



STUDENT LED TEACHING AWARDS REPORT

2015/16

Preface

In recent years, and despite respectable NSS scores for overall student satisfaction, students have consistently marked learning and teaching below the national average.

The sector as a whole has been looking to improve its teaching, meaning that Brunel will need to continuously improve to compete effectively. This is also something that the Government is trying to introduce as an important part of policy through the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). This will incorporate the quality assurance information, the National Student Survey (NSS) results amongst other metrics. Added to this, there is a written statement which we feel that the SLTA's can add to. It shows the impact that the SLTA's have had in contributing to the improvement, and recognition of teaching at Brunel over the last four academic years. It allows departments and colleges to give the positive chance to show what students like, and effective case studies to show those who are new or are looking to improve their teaching. A mock TEF by the Times Higher Education put Brunel on the border line between the top and second quartile compared to other Universities. The SLTA's will be part of a host of evidence that Brunel can use to show that its teaching can be not only excellent, but outstanding.

The SLTA's were introduced in the 2011/12 academic year, not only to highlight and recognise areas of good practice to the University, but also to provide a platform for students to voice what qualities they value most when it comes to their learning. Brunel Universities Educational Excellence Centre has consistently provided support for these awards, and nominations are taken into account when staff members have performance reviews.

In previous years, there have been nine awards, however this year the awards were minimised down to four main categories, making the criteria less ambiguous and the categories more relevant to what the SLTA's stand for. The awards on offer this year were:

- Tutor/Supervisor of the Year Award (With College specific awards)
- Outstanding Feedback Award
- Lecturer of the Year Award (With College specific awards)
- Exceptional Support Staff Award

The Tutor/Supervisor of the year awards, along with the Lecturer of the year award was broken down into College's. This meant that in each college one member of staff received this award. Those winners were then considered for the overall University wide award.

This year's SLTAs saw a dramatic increase in the Quality of nominations submitted by students, this means that the scheme is able to provide a much better overview on what students consider to be "Excellent" at Brunel University London.

This report aims to take advantage of this increase in data by shedding light on the findings of this year's SLTAs in order to inform the University of what Students Consider to be best practice.



Brunel University London aspires to be a world class creative community that is inspired to work, think and learn together to meet the challenges of the future. The University is therefore committed to providing opportunities for high quality learning and teaching, and to seek excellence in this provision.

Every year the Union acknowledges those lecturers and other members of University Staff that go above and beyond to inspire, challenge and engage their students through the Student Led Teaching Awards (SLTAs). The scheme provides the student population with the opportunity to recognise those exceptional individuals that offer excellent teaching and support.

The Union strongly believes that the highest quality learning experience is essential in extending the creativity and intellect of students, and therefore desires to see outstanding members of staff acknowledged for their work in the University.

The SLTAs provide a raft of benefits for both the Union and the University, including:

- Highlighting the impact of outstanding contributions of Brunel Staff on the student experience.
- Empowering and amplifying the student voice throughout Brunel.
- Supporting the importance of the learning partnership between the students and their lecturers.
- Identifying the student perspective of good practice and student expectation.
- Enhancing the learning and teaching elements of Brunel's strategic plan.
- Contributing to the enhancement plans of the Colleges by highlighting areas of good practice.

This is the 5th year that the Student Led Teaching awards have been running, and we hope to utilise and build upon the success of this year's iteration, as well as those in previous years, to make the scheme as beneficial as possible for University and ultimately the students.

[Nominations were open from January 18th through to February 26th; and were accessible through the Union's website.](#)

Students were asked to write up to 500 words, explaining how their nominated member of staff met the criteria for the award(s) selected.

All nominations were sorted into awards and reviewed by a Selection Committee comprising of members of Student Assembly and the Vice Presidents of the Colleges. It is important to clearly point out that the awards were awarded based on the quality, not quantity, of nominations submitted, although large volumes of nominations for individuals or groups were taken into consideration.

[The Selection Committee shortlisted each award into 3 Nominees, and each Nominee and nominator were invited to an Award Ceremony on April 20th 2016.](#)

All staff members who received a nomination were sent a personalised email containing the statements made by the nominator. In addition a document was placed on the Union website outlining all the nominees, and the shortlist, along with details of who had won what awards and what had been said about the winners.

The awards ceremony was upgraded this year to be a sit down meal. This was done to increase the prestige associated with the awards, and by all means proved a success.

2 Student Lead Teaching Awards

This year's Student Led Teacher Awards (SLTAs) saw a reduction in nominations from the previous year. However; there was a dramatic increase in the quality of nominations being received.

258 nominations were received from undergraduate and postgraduate students across the three Colleges; College of Health and Life Sciences (CHLS), College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences (CBASS) and the College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences. As in previous years, the award that received the highest number of nominations was the Award centred on teaching, with over half of the total. The breakdown of the nominations between the different awards can be seen in the table below.

Lecturer of the Year	139
Tutor/Supervisor of the Year	90
Outstanding Feedback of the Year	9
Exceptional Support Staff	20

1st year students and postgraduates are the two largest groups nominating for the SLTAs. There can be several contributing factors to this, such as a higher engagement with these groups of students or the timing of the SLTAs, which run in the same time as the NSS survey.

1ST	73
2ND	43
3RD	62
4TH	17
PGT	41
PGR	22

Total number of nominations divided between the Colleges

CBASS	131
CHLS	71
CEDPS	56

Winners 2015-16

Outstanding Feedback

Yone Santana

Exceptional Support Staff

Pauline Melham

Tutor/Supervisor of the Year – CBASS

Chris Cox

Tutor/Supervisor of the Year – CEDPS

Stephen Cockett

Tutor/Supervisor of the Year – CHLS

Edwin Routledge

Lecturer of the Year – CBASS

Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt

Lecturer of the Year – CEDPS

Robert Macredie

Lecturer of the Year – CHLS

Christian Rudolph

Lecturer of the Year for Brunel University London

Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt

Tutor/Supervisor of the Year for Brunel University London

Edwin Routledge

Tutor/Supervisor of the Year Award

Definition

The Tutor/Supervisor of the Year Award will be awarded to a member of academic staff that has offered exceptional support to tutees and supervisees.

Core Criteria

- Provides support to their tutees in terms of academic and non-academic advice, and has the desire to better the lives of their students.
- Provides opportunities for multiple forms of communication through telephone calls, emails and face to face meetings, and advertises their availability to students.
- Provides realistic solutions to any issues and constructive feedback where necessary.

Eligibility

A member of academic staff
The new system of awards will see the Tutor of the Year award being awarded by College. From these winners the selection panel will then select one individual to win the overarching Tutor of the Year award.

Shortlisted nominees

CBASS
Chris Cox
Martin Hansen
Sergio De Cesare

CEDPS
Gabriella Spinelli
Wamadeva Balachandran
Stephen Cockett

CHLS
Edwin Routledge
Elisabete Silva
Niamh Brady

Winners

CBASS
Chris Cox

"...Chris has been extraordinarily helpful for many of us in the course and we are all incredibly thankful for his dedication to his students"

CEDPS
Stephen Cockett

"...From speaking to current and previous Students and Staff from the course over my time at Brunel, I know that it is unanimous feeling between all, that Steve is an absolute pleasure to have as a mentor or colleague"

CHLS
Edwin Routledge

"Ed really deserves recognition for his contribution to the department, especially how he enriches the student experience."

Overall Brunel University Winner

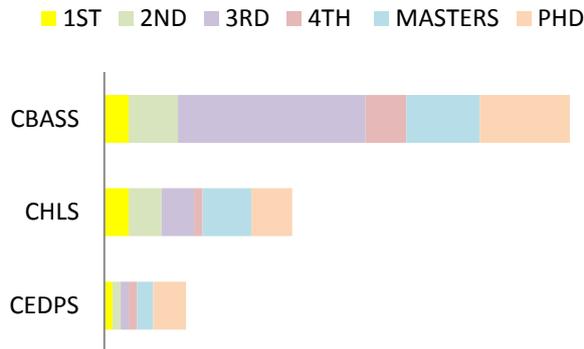
Edwin Routledge

"...Ed has a rare ability to treat his students in a way that compliments their natural tendencies"

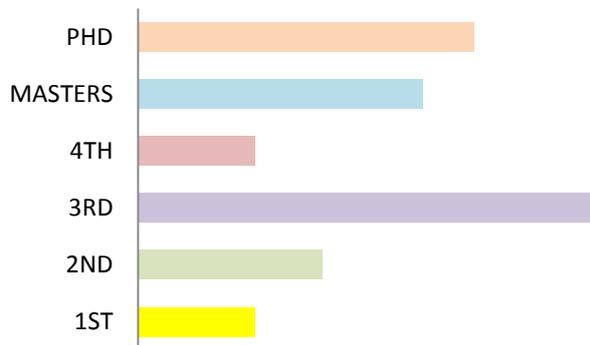
Many of the nominated staff in this category have been described to have gone "above and beyond" the remits of their role, which students are very grateful for.

Taking the time to explain an issue in depth is another quality that students value when nominating staff for this award.

"...he really loves what he does and goes out of his way to ensure we succeed."



As is shown in the charts below and above, nominations of this award were predominantly put forward by 3rd year students. Which is understandable given they are more likely to utilise Tutors along with Maters and PHD students. In the chart below the distribution of nominations over the levels of study look disproportional when taking into account 1st and 2nd year students. CBASS, being the largest College of the four, had the largest volume of nominations, with CEDPS having the lowest amount of nominations.



