Lord Dearing Award for Excellence in the Learning Environment

In 2017, the University made an additional single award to an outstanding school or department. This award is in addition to the existing awards for excellence made to individuals and to teams.

The award recognises a school or department where efforts to achieve excellence in teaching and in the student experience have been embedded across all programme teams and staff groupings.

Heads of School or Department are invited to self-nominate their unit with the submission of a short statement (maximum 500 words). The selection of the award-winner will be by Teaching and Learning Board (chaired by the PVC Education and the Student Experience) and the award will be announced at Senate and publicised.

Schools and departments with a presence on more than one campus should reflect this in their nomination.

Heads of School and Department wishing to submit a nomination, may choose to use the following criteria as guidance (noting that it is not expected that all areas would be mentioned).

Academic environment

- Strategic goals: the school/department has a Teaching and Learning strategy which is developed collaboratively with staff and students and can be clearly seen to drive development activity.

- Staff commitment: the school/department demonstrates its commitment to its students by ensuring staff are accessible and by providing opportunities for staff/student engagement beyond formal contact time.

- Staff-student collaboration: staff engage students actively as partners in the enhancement of the learning environment. This can be via Students as Change Agents, via LCFs or via specific school/department initiatives.

- Research-engaged teaching: the school/department provides opportunities for students to access or contribute to staff research

- Student outcomes: students achieve high standards as reflected in degree outcomes and graduate destinations.
Social environment

- Well-being: The learning environment is experienced as supportive and inclusive. The personal tutoring system works well and peer mentoring is promoted and accessible.
- Physical space: the school/department prioritises the provision of effective space for formal and informal learning.
- Identity: the school/department makes efforts to create a sense of belonging and identity for students and staff, e.g. in supporting student societies

Challenge and development

- Commitment to development: the school/department engages proactively in teaching enhancement via regular and focused staff development involving a good number of teaching staff.
- Evaluation: the school/department routinely evaluates its provision, responds to student feedback and provides feedback.
- Teacher development: teaching staff are encouraged and supported to develop themselves as scholarly teachers; school/departmental leadership promotes the NRS, gives an active role to its Fellows/Senior/Principal Fellows and National Teaching Fellows; appropriate support is provided to staff undertaking the PGCHE, with research projects routinely being used to inform local development.