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NAIRTL

National Academy for Integration of **Research, Teaching** and **Learning**

Acadamh Náisiúnta um Chomhtháthú ***Taighde, Teagaisc*** *agus* ***Foghlama***

Recognition, Reward and Impact

A Review of the National Awards for Excellence in Teaching in Higher Education



Donna Maria Alexander and Catherine O'Mahony

T&L

HEA
Higher Education Authority
An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas

NDP

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The Irish National Academy for Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning promotes innovation, supports development and sustains good practice that links research with teaching and learning in higher education institutions. NAIRTL is a collaborative project whose founding members are University College Cork (the lead partner), Cork Institute of Technology, National University of Ireland, Galway, Trinity College Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology, but whose activities are conducted at a national level across the higher education sector.

NAIRTL's current activities are focused on scaffolding research and inquiry in undergraduate programmes, the professional development of research supervisors of postgraduate students, and supporting Higher Education staff to engage in research and inquiry into their teaching and learning.

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FOREWORD

The National Academy for the Integration of Research and Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) was established in 2007, following a successful proposal for funding under the HEA's Strategic Innovation Fund. NAIRTL is a collaborative project whose founding members are University College Cork (the lead partner), Cork Institute of Technology, National University of Ireland, Galway, Trinity College Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology. Its purpose is to encourage and support excellence in teaching and learning in higher education in Ireland. Building on good practice, nationally and internationally, NAIRTL engages in initiatives that promote innovation and support developments that integrate research with teaching and learning.

NAIRTL was funded by the HEA from 2007 to 2012 and during that period it had four main strands:

- Awards for Excellence in Teaching
- Professional Development in Academic Practice
- Dissemination of good practice through workshops, seminars, conferences and publications
- A grants initiative to encourage and support staff the integration of research and teaching and learning.

In December 2011, an evaluation of the impact of the NAIRTL Grants initiative was undertaken and its results were published. The current publication presents the results of a study of the impact of the NAIRTL Awards scheme for Excellence in Teaching. We are grateful to the recently established National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education for funding this study.

As chairperson of the working group which devised and administered the NAIRTL Excellence in Teaching Awards scheme from 2007 to 2012, I am pleased and proud to write a foreword to this review of the impact of the scheme. When devising the scheme, we drew on a number of teaching awards schemes in other jurisdictions. We were particularly influenced by the US Professor of the Year awards (established in 1981); the Canadian 3M National Teaching Fellowships (est. 1986); the Australian Awards for University Teaching (est. 1995) and the UK National Teaching Fellowships (est. 2000). We were also cognisant of institutional award schemes in the Irish higher education system - notably in UCC, Trinity College, NUI Galway, UCD and WIT.

We were anxious from the start to ensure that the awards were regarded as worthwhile and prestigious. To this end, we ensured that during the five years of their existence, the presentation of awards ceremonies were held in celebrated locations such as Dublin Castle and the Clock Tower building of the Department of Education and Science and were presided over by national dignitaries including the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese; the Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn; and a Judge of the Supreme Court, Her Excellency, Justice Catherine McGuinness. As will be seen in this publication, the award recipients and their friends and families greatly appreciated the honour and glory of the awards as well as the financial and other benefits accruing from the awards.

I would like to place on record my appreciation of the full and enthusiastic co-operation received from the 25 different higher education institutions who participated in the scheme. They nominated no fewer than 145 individuals for an award, 43 of whom were successful. I would also like to thank the members of the working group who devised and oversaw the administration of the scheme as well as the members of the review committee who reviewed and assessed the nominations each year. All of these people worked on a voluntary, pro bono basis and spent many hundreds of hours each year engaging with the process of review. The review committee included students, former award winners, and academic staff, all of whom were actively engaged in

teaching and assessment. Above all, I would like to thank the previous Manager of NAIRTL - Dr Jennifer Murphy and her team, Dr Catherine O'Mahony and Maria Buckley. It was a privilege and a pleasure to be involved in the Awards for Excellence in Teaching and in the other activities of NAIRTL.

Finally my thanks to the co-authors of this study, Donna Maria Alexander and Dr Catherine O'Mahony. I hope the results of their research will help to inform the future work of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, especially the Forum's Learning Impact Awards scheme.



Áine Hyland, Emeritus Professor of Education, University College Cork



NAIRTL Team (L-R): Dr Jennifer Murphy, Maria Buckley and Dr Catherine O'Mahony

1. Introduction

INTRODUCTION

National Awards for Excellence in Teaching 2008-2012. What Were They?

The establishment of a national awards initiative for higher education teachers by the National Academy for the integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) in 2008 saw Ireland take its place among the countries of the world that truly value excellent teaching in higher education. In addition to institutional awards schemes, national awards programmes for higher education teachers have been in existence for many years in countries such as the US, Canada, UK and Australia. The primary aim of these programmes is to recognise and reward teaching excellence with a view to raising the profile of teaching and learning across the sector.

The Irish National Awards for Excellence in Teaching ran for a total of five years, during which time forty-three higher education staff members across a wide range of Higher Education institutions and disciplinary backgrounds received an award for their subject-based expertise as well as their passion and interest in cultivating the potential of their students (see Figure 1).

Five awards were made per year for individual or group nominations[1].The scheme sought to recognise teachers who have demonstrated exemplary success at linking research and teaching using innovative, exciting and stimulating teaching techniques. The selection criteria included the following: imaginative approaches to teaching that support its integration with research and learning, the promotion and enhancement of student learning, innovation in assessment and the utilisation of approaches that foster independent learning, effectiveness and creativity in the design and delivery of courses, support for colleagues and sharing of best practice, sustained commitment to professional development with regard to the integration of research, teaching and learning, and support for the diversity of learning needs within student populations (see Appendix A for details).

There was a high level of engagement with the award scheme. Up to three nominations were accepted per institution per year, and a total of 145 nominations were received from institutions across Ireland over the course of the initiative. These 145 nominations represented a total of 250 Higher Education staff members as the scheme included both individual and group nominations (see Figure 2).



Figure 1: Disciplinary focus of Award winners

1. In 2009, in addition to the five awards, 2 special commendations were given.

The scheme was open to all High Education Institutions (HEIs) participating in the free fees initiative, and twenty-five different institutions across Ireland participated in the initiative. Figure 3 illustrates the geographical spread and institutional category of the participating institutions with eleven participating HEIs in the Dublin region alone including Universities, Institutes of Technology, Educational Colleges and Other.

