated:

In my estimation Dr Hilda Higgins is an accomplished and very effective teacher who connects teaching to research and to community responsibilities in a vital way. She draws on anti-racist education principles to offer students and colleagues a grounded approach to Indigenous tourism as a speciality, as well as tourism as a 'mainstream' practice. In class she is engaging, challenging and informative. Her publications on tourism-related matters have the same qualities. Students respond readily and positively to a combination of attributes, which have won her respect as an important educator and the recognition of her peers and students (Peer Evaluation 1 May 2007).

In addition to the Indigenous Australian contributions to the course, I have also utilised my extensive networks within the tourism industry to secure guest lectures by industry professionals and experts in Indigenous Australian economic development (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous). Carol Dense, founder of "Diverse Travel", and a mentor to Indigenous tourism enterprises under the government's Business Ready program, has participated repeatedly. She found that:

The Indigenous tourism course provides an excellent forum to raise awareness of Indigenous tourism product and its role the market place. It is also an opportunity to move the reconciliation process forward through education of the student community providing an insight into the broader

context of what it means for the Indigenous communities to be involved in tourism (Correspondence, 20 August 2008) .

Industry presentations provide students with the most up-to-date and relevant insights into Indigenous tourism possible. This is further enhanced by case studies from my own research into Indigenous rights in tourism and reconciliation through tourism, which are provided through both the readings and the lectures. One student presented these as the best aspects of the course: “having guest lecturers expand on what we have already learned in readings and lectures...providing up-to-date information about the topics in the course and her ongoing research of the subject” (CEI, TOUR 2007, SP 5 2007).

Students studying in this course come from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, and are not necessarily choosing it with a strong level of interest or background knowledge in the topic. Previous student cohorts have included international students from a diversity of countries, non-Indigenous Australian students and Indigenous Australian students. Meeting the learning needs of such a diverse cohort is one of the key achievements of this course. Student feedback indicates that student learning is enhanced by the depth and breadth of the learning resources, which are formulated to help them engage meaningfully with this curriculum that bridges the divides between tourism and Indigenous studies, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Student feedback to a question asking about the best aspects of the teaching of the course indicates appreciation of both the curriculum, coverage of issues and the presentation of the course:

The use of guest speakers in lectures, it made it more interesting and different. You can tell she is very passionate about Indigenous issues which made me want to learn more about Indigenous tourism and it has become my favourite subject this semester (SET, TOUR 2007, SP 5 2007).

A strong passion for what she was teaching. An inspiration, motivating me to strive to do my best work. Utilisation of many interesting teaching approaches, film , trips, brochures, special guest presenters...a lot of ‘real world applicable’ knowledge taught. Inspired me to set out and experience more of the world- starting with Aboriginal cultural exhibit of the museum the other week (SET, SP 5 2008).

Student feedback also indicates that the effort to realise UniSA policy on embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum is well received by students studying in this course:

[The course] definitely helped me to expand my social values and perceptions (CEI, TOUR 2007, SP 5 2007)

I would recommend this class to other students because it gave me insight into Australian indigenous people and their views on tourism. I think it's important to know about your countries indigenous history and issue related to indigenous people today (CEI, TOUR 2007, SP 3 2004).

The formal survey results gathered between 2004 and 2008 confirm that students found that the course curriculum and resources created a positive learning experience. The CEI surveys conducted in this period demonstrated that the course was judged as outstanding and the SET surveys demonstrated that my teaching approach was highly valued by students. For instance, in the 2004 CEI, the course scored above all scores in comparison to other courses in the management and commerce disciplines on seven core questions, including the key question on

overall satisfaction with the course (and in the fourth, or top quartile, for the remaining three questions). In the 2006 SET, 90 percent of students strongly agreed with the statement that “Overall, I was satisfied with the performance of this staff member”, which again was above all scores in comparison to other courses offered in the management and commerce disciplines. In the 2007 CEI, the course scored in the top quartile on seven core questions and the third quartile for the remaining three. In the 2008 SET, my teaching was ranked in the top quartile in all but one of the ten core questions, including the question on overall student satisfaction. Additionally, informal feedback indicates that students are now enrolling on the recommendation of former students who say it is a challenging but valuable course. One student stated: “I would definitely recommend this course to other students because it is interesting, relevant to today and insightful” (CEI, TOUR 2007, SP 1 2006).

Now, focusing on an example of your practice, write a couple of paragraphs that address your chosen main criterion by telling the reader:

What the example is

Why you adopted or developed the practice

How it works

How you know it has improved student learning outcomes.

6.5 The 4th Section of the application – a Summary Statement

After addressing one or more of the five main criteria, the Citations require also a statement identifying the ways in which the contribution has influenced student learning, engagement and/or the overall student experience, been sustained over time, and been recognised by fellow staff, the University, and/or the broader community. This is often a neglected area, or poorly handled. It usually covers about half of the last page.

The first thing to remember is that if you have substantially covered any of the points mentioned in the paragraph above, then you are not required to reiterate them in this final section.

If you have not addressed motivating students as learners (Criterion #1) previously, then it would be appropriate in this section to tackle that issue, especially in terms of how such motivation has resulted in better learning outcomes. However, depending on the context of your claim, in this section you might also want to touch on issues such as evidence of awareness of the learning problems encountered by individual students, the pastoral care of students, and appropriate responses towards problems of equity, race, gender, disability and social and cultural disadvantage. Applicants might also return to some specific item they mentioned in the Overview and which they did not discuss in addressing the main criterion. Here something might be said to and describe more fully the context in which they work, and the intersection between their practice and the Teaching and Learning framework and or mission of their University.

If not mentioned elsewhere, the sustainability of your contribution must be covered here. It is addressed not simply in terms of length of time (i.e. “I’ve been teaching X number of years...”) but in terms of sustained learning outcomes.

Probably data over a minimum of three years are needed to make a credible case for a sustained approach.

Excellent teaching does not occur in a professional vacuum. Mention should be made of the input and impact of working with colleagues, relations with industry, the professions and professional bodies.

Under recognition from fellow staff, the institution, and/or the broader community, may be included, if not mentioned previously, items such as:

- Awards, prizes, to you or to your students, from the University and other bodies, community recognition
- Professional activities (leading workshops, memberships in education societies or education subcommittees of societies, research on teaching-related topics)
- Leadership in T&L, at departmental or institutional level, mentoring, peer observation, etc.
- Other research and professional accomplishments (they should be summarised). Summarise grants received, and cite the more impressive grant bodies. Teaching-related grants, however, should be listed more thoroughly
- Publications, especially teaching-related publications, should be noted if not previously mentioned – if a lengthy list then just summarise by topic, number, or quality of journals, etc.

EXAMPLE 3: A Summary or General Statement

4. General Statement

My practice has been recognised by my peers and the broader community and is evidenced by my selection and inclusion in the Cubed Block International Triennial of Eco Poster, 2009, the International Council of Incredibly Arty Types Design Associations online Gallery, 2008, and in the nationally recognized 2006 and 2007 National Poster Annual conducted by the Botswana National Design Centre. In 2008 I was also awarded winner of the international poster competition for the 2009 Disneyland Fringe Festival. Further. My research and teaching have also been recognised, I was the only recipient within the School of Arts' Visual Communication program to be awarded Hamstrung University Supported Researcher status in 2006–2008, in 2008 was awarded a Hamstrung Citation for Excellence in Teaching, and in 2009 I received a Hamstrung Supported Teacher Award in 2009.

Because I am committed to the Scholarship of Teaching I take time to read and reflect on the educational literature in my field. Since 2005, I have facilitated a monthly meeting of colleagues to informally discuss teaching and to share our approaches, practice and problems. Over the past three years I have mentored four new academic teachers in our School, and I have been a member of the School's Teaching and Learning Committee for the past five years.

While my professional and academic achievements have been rewarding, my greatest sense of satisfaction arises from the feedback I receive from students after I have helped to facilitate their understanding. For example, after responding to a student email requesting clarification in regard to an aspect of the Illustration Design course curriculum, I received the following email:

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my questions so thoughtfully - I really value all that you wrote...I now have a loads better understanding of the reasoning behind the project...So it all makes heaps more sense and I'm glad I could approach

you about it..Thanks again for understanding and answering my questions (Unsolicited student email, 22 April 2009).

And this SET comment:

He is easy to communicate with and gives useful feedback (realistic without being insensitive or precious). He gave me inspiration in terms of visual work and useful 'industry' advice. I really enjoyed my time learning from him and will be sad to leave...He works hard and does his best to put his students first (Illustration Design Studio 5, 2007).

