

Congratulations to all Winners and Nominees

Recognising members of staff in their outstanding contribution to enhancing the academic lives of students and colleagues.

EXCELLENCE

AWARDS

UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION



Principal's Teaching Excellence Award and Good Practice in Teaching Case Studies

Principal's Excellence in Teaching Award

Winner

Dr Derek Scott (School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition)

How do you feel about winning the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award?

“It's very satisfying when it's recognised that what you're doing as a teacher is of value. The fact that peers have evaluated the evidence and judged the educational work worthy of a prize also feels special. I'm also very happy that a mad idea I had several years ago and that has undergone various improvements and iterations is doing some good and helping a wider range of students and staff than I ever thought possible.”

Why do think the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award is important?

“I think that this is important because it shows that we are peer-reviewing one another's efforts as teachers and using an evidence base to recognise the excellent work we are all doing at Aberdeen. It is easy to dismiss teaching-related prizes as mere popularity contests, but the fact that this prize was part of wider effort to gather examples of innovative practices that have effected real change locally, nationally or internationally highlights the educational strengths that Aberdeen has.

It also recognises that there are many teachers in Aberdeen who are doing brilliant things with their students, even when they already have significant demands on their time. We need to be just as proud at Aberdeen of innovative teachers and teaching as we would a major research project or discovery. External audiences also need to know how great our teaching is here at Aberdeen.”

What do you plan to do with the prize?

“I am interested in adapting objective structured practical examinations (OSPE’s) that are commonplace in clinical courses for use in other disciplines. Our early work has shown these to be very effective in assessing a far wider range of graduate attributes and transferable skills than many traditional assessment forms. As these have been gradually introduced into various science disciplines across my school, the number of students/staff involved and the assessment burden has increased.”

“I would like to find ways to use our VLE to automate some of the assessment and pilot some paperless approaches to practical teaching. This would allow others to easily adopt this assessment model and help us try new things in advance of teaching in the new Science Teaching Hub. I have also recently started collaborating with a range of educators across North America, and this prize will allow me to undertake some pilot work with them regarding novel practical and assessment methods in medical sciences.”

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

“All of my innovative educational work is undertaken as part of a team. This includes working with students, as well as colleagues, to develop new ways of doing things. I am extremely indebted to administrative, technical and academic colleagues who help me undertake the work I do. I also have to acknowledge the support of The Physiological Society, who have provided me with the chance to become more involved with educational work nationally and internationally. Without their support, I wouldn’t have been able to forge the collaborations I have or disseminate much of the work we have done. Their Education & Teaching theme is highly active and supported my work in all sorts of ways over the past few years. This prize recognises the efforts of all of these people.”

Good Practice in Teaching Case Studies

Runner Up

Dr Mirjam Brady-Van den Bos, School of Psychology

How do you feel about winning the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award?

"To be honest, I never expected it. I love teaching and doing pedagogical research, so to receive an award for it feels a bit like getting rewarded for eating cake!"

Why do think the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award is important?

"I think it pushes people to do more, to venture into trying things out that they otherwise may not have done."

What do you plan to do with the prize money?

"In recent years I've started to develop a strand of qualitative teaching, mainly for 4th year dissertation students. The money could go towards equipment that would help my students with data collection and transcribing (such as recorders and transcribing pedals) and it could also be used to kit out a "qualitative room" in our School that could be used by my colleagues and collaborators at CAD as well, for interviewing and teaching in a small group setting."

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

"I feel it's important to mention that much of the good teaching at university goes on seemingly unnoticed. I'm thinking about people who don't have teaching as their primary role, such as those who work to support research. Or people who support and guide early career academics. And then there are people who teach without doing anything "innovative". Yet they're there, reliably day after day, year after year, keeping the show on the road. Everyone who is part of the academic community should be celebrated for the part they play."

Runner Up

Dr John McKeown, School of Medical, Medical Sciences & Nutrition

How do you feel about winning the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award?

"Simultaneously both surprised and delighted. I'm very aware of the amazing work that is developed both within the School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition and the wider University of Aberdeen and am very flattered that our work is valued in that context."

Why do you think the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award is important?

"This project in particular had so many benefits. It brought teaching settings together, reached out in to the community, and brought teams from across the University together. To have that integrated and community facing work recognised will hopefully inspire others to look throughout the University for inspiration and teamworking."

What do you plan to do with the prize money?

"It really is too soon to say. Since developing this our General Practice teaching team has not rested and we have pressed on with many innovative projects, including online supported learning which is directly related to this project. The funding will be a valuable contribution to our further curriculum development."

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

"The first thing I did on receiving the award was to communicate it to the many members of the GP team that have worked hard to deliver this teaching area. This includes the administration staff, GP's both in the community and the University and also to the many patients who have volunteered to help. It really has been a team effort and we are incredibly grateful to be recognised."

Runner Up

Dr Tavis Potts, School of Geosciences

How do you feel about winning the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award?

"I feel very proud, excited and honoured that the committee has recognised the MSc in Environmental Partnership Management and its innovative internship program. A lot of time and effort has gone into the development of the partnership project (internship) including the effort of staff, our partners in the community and our fantastic students. Identifying interesting, meaningful and ultimately deliverable internships that address sustainability in a variety of organisational contexts has been an interesting and rewarding challenge. As our program grows, we need to continue to develop new partnership projects and identify new areas for our students. This recognition will help us achieve our goal of giving our students the best experience in their postgraduate education and the confidence to drive real changes in communities, government and business towards sustainability."

Why do you think the Principal's Teaching Excellence Award is important?

"The heart of our MSc is to improve the confidence, skills and ability of our students to engage with civil society, government and business to advance sustainability and the green economy. The Partnership Project is the capstone of the MSc, where students work on real issues that face organisations and communities. Recognition of our teaching excellence helps us to

promote and disseminate our MSc, identify new opportunities and internships for our students and assist with other programmes that are considering setting up and managing internships. Importantly, we should recognise the critical role that our host partners play in developing the projects, supporting our students and offering resources and support. Without a supportive network of internship providers, we could not deliver this course or the MSc – it is them who I would like to thank for their support.”

What do you plan to do with the prize money?

“One of the issues we face is marketing what we have done in the Partnership Project and highlighting our contribution to local and national policy, practice and debate around sustainability. We want to advertise the innovative nature of this program, the real changes and contributions the students are making and to ensure that the outcomes contribute to public debate on a just transition to a green economy. To that end, I intend to purchase a camera to visually record and film students in the field and sound equipment develop a regular podcast run jointly by EPM staff and students that discusses some of the issues we are addressing. This would help us to capture the lessons learned from the internships and share these lessons with our communities.”

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

“We are living in interesting times! Climate change and biodiversity loss are real threats to our society and the natural world and they are driving major policy shifts. Our MSc in EPM and the Partnership Project is at the forefront of these changes, training the next generation of green leaders to address these challenges. If anyone is interested in discussing this further, or would like to host an internship, please get in touch!”