The forty-three award recipients represented thirteen different Higher Education institutions nationally and the distribution of the winners amongst the educational institutes showed a greater number of award recipients in Universities, with NUI Galway in particular having success in each year of the initiative (Figure 4).

The engagement of the different types of higher education institutions was compared with their

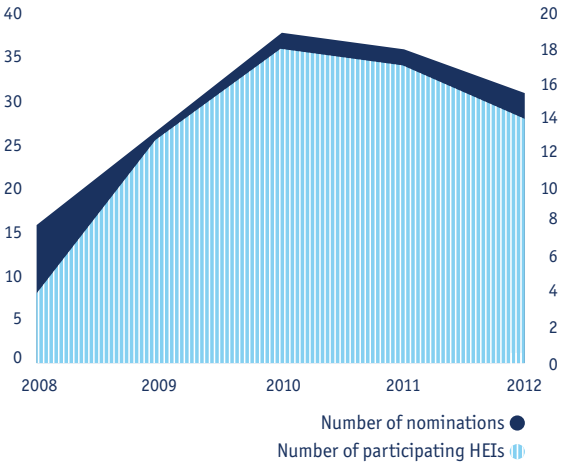


Figure 2: Overview of institutional engagement with national awards initiative



Figure 3: Geographical location of HEIs that participated in Awards Initiative (n=25)

University *Institute of Technology*
Educational College *Other*



Figure 4: Geographical location of Award Recipients and number awards per HEI (n=27)

University *Institute of Technology*
Educational College *Other*

relative success in the initiative and it was found that institutions in the University category (and the Royal College of Surgeons) had a larger number of awards (see Table 1). However, when the total number of award recipients was considered per institutional type there was evidence of an alignment between the number of recipients and the level of engagement. Many of the institutions who showed a high level of success in the initiative put forward nominees who had previously received institutional awards for Excellence in Teaching. The Institutes of Technology showed greater success in team nominations than in individual applications relative to their number of submissions[2]. In terms of gender, 65% (28) of the National award recipients were female and 35% were males (15). This reflects the larger number of nominations received for females (142, 57%) versus male (108, 43%).

Table 1: Relative engagement in initiative and success by institutional category

	# Nominations	# Awards per institutional category	# Winners per institutional category
Institute of Technology	39 (27%)	4 (15%)	16 (37%)
University	82 (57%)	19 (70%)	23 (54%)
Educational College	18 (12%)	2 (7%)	2 (5%)
Other (RCSI)	6 (4%)	2 (7%)	2 (5%)
TOTAL	145	27	43

The Teaching Awards scheme was administered by the National Academy for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning and funded by the Strategic Innovation Fund of the Higher Education Authority. NAIRTL is a collaborative project whose founding members are University College Cork (the lead partner) and National University of Ireland, Galway, Cork Institute of Technology, Trinity College Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology, but whose activities are conducted at a national level. It was set up in 2007 with the goal of enacting a series of activities and initiatives to support students, researchers and staff to implement and advance effective research-informed teaching and learning practices throughout the Irish higher education sector. Its current activities are focused on scaffolding research and inquiry in undergraduate programmes, the professional development of research supervisors of postgraduate students, and supporting Higher Education staff to engage in research and inquiry into their teaching and learning.

2. There were three team nominations and one team commendation over the duration of the initiative.

Rationale for a National Awards Scheme

Higher education is identified with three main roles, i.e. research, teaching and learning, and engagement. However academic recruitment and promotion criteria can often favour research activities, particularly in relation to higher ranked positions (Parker, 2008). There has been widespread recognition internationally of this imbalance in favour of research (McAleese et al., 2013), and the Teaching Awards scheme was established by NAIRTL in 2008 as one way to address this. At that point Institutional awards had been in place for several years in University College Cork (since 2000), National University of Ireland Galway (since 2005), Trinity College Dublin (since about 2002), and Waterford Institute of Technology (since 2004). In line with these internal efforts, NAIRTL sought to bring the celebration of teaching to the national stage.

Israel (2011) argues that teaching awards need to be understood within the context of a system that has very clear metrics for the measurement of research success through a variety of awards, fellowships and other funding opportunities as well as publications and conferences. He believes teaching does not have such clear barometers for calculating success. More often than not, student feedback in the form of surveys and short course review forms are the only measure of quality and performance in teaching and learning. A teaching award can go some way in providing a level of objective peer review for educators. This is where teaching awards and research funding depart. Acquiring a research fund or award almost always requires the candidate to develop and complete a particular project, and account for their use of the fund. In the case of teaching awards, as Israel states, they are "a way of recognising and rewarding good teaching without placing any expectations upon the winners. While awardees may be and indeed have been asked to do any manner of things, they are not required to do so as a condition of the award". He goes on to say "consequently, in the main, neither the administering authority, nor an awardee's home discipline or university have turned their attention to what happens next" (2011, 14). While Israel is commenting on the Australian National Awards, the central point is relevant in Ireland too given that the national awards scheme reviewed in this report required no accountability from awardees. However, as is discussed in the Findings section of this report, a teaching award can, in many cases, catalyse a domino effect in an awardee's career development. The public nature of awards often leads winners to become recognised within and beyond their institution and discipline. This too is part of the rationale for the teaching awards scheme developed by NAIRTL, putting faces to the excellent teaching practices evident in institutions across Ireland.

Where Are We Now?

While the National Awards scheme ended in 2012, efforts to celebrate and reward excellence in teaching in higher education across Ireland continue. The recently established Learning Impact Awards with their combination of Teaching Hero and Teaching Expert awards attest to this[3]. This turning point offers an opportune moment to review the impact of the National Awards and garner any suggestions for future schemes as they develop.

Methodology

The forty-three National award recipients were contacted to request their participation in the review in order to trace what impact, if any, the award had on their career trajectories and teaching practice. More than half of the award holders participated in the review, and 40% of these were

3. The Learning Impact awards are coordinated by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. These have a two year cycle and include a student-led Teaching Hero award and an institutionally or cluster-led Teaching Expert award, offered on alternate years. The first cohort of Teaching Heroes was recognised in September 2014 and further details on both awards are available at www.teachingandlearning.ie.

male and 60% females which reflected the gender balance of the total award recipient cohort (35% male, 65% female). The disciplinary focus of the review respondents mirrored that of the overall award recipient cohort, but due to inclusion of several members from one team there was a slight skew in disciplinary and HEI representation.

A mixture of phone interviews, email questionnaires and a focus group were used to gather responses from the awardees. This combination of approaches was chosen for a number of key reasons; the variety of styles opens up the possibility for different levels of response. For example, the focus group allows for discussion among awardees, while a phone interview is a focused exchange between interviewer and interviewee. The email interview was included as an option to facilitate respondents who wished to contribute their stories, but were unable to complete interviews by phone.

