

The Gilian Sherwin Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching

About the Award

Since 1989, the UVic Alumni Association has been pleased to honour the outstanding level of teaching offered by the university's faculty and instructors. We are proud of our role in recognizing UVic teaching of the highest caliber.

The Gilian Sherwin Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching bears the name of a former senior lab instructor in the Geography department who, for 21 years, was a strong supporter of better teaching at the university, an active member of the advisory committee of the Division of Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation (LTSI), and a regular participant in the training of teaching assistants. This award is a tribute to Gilian Sherwin's commitment to the art of teaching and the influence she had on many students and colleagues.

The Gilian Sherwin Alumni Award is the highest honour for teaching excellence at the University of Victoria for Sessional Lecturers, Lab Instructors, and Senior Lab Instructors.

Recognition

One award is presented each year. The award includes a gift and a \$2,000 cash prize. Portraits of award winners may be displayed on campus.

Eligibility

Who can be nominated?

This category is open to all Sessional Lecturers, Lab Instructors, and Senior Lab Instructors.

Nominees must

- have taught for a minimum of three years within the last five years prior to nomination at the University of Victoria, currently hold a sessional position, and anticipate continuing in that position for the next academic year;
- have taught
 - a) a minimum of 4.5 units in all of the three years (or);
 - b) have held a .5 FTE instructional position for 8 months in all of the three years, (or);
 - c) be able to substantiate that he/she has had instructional responsibilities equivalent to either of the former requirements in all of the three years (a list of courses taught is required); and,
- be the only nomination from their academic unit (i.e., only one nomination per academic unit will be considered).

Who can nominate?

The nomination is coordinated by the nominator(s) and the nominee. Nominations are to be submitted jointly by

- a UVic student or former student (i.e., not currently enrolled in a course with the nominee), as well as; and,
- a fellow faculty member colleague and/or the Department or School Chair.

If the Department Chair is not a co-nominator, the Chair must review and sign to endorse the nomination.

For those nominations that are not selected as the recipient, nominations will be held and eligible for review for a period of three years. During the three year period, nominees will be asked if they want their nomination package to stand for the upcoming deadline and will also be asked to update their nomination package as per the current guidelines.

Award Administration and Process

The Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost administers the award on behalf of the Alumni Association.

Selection Committee:

- Chair, Vice-President Academic and Provost (or designate);
- Executive Director, Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation (or designate);
- Two Regular Faculty Members, Artists in Residence, or Librarians (usually including a previous recipient of a University of Victoria Teaching Award);
- University of Victoria Students' Society Chair (or designate);
- Graduate Students' Society President (or designate);
- Chair, Grants and Awards Committee, Alumni Association (or designate); the Alumni Association representative will be a member of the Alumni Board (voting member); and,
- Member, Grants and Awards Committee, Alumni Association (or designate); this second Alumni Association representative will be a non-voting member-in-training.

Details of the committee's discussions and deliberations will be held in camera.

Criteria

As the highest honour for excellence in teaching at the University of Victoria for these categories of educators, the Gilian Sherwin Award recognizes both Teaching Excellence and Educational Leadership. Note that the information provided for this Award must focus on the nominee's time at the University of Victoria.

Teaching Excellence (75%)

The nominee will demonstrate teaching excellence.

Attributes of teaching excellence may include:

- Student-centred learning: Teaching practices that actively engage students in the learning process and are focused on student learning outcomes;
- Teaching enhancement and creativity in improving student learning as evidenced by reflection, continuous improvement of teaching practice (e.g., new teaching methods within disciplinary context, learning-centred lesson design/redesign, effective assignment development, incorporation of active learning strategies and educational technologies, formative assessment);
- Innovative course design/redesign and engagement in curriculum development;

- Incorporation of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) research into teaching practices;
- Mentoring of students within and beyond the physical or virtual classroom/lab; and,
- Collaborative approaches to teaching practice (e.g., collegiality, teaching observations, incorporating feedback from peers and students, and/or teaching assistants (TA)).

This list of attributes of teaching excellence is not intended to be exhaustive but to provide some examples of how a nominee may demonstrate teaching excellence.

Educational Leadership (25%)

The nominee will demonstrate excellence in educational leadership associated with their role at the University of Victoria. Evidence may be drawn from activities within UVic, and/or in community-engaged learning and teaching, and/or the professional discipline/field of study. The following are examples of evidence of educational leadership:

- Offering workshops for colleagues on some aspect of teaching improvement or inquiry both in one's own discipline and beyond (for example through the LTSI);
- Sharing public and peer-reviewed teaching and learning discoveries, for example, through presenting at conferences in the field or in higher education more generally, publishing in academic journals;
- Being actively involved with learning and teaching related committees;
- Making contributions to curriculum development and reviews;
- Being involved with organizations/associations to promote teaching excellence;
- Obtaining grants in support of a teaching improvement or query;
- Actively engaged in SoTL research to further develop knowledge of learning and teaching;
- Being invited as a plenary speaker or being called on to speak within the community or through media on teaching and learning matters;
- Obtaining a grant for professional development in teaching; and,
- Grants in support of teaching improvement or inquiry.

The list of Educational Leadership activities is not intended to be exhaustive but to provide examples of how educational leadership may be demonstrated.

Nomination Dossier

- The dossier must be submitted as an **electronic pdf file not exceeding 30 pages**. Note that the Cover page, Table of Contents, and Nomination Form pages are not counted;
- The dossier will be created using a standard 12-point font and be single spaced with one-inch margins;
- Each page must be legible and numbered;
- All materials to be reviewed must be contained within the 30 page limit. Please do not include URLs or materials besides those requested. The Selection Committee will not review them; and,
- Only dossiers that meet these guidelines will be forwarded to the Selection Committee.

1.0 Cover Page and Table of Contents with page numbers for each item. This is mandatory. The additional use of section dividers is optional and will not be included in the page count.

2.0 Nomination Form

- 2.1 *Award*. Select Gilian Sherwin Award for Excellence in Teaching.
- 2.2 *Nominee Contact information*. The nominee's contact information must be included.
- 2.3 *Nominator Contact information*. Both the faculty member colleague and the student who are formally nominating this nominee must include their contact information.
- 2.4 *Chair Contact Information*. Please provide contact information for the nominee's department or school chair. Signature of chair is required at the time of submission.
- 2.5 *Nominee's Education and Other Relevant Experience*. List all educational certificates, diplomas, and degrees acquired and for each one the granting institution. List other experiences that potentially contributed to the nominee's teaching excellence.
- 2.6 *Employment History*. Begin with nominee's current position. Include dates for each appointment and name of department, school or division.
- 2.7 *Teaching Awards*. If relevant, list any teaching awards the Nominee has received beginning with those awarded at the University of Victoria. Awards from other institutions can also be listed. Include the date that each award was given.

3.0 Letter from the Nominators (signed and dated)

The letter from the Nominators serves as an introduction of the Nominee to the selection committee. The role of the nominators is to be familiar with the entire dossier and to jointly write the nomination letter. The letter should provide a comprehensive overview and address the evidence in the nomination package specific to the award criteria. This letter highlights the most persuasive evidence and guides the reviewers toward what to look for and where to find it. This letter of endorsement clearly communicates how the University of Victoria benefits from the Nominee's distinctive contributions. The most compelling letter evokes and reinforces a vivid, three-dimensional sense of the Nominee and thus is one of the most important documents in a successful dossier.

Please note: Opinions about a candidate's excellence are most credible when expressed by others providing clear and specific examples with evidence of outcomes.

