

AAUT VIDEO SERIES:

2021 AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE OF THE YEAR (EARLY CAREER):

Dr NICK BROWN

INTRODUCTION

Hi there. My name is Nick Brown. I'm a teaching focused academic in the School of Engineering at RMIT University. I'm going to speak to you today from Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations about my experience with applying for winning the 2021 Australian Award for University Teaching.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ASPECTS OF YOUR TEACHING BEING RECOGNISED FOR THIS AWARD?

The teaching award recognises my approaches in engaging engineering students predominantly in things like social justice, poverty alleviation, and so making that part of standard engineering practice and also doing that multiple different levels, some of my teaching approach means that I get to work in a more intro to engineering course where we have 1100 students and I've managed to work with a team of about 31 teachers to ensure that students are engaging with that kind of material all the way to later year courses where I'd be working with 25,30 students on some kind of experiential learning or service learning course where we're in Fiji, Timor, Cambodia, places like that, learning again about the application of engineering in humanitarian contexts. And I think that it was a nice balance about talking about that breadth of work as well which was something that I put into the application.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH TEACHING AWARDS APPLICATIONS?

I definitely had a bit of success going into that AAUT award application. I probably wouldn't, in fact, I was even considering, obviously I'm quite glad now, but I was even considering withdrawing from the process. I wasn't too sure about the application, wasn't sure that I've done enough, or wasn't sure to justify it. Obviously, I'm really glad that I did.

And I did get some useful hints and help along the way from so many people who really gave me the nudge and said, "Oh, look, you have done some good stuff. You should at least give it a go". It was definitely boosted by the fact that I won the School of Engineering Award and then the University Early Career Teaching Award as well. So two Early Career Teaching Awards really helped me in framing my application at the AAUT.

The thing that I'd say more than anything else is the fact that going through those different award applications to school and then the university and then finally, the AAUT award was just a great opportunity to reflect on my own teaching practice. I would strongly encourage everyone. I'm sure that everyone does this already. And even if you're not going to actually submit the award or apply, still thinking about reflecting on your teaching practice and gathering evidence to show the impact that that teaching practices have just a really great part of academic practice. And in fact, it's so valuable to me when I then eventually applied for promotion to Senior Lecturer because I pretty much had that teaching session written out already because I've been reflecting on my process so much.

ADVICE FOR FUTURE APPLICATIONS?

For anyone that's an aspiring applicant, I would encourage you to sit down early and do that reflective practice. I've had a couple of people asking me for advice more recently saying like, "hey, how do I show ongoing commitment to X or Y?" And I said, "Well, it's hard to do that. Now. You have to have, if you need to show something, you needed to have done that a few years ago and be continuing with that teaching practice over time". It's definitