



# Teaching Awards Insight

*for Officers, Chairs and Reps*



## Teaching Awards Insight

Last year's Teaching Awards were deliberately pitched to students as an opportunity to feedback on the positive and outstanding teaching and research engagements undertaken in the last academic year. This had a focus both on activity taking place prior to the global pandemic; but also included the global pandemic and first lockdown in a very deliberate way to ensure we had a set of feedback relating to those factors in terms of being able to set out best practise.

Having had the further insight and research work from WonkHE/Pearson carried out in December 2020 and promoted by yourselves prior to Christmas vacation we are now able to put the two pieces of information together to give a best practise insight guide for you to help shape local responses to the lockdown within this academic year.

### Contents

**Pages 3-4** cover the tables of categories which came out of a close analysis on the nominations – these are specific points to apply against the student feedback you're getting to identify the problem areas and what it is that's currently missing from the education experience of the students you represent.

**Pages 5-6** is a look at what the insight means in terms of asking for action – and setting out the top-level ask which can be shaped at local level for delivery in a way that suits the students in each course and fits the course materials, methods and knowledge required to excel at University.

**Pages 7-8** is a list of things that were done as “packages” during the first lockdown, where several methods have been applied together in order to make the whole support structure stronger and more effective.

**Pages 9-11** are how to support your requests with evidence – either evidence you have from feedback, evidence from the insight work or evidence from the nominations from the Teaching Awards last year. Also on page 11 is the headline summary from the WonkHE/Pearson insight work, which helps set the context of what you're going to be asking for.

The flip-side of this report and the actions that could be asked for is the awareness that some of them might already be happening, and where they are that should be highlighted as best practise to close the feedback loop and also to encourage students to engage with them!

Table of categories (themes) of Teaching Awards nominations

<b>Clarity</b>	Clear/detailed explanations and effective simplifications of topics
<b>Engagement</b>	Delivery of course content in an engaging and interesting way
<b>Passion</b>	Demonstrates enthusiasm and passion for content being delivered, as well as for the learning experience of students
<b>Mental Health Support</b>	Provides mental health support for students
<b>Academic Support</b>	Provides academic support for students
<b>In-person Support</b>	Makes time for in-person support, where allowed
<b>one-to-one support</b>	Appreciation for one-to-one support provided
<b>Availability</b>	Nomination details consistency of availability for support in any shape or form
<b>Motivating</b>	Nomination outlines efforts made to motivate or inspire students
<b>Pastoral Support</b>	Provides pastoral support for student
<b>Awareness of EDI Issues</b>	Demonstrates clear awareness of EDI Issues in teaching and support provided
<b>Lecture Slides</b>	Availability of lecture slides for students
<b>Supporting material (e.g. handouts)</b>	Provides additional supporting material for content such as handouts, additional mock papers or coursework, etc
<b>Additional study Sessions</b>	Organises additional study sessions for students
<b>Further Learning Opportunities (E.g. Weekly journal, conferences).</b>	provides opportunities for students to further education and learning (e.g. linking to additional resources, journals and new research, weekly information journal, access to conferences, and featuring guest speakers
<b>Undergraduate + Postgraduate Collaboration</b>	Organises interaction between undergraduates and postgraduate students
<b>Disability Support</b>	Awareness of and specific support for students with disability requirements/issues
<b>Regular Check in</b>	Appreciation for regular check-ins undertaken by staff via email or video/audio calls

<b>Digital Adaptability</b>	Nomination acknowledges change to delivery of content /support to digital setting as a result of disruptions, in a manner which enhances or maintains education experience
<b>COVID information</b>	Provides active updates on effects of pandemic on teaching/course
<b>Online Resources</b>	Provides additional/helpful online resources to assist with course/education
<b>Email Communication</b>	Umbrella term for mention of positive support via email, including fast/consistent responses.
<b>Feedback Loop</b>	Completion of the feedback loop via including methods of collecting feedback as part of course, and acting on feedback in a clear and effective way
<b>Video Calls</b>	Clear appreciation for nominees who use video calling as a format for providing support, either on an individual or group basis
<b>Employability support</b>	Mention of support provided by nominees regarding additional employability opportunities/information,
<b>Creativity</b>	Creative approach to delivering content
<b>Marking</b>	Nominees praised for feedback and marking
<b>Social opportunities</b>	Nomination outlines additional social opportunities organised which positively impacted education experience
<b>Assessments</b>	Appreciation for assessments given to gauge student understanding of content/aid revision
<b>BAME Support</b>	Specific support for BAME students/acknowledgement of BAME issues and their impact on the course or education experience
<b>Education Environment</b>	Appreciation for efforts to create an environment that was considered as safe or comfortable, and where students felt they could freely engage in sharing of ideas and discussion

Insight and what that means for action

The biggest themes from the WonkHE/Pearson insight are **the lack of social contact in education environments**, and the **impact of isolation during lockdown**, partial lockdowns (Tiers in term one) and self-isolating due to having Covid-19 or having been in close contact with someone with Covid-19.