In the nominations for this award there is a clear pattern of mentions of approachability and accessibility. Students wishes to be able to access their tutors easily and feel welcomed.

Lecturer of the Year Award

Definition

The Lecturer of the Year Award will be awarded to an inspirational member of academic staff, or a Postgraduate Student, who teaches in innovative and captivating ways; and engages with students in their learning beyond what is expected.

Core Criteria

- A true passion for lecturing, and engages the whole class in every lecture.
- Is knowledgeable in their area, and provides structured seminars and tutorials that add to the learning experience.
- Actively challenges students in class and encourages critical thinking.
- Uses a diverse range of teaching methods that reflects the range of needs of the student body.
- Adopts engaging and innovative ways of teaching, such as technological enhancements or teaching based outside of the lecture room.

Eligibility

A member of Academic Staff or Postgraduate that teaches

The new system of awards will see the Lecturer of the Year award being awarded by College. From these winners the selection panel will then select one individual to win the overarching Lecturer of the Year award.

Shortlisted nominees

CBASS

Michael Heller
Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt
Kristian Gustafson

CEDPS

David Smith
Alasdair Cairns
Robert Macredie

CHLS

Panagiota Nikopoulou-Smyrni
Mandy Jones
Christian Rudolph

Winners

CBASS

Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt

“...Aside from the expected norms of teaching, being on time, constructive feedback and support, Katja has always demonstrated a calm and confident background to her classes.”

CEDPS

Robert Macredie

“During the lecture sessions, Rob always takes an interactive approach to teaching and engages his students by asking questions creating an interactive dialogue. Rob also provides outstanding support for students who may need additional clarification or help on a particular taught topic”

CHLS

Christian Rudolph

“Dr Rudolph always makes it very welcoming, and makes it feel more like a discussion and involved everyone in the answer, making you not feel 'stupid' for not understanding something.”

Overall Brunel University Winner

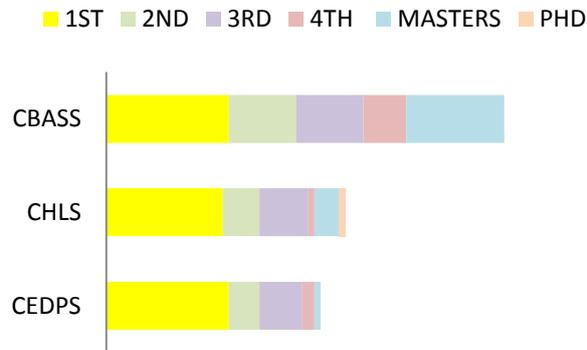
Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt

“Significantly, Katja pushes students to reach higher grades and to aim higher in the essays continuously. She also uses various materials and resources in her meeting her one to one, and is highly concerned of her student’s welfare in education.”

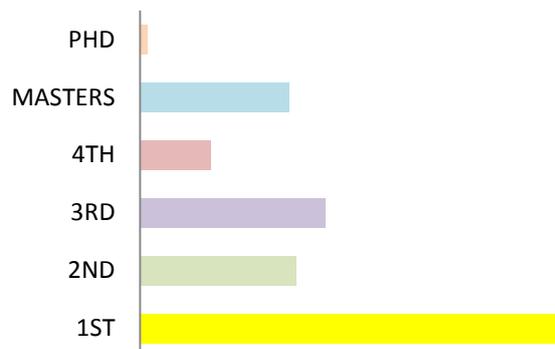
In the nominations for this award there is a clear pattern of mentions of enthusiasm in teaching, passion for the subject and an interactive teaching style. Students wish to be inspired by knowledge, experience and innovative ways of presentation.

“Her excitement is infectious and she can always make you feel better. I can’t imagine a better lecturer, we are lucky to have her.”

Teaching skills seem to be key to the reasons why Lecturers have received nominations. As the use of different methods of teaching are mentioned throughout the nominations.



As is shown in the charts below and above, nominations of this award were predominantly put forward by 1st year students. There was however a good number of nominations submitted from other levels across the university, With PHD student being the smallest number. CBASS, being the largest College of the four, had the largest volume of nominations. However the other 2 Colleges show a good level of nominations



Outstanding Feedback

Definition

The Outstanding Feedback Award will be awarded to a member of Academic Staff, or a Postgraduate Student who teaches, that has offered exceptional feedback through innovative and constructive ways.

Core Criteria

- Provides feedback in a timely fashion, with constructive comments and clearly described areas for improvement.
- Provides resources to allow students to complete the assignment to a suitable level, such as lectures, additional reading or laboratory time.
- Provides feedback in innovative ways, such as face to face, or through individualised emails
- Allows students to contact them regarding any feedback queries.