The phone interviews and the focus group use a semi-structured interview approach aimed at encouraging interviewees to tell their stories and experiences without being restricted by the line of questioning. Thus, the interviews are largely made up of open-ended questions with close-ended questions used only when definitive confirmation of a particular view was needed. The email interviews are also made up of the same open-ended questions (see Appendix B and C).

A comparative study of reviews of International National awards schemes was then carried out. Attention was particularly paid to the interview approaches and the overall aims of these reviews in order to copper-fasten the approaches taken here. For example, it was decided that the responses of interviewees should be anonymised as much as possible given that the majority of these international reviews found that some award winners experienced negative reactions and situations following their award. It was thought that anonymity would encourage any interviewees to discuss any negative issues that they associate with receipt of the national award.

2. International ‘National’ Awards Schemes

INTERNATIONAL 'NATIONAL' AWARDS SCHEMES

National Awards schemes have been in existence internationally for some time. Australia, Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. have well-established national schemes that reward excellence in teaching and offer funding for teaching and learning initiatives. As part of this report a literature review on international 'national' schemes was carried out. The reasons for this are twofold; firstly, we were interested to see if the impact of teaching awards was deemed important, in order to gain an overall sense of the place of teaching awards within the larger topography of funding and awards schemes in higher education. Secondly, such reports might provide a roadmap for the implementation of this report.

While there is a range of literature available that considers the value and impact of teaching awards schemes more generally, there are few comprehensive reports that deliver in-depth studies of specific international schemes. The Australian national awards are an exception to this with extensive reports by Ballantyne et al. (2003) and Israel (2011). Ballantyne et al. reviewed the Australian Awards for University Teaching, focusing on the impact and importance of the awards scheme as well as offering recommendations in the areas of the selection process, awards categories, incorporating links with internal schemes and encouraging dissemination as part of the awards process. Israel's ALTC-funded project reports on the impact of teaching awards on individual recipients and institutions. The report focuses on four key areas: celebrating awards, career development, leadership roles, and building networks of award winners. The report also offers recommendations for awardees, institutions, and the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Both choose interview approaches in order to get first-hand accounts of the experience of applying and winning a national award, and the aftermath in terms of career development and satisfaction, and personal value.

The National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) in the UK has also been the subject of an impact study. Philip Frame et al. (2006) garnered responses from recent winners of the NTF to consider the schemes effect in terms of personal value and career development. Adam Skelton (2004) reports the findings of a study that evaluated the impact of the NTF under three themes: how teaching excellence is understood within the NTF schemes; the key characteristics of the NTF as a development mechanism and strategy; the impact the scheme had on the professional lives and identities of the award winners.

Other critics have also focused on how excellence in teaching can be defined within the context of awards. Adam Palmer and Roz Collins (2006) examine the UK governments funding of teaching awards schemes and focus on how excellence in teaching should be defined within the rubric of awards schemes.

Other literature in the area tends to focus on particular issues relating to rewarding excellence in teaching. The selection processes involved in awards schemes has received attention from several critics. Mary Deane Sorcinelli and Barbara Gross Davis (1996) examine best practices in administering teaching awards. Nancy Van Note Chism and Borbála L. Szabó (1997) question why teaching awards have not been studied at length in terms of what they recognise, and the selection processes involved, followed by a series of recommendations for the implementation of awards schemes. Carusetta (2002) also examines selection processes and their effectiveness using the Stuart Award as a case in point, concluding that giving a teaching award is an evaluative process that must be supported by robust selection criteria in order to cement its validity as such. In a study of the recently implemented regional awards schemes in Ireland, Mary Fitzpatrick and Sarah Moore (2013) focus on faculty motivations for participating in awards processes, and participants' experiences of participating in such processes in terms of benefits and disadvantages.

Being an academic more often than not means juggling teaching and research. This has also received critical attention in relation to awards for excellence in teaching. Christine Halse et al. (2007) consider the "research-teaching nexus" examining the extent to which outstanding teachers are involved in research, and if they draw on the central aim of research – dissemination – to share their teaching practices with the public. James Brawer et al. (2006) examines the perceptions of teaching awards by department chairs and recipients within the context of the emphasis of research over teaching in academia. Brawer et al. (2006) find that a teaching award will only be of benefit to the recipients' careers if they are located within institutions that place high value on excellence in teaching.

While there is a broad range of literature on teaching awards in existence, there are few comprehensive reports on national awards schemes worldwide. This report seeks to examine the level of significance attached to recognising excellence in teaching through a national award, the impact of that award on the personal and professional lives of its recipients, their experiences with the application process, their perceptions of the judging process, their approaches to spending the prize money, and their recommendations for the processes and practices involved in administering a teaching award. To this end, this report fits within the framework of literature available on the topic while being the first comprehensive report of an Irish national award for excellence in teaching.

3. Findings

FINDINGS

When reflecting on the impact of the national award on their teaching practice and career trajectories, the responses gathered from the participating national award recipients coalesced on several key themes. These included:

- The strong belief that teaching is a key part of academia and merits celebration and recognition
- The personal affirmation and self-confidence gained from such recognition, particularly national recognition
- The benefit of this award in advancing their career through success in promotions, gaining publisher's interest in publishing their work, or through their being engaged in institutional initiatives to support and advance teaching and learning
- The continued engagement by award recipients in activities at departmental, institutional, and national level to enhance teaching and learning
- The sustained engagement of the majority of respondents in efforts to integrate their research with their teaching and learning activities
- The importance of receiving a prize fund that can be used for teaching and learning initiatives in a funding landscape that does not provide enough financial support in that area
- The largely positive reflections by respondents on their experiences with and opinions of the selection process

Recognising Excellence in Teaching is Important

The majority of respondents agreed that the role of teaching in higher education merits greater recognition. To this end, a national award for higher education teaching is seen as a worthwhile approach for boosting the visibility of excellence in teaching across HE institutions across Ireland.



