Regional Teaching Excellence Awards

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can be considered for the award?

The award is open to all teaching staff in the partner institutions of the Midwest regional cluster (i.e. MIC, TUS and UL).

What do I need to do if I apply for this award?

There are three stages to the overall regional award process:

1.Nomination stage

Nomination stage: Teaching staff may nominate themselves, or indeed nominate a colleague, for the award. In order to nominate yourself or a colleague, you will be invited to submit a nomination form to your local, employing institution by **Friday 25th September 2026, 12 noon**.

2.Shortlisting stage

Support will be provided to assist you in the preparation of an initial teaching philosophy statement followed by an overview of your pedagogical approaches to and achievements in learning, teaching and assessment. This is to be submitted to your local institution by **Monday 16th November 2026.** This is reviewed by an international review panel who will provide a shortlist of no more than three candidates in each of the participating institutions to progress to the final stage of the process. We anticipate that the outcome of the shortlisting process will be communicated by Wednesday 16th December, 2026.

3. Final Portfolio Submission

Each finalist will submit a complete teaching portfolio to an external panel for consideration for the regional award by **Monday 19th April, 2027**.

Do I need to have a teaching qualification to enter?

No.

If I apply for the award, will I automatically be shortlisted?

No. The process for consideration for the regional award requires applicants to first apply to their local, employing institution. Up to three finalists from each partner institution may be shortlisted and invited to submit for consideration for the regional award.

How much of a time commitment is likely to be involved if I am shortlisted?

The time commitment will really depend on how much work you have already done in reflecting on and providing evidence of your performance and impact as a teacher. Therefore, it is likely to differ from candidate to candidate.

If I entered last year, can I enter again this year?

Applicants who were not shortlisted previously may apply again at any stage. Finalists can engage once again after a three-year period. The rationale for this stipulation is that it allows time for the individual to evolve and develop their practice based on feedback and to reflect on it within a portfolio. The experience of reflecting on your teaching should strengthen your practice as a teacher and should put you in a stronger position when you submit a subsequent application.

What forms of information can I use to provide evidence of my teaching effectiveness?

Your teaching portfolio can include evidence of innovative approaches linked to the RTEA Indicators of Excellence (Refer to Appendix 1). Further information will be provided at support sessions.

What is the recommended word limit guiding the design of a teaching portfolio?

For shortlisting stage, you are required to prepare your teaching philosophy and evidence of teaching excellence, which should not exceed 1500 words. (See guidance document for further details).

Once shortlisted, the final portfolio that is prepared by finalists, should not exceed 4,000 words. A selection of appropriately signposted appendices may accompany each portfolio. Your entire portfolio should be submitted in one electronic file or as an ePortfolio using a platform of your choice for consideration by the external panel.

Where can I get advice about preparing my application?

On-going support will be available from Teaching and Learning personnel throughout

the process. An initial workshop on the process will take place online on Friday 2nd October, 1-2pm. Follow up supports, including writing sessions, will be offered throughout the process.

What will the outcome be?

All finalists will be invited to attend an RTEA awards ceremony where their individual achievements will be celebrated. They will also be invited to join the Regional Teaching Excellence Fellowship network.

The award winner will receive a financial award of €3,000 which will be paid into an institute account, and can be used to:

- Support teaching and learning enhancement.
- Support professional development in teaching and learning.
- Disseminate teaching and learning enhancement and practices.
- Develop and/or disseminate teaching and learning resources.
- Support research related to teaching and learning, including dissemination.

Will I get feedback?

Yes. Your application will be reviewed by an external shortlisting panel, who will provide feedback on your portfolio which might help you to sustain and enhance your teaching performance impact in the future. Finalists will also receive feedback from the adjudication panel.

What if my subject area is very technical? Will that put me at a disadvantage?

No. Differences between disciplinary areas will be considered and you will not be disadvantaged if you teach in an area that students typically find difficult or challenging.

How will this process benefit me professionally?

