Award for Graduate Assistants (Teaching)

The University of Calgary Teaching Awards recognize excellence in varied learning contexts by individuals and teams. A University of Calgary Teaching Award is a distinguished honour for members of our university community who, through their commitment and expertise, create deep and lasting learning experiences.

1.0 Eligibility

The University of Calgary Teaching Award for Graduate Assistants (Teaching) recognizes the teaching excellence of individual graduate students who are employed as Graduate Assistants (Teaching). There will be up to three awards available annually.

No individual may receive the University of Calgary Teaching Award for Graduate Assistants (Teaching) more than once. Although up to three awards are available each year, all three awards may not be conferred every year, depending on whether qualifying nominations are received.

2.0 Award Criteria

Teaching excellence at the University of Calgary is exemplified by characteristics of scholarly teaching that cross teaching and learning contexts. Graduate Assistants (Teaching) contribute to student learning experiences in many ways and diverse contexts. In their roles, Graduate Assistants (Teaching) often play a unique role in connecting with students to help them learn the concepts and processes of a field of study and gain confidence in their roles as independent learners. Although there will be many ways in which individual Graduate Assistants (Teaching) demonstrate the qualities of scholarly teaching in the context of their work assignments, nominations will be assessed based on the evidence of the nominees' demonstrated abilities to:

- Communicate effectively with students within the scope provided by their particular Graduate Assistant (Teaching) role.
- Prepare thoroughly for assigned Graduate Assistant (Teaching) duties.
- Employ effective teaching practices that actively engage students and encourage collaboration within the scope of assigned Graduate Assistant (Teaching) roles.
- Engage students in developing expertise in a subject area through interactions and/or feedback.
- Challenge learners to practice and develop their critical thinking and independent learning abilities through interactions and/or feedback.
- Motivate students' interest and learning, and establish relevance of subject matter.
- Collaborate effectively with the course instructor and, if appropriate, other Graduate Assistants (Teaching) to support student learning.
- Exhibit respect for students, which includes showing interest in students' inquiries and ideas.

- Collect feedback, engage in professional learning activities and reflect on teaching in order to strengthen their teaching practices and improve student learning.

3.0 Nomination Package

The nomination should be coordinated between the nominator(s) and the nominee. Nominations may be submitted by up to three nominators, who may include any combination of former students, graduate assistants teaching colleagues, faculty and/or instructor colleagues or academic administrators, and ideally across groups.

The nomination package should include:

- A brief nomination letter (2-page maximum) outlining how the nominee meets the award criteria. Contributed by an individual nominator, or co-written by nominators;
- A nomination dossier (10-page maximum, excluding letters of support); and
- A cover page verifying that the nominee meets all eligibility requirements and that all recommended nomination components have been included in the submission.

3.1 Nomination Letter

A nomination letter outlining how the nominee meets (or exceeds) the award criteria may be contributed by an individual nominator or be co-written by 2-3 nominators. A co-written nomination will in no way disadvantage a nominee. Nomination letters are not included in the dossier page count; the letter should be a maximum of two pages.

Guidance on writing effective nomination letters is available through the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning.

3.2 Nomination Dossier

Teaching excellence is a multidimensional and complex task that required multiple sources of evidence that can be triangulated to produce a robust assessment. While the quality of evidence is a critical aspect of a strong nomination, so is the alignment across data sources. Support for creating a nomination package is available through the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning.

Your nomination dossier should be a **maximum of 10 pages** (excluding letters of support):

- **Teaching philosophy statement (1-page)**
  The teaching philosophy statement explains the rationale that guides your practice, and provides information about your context, approaches and contributions.

- **Descriptions of specific strategies**
  You should provide description of specific strategies you use in your teaching practice and include some indication of impact on learning.

- **Summary of data from student feedback**
  A summary of data from student feedback and representative samples of student comments received across multiple learning contexts and years. It is recognized that these data may not be available or appropriate, depending upon the learning context (e.g., in small class sizes or in courses with sections taught by multiple instructors).

- **Reflective summary statement**
  A brief reflection and summary of information included in your dossier to put it in context, highlight how they connect to your teaching philosophy and practices, and identify future areas for growth.

3.3 Letters of support
Two signed letters of support that complement and align with the nomination dossier and provide further evidence of impact.

4.0 Adjudication Process

The selection process for each of the university-level teaching awards will be similar. Administrative processes surrounding communication, nomination and selection processes will be coordinated through the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning.

A committee, chaired by the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning (or delegate) and consisting of two academic staff members, two students (undergraduate and/or graduate), and a support (AUPE) staff, management or professional staff (MaPS) or postdoctoral scholar representative, will adjudicate the nomination files. The committee will be guided in its adjudication through consensus-based discussion with reference to the criteria for the award.

5.0 Recognition

Recipients will be presented with their awards at the Celebration of Teaching event. Their successes will be celebrated on the Wall of Honour in the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning.

Award recipients will be invited (but not required) to join the University of Calgary Teaching Academy, from which honorees can volunteer to share their expertise through mentoring, facilitating educational development activities, or implementing initiatives of their own design.