"People think the word 'doctor' means someone who takes care of sick people. But, doctor as I'm sure you know means teacher. Therefore, as a doctor I have an obligation to help others to learn"

The Research-Teaching Nexus

Several awardees noted that a teaching award is especially important within a system that continues to place greater emphasis on excellence in research. While research is measured in peer review and journal rankings, teaching is not subject to the same universal barometers. Internally, student feedback is usually measured through surveys and questionnaires. One respondent made the following statement:

> *"It is always the poor relation of research, in terms of value towards academic progression. One could win countless awards regional, national and international for teaching excellence but it wouldn't count, as published journal articles. There is undoubted academic snobbery within academic circles when teaching is considered" (Email Respondent).*

> *"It (the NAIRTL award) has had a significant impact. It has raised the profile of teaching. This is very important because in many institutions it tends to be research more than teaching that gets recognised. A teaching award raises the profile" (Phone Respondent).*

Supporting Existing Quality Assurance Activities

Objective evaluation of teaching practice from the outside is rare and national awards have the potential to fulfil this function (Carusetta, 2001). Several respondents noted this in their interviews and particularly the role of such awards in supporting existing quality assurance mechanisms such as student feedback:

> *"Awards like this usually show that this is valued by somebody. I think this comes across more in institutional awards but national awards are useful for this as well to show that this is part of the job for academics. It's not all about research. Anything that recognises the value of teaching and quality* teaching is valuable" *(Phone Respondent).*

More than providing objective evaluation of one's teaching practices, awards, in raising the profile of teaching, also have an important role in causing institutions to bolster student-centred mission statements with clear, measurable results:

> *"I think it behoves institutions to factor that in too. You can't have a rhetoric of being student-centred if you're not" (Phone Respondent).*

Providing Access to a Broader Network

A number of awardees acknowledged the significance of an award that comes from a national body as well as mentioning its role in providing access to a broader national network:

> *"It was very important because it gave national recognition to people doing great work. People performing at a very high level were being recognised." (Phone Respondent).*

> *"It gives you access to a broader network. It's also in a way tying into a bigger national network, for example, the HEA and a political status given that the award was presented by Mary McAleese" (Phone Respondent).*

One awardee was cautious about attributing too much significance to the award in terms of impact:

> *"I think all the awards have raised awareness in the academic community of the importance of teaching. But I don't know if it has necessarily helped the cause as much as you would have hoped" (Focus Group Respondent).*

However, two respondents noted that while the award "did raise the profile" and "was prestigious" within higher education, the award had "limited" impact at institutional level (Phone Respondents).

Indeed, another respondent stated that receiving a teaching award made it easier for their institution to isolate them as they "were seen to be outside the normal teaching undertaken by our colleagues" (Email Respondent).

Personal Value



"The old imposter syndrome can creep in and you start asking yourself are they even listening to me? Am I doing the right thing? (National recognition) gives you a sense of personal achievement and confidence"

Every respondent felt that the award was of great personal value. This is a frequent trend across awardees in international, national and institutional schemes too. In a study of the impact of a teaching award given in the Faculty of Medicine in McGill University, Brawer et al. (2006) found that the personal value of the award often outshone the professional value.

Confidence

Several respondents noted a boost in confidence:

> *"It was confidence and a sense of pride, confidence in what I do. I don't teach for the money; I teach for the career satisfaction" (Phone Respondent).*

> *"It was a lot of extra work on top of a busy workload and it gave recognition to the fact that what we were doing was valuable and acknowledged that it was good, so that gave me a personal sense of confidence" (Focus Group Respondent).*

The sense of confidence was linked by the following respondent to the current situation in academia:

> *"These are very, very difficult times that we're working in – you know, I was in a middle of an RQR (Research Quality Review) when I discovered your email. So you know these are awful times to work in and it's very, very nice to get a boost and especially for something that is a core thing that we do which is teaching" (Focus Group Respondent).*

Celebration and Peer Relationships

The inclusion of family and friends in the awards ceremony also played a part in shaping the personal value of the awards:

> *"My family and friends finally understood what I do! A lot of people don't really understand what it is that academics do. For family and friends to see what you do is great" (Phone Respondent).*

> *"It was a really big honour. My family were there, and the registrar. I was surprised actually. The ceremony was at Dublin Castle. It was a lovely recognition" (Phone Respondent).*



Absolutely wonderful. A marvellous moment of recognition in my career. It was a great privilege to be presented the award by the President of Ireland. There was a wonderful sense of celebration in that people could bring families"

A number of respondents connected their sense of personal fulfilment at getting the award with their relationships with colleagues and students:

> *"It meant a lot. I like students and I like teaching. I am committed to teaching and to the pastoral care of students. In many ways I see them like I see my own children. A little bit of care and attention can make a huge difference in someone's life at certain points" (Phone Respondent).*

> *"It's a reflection of my colleagues as well and their commitment. And I'm not saying that out of false modesty. Everything I do is supported by them so it was based on the strength of my discipline. The passion I have for my students came through strongly and that gave me a lot of pride. It was as much an award for them as it was for me" (Phone Respondent).*

Validation of Their Approach to Teaching

Many of the award applicants and winners utilise non-traditional methods and approaches to teaching. Several of those interviewed expressed a sense of personal validation that their innovative efforts were recognised publicly:

> *"There's a lot of hierarchy in academia so it was great recognition of doing something seen to be outside of that" (Phone Respondent).*

While the majority of institutions utilise student feedback in order to measure success, several respondents felt that the award, being given from the "outside" offered a more objective evaluation of their work:

> *"Receiving it was massive! I say that cautiously because some people think that you can get too emotional about these things. I'm not comparing it to receiving an Oscar or anything but it really was massive!" (Phone Respondent).*

Career Development

In an extensive review of the Australian National Teaching Awards, Roy Ballantyne et al. (2003) found that while the personal validation of an award is powerful, it was seen by many as a burden that encumbered winners with extra time-consuming duties such as teaching and learning committees, and negative attitudes from colleagues. These formed barriers for some rather than stepping stones in their careers. In the case of the NAIRTL awards scheme the career impact was varied. Many respondents noted definite connection between the award and positive developments in their careers.

Publishing

Two respondents viewed the award as holding significance when they sought prestigious publishers for book projects:

"I recently published a book, co-authored it. It's a book that's at a level for advanced undergraduates. Writing a book is usually at a research level, but this wasn't. It really brought together my research and teaching, and my love for what I teach. When I went looking for a publisher – that's really important because a publisher is like branding for the book – we approached Oxford University Press. The senior editor there googled us both before he spoke to us and said to us, 'I see that you've won this award and that already makes me very interested.'" (Phone Respondent).

"I am writing a book with a colleague that is going to be published by Gill MacMillan Press. The teaching award was very important in securing that contract" (Phone Respondent).

Promotion

> "I was involved in a promotion panel recently and someone going forward for promotion had won a teaching award and that was used as a kind of tiebreaker"

Awards have the potential to impact a person's application for promotion. As one respondent puts it,

"teaching awards can be seen as the death knell of research if they're not recognised in promotion applications, which of course they are. But some people aren't aware of that" (Phone Respondent).

