

# Preparing a Nomination for the 3M Teaching Fellowship Award

## Introduction

If you are reading this document, then you are likely considering making a nomination for a 3M Teaching Fellowship. We hope the information in this document is useful to you. What we have tried to do is to put down in one place some of the observations that reviewers of the dossiers have made over the years. These observations provide a window into the Selection Committee for these awards and some insight into how members of that Committee review the various kinds of evidence submitted.

## The Selection Process

The two criteria for these awards are: 1) excellence in teaching over a number of years, principally (but not exclusively) at the undergraduate level; and, 2) commitment to the improvement of university teaching with particular emphasis to contributions beyond the nominee's discipline or profession. Each year, up to ten faculty members are selected from the nominations submitted (see Appendix A).

The Selection Committee normally numbers six and includes representation from the STLHE Steering Committee, previous recipients of the award, and an STLHE Member-at-large. In composing the Selection Committee, we continue to strive for fluency in French and English, a balance of gender, geography, experience in the process, and variety of academic discipline. We have also taken steps to ensure that every file can be read, regardless of whether it is submitted in French or English.

Copies of the nomination materials are circulated to all members of the Committee. Members of the Selection Committee are asked to evaluate each dossier against the published criteria for this award. They look for the kinds of supportive evidence identified in the Call for Nominations. They may find that a particular file includes unique evidence that is, nevertheless, convincing and documents the achievements of the candidate.

Members of the Committee are asked to assess the evidence submitted according to the published criteria as they appear in the Call for Nominations. The criteria for the award are regularly reviewed by the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in collaboration with the sponsor of the award, 3M Canada.

Every file is read by at least three reviewers and each reviewer independently submits a score out of a possible 10 points for each of the two criteria for the award. Members are excluded from reviewing and scoring files from their own institution together with any other file for which they may have a conflict of interest. Scores are standardized and then combined (a mean score is calculated) just prior to the Selection Committee meeting.

Typically, the combination of scores reveals some obvious winners (nominees who are rated at the top by all three raters) and some who fail to provide much by way of evidence in support of one or the other criterion (nominees who are rated near the bottom by all three raters).

The Selection Committee next constructs a short list of potential winners based upon:

- ▶ combined scores that are high; and,
- ▶ candidates whose combined scores are pulled down by a single rater.

Each member of the Committee is encouraged to add one marginal candidate to the short list, provided he or she thinks there would be a benefit in more people reviewing the file. When this happens, it is usually because a reviewer is not completely confident in his/her score for a particular file.

All short-listed files are then read by all members of the Committee and the short-listed candidates are independently ranked. The rankings are combined and inconsistencies in rankings are discussed. In some years, discussion is minimal and in other years the discussion is extensive but, in all cases, we work toward a consensus on the ten winners and focus on the evidence submitted in the files. Winners are announced at the annual STLHE Conference in June.

## General Guidance on Preparing a Nomination

Every reviewer appreciates the time and energy that go into a nomination. Nominations that are **well organized**, and especially nominations that help the reviewer quickly find key pieces of evidence are especially appreciated. This usually means the nomination should follow the format and structure outlined in the "Call for Nominations." It also means that a dossier prepared for some other purpose (tenure, another teaching award, etc.) may need to be significantly revised to fit the criteria and documentation required for the 3M Teaching Award. The same can be said of supporting letters. They should be recent and address the criteria for this award.

## **How much is too much?**

In general, keep the dossier succinct. Reviewers do give low scores to nominations that are too brief (10 pages or less) and that fail to include sufficient evidence to draw a conclusion, but, in recent years, reviewers are more likely to give low scores to nominations that contain too much information. Reviewers know that such nominations contain most of the evidence required but it proves difficult to keep the kernels of important evidence in mind when they are surrounded by large amounts of less helpful material. Important evidence (i.e., a summary of student rating data) may be missed because it is surrounded by less helpful evidence such as pages and pages of raw data.

Nominators need to bear in mind that the Selection Committee will not likely be familiar with the norms of any particular discipline nor with the context for the nominee's teaching. (Committee members are excluded from reviewing dossiers from their own institution.) This means that you will often need to **provide the context** and an explanation of the significance of the achievements of the nominee as well as listing them.