As teaching and learning is becoming an increasing focus of strategic attention across further and higher education, being a finalist for, or winning, this award provides clear evidence of your commitment to teaching and your performance as a teacher. The process of preparing a teaching portfolio will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on and gain increased insight into your practice as a higher education teacher. Finalists will also be invited to join the Regional Teaching Excellence Fellowship network which will offer valuable networking and peer practice sharing opportunities.

Will this award system give me a teaching qualification?

No. However, a detailed portfolio, produced according to principles of national and international best practice, may position you very well for achieving accreditation if you decide to pursue this option subsequently nationally and internationally.

Do I need ethical approval when collecting and sharing student data as evidence in my portfolio?

All RTEA candidates are required to adhere to institutional ethical guidelines, policies and procedures and should consult their respective institutional guidelines for further clarity. Where it is the intention of an RTEA candidate to collect data from human participants, including students, which they plan to disseminate through publication (e.g. journal article, conference paper etc.), **ethical clearance is required**. Ethical clearance is required before any data collection activities take place, and it is the responsibility of the RTEA candidate to ensure timely submission of the relevant forms.

Where it is the intention of an RTEA candidate to collect data from students which is to be used to for the purposes of prompting reflection on practice and to enhance teaching, learning and assessment approaches, and **which will not be disseminated beyond the RTEA application and portfolio**, then ethical clearance is not required. Higher Education teachers routinely seek anonymous feedback at various points throughout the learning experience, and such data can be used to support discussion and reflection throughout the RTEA application and portfolio. This might include, for example (but is not limited to):

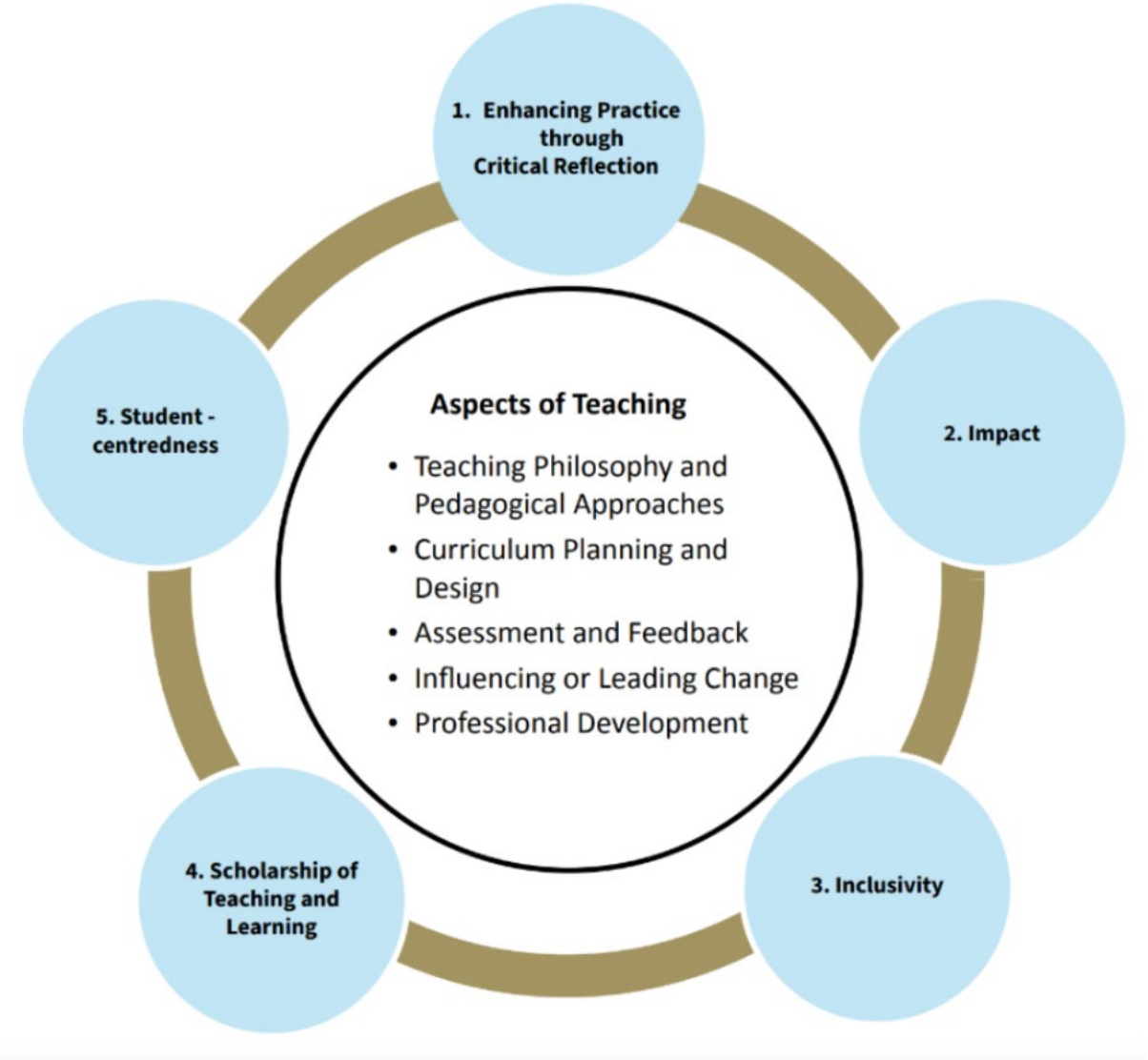
- Ongoing personal reflections.
- Student evaluation of teaching and anonymous student feedback.
- Peer observation of teaching reports.
- Anonymised high-level learning analytics data from Moodle.