Several respondents directly connected the award with successful applications while others speculated that it could have a positive impact in future applications.

"One thing that comes to mind is in relation to benchmarks in terms of various categories of staff. It definitely had an impact in my application for senior lecturer" (Phone Respondent).

"We had a senior lecturer promotion board recently. It's a very long process. I got promoted to senior lecturer. There is no doubt whatsoever that my teaching scores were bolstered by the award. In the points system you get points for national engagement, institutional engagement, etc. There is no doubt whatsoever that it's a factor" (Phone Respondent).

Leadership Roles



> "Recognition by peers; very often I am the person they ask as a sounding board for new teaching ideas, asking for input"

There is no doubt that award winners have much to offer in terms of teaching and learning. Indeed, a number of successful applicants were already involved in teaching and learning initiatives in their institutions. For some winners their level of involvement saw an increase following receipt of the award. Within their institutions, several awardees were called upon to serve and even chair teaching and learning committees. Often the recognition of them as experts who have something unique to contribute to the enhancement of research, teaching and learning went beyond their own departments and faculties. Invitations came from other departments and schools too; several awardees were invited to deliver presentations and workshops, and to chair related committees.

"I'm on the teaching and learning committee for my school. I've been trying to encourage my

colleagues to engage more with the teaching and learning programmes here. That is definitely aiding the school and our discipline. There is much more systematic structures to how we engage with students" (Phone Respondent).

Outreach

The interviews reveal that the recognition of award winners does not just come from within their institutions. Several awardees spoke about being invited to deliver talks, workshops, and lectures outside of Ireland:

"I have been invited to teach in India, and there have been many invites to collaborate with colleagues" (Phone Respondent).

"I did meet someone at a UK conference and she recognised my name and asked me to go over there to give a workshop to graduate students" (Phone Respondent).

One respondent showed how the teaching award was able to dismantle the perceived socio-academic barriers between universities and IoTs:

"Quite often universities treat IOTs as second-hand. Having a NAIRTL award meant I was included. I was invited to be on interview panels. It was university recognition of what I do: "she knows what she's doing so we'll let her do this" (Phone Respondent).

Teaching Practice

"I began to think more about the connection between research and teaching. The award confirmed it for me. It encouraged me to do it even further and to connect my own research with my teaching, and I did that with a degree of activism"

A number of awardees stated that the award influenced their approach to their teaching practice, causing them to reflect more on their methods, focus more on the integration of research, teaching and learning, as well as encouraging them to become more knowledgeable of the literature around teaching and learning in their discipline:

"It reaffirmed that there needs to be a close alignment between the silos of research and teaching" (Email Respondent).

"Our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes have undergone a review. I was chair of the design team. The notion of integrating research, teaching and learning is something we've moved towards" (Phone Respondent).

Age

Age is a factor when it comes to measuring the career impact of any award or honour. In the case of the NAIRTL awards scheme, two respondents stated that they felt little or no professional impact due to being close to retirement at the time they were awarded:

"My career development wasn't affected really. I was around 60 when I got the award and retired recently" (Phone Respondent).

"Professionally I don't think it had a major impact probably because I'm too old, too close to retirement" (Focus Group Respondent).

Some awardees noted no positive impacts, attributing this to attitudes towards teaching and champions of good practice in teaching within their institutions. One respondent stated that "you can be viewed as just a university teacher" indicating that a person's research reputation can suffer if too much significance is placed on their role as an educator (Email Respondent). Another respondent received an email from a senior staff member in which the



"It allowed me to do things I couldn't do otherwise. There are lots of funds for research projects but if somebody has an interest in teaching there isn't much in the way of funding, so the cash prize was important"

awardee was "berated" and told that "the award was for the course, rather than for teaching and research" (Email Respondent).

Prize Money

The NAIRTL award included a €5,000 prize and awardees were allowed to spend this fund as they wished as their departmental teaching and learning budget. The majority of uses to which the funds were put include travel, further study, equipment, professional memberships and networking. A number of awardees also used the money to fund doctoral students and higher educational assistants.

Lack of Funding for Educational Projects

Mary Fitzpatrick and Sarah Moore note that "the introduction of an award system could be a useful route to justifying the allocation of more resources to professional development support, particularly at times of fiscal rectitude" (2013, 9). Indeed, several awardees noted that there is a dearth of funding for educational projects:

> *"If you go looking for grants, big proper grants that you can really do significant study with, it's really hard to get a grant for educational-focused research" (Focus Group Respondent).*

> *"It allowed me to do things I couldn't do otherwise. There are lots of funds for research projects but if somebody has an interest in teaching there isn't much in the way of funding, so the cash prize was important" (Phone Respondent).*

Supporting Professional Development

The prize money from the NAIRTL award went some way towards filling that gap in funding for those who received it:

> *"I spent it as best I could: professional memberships, conference attendance, an online course in online teaching, a SEDA summer school which was absolutely fabulous – I couldn't have afforded it otherwise. Then I went on to do a SEDA online course" (Phone Respondent).*

> *"You could spend time abroad. I went on sabbatical and even just sitting in on lectures in the U.S. was great to see how different it is over there. You could bring in guest lectures. With €5,000 you could bring in a few and everyone would do something different" (Phone Respondent).*

Several awardees stated the importance of spending the money on something that would have lasting impact:

> *"You want something that will cause a ripple effect. I think if people are encouraged to interact with other educators nationally and even internationally that may be helpful" (Phone Respondent).*

One awardee used it for classroom equipment and was pleased that "the students are very enthusiastic" about it and had even formed a group based on the form of teaching introduced by the use of said equipment (Phone Respondent).

Selection Process

Awardees can offer unique insights into the experience of the application process. Few reviews of awards schemes focus on this key area. Information gained from this can be of benefit to NAIRTL and other funding bodies when developing awards schemes in the future.

Time Commitment

Several awardees noted that the amount of work required for the NAIRTL application was less than their institutional awards schemes:

> *"If anything the bigger application was the institutional application. What I saw with NAIRTL was that you had to distil it down and think about key issues in a national statement" (Phone Respondent).*

> *"The national award wasn't as much work as the local or regional award, but the recognition was greater" (Phone Respondent).*

The Team Experience

For the team applications, a CV was required from each person while the single written statement from the nominee remained the same for teams. Some teams worked together on this section, each giving input and feedback on the application. However, when asked about the experience of the application process, a member of a team application stated:

> *"Because we were a team we wouldn't have had involvement in the application" (Phone Respondent).*

Referees

The inclusion of multiple referees and students in applications was also received favourably by awardees:

> *"I liked the range of referees that was allowed in the application. I also really liked the fact that it welcomed the student voice" (Phone Respondent).*

Encouraging Reflective Practice

A key benefit of this type of award is the opportunity it provides for reflection on teaching practices and philosophies:

> *"It was very worthwhile. It caused me to revisit my teaching portfolio, my own teaching philosophy and my understanding of teaching practices. It was a moment in time in which I could see how an experience I had with an absolutely horrific teacher in primary school informed the passion I have for justice and peace research and how it informed my desire to help teachers recognise their hugely important place in the teaching and learning dynamic" (Phone Respondent).*

One awardee expressed disappointment at the fact that people could not self-nominate:

> *"In a way I think that's discouraging because sometimes great people are not seen. People might not think to nominate them. Ultimately there's an element of self-nomination anyway because of the documentation you have to provide. There's a lot of unsung heroes out there" (Phone Respondent).*

4. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

The national awards system is transitioning towards a two pronged approach: student-led Teaching Hero award scheme and an institutionally or cluster-led Teaching Expert award, offered on alternate years. It is envisaged that the recommendations gathered from the review respondents will help inform the nascent Learning Impact Awards scheme.

In light of this, at the end of each interview respondents were invited to contribute any suggestions for future teaching awards schemes based on their experience with this one. The recommendations relate to various aspects of awards schemes from application processes to the aftermath of the award.

Key recommendations identified by the review participants included:

- maximising the impact of the initiative at a national level through creating a network of award recipients and engaging them in activities to support and enhance teaching and learning
- enhancing the awards process through increasing the diversity on the judging panel, broadening the categories of the awards, and maintaining the current streamlined application process

These suggestions are in line with international good practice and the review of awards schemes in other countries such as the review of the Australian National Awards Scheme by Israel (2006) which suggested that winners should capitalise on their award by showcasing it in various applications, and make a contribution to their discipline by getting involved in teaching and learning committees and relevant projects. Institutions should play an important role in supporting their awardee by encouraging them build networks, get involved in teaching and learning activities, and avoid relegating them to the role of teacher-only.

Furthermore, these recommendations reflect findings by Jennifer Murphy (2008) who suggested that national awards schemes can influence national higher educational agendas.

Applying to a Teaching Awards Scheme

> "You would probably see great systemic change within universities, and their programmes, if there was a reward mechanism that recognised the importance of collaboration within teaching excellence"

In terms of the application process the majority of respondents agreed that it was clear, focused, and required an appropriate amount of documentation without being overly laborious for nominators, nominees, and judges. One respondent stated that the NAIRTL award application was an easier experience in comparison to the requirements of some institutional awards in which "you'd nearly include the kitchen sink" (Phone Respondent). However, some respondents suggested items for inclusion in the application processes of future schemes:

- The submission of a teaching and learning portfolio
- More evidence from students
- Nominations from students
- A stronger emphasis on team applications
- Applicants should have the option of self-nomination.

Judging an Awards Scheme

Another key area that drew a lot of attention from awardees is the judging panel. Awardees sought more diversity on judging panels:

- Panels should include people active in teaching
- Panellists should come from a broad range of disciplines
- Judges should have to apply to become a member of a panel
- People from outside academia should be involved in the judging panel, such as people from industry backgrounds.
- Panels could include representation from among the student body.

> "The judging panel and the selection process should include people active in teaching, not just people from the administrative side of academia. Teaching is hard to judge and what works in one discipline may not work in another. Having a spread of people across disciplines would be good"

Categories of Awards

Some suggestions with regards to categories of awards were made with a view to increasing the inclusivity of awards schemes. These include:

- A student teacher category
- A category that honours research-led teaching

> "Maybe have student educator awards to celebrate PhD educators and to show that good teachers are born early"

The Prize Money

The majority of respondents stated that the prize money was useful and two key suggestions concerning the prize money were made. The first of these relates to the application process with an awardee proposing that a national awards scheme include a section in which nominees indicate how they intend to use the funds:

- Ask applicants to describe how they would use the prize fund
- Give winners the option of multiplying the benefit of the award money by nominating a colleague or peer to take a share of the fund.

> "The key thing is trying to recycle it back into research, teaching and learning. People should be allowed to spend it on things like conferences and equipment to record teaching, in ways to make life easier. "

A Network of Awardees

A number of awardees are keen to use the award as a catalyst for developing a network of award winners. Indeed, this would be similar to the UK National Teaching Fellowship Scheme which invites successful applicants to become members of the Association of National Teaching Fellows. Several awardees noted that, together, they have great potential to make positive impacts on the pursuit of excellence in teaching. Moreover, they stated that they believe that awardees have more to give and see the award as a stepping stone towards making further meaningful contributions to the integration of research, teaching and learning. As one respondent puts it, winning an award could come with the "expectation for winners to give something back." The following are some suggestions of how this proposed network could operate:

- Awardees could be invited to participate in NAIRTL meetings
- Awardees could work together to develop national policies on best practice in teaching and learning
- A network of awardees could operate an advisors system and undertake mentoring roles for the benefit of student and early career teachers
- Awardees could hold semi-regular symposiums to facilitate knowledge exchange, brainstorming and roundtable discussions on the integration of research, teaching and learning
- Winners could become ambassadors for the award and help communicate the importance of integrating research teaching and learning
- Winners could deliver workshops, and talks about their work
- Winners could make short videos in which they discuss teaching practices
- Awardees could team up with other educators to develop teaching and learning resources.

"If you are giving an award once a year to 5 or 6 people you have an excellent community of experts in teaching practice. These people I'm sure would be happy to give advice on best practices in teaching and sharing information. There's a massive pool of untapped resources"

"Harness awards recipients' energies in a focused way. There could be better use of us by NAIRTL for its own agenda which is a very important one. I would have been delighted to be asked to do anything"

5. Conclusion

CONCLUSION

The idea that teaching awards can be part of an evaluative process is not new. Awards have been used internationally as a key measure of teaching quality, and as a method of publicly acknowledging excellence in teaching. Over the course of a five-year scheme, 23 individual awards, 3 team awards, and 2 special commendations were given. With 18 individuals making up the teams, this gives a total of 43 teachers who were recognised and celebrated for their contribution to the integration of research, teaching and learning in Ireland. Of those, 26 agreed to share their stories with us. Based on their feedback we can come to a number of conclusions.

Firstly, the recognition of teaching excellence is essential and welcomed. The widespread acceptance that research often overshadows teaching in terms of one's academic portfolio has not led to any significant redress of that imbalance. However, the presence of a national awards scheme raises the profile of teaching and sends a message that quality of teaching and the integration of research into that teaching and learning is valued and supported. Thus, teaching in higher education needs continued support, internally, regionally and nationally through awards and schemes that value, encourage and publicise such efforts.

Secondly, teaching awards are an integral part of evaluating, rewarding, celebrating and promoting excellence in teaching. Every single respondent noted a deep sense of personal achievement, pride and confidence upon winning the award. Furthermore, the value of the award often extended from the personal to the professional, with a significant proportion of respondents claiming tangible benefits from securing publishing contracts with highly regarded presses to gaining promotions. Many awardees also participated and led committees, research projects and teaching and learning initiatives stemming from their identity as a NAIRTL award winner.

Moreover, the prize fund given with the award holds value that goes beyond the financial. This allowed awardees to explore areas of teaching and learning for the benefit of their students, their institutions and themselves. From travel and networking, to curriculum development, from materials to professional development activities, the fund was clearly seen as unique opportunity to engage with education-focused opportunities.

Finally, it came as no surprise that the awardees who responded to our call emphasised in their interviews the importance of the student voice in any teaching and learning initiative. These awardees, who are dedicated to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge from research to teaching also have much to offer. This review is not just about recording the impact of the awards scheme itself, but emphasising the impact that such individuals have had and continue to have in higher education. Their recommendations related to implementing national teaching awards are a welcome contribution at a time when the national recognition of excellence in teaching continues to gain momentum through the Learning Impact Awards of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

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7. Appendices

APPENDIX A: National Awards for Excellence in Teaching - Selection Criteria & Nomination Process

Selection Criteria

The NAIRTL National Awards for Excellence in Teaching aim to recognise teachers who show a high level of impact and engagement in teaching and student learning.

Applications should display evidence of sustained commitment to teaching excellence, supporting learning and an inspirational and/or influential scholarship within or beyond the institution.

As a general guideline, criteria for assessment of applications may include:

Approaches to teaching:

Evidence of quality teaching with imaginative and stimulating approaches as follows:

- research-led: the curriculum is informed by the research interests of the teachers;
- research-oriented: the curriculum emphasises the processes by which knowledge is produced;
- research-based: the curriculum includes activities in which students actually conduct research, through projects and other course work; or
- research-informed: the curriculum is informed by systematic enquiry into the teaching and learning process itself

Student learning:

Evidence of promoting and enhancing the student learning experience should be conveyed strongly as should contribution to the development of students' critical thinking skills, analytical skills and scholarly values; evidence of teaching strategies that engage students in active and self-directed learning; use of teaching strategies which recognise and value a wide range of learning styles and promote student success.

Assessment of learning:

Innovation in assessment methodology; approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning.

Curriculum design:

Effective and innovative design and delivery of courses; development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field.

Collegiality:

Evidence of supporting colleagues and influencing support for student learning through demonstrating impact and engagement; enthusiasm for and commitment to collegiality by influencing, stimulating and encouraging best practice amongst colleagues; membership of leading educational organisations.

Sustained commitment:

Commitment to on-going professional development with regard to integration of research, teaching and learning; evidence of continued professional development and reflective approaches.

Challenge of diversity:

Evidence of recognising, supporting and embracing diversity of learning needs in the student population.

These criteria are not exhaustive and should in no way limit applications for an award.

Selection Committee

The selection committee is expected to include a nominated member from each of the following groups:

- Irish Universities Association
- Institutes of Technology Ireland
- NAIRTL International Advisory Board
- NAIRTL Management Board
- Union of Students of Ireland
- Previous NAIRTL Award Recipient

Nomination Process

Nominations will be made by a member of senior management within the institution e.g. President, Registrar, Vice-President, Head of School, or equivalent.

Nominators should prepare:

Nomination form - one per application (1,000 words max). Testimonials should be on institutional headed paper and signed by the nominator.

Nominees should prepare:

- Two testimonials from peers (500 words max per testimonial). For team nominations, the two peer testimonials should relate to the entire team.
- CV from nominee (1,000 words max). For team nominations, one CV per team member is required.
- Written statement from nominee (1,000 words max). For team nominations, submit only one written statement per team.

Up to three nominations are invited from each institution and these should be forwarded in the same envelope to NAIRTL by the person(s) responsible for co-ordinating the nominations.

Nomination Format

The completed application should include:

- completed nomination form (from NAIRTL website)
- two peer testimonials
- the nominee's CV (or team members' CVs)
- a written statement from the nominee or team

- Paper must be A4 and should be plain white
- Note the word and/or page limits for each nomination type
- Margins should be at least 2cm with clear paragraph definition
- Arial font size 11 point is recommended
- Nominations must be single sided, corner stapled and unbound
- The complete application will not exceed 14 pages

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions

What impact do you think the NAIRTL Awards Scheme has had on the recognition of teaching excellence in your institution? And within Higher Education in general?

How was the reaction from colleagues, family, and friends?

In what way was your success celebrated beyond the initial news and awards ceremony?

What in your opinion are the main benefits of this awards scheme?

Do you perceive there to be any disadvantages?

What did you think of the selection process?

Are there any innovative ways that you could spend prize money from such awards?

Can you describe what receiving a teaching award meant to you personally?

Can you describe what receiving a NAIRTL teaching award meant to you professionally?

In what way has receiving this award impacted on your career development?

What kind of doors were opened by the award?

Did your faculty/department/school encourage you to play a greater role in the integration of research, teaching and learning following your award?

If you have been active in any new leadership roles in your institution since your award in what area has this been and at what level?

Can you comment on whether or not the award affirmed or even changed your views on and/or approaches to the integration of research, teaching and learning?

In what way did receiving this award effect your sense of career satisfaction?

Given that research profiles often seem to overshadow teaching profiles in academia, do you think there's a special sense of recognition attached to receiving a teaching award for third level education?

In what way did the award effect your commitment to the integration of research, teaching and learning?

Is there any way that the scheme (or future schemes) could be improved?

APPENDIX C: Focus Group - Guiding Questions

Introductions

- What are you? (i.e. teacher, researcher, chemist, nurse etc)

Baseline questions:

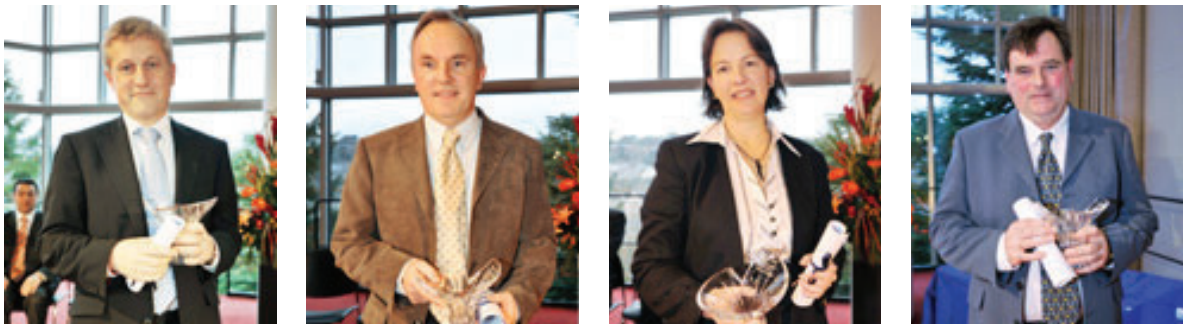
- How did winning the award impact your career trajectory?
- What kind of personal meaning did the award hold for you?
- Have you undertaken any leadership roles in the area of teaching and learning since your award?
- How did you find the method and process of applying? You may wish to consider issues such as amount and validity of documentation required, etc.

Discussion:

- It is widely accepted that there is still a tension between research and teaching in academia. Does an award such as the NAIRTL scheme, which focused on the integration of research, teaching and learning, have a greater role to play in terms of not just boosting the profile of teaching excellence, but also in merging the two practices of research and teaching?
- The NAIRTL Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Teaching Heroes Awards operate using very different selection processes. Do you have any comments about these?
- Part of the focus of this study is to garner any practical suggestions for future awards schemes. Do you have any suggestions? You may wish to consider the selection process, the prize, the publicity, and any follow-up activities.
- One suggestion that has come up in the phone interviews is that these national awards schemes reveal a pool of experts who could be used as a resource for creating and raising standards of excellence in teaching at third level, and developing best practice policies. It was suggested that perhaps a national network of award winners could be formed and out of that could come activities like training and advice sessions and seminars could come about. Is this a possibility? How could we make this happen? Are there any barriers to this? If so, how can we overcome them? Can we use new technologies and social media to facilitate discussions and online workshops?

Appendix D: Recipients of the NAIRTL National Awards for Excellence in Teaching





Top Image (L-R): Nuala Walshe, Siobhan Murphy, Angela Flynn and Irene Hartigan
Lower Image (L-R): Peter Cantillon, Ray Murphy, Sylvia Draper and Sean O'Leary

2008 Award Winners	
Professor Peter Cantillon	National University of Ireland, Galway
Professor Sylvia Draper	Trinity College Dublin
Dr Ray Murphy	National University of Ireland, Galway
Ms Irene Hartigan	University College Cork
Ms Siobhan Murphy	University College Cork
Ms Nuala Walshe	University College Cork
Mr Sean O'Leary	Cork Institute of Technology



Front row (L-R): Helena Lenihan, Marian McCarthy, President McAleese, Susan Bergin, Bettie Higgs. Back row (L-R): Sarah Rawe, Aisling McCluskey, Michael Seery, Amanda Gibney, Claire McDonnell and Christine O'Connor.

2009 Award Winners	
Dr Susan Bergin	Maynooth University
Dr Amanda Gibney	University College Dublin
Dr Helena Lenihan	University of Limerick
Dr Aisling McCluskey	National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Claire McDonnell	Dublin Institute of Technology
Dr Christine O'Connor	Dublin Institute of Technology
Dr Sarah Rawe	Dublin Institute of Technology
Dr Michael Seery	Dublin Institute of Technology

2009 Special Commendation	
Dr Bettie Higgs	University College Cork
Dr Marian McCarthy	University College Cork



L-R: Conor Carroll, Eilish McLoughlin, Aine Hyland, NAIRTL Awards Programme Chair, Dagmar Stengel, the Hon. Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness, Patricia Kennon, and Ann O'Shea.

2010 Award Winners	
Dr Conor Carroll	University of Limerick
Dr Patricia Kennon	Froebel College of Education
Dr Elish McLoughlin	Dublin City University
Dr Ann O'Shea	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Dr Dagmar Stengel	National University of Ireland, Galway



L-R: Thomas Farrell, Jennifer Schweppe, Áine Hyland, NAIRTL Awards Programme Chair, Minister Ruairi Quinn, Marion Palmer, John Hennessey, HEA, Frances McCormack, and Kathleen Horgan.

2011 Award Winners	
Dr Thomas Farrell	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
Dr Kathleen Horgan	Mary Immaculate College
Dr Frances McCormack	National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Marion Palmer	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology
Ms Jennifer Schweppe	University of Limerick



L-R: Kevin Nolan, Seán Ó Foghlú, Department of Education and Skills, Liam Leonard, Martin Fellenz, Paula Kenny, John Morrissey, Jessica Mannion, Tony Ryan, Maresa McGee, Fergus Timmons, Áine Hyland, NAIRTL Awards Programme Chair, Kevin Sludds (back), Marcus Hopkins (front), Sinead Meade (front), Sinead Barrins (back), Paul van Kampen, and Grace Neville, Director of NAIRTL.

2012 Award Winners	
Dr Paul Van Kampen	Dublin City University
Dr John Morrissey	National University of Ireland, Galway
Dr Martin Fellenz	Trinity College Dublin
Professor Tony Ryan	University College Cork
Professor Kevin B Nolan	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
Mr Fergus Timmons	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Dr Kevin Sludds	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Ms Sinead Barrins	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Ms Finola Colgan-Carey	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Dr Marcus Hopkins	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Dr Paula Kenny	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Dr Liam Leonard	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Ms Jessica Mannion	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Ms Maresa McGee	Institute of Technology, Sligo
Ms Sinead Meade	Institute of Technology, Sligo

About this publication

The Irish National Awards for Excellence in Teaching in Higher Education ran for a total of five years, during which time forty-three higher education staff members across a wide range of Higher Education institutions and disciplinary backgrounds were recognised and celebrated for their contribution to the integration of research, teaching and learning in Ireland.

This publication traces the impact the NAIRTL Awards on the career trajectories and teaching practice of the award holders. It emphasizes the sustained contribution of the recipients to Irish higher education, and gathers together their recommendations regarding the development of national schemes such as the nascent Learning Impact Awards of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

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