The nomination needs to contain independent evidence of achievement for each of the two criteria for this award. It matters little who collects or organizes that evidence provided that it is independent. So, for example, it does not matter who collects the teaching related publications of the nominee so long as they are properly cited. Often, the nominee is the only person in a position to know about certain kinds of evidence (innovative course assignments for example). It is therefore difficult to present the best possible case for a particular nominee without the **active assistance of the candidate**.

Several of the recipients each year were nominated on at least one previous occasion. A careful review of these successful **re-submissions** revealed that the re-submission had been significantly refined, was more complete, and current evidence had been included. Routine re-submissions, with no additional evidence, are unlikely to be successful.

Finally, it is worth noting that the entire nomination package must not exceed 75 pages including appendices and graphics. Each page should be clearly numbered. The Call for Nominations can be obtained at [www.tss.uoguelph.ca/stlthe](http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/stlthe). The numbering system used to describe headings in the Call for Nominations is referenced in the sections below.

#### ► **Nomination Letter [3.0]**

Good nominations often begin with a comprehensive nomination letter (up to five pages). The letter summarizes the particular accomplishments of the nominee in teaching and in educational leadership. The letter is not so much the evidence, but rather states the qualifications of the nominee and points to other parts of the file that contain more complete evidence. The letter tells the reviewer what to look for. Anyone who is very familiar with the nomination file and the nominee can prepare the letter, and, hence, play the role of nominator.

Nominators should try to make the nomination reflect who the nominee is as a person. Sometimes, this information appears as part of a narrative describing the work of the nominee. Sometimes, this information appears in letters written by colleagues or students.

#### ► **Statement of Teaching Philosophy [4.0]**

Another very effective way to capture important information about the nominee is to include a personal statement of teaching philosophy, written by the nominee. The nomination then goes on to link various items in the file to that philosophy. A nomination file that describes the nominee as scholarly in his or her approach to questions about teaching would be rated more favourably if it later included papers and presentations of a scholarly nature on aspects of the nominee's teaching, and viewed less favourably if the same claim were made but the nomination file included no evidence of scholarly activity.

#### ► **A Description of Particularly Effective Teaching Strategies [5.0]**

This particular category of evidence is often the clearest when presented in narrative form and authored by the nominee. The

instructor tells the story of what was done, provides the thinking behind the new strategy, describes how students learn under the new strategy, and then offers evidence for the effectiveness of the strategy. Not everything the nominee does needs to be so described, but usually there is a set of things that the nominee does differently from others, and that is done very well.

Sometimes these teaching stories are familiar to many on your campus, but it is important for the Selection Committee to know the full story behind these examples of exceptional teaching. The story might describe a novel assignment, a series of lab experiments, exceptional field work, innovative lecturing and so on. Two or three such stories provide a window into the teaching of the nominee and help the Committee to better understand the achievements of the nominee.

### **GUIDANCE ON THE DOCUMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP [6.0]**

The kinds of evidence members of the Selection Committee look for are detailed in the "Call for Nominations." In fact, the rating form the reviewers use (Appendix B) is directly linked to that document. The list is not exhaustive, nor is any particular piece of evidence essential, and nominators are free to present the case for their candidate in the best possible way.

The following offers an elaboration on the kinds of evidence listed in the Call for Nominations. Each of the two criteria is of equal weight, but it is worth noting that the Educational Leadership criterion is frequently less well documented for many of the nominees. It seems the more successful nominators put equal effort into building a case for and documenting each of the criteria.

#### ► **Context for Educational Leadership [6.1]**

Only a few paragraphs are needed to describe the context for engaging in educational leadership at your university. The Committee will use this description to help it assess the extent to which the educational leadership activities of the candidate are the efforts of a pioneer or build upon ongoing existing programmes. Does your institution offer:

- regular workshops on teaching and learning?
- assistance with the creation of teaching dossiers?
- teaching awards?
- the services of an Instructional Development Centre?
- the support of a teaching and learning committee?
- grants for teaching and learning projects?

#### ► **Workshops on Teaching and Learning [6.2.1]**

List the activities and include the description, date and duration, audience, location and the results if known. An invited workshop on problem-based learning at a distant institution that results in curriculum changes is stronger evidence of educational leadership than is a single departmental seminar on marking for the department's graduate students. Include information on preparation, materials provided, and any announcement of the session if available. Explain to the reviewer what might be noteworthy about the session(s).

► **Work with Teaching & Learning Centres/ Committees [6.2.2]**

Describe the activities the nominee has engaged in, and, in particular, the significant contributions the nominee has made. Initiating a successful new program is more significant than participation in a single established event. Recurring participation, by invitation, is also good evidence. Where possible, document successful outcomes of the candidate's participation.

► **Consultation with Colleagues [6.2.3]**

Sometimes, this is a formal peer consulting process with clear evidence of achievement; sometimes, it is a much more informal relationship between colleagues. If the nominee is sought out as a coach of teachers, it ought to be possible to document the success of this coaching. The best evidence might include letters from colleagues that describe how they know their teaching has been strengthened through the support of the nominee. In other words, there are likely examples of changes that resulted from working with the nominee, and evidence that these changes resulted in a better course.

► **Publications on Teaching and Learning [6.2.4]**

Many 3M Teaching Fellows publish the results of their efforts to succeed as teachers. The ranges of publications include peer-reviewed papers in major journals to short tips appearing in a campus newsletter. List and describe each publication and include selected samples of these publications in an Appendix to the nomination.

► **Research on Teaching and Learning [6.2.5]**

The Committee looks for a scholarly investigation of teaching and learning at the university level, and which goes beyond the nominee's normal discipline research. By "scholarly," we mean "serious and systematic" more than "grant supported and published." Nearly all such research will be of interest to the Committee, including informal studies and what is variously described as classroom assessment or action research where the purpose is to systematically refine a course.

The conditions expressed above have the purpose of excluding research with no direct application to the university context.

► **Work on Special Teaching and Learning Projects [6.2.6]**

Often the work of teachers is supported through larger scale initiatives and policies. Examples include the work behind the introduction of a fair and comprehensive teaching evaluation process, the creation of teaching awards, the creation of a policy for educational leave, the design/ administration of a teaching and learning grants program, etc. It is important to describe and illustrate how the nominee helped create or sustain favourable conditions for teaching and learning, and to identify the successes in teaching and learning that this work enabled. Vision and delegation is not normally enough; reviewers are looking for commitment expressed in sustained effort. Note that the projects may be local, situated in a department or faculty, or, in some cases, international in scope.

► **Work on Curriculum [6.2.7]**

While course development efforts normally contribute to a candidate's claim to excellence in teaching, nominees often participate in a meaningful way toward larger curriculum projects which they may or may not participate in as teachers. Several innovative and successful programs in writing, women's studies, inquiry-based learning, and first year programs have been the result of careful design and persistent lobbying by highly respected teachers. Again, vision and delegations are not usually enough. The Selection Committee looks for a clear description of the program, the work involved in bringing it to fruition, evidence of the success of the program, and documentation of the candidate's role in this effort. The nominee can participate as an educational leader in such projects without ever teaching in the program.

► **Work Done with Organizations/Associations [6.2.8]**

The Committee is interested in the nominee's activities to support teaching and learning through organizations and associations. Examples include such things as hosting a conference on teaching and learning, editing a journal (or column) on teaching and learning, etc. Again, the goal is to describe what was done and to explain the significance of the achievement.

► **Other Evidence [6.2.9]**

The items above represent a range of activities that educational leaders might engage in and are largely culled from the list of activities of previous winners. Few, if any, nominees have engaged in all of these activities and many have demonstrated leadership in other ways. The items above are provided as examples only; your nominee is unique and the task is to describe and document the achievements of your nominee.

**GUIDANCE ON THE DOCUMENTATION OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE [7.0]**

As one of its criteria, the 3M Teaching Fellowship is designed to recognize excellence in teaching, principally (but not exclusively) at the undergraduate level. Evidence of exceptional graduate teaching is not out of place, provided that the nominee has first made the case for the exceptional teaching of undergraduate students. Undergraduate students include those in all first degree programs including medicine, engineering, law etc.

The Committee appreciates evidence demonstrating that the teaching and teaching materials of the nominee have received a favourable peer review. This involves more than sitting in on an occasional lecture but includes such things as:

- a) requests from colleagues for copies of the nominee's teaching materials;
- b) adoption by colleagues of the nominee's teaching materials;
- c) requests from colleagues to demonstrate a teaching strategy;
- d) adoption by other institutions of the teaching resources or strategies of the nominee;
- e) favourable published reviews of the teaching materials of the nominee.

► **Institution's Recognition of Teaching Excellence [7.1]**

To assist the Committee in putting this information in context, please begin with a paragraph that lists all of the local teaching awards for which the nominee is eligible. Include enough information about the award, criteria and selection process to enable the Committee to evaluate this prior recognition. The Committee places higher value on awards with similar criteria to the 3M Teaching Fellowship, higher value on awards with a clearly stated and rigorous selection process, and higher value on more recent awards (as opposed to a single award received ten years ago). A copy of the "Call for Nominations" for any awards received is usually enough to enlighten the Committee. Other useful information includes the number of faculty members eligible for the award and the number of awards granted in any given year.

► **Prior Teaching Awards Received [7.2.1]**

List, date and describe those teaching awards that the nominee has received in the past. In many cases, nominees for the 3M Teaching Fellowship have already been recognized as exceptional through some other teaching award competition. A previous award is not necessary (the 3M Award was the first award received by several 3M Fellows).

► **Data from Student Ratings [7.2.2]**

No particular type of evidence is required, though if any piece of evidence were necessary, it would be student rating data. There have been a few cases in the past where the nominator has indicated that the university/department does not provide for formal student ratings of teaching, and so data are unavailable. No nominee is expected to provide what is unavailable, yet the Committee normally assumes that exceptional teachers pay attention to the results of their teaching efforts and will have, if not university-sponsored student rating data, then some other form of objective student rating data.

There are several things you can do to assist the Committee with their job of interpreting the student ratings of your nominee.

1. Briefly explain how student ratings are normally conducted.
2. Do not include raw data or computer printouts.
3. Include a one page table listing all courses taught by the nominee in the last five years, the enrollment in each course, and the mean rating received for the global question\* for each course.
4. Include a statement of the normal number of courses taught by faculty in your department.
5. Ratings from a single year and/or course are insufficient, the Committee will be unable to draw any conclusions from such limited data.
6. Ratings from courses with low enrollment (fewer than ten students) are unreliable.
7. Most impressive is a trend of consistently high ratings in several courses over a period of years.
8. Help the Committee by explaining any irregularities in the data (low ratings that result from significant changes to a

course, gaps in ratings due to a leave of absence or special assignment or reduced teaching responsibilities, changes in the rating form, etc.).

9. State who summarized the data and how the summary was prepared.

\* In the absence of a global question (one that asks students to express an overall judgment about the instructor as a teacher), you might want to calculate a mean for all questions. In any case, explain what it is you are substituting for the global question. The point is to help the Committee understand your candidate by doing your best to explain and summarize the data.

**Re. Student Comments from Two or More Classes:**

This particular form of evidence is less helpful when it consists largely of a list of superlatives with nothing by way of elaboration. Single comments taken out of context are not a reliable form of evidence. If student comments are included, the nominator should indicate how the list was prepared and state in what ways it is truly representative of the nominee's teaching. The Committee prefers unedited comments and all the comments from at least two classes.

**Re. Course Enrollment Data:**

Enrollment data on their own are far from conclusive but sometimes such data help to confirm other evidence in a nomination. We encourage you to include these data in a simple table with an explanatory note only when it is clear and suggestive of the nominee's helpfulness to a broad range of students. The Committee might look for a trend. For example, an unpopular existing course is given new life through the efforts of the nominee and a declining enrollment trend is reversed, or the nominee consistently introduces new courses which rapidly attract students.

► **Student Rating Form [7.2.3]**

Include a blank copy of the student rating form, or at the very least, a clear statement of the global question\* together with the possible responses.

► **Course Development Efforts [7.2.4]**

A simple way to proceed here is to list the courses developed. Where the success of a course is due to innovation in design, you will need to explain what is unique and particularly effective about the design and include whatever evidence you have for its effectiveness. Are students learning something different because of the design, and, if so, how did you come to this conclusion? Your reasoning and evidence will be very helpful to the Committee. Again, if you are emphasizing achievement that results from course design, you might want to describe at some length the process used to develop and refine the course.

► **Letters from Colleagues and Students [7.2.5]**

This particular form of evidence is less helpful to the Committee. We encourage you to include no more than two or three letters from colleagues and two or three letters from students. The best

letters are those that are specific and authentic. They provide details about the way in which the nominee has been particularly effective in bringing about learning, either in students, or in colleagues who are developing as teachers. Multiple letters which merely describe the nominee as a wonderful teacher are unhelpful and should not be included. Letters from current students are particularly awkward; such students are vulnerable by definition, even when they express an unprompted and strong desire to play an active and supporting role in the nomination.

► **An Example of Course Materials [7.2.6]**

Bear in mind that no Selection Committee member will review an entire textbook. Identify what is unique and exceptional about course materials and help the Committee locate those elements that are noteworthy. You might include highlights of course materials or better, include excerpts with an explanation. For example, a textbook in chemistry that encourages students to be more self-directed might include a sample from the text and explain in what way students would learn more effectively using this text.

► **Other Evidence [7.2.7]**

The items above represent a range of the kinds of evidence that are indicative of excellence in teaching and are largely culled from the dossiers of previous winners. Few, if any, nominators have collected and submitted all of the possible evidence listed and many have demonstrated teaching excellence in other ways. The list is provided by way of example; your nominee is unique and the task is to describe and explain his/her achievements.

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Appendix A: **SUMMARY OF NOMINATIONS AND AWARDS**

**Nominations and Awards by Province**

Province	2003		2002		2001		18 YEAR 1986-2003		Summary Success Rate	Eligible Faculty <sup>1</sup>	Univ with Fellows / Univ	Total # of Univ
	Nom:	Awds	Nom:	Awds	Nom:	Awds	Nom:	Awds				
B.C.	4	1	8	1	5	0	112	20	17.9%	3293	3 /	6
Alberta	5	0	5	0	12	1	186	30	16.1%	2940	3 /	7
Saskatchewan	0	0	2	2	1	0	21	5	23.8%	1372	2 /	6
Manitoba	1	0	2	0	1	0	65	7	10.8%	1506	2 /	6
Ontario	16	4	18	4	19	7	446	85	19.1%	12346	16 /	29
Quebec	1	0	6	1	7	1	150	15	10%	8144	6 /	21
New Brunswick	2	1	1	0	0	0	33	6	18.2%	1146	3 /	4
P.E.I.	2	1	1	1	1	1	9	3	33.3%	180	1 /	1
Nova Scotia	2	0	1	0	1	0	52	3	5.8%	1910	2 /	11
Newfoundland	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>12.9%</u>	<u>865</u>	<u>1</u> /	<u>1</u>
	<b>34</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1105</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>33702</b>	<b>39</b> /	<b>92</b>

<sup>1</sup> from Stats Canada (1997-1998)

Prepared by Dr. Arshad Ahmad. First printed with permission from STLHE/SAPES *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* Newsletter, Number 23, April 1998.

## Appendix B: SUMMARY FORM FOR REVIEWERS

Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Rater: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Score: \_\_\_\_\_/20

### STATEMENTS ON TEACHING PHILOSOPHY & TEACHING STRATEGIES

Before compiling the two scores on Educational Leadership and Teaching Excellence, please review Statements on Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Strategies and any other information relevant in items 3 and 4 on the Call for Nominations.

#### Highlights, Comments, Notes on Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Strategies

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### EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ /10

- ▶ Conducting of seminars, workshops, conferences or other events for university colleagues on teaching/learning topics.
- ▶ Work with teaching/learning committees or centers.
- ▶ Consultation with university colleagues on teaching methods.
- ▶ Papers, texts, newsletters or other publications on university teaching.
- ▶ Research on university teaching/learning problems that goes beyond the normal discipline-focussed research conducted by the nominee.
- ▶ Work on special projects related to university teaching and learning.

#### Highlights, Comments, Notes on Educational Leadership:

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### TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ /10

- ▶ Normative data from teaching evaluations over several years.
- ▶ A list of special course development efforts.
- ▶ A list of teaching awards received.
- ▶ Letters from colleagues and students.
- ▶ A typed list of all student comments from two or more classes.
- ▶ An example of course materials.

#### Highlights, Comments, Notes on Teaching Excellence:

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#### COMMENTS FOR FEEDBACK TO NOMINEE (please print)

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