4.0 Statement of Teaching Philosophy

The Statement of Teaching Philosophy is prepared by the Nominee and must be current (within the last two years). An effective philosophy statement is personal and genuine. It distinguishes the Nominee's approaches to learning and teaching. It provides a conceptual framework that explains the values, principles, and goals that underpin the Nominee's teaching decisions and actions. The Nominee does not provide examples or evidence in this statement; the opportunity to do so occurs elsewhere in the dossier. This statement is usually no more than two pages in length.

5.0 Statement of Effective Teaching Strategies from the Nominee

The Nominee also writes this section (updated within the last two years). It is often presented as a narrative and it illustrates how the Nominee's philosophy is informed by the teaching decisions and actions enacted in the teaching process. The Nominee typically provides the rationale behind the strategies and provides evidence of their effectiveness (e.g., what worked, what did not work). It is advisable to link these teaching strategies to student learning and learning outcomes. This statement is typically three to five pages.

6.0 Evidence of Teaching Excellence

Identifying Teaching Excellence: What has the nominee done to further student learning in his/her courses? What evidence is there of excellent teaching? What contributions has the nominee made beyond the classroom or laboratory? How much and what kind of contact does the nominee have with students?

6.1 Courses Taught. Provide a table with all courses taught in the past five years. Column headings are to include course number and title, number of units, term taught, class size, and response rate. Include a statement of the normal teaching load for faculty in the Nominee's department. If there were any breaks in teaching then it is acceptable to include teaching activities beyond this 5-year history; for example, a 6-month study leave or personal leave means that teaching history should be included for a 5-year 6-month period. Here is a sample table:

Course Number and Title (Units)	Term	Class Size	Response Rate
ENGL 146: The Literature of Our Era (1.5)	Fall 2015	48	50%

6.2 Examples of Course Materials. Here is the ideal opportunity for the Nominee to illustrate the link between teaching philosophy, strategy, and application. The Nominee should choose two to three unique examples (e.g., a novel assignment, a series of lab experiments, exceptional fieldwork, innovative lecturing) that support these links. A copy of a course outline or major assignment is, by itself, insufficient. The Nominee must explain explicitly how each example links philosophy and strategy or how it enhances teaching excellence.

6.3 *Statement illustrating Course Development/Course Design.* The Nominee must provide evidence for excellence in the design of no more than two recently developed or re-designed courses. The Nominee must describe the rationale for and process used to develop and refine the course. If the course was successful because of design innovation, explain what was unique and effective. It is useful for the Nominee to link the new design to the statement of teaching philosophy and/or strategies, to student learning outcomes and to articulate effective assessment methods (e.g., assignments).

6.4 *Two Graphic or Tabular Summaries of Data.* Identify two courses and attach the complete quantitative Course Experience Surveys for each course. Where possible, these courses should be distinct from each other and offered at different levels in the program (e.g., 100, 200, etc.).

Note 1: Ideally the two courses selected should be very distinct from each other. However, if an instructor only teaches multiple sections of the same course (e.g., a 100- or 200-level course) then select two sections that are unique, for example, one 3-hour evening section taught 1x/week vs. one section taught for 1 hour 3x/week.

Note 2: Usually, dossiers should not rely entirely on feedback from classes with fewer than ten students. If small classes are the norm for the Nominee or department, or the classes are graduate student classes, please explain how the numerical data and comments were collected and how they are significant.

6.5 *Two Independent peer reviews of teaching within two years of the nomination are required for consideration of the nomination.* Peer review of teaching is integral to demonstrating teaching excellence. Peer reviews must be based on observation of teaching (physical and/or virtual¹ class) and meet the standards for peer review of teaching. They must be peer reviews of two distinct courses by two separate individuals. At least one of the two peer reviews must come from a faculty colleague within the Nominee's department. The second review may come from a faculty member or a person in a teaching leadership role inside or outside of the department. The peer reviewer is encouraged to consider using [UVic's Suggested Peer Review Process for Teaching Assessment](#) for this evaluation.