I believe for education to be successful it must be enjoyable and memorable; to this end I aim to demystify the hierarchies of learning through empathy, balance and honesty in the way I convey knowledge, (Jarvis 2004). By utilising the passion and enthusiasm I feel for Illustration Design I aim to arouse and facilitate a need within each student to understand the core principles within my discipline while empowering them with the ability to investigate and learn throughout their lives. As an educator my approach is to inspire the desire for knowledge and provide the capacity to learn.

7. Review

When you have completed your first draft, it is important to go over it in light of the general criteria of the award. Check that your written application shows evidence that your “contribution has:

- influenced student learning, student engagement or the overall student experience;
- been sustained over time; and
- gained recognition from fellow staff, the University, and/or the broader community.”

As stated earlier, keep your drafts under review by distributing them among your colleagues for feedback.

8. Strategies for writing

- **Format:** Consider using a two-column format, which often looks very good. Highlight, but do so sparingly, through use of **bolds**, *italics*, **FORMATTING** and dot • points, to draw attention to the key points.
- **Clarity of thought and expression:** Writing for awards requires that a great deal of information be compressed within a few pages. The result can be dense and difficult for the reader to follow. Clarity can be enhanced by following an ordered and logical structure, using short sentences and paragraphs, avoiding verbosity and jargon. Do not assume that the reader will know your discipline or be familiar with the technical terms or acronyms that you may commonly use.
- **Be personal:** Write in the first person ('I' for individual applicants, 'We' for teams). Writing in the third person can sound contrived or pompous and is rarely concise. Do not be flippant (assessors think you are not taking them seriously), overly humble or unnecessarily forthcoming about your drawbacks. You are promoting your teaching, so the only to point out weaknesses is to show how you subsequently worked at overcoming them and, as a consequence, have achieved better learning outcomes.

- **Be student centred:** THIS IS A VITAL POINT. Try to write about your practice as much as possible from a student learning angle. Most importantly, make it obvious to the readers how you **inspire** students. For example better than writing, “my approach is to teach ...”, is to say, “I offer my students learning experiences that ...” It is easy when trying to write up one’s teaching to slip into a rather descriptive, teaching centred approach – telling the reader what you do – rather than taking a student oriented stance which focuses on the impact of one’s teaching on the students’ experience. When writing sentences, wherever possible, Put your students, rather than yourself, first.
- **Make each sentence count:** Build a compelling case. Tell the reader **what** you offer students; **why** you do so; **how** (and **how well**) you do it (think in terms of the specific strategies you employ); and importantly the **impact** of each strategy on student learning and the **evidence** thereof.
- **Inspire the reader:** Be personable. Let something of your passion and enthusiasms come through. Tell a story. Let the readers see the person behind the nomination. At the end of reading the application you want the reader to say “I want to be in that class!”

9. References and CV

Two letters of reference are required for the Citations. One should be from the Head of School. You can choose anyone else for the second reference, but you do want informative and inspirational references. So referees need to know you and your work.

Encourage your referees to write references that capture and highlight the outstanding aspects of your particular contribution.

You may prefer to wait until you have a draft to show a referee. Experience has shown, however, that waiting until that point can be too late in many instances. Therefore it may be prudent to contact your referees at the outset, supplying them with the *citation wording*, and the *selection criteria* that you will address, together with a few dot points. A copy of your *CV* may also be of help to them. Whatever you choose to do, do it early, so they have time, and you have time to reflect on their perception of your practice. Make sure referees know that they have only one A4 page!

10. Summary¹¹

Citation

- Do not attempt to address all criteria. Select one or two areas of strength. No advantage to select more
- The criteria are indicative, not limited. If the criteria do not exactly suit you – then adapt.
- For each criteria -state claim; -provide examples; -supply evidence from a variety of sources; -demonstrate breadth and depth; -write in your own voice
- Less is more – if it cannot be said in the allocated pages then EDIT
- You cannot start writing too soon, and seek feedback.

¹¹ Adapted from a presentation by Denise Chalmers at the Carrick Australian Awards for University Teaching Forum, Melbourne, 29 May 2007.

Further Reading

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- Skelton, Alan (2005), *Understanding teaching excellence in higher education: Towards a critical approach*. Key issues in higher education. London: Routledge.