It cannot be stressed enough that this academic year has been exceptionally difficult for most of the student body, as well as for staff and support teams; but we feel that there are smart and simple ways to improve the general education experience at local levels based off the nominations from last years' Teaching Awards and being able to see what students appreciated and enjoyed about their experience despite the first lockdown.

The biggest areas of concern that we're raising with the University at the top level is that action is needed to:

- Provide more interaction between personal tutors, lecturers, and seminar convenors by having those staff engage in one-to-one outreach to their students
- Providing alternative means of providing ordinary contact points like Office Hours through Microsoft Bookings or other software that enable students to book staff appointments without fuss
- To hold recap and review tutorial sessions led by staff to help students to see that they understand the material already delivered and help them to direct their own learning to fill any gaps that do actually exist
- Break the materials up a bit more from single-format delivery in Teams or Zoom only and provide pod-casts, chat-show formats and other different methods of achieving learning outcomes
- Provide more interaction between students in the virtual classrooms being used either with the Icebreaker software or other formats to allow that 5-10 minutes of interaction that happens in lectures and seminars to go on even digitally
- Regular virtual study sessions such as "Shut up and Write" or drama's "Work in Progress" sessions where interaction is more likely
- Specific opportunities for groups of students who might have common ground to meet and interact to develop smaller communities of students around things like disability, international origins or other cultural learning and social activity
- Virtual study rooms where students can study in an online chat and have the opportunity to interact while reading, reviewing or revising

- Academics collaborating with Academic Societies to provide peer-support initiatives for students
- A virtual space for students on each course / level to talk to one another
- Mini-Grand Challenges or similar projects to enable students to put their learning into practical effect and apply it to real-world situations
- Feedback and marking on reading summaries submitted by students to help them see what stage their learning is at from self-directed reading
- University Challenge style test of course knowledge between individuals or small teams to help social connections and fix learning outcomes
- “You’ve got this” / “We’ve got this” focus on self-confidence in learning ability and knowledge – staff led or peer led
- Better communication at local level condensing and framing the top-level information on the pandemic and other elements of student support and framing it for better understanding

Each one of these points can be developed on a local level and while some may be impractical in every subject it should be possible for each Subject Chair to work at local level with their Subject Reps and decide what points you can develop with the feedback you have, to put specific action requests in for your department at SSLC meetings and assist in delivering out a comprehensive and inclusive set of local actions to improve the education experience for the remainder of this academic year.

- Keep it realistic
- Keep it clear and simple
- Make sure you explain *why* you’re asking for those actions, and what they would mean to students overall



Putting actions together in a package

The most important thing to note when asking for actions is to ensure that what you're asking for is a package of various strands that really fits the bill for local delivery – here's some examples from the Teaching Awards nominations where several things have been done together to have a much greater impact overall of the student experience.

### Multi-faceted Support

- Availability for queries via Email Communication, with rapidity and consistency as important factors, in addition to clarity and simplicity of communication
- Combination of Pastoral, Academic, and Mental Health Support. Students fundamentally want to feel supported in these aspects of their education experience:
- Combination of formats (video Calls via teams or zoom, Email check ins) for support dependant on individual needs and circumstances. The offer, scheduling and (in particular) the availability of support seems more significant than the specific format:
- Additional Support for students experiencing EDI, BAME, and Disability related-difficulties.

### Diverse and complete Online Resources

- Availability of a combination of lecture slides, lecture summaries, videos, smaller soundbites, and links to articles as extremely helpful.
- Further learning opportunities provided as part of course, including engagement with external guests, conferences,

### Motivation and confidence

- Developing self-confidence via one-to-one discussion as beneficial to academic experience. Clear feeling of uncertainty in ability, and security in content covered.
- Creation of safe and comfortable atmosphere, alongside encouraging student ideas/discussion, reoccur throughout.
- Combination of challenge, support, and direction as crucial to improving motivation, confidence, enjoyment, and academic performance.

### Consistency of education experience

- Smooth transition to a digital environment through effective engagement with digital formats, including transition to virtual one-to-ones, and a functional and accessible digital environment.

- Creating a feeling of consistency, stability and structure through regular check-ins, identified as highly beneficial.
- Completion of feedback loop via visible implementation of changes informed by student feedback.

### Employability and Real-World application

- Information on application of acquired knowledge/skills to future employment or further study paths.
- Sharing real-world experiences and advice relating to relevant industries
- One-to-one support on developing employability or further study applications, in addition to signposting skills or career prospect development opportunities



Evidence to help you support your requests for action

As set out in the feedback training and guidance, feedback is better when it's ABCDE – go to [https://training.exeterguild.com/play.php?template\\_id=33](https://training.exeterguild.com/play.php?template_id=33) if you want a quick refresh.

To be effective:

- Collect feedback through as many channels and methods as possible.
- Encourage constructive feedback with details and outcomes, and ideas of how to get to those outcomes.
- Be aware of your own biases, preconceptions, and assumptions, and seek additional input from other reps and students.
- Close the feedback loop properly and consistently by reporting back to students.
- Work as a team – your student council is made up of a number of students with different skills.

Here are some direct quotes from the Teaching Awards nominations, which show how appreciative students were of various elements – and in particular of multi-faceted support where several actions are taken together which make the whole act more effective and more valued by the students who put these nominations in last year.

Instead of just reciting negative feedback, make sure you turn it on it's head when putting this information together for your SSLC meeting – identify what's being missed and turn that into an action to fill the gap which is identified in the feedback you have.

Don't forget if you need help taking the feedback you have and packaging it together for your next SSLC we're happy to support Chairs or entire subject councils to do this if you book a meeting with us!

*“despite the large numbers of students in the cohort, [name] is super-efficient on [their] emails and always replies within 24 hours which again is something so valuable and helpful as a student”*

*“[name] has always been available by email or in [their] office for any queries or concerns throughout the year, making this first year enjoyable rather than stressful*

*“At the beginning of my PGCE journey, I found I was completely overwhelmed by the course and the sheer amount of information I was processing each day, so I sent [name] an email asking whether I could defer my training or even quit altogether. [name] came back to me almost immediately and talked me through my options with such clarity and honesty that I decided to keep going”*

*[name] checked up on me after not hearing from me for a while during this pandemic. [name] has reassured me over worries and anxieties regarding assignments and working from home. [name] points me in the direction of sources that might be helpful for my essays without prompt. I know I can confide in [them] about my academic worries, even if they aren't about ones [name] teaches.*

*[name] was incredibly kind, and was proactive in regularly reaching out to us, and in championing our situation, and that of the unwell individual, within the university system. I can't count the times when my friend and I arrived in the Amory hub without an appointment following a night spent awake looking after our friend, and [name] was happy to talk to us about what next steps we could take.*

*[name] arranged a one to one meeting right at the beginning of term so I could relay some of my concerns, and [they] provided resolutions and reassurance that I was still able to complete my degree, despite all my additional responsibilities*

*[name] has been available for phone calls throughout the pandemic, and has taken on a lot of work being dissertation convenor, which would be stressful enough at any time, let alone during a pandemic*

*[name] was also great at setting up meetings over zoom during lockdown, and always made sure we had weekly meetings before the lockdown where we would be able to talk extensively about the project.*

*[name] has been particularly outstanding during the COVID crisis, contacting each of us individually straight away to find out what is impacting us and how [they] can help. We've been having weekly teams meetings to catch up and [name] always follows up any queries we have. [name] has also started a Teams chat where [name] posts useful aids that may help us at this time- even things just to make a giggle*

*“I proceeded to book a meeting with [them]. I knew the advice was going to be useful to some degree, but I could never have expected the impact it would have on me. [they] immediately filled me with the confidence I so desperately needed, assuring me that I was in fact suited to a career at the Bar*

### Headline Findings from Insight work

Students seem insecure about their *actual* learning – the responses indicate again that while the **quality of education** might be equal to or surpass that given in normal conditions the disconnect experienced as a part of the virtual environment leaves students less certain of articulating their learning outcomes, and this is what we see reflected in the data.

The post-pandemic suggestions back this up – students want to be able to test themselves against metrics to be able to see for themselves proof that they have learned what has been taught.

Without the human contact element and reassurance through contact with both peers and educators the isolation is skewing satisfaction towards negative and it is likely that this will impact the NSS results at least as significantly as the strikes did in 2018.

**The missing element here is the “social animal” factor which government policy has avoided recognising in general or in specific – students need emotional support from other students and educators to feel more ‘at home’ in being able to see for themselves that the wider experience is the same as theirs, and to be able to place themselves in that comfort zone of fellow feeling.**

Under normal conditions the peer-to-peer contact in all situational aspects of the student experience reinforce the feeling of belonging and underpin the happiness index. These findings do not state that the education quality is missing, they state that students don’t feel happy that they know/understand their place in it.

The “what can be done differently” underpins the approaches needed to improve satisfaction. Students aren’t reaching out by themselves – someone needs to reach out to them; when that is done it can make the difference.