6.6 *Two letters of support from former students addressing teaching excellence. Student feedback is integral to assessing teaching excellence. These two letters of support are in addition to the letter of nomination from the student nominator.* Remember: please do not ask for letters from current students. Students are vulnerable by definition even when they express a strong, unprompted desire to play an active role in supporting the nomination.

Student letters of support are to be independent from one another. Each letter of support ideally will represent a different course. The best letters are authentic and specific including concrete examples from the student's own experience. The letter should address the Nominee's teaching, identifying ways in which the Nominee has been effective in bringing about learning. Elements might include: commentary on student engagement, support for student learning, value of the courses to their overall program, effective teaching strategies (be specific), creativity in course design, teaching inspired by research, student mentoring, and innovative and/or effective assignments.

¹ Virtual classroom refers to teaching online using educational technologies. Observation can be done through reviewing CourseSpaces sites, postings, discussions and commentary, etc.

6.7 *Other evidence of teaching excellence.* Many instructors demonstrate excellence and commitment to teaching in innovative, radical, or novel ways. This is your opportunity to demonstrate innovative teaching excellence and the impact on student learning. Examples could include (but are not limited to) experiential learning, facilitating opportunities for community engagement, land-based learning . . . the list is endless.

7.0 *Statement of and Evidence for Educational Leadership*

The Nominee writes a brief Educational Leadership Statement illustrating how a Nominee’s ideas, knowledge, and passion have been implemented beyond the classroom. Again, as with the Philosophy Statement, this should be current (within the last two years). The statement should include the Nominee’s personal understanding of “leadership” and why it is defined this way. Effective leadership can be evident on multiple levels: within the university, in the community and beyond. At its most persuasive, educational leadership goes beyond the Nominee’s assigned duties, transcending the confines of the home institution and even the discipline. It makes a difference through deep and significant change.

When completing each sub-section the Nominee should provide factual and explicit examples to support the narrative. The Nominee could highlight specific projects, evidence of recognition, assessments of impact, and other supporting documentation. It is NOT appropriate to include a long list of workshops extrapolated from a curriculum vitae; The Nominee should, instead, provide summarized evidence of how these workshops supported the key points presented in the Leadership Statement.

In providing this evidence, keep in mind the significance of the Nominee’s role. Serving on committees and attending teaching workshops provide only modest support for a case. But creating campus or national initiatives, or inspiring changes internationally is more persuasive. Explain why something is important and how it makes a difference, and what the Nominee did to make that difference. To strengthen the nomination, evidence may be provided in the following areas:

7.1 *Within the University of Victoria.* Educational leadership may include sitting on university committees but exceptional leadership goes beyond this. The Nominee may have introduced major program initiatives or student awards or been an exceptional mentor to new faculty. Give specifics.

7.2 *Community-Engaged Learning and Teaching.* Perhaps the Nominee engaged the community in unique ways, such as, initiating community forums, being involved in media on social or public issues, or may have facilitated connections with community agencies or other educational institutions on topical issues or in an advocacy role.

7.3 *Disciplinary/Field of Study.* Exceptional leaders create and offer development to colleagues through their disciplines or professional organizations to foster and share fresh ideas and knowledge. They inspire others through their writing and through their advocacy because they are deeply invested in teaching. They create and support change in the way that teaching is undertaken, understood, and respected.

7.4 *Other evidence of educational leadership.* Many instructors demonstrate excellence in educational leadership through novel ways. This section provides an opportunity to include examples or evidence of innovative educational leadership.

8.0 Summary Statement from Nominee (150 words)

In the nominee's own words: What does excellence in teaching and educational leadership mean to you and why do you see yourself as a strong candidate for the Gilian Sherwin Alumni Award?

9.0 Nominator's Summary/Conclusion (150 word limit)

The nominator(s) brings the whole dossier together (with quotes as appropriate) by providing a persuasive summation that, if successful, may potentially be used as the foundation for the award citation.