Data of this nature can be included in the portfolio provided that all identifying information has been removed and it is limited to short, anonymised excerpts.

Images or copies of work generated by students **cannot** be included in any RTEA application or portfolio, unless express permission is sought and ethical clearance is granted.

Appendix 1

Regional Teaching Excellence Award Indicators of Excellence



RTEA Indicators of Excellence, adapted from Ka Yuk Chan and Chen (2023)

Table: RTEA Indicators of Excellence, adapted from Ka Yuk Chan and Chen (2023)

	Indicators of Excellence				
Aspect of Teaching	**1. Enhancing Practice Through Critical Reflection**	**2.Impact**	**3.Inclusivity**	**4.Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**	**5.Student-centredness**
Teaching Philosophy and Pedagogical Approaches	Provides a rationale for the selection of pedagogical approaches including digitally enhanced learning as appropriate.	Reflecting on the impact of current working practices and context on self.	Creating an equitable learning environment informed by the principles of inclusive practice.	Applying research- and evidence-based knowledge to enhance learning, teaching and assessment practices.	Commitment to active and applied approaches to learning.
Curriculum Planning and Design	Programme and module design that incorporates latest developments in the discipline and underpinned by critical reflection.	Evidence of well-designed curricula that enable student learning.	Curriculum design is appropriate for a diverse range of learners informed by the principles of inclusive practice.	Using scholarship to inform curriculum review and design.	Supportive of active, student-centred approaches to learning that engage students and build towards students as partners in their learning.
Assessment and Feedback	Adopting assessment and feedback approaches that encourage critical thinking and independent inquiry.	Assessment design to include assessment of, for and as learning.	Designing assessment and feedback approaches taking cognisance of diverse learners.	Using scholarship to inform assessment and feedback design.	Assessment design that encourages the development of transferable and transversal skills.
Influencing or Leading Change	Influencing positive changes to practice which may include a variety of contexts.	Improving the quality of teaching in the academic community through sharing practices and approaches.	Exploration and engagement with diverse groups to enhance teaching practices.	Conducting research and disseminating findings through publications and Workshops.	Influencing or leading change to support active student-centered approaches to learning.
Professional Development	Demonstrating a commitment to continuous professional development informed by current HE priorities.	Evidence of sustained reflective practice for personal and professional development.	Engaging in professional development to support diverse groups of learners.	Engaging in professional development focusing on contemporary approaches to disciplinary/subject knowledge and pedagogies.	Exploration of student-centred approaches and the development of practice.