



Teaching Awards 2025
Application Template
(Please refer to Guidance Notes for further details)

Please indicate if this is a Team or Individual application

Team

Individual

Strategic Themes: Applications should address at least one of the strategic themes. Please indicate below. See Guidance Notes for further details.

Transformative Student Experience

Examples of work within this theme would include supportive and inclusive practices that enhance the student journey, demonstrate responsiveness to the student voice, and foster student belonging, engagement and/or satisfaction.

Education for the Future:

Examples of work within this theme would include curriculum review and design reform, the development of effective assessment approaches, the development of flexible, inclusive pathways to improve student engagement, attainment and achievement, and the effective and appropriate use of AI in Education.

Contact Details:

Name and email address of **individual** (including Title): Dr Emma Walker

Names of team members, if applicable: N/A

School/Department: School of Psychology

Number of years working in higher education (level of experience will be taken into account by the assessors. For teams, this should be the number of years of the most experienced member of the team.)

I am going into my **fourth year** working in higher education. I began as a Teaching Fellow in 2022 and secured a permanent LE post last June 2024.

Please select **one format** for your submission that best allows you to highlight the reach, value and impact of your work.

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|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reflective Commentary | 900 words, plus 100 words of introduction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative Presentation | 9 minutes, plus 1 minute of introduction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video link | 9 minutes plus, 1 minute of introduction |

Introduction (approx. 100 words)

For me, every student matters; every single time. From the minute they enter my class, I work hard to ensure that the time students spend with me is valuable and that they leave with something they didn't have before they entered; this might be new knowledge, enhanced self-belief or a feeling of real belonging.

I have faced challenges in my life and have felt 'not good enough' many times and I use those tough experiences now, for good. There is something in who I am and what I do that really does seem to connect with students. I'm proud of this and want to shine a spotlight on what it means for and to students when we really do transform their learning experience.

Written Case Study

900 words total across the five sections below

Insert link to recorded material here. The video or presentation should address the sections listed below and be no longer than 10 minutes in total, to include 1 minute of introductory material.

Impact (include evidence of this impact through reach and value)

My approach to teaching centres around ensuring all students in my classes, no matter whether it is a lecture or a small group setting, feel 'at home'. Throughout my time at Queen's, I have seen how this approach creates a feeling of safety and belonging in my students. I have the pleasure of working with many different student groups: international students, UG and PGT students, students with caring responsibilities – to name but a few. I have received feedback from students that acknowledges my teaching as impactful and engaging. This affirms my inherent belief that creating an interactive and supportive teaching environment, as well as being personable, really does create lasting impact.

Below are some selected quotes from student feedback and peer reviews of my teaching:

Peer review

Student participation was engaged through interactive mini quizzes used to probe student understanding which is a good strategy – large numbers of students participated in Vevox quizzes. A difficult and technical topic was well-introduced and linked to other parts of the module and course in general; using interactive quizzes was good for helping students' understanding and engagement.

Feedback from students

I loved how interactive Emma's labs have been. Emma was so enthusiastic, made everyone feel included and was so patient in helping. I found the SPSS lab so difficult and was one of the last one to finish. Emma sat with me

till I completed it and was so reassuring and understanding. Starting this journey can feel so daunting but when you've people like Emma around then it makes it all a lot easier!! I have been to two labs with Emma now and I was glad when I seen her at the 2nd one after experiencing the first one with her.

I thought the lecturer was very interactive with the students, asking questions and prompting answers which made me think about what i previously learnt. It made the information more memorable and i think this should be more widely adopted across modules.

You actively engaged with us, It really made me feel so involved in the lab class. It was my favourite lab classes of the semester.

Emma makes everyone feel seen, she was the first lecturer I actually spoke to, from starting uni in September I'm pretty sure my first lab class was near the end of October with her. It's quite a while to have spoken to no teaching staff, but in Emma's lab it all felt a lot less daunting as there was actual communication with the students...This meant a lot

The lecturer made the subject extremely engaging and interesting with mini quizzes and our own activity on assessing risk for offenders. In addition they also allowed students to engage in debates regarding different topics. I found this boosted my engagement a lot and I enjoyed coming to that class more. This method of teaching should be implemented by more lecturers.

I really enjoyed the style of teaching, it was interactive at parts and felt comfortable to participate due to the nature of presentation I very much enjoyed this lecturers topics and found she was a very clear and confident lecturer. I feel she added to my learning experience significantly in a way that not many other lecturers do

She caters to various types of learning within her lessons such as visual and kinaesthetic through the use of printed out tasks and examples. This is very helpful for people like myself who need to see how a piece of work should be structured.

Outcomes

At first, using technology in the classroom might have been seen as 'gimmicky' but I firmly believe that interactive teaching enhances engagement. Teaching is not a 'once size fits all' thing and having been the Psychology International Summer School this year, I feel more finely attuned to pedagogy that is responsive to the learner. I am trying to change the attitude that teachers are not just passive givers of knowledge but that we can and do have profound impacts of students, not just in an academic setting but also socially and emotionally and this plays a huge part in students' future employability and what it means to leave Queens University Belfast as a successful, work-ready/life-ready, graduate. Improving graduate outcomes is something that is always changing in response to world politics, our economy and so being amenable to these fluctuations and growing with them will only make me, the wider staff and the university stronger in the years to come.

Outputs/activities

As a junior member of staff (promoted to LE from TF last June), one of the motivations for applying for this Teaching Award was to help springboard what I do and how I teach, so that it would be possible to generate

greater output/activities. I have collected qualitative data from L3 psychology students about 'pedagogy for employability' and what is valuable from going on work placement and what is valuable classroom teaching. This will be written up for publication but I also want to disseminate more widely. Poor teaching is only discouraging to students and they deserve better. I module co-ordinate a placement module and I am also the EPS summer school lead, as stated above. Sixty international students came to the EPS summer school this year, half of whom came to psychology. This international working relationship alongside the continuing successful partnerships with industry helps to ensure that I can continue to provide opportunities for underrepresented students, international students and those students who just need a little nudge to be shown that they CAN do it and the self-confidence in students that follows that is bigger than us all.

Inputs

I invest a lot of myself in my job; and often this is through teaching using personal anecdotes, spending time with students on a one-to-one to ensure no one is left behind. I also spend a lot of time developing my class materials. I like to ensure that my lecture slides have little jokes in them, no one likes a boring monotone lecture after all. I teach some dry topics and I spend time trying to make how I present that material engaging and accessible, and so far, I am managing it. I also try to ensure that my assessments are relevant with a much real-world application as possible.

I have participated in peer observations, regularly attend webinars on teaching and my own professional development is important to me, and again, a reason why I'm trying to apply for this award. I want to strive and grow and succeed just like students do.

Describe your influence

I believe students in the School of Psychology from 2022 and those who have attended the EPS summer schools have been positively influenced by me as a person and my teaching. I genuinely try so hard to be enthusiastic, engaging and motivational and indeed "engaging" is a word that comes up time and time again in my feedback. As alluded to earlier, I have faced challenges and that has made me see life differently and because of that, besides academic achievement, social and emotional growth are what I try to instil in students. Life is hard and being resilient and confident are two skills that I try to help the students find within themselves. This really, is where I get my greatest joy and what, in my opinion, needs to be more widely reinforced. We are role models, even to adults in HE, and our attitudes and behaviour matter and so, inspiring participation and a positive mindset only serves to shape every student for a challenging world that awaits them upon graduation.