Eligibility

A member of Academic Staff or Postgraduate that teaches

Shortlisted nominees

Deirdre O'Neil
James Thomson
Yone Santana

Winner

Yone Santana

"All of my course mates look forward to Yone's enthusiastic, interesting and creative lectures and workshops because of his infectious passion, fantastic artistic ability and firm but fair feedback."

■ 1ST ■ 2ND ■ 3RD ■ 4TH ■ MASTERS ■ PHD



As shown above, the vast majority of the nominations come from CBASS or CHLS, with the majority of nominations coming from undergraduate students



The nominations submitted by 2nd year students make up the majority of nominations for this award.

"She has given me great ideas for my coursework and checked over planning and simple drafts of writing giving constructive and positive criticism throughout."

Judging from the nominations, what makes outstanding feedback is for it to be constitutive, personal and prompt.

In addition many of the students mention the importance of feeling like the staff member is giving them time to get in-depth feedback.

Exceptional Support Staff

Definition

The Exceptional Support Staff Award is awarded to Non-Academic Staff that has supported a student in their studies or personal matters.

Core Criteria

- Provided support with Academia, placements, or advanced learning
- Provided support with pastoral matters such as counselling or religion
- Has benefited the student in staying within the University.

Eligibility

Nominations are open for any NON-ACADEMIC staff

Shortlisted nominees

Debbie Hirst
Pauline Melham
Terry Skelton

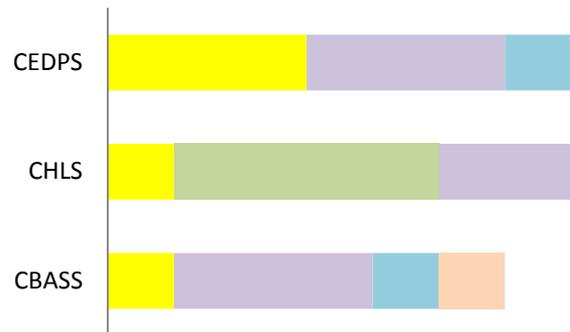
Winner

Pauline Melham

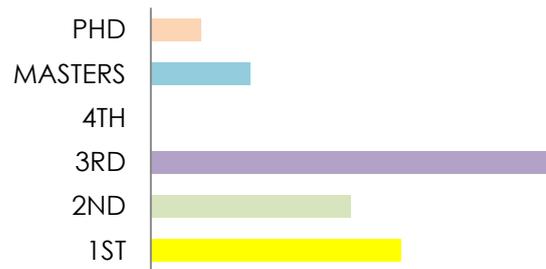
“She supports the transition of students on the autistic spectrum from school/college to university and contributes to their wellbeing. Pauline has recently taken over the role to coordinate the Brunel Asperger’s Group, a fortnightly support group that provides a friendly welcoming space for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders”

This award had a very even split across the colleges for nominations. However the nominations came predominantly from undergraduate students.

■ 1ST ■ 2ND ■ 3RD ■ 4TH ■ MASTERS ■ PHD



Last academic year 3rd year students submitted nearly half the nominations, with 2nd year and postgraduate students sharing the second place. However this year we can see a change in the pattern with the nominations predominantly coming from 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students.



Valued aspects of the nominees for the Exceptional Support Staff Award ranged from professional and quick handling of problems and queries, as well as continuous support and advice.

Nominations also vouch of instances where members of staff have gone above and beyond their professional role to offer support and advice, which offers testament to why the SLTAs are so important as an opportunity for the students to show their appreciation to truly outstanding members of staff.

AUTHOR'S OBSERVATIONS

The divide between the Colleges

This year the nominations came predominantly from CBASS, with CEDPS being the college that engages least with the SLTA's, despite being the second largest College. This is consistent with the lack of engagement from CEDPS in other areas of the Union.

The divide between the levels

2nd years and PGR students engaged least with these awards. This indicates a shift from last year's awards where 1st year students were one of our least engaged groups. The data this year has also moved to distinguish PGR students from PGT students, meaning that there is no indication as to whether the PGR nominations are an increase or decrease on last years. However, it is clear there has been a decrease in Postgrad engagement overall.

When looking at the individual awards there is a clear trend for Postgrad and final year students to nominate for the Tutor and Supervisor of the year award. One can speculate that this might be due to these students writing dissertation and as such they are more likely to utilise tutor/supervisors.

However the Lecturer award received most of the nominations from 1st year students, which might indicate that

teaching quality is something particularly important to these students.

Outstanding feedback received the least nominations overall. This could be due to either students not feeling they receive outstanding feedback, or just a lack of understanding regarding the category itself, this needs to be explored.

The importance of these awards

With 258 nominations this year, it's clear that students are grateful for this opportunity to award and praise excellent members of University staff. These awards will push University staff to work harder to be more innovative and inspirational, to be the best personal tutor possible and so on, and it grants the students the opportunity to thank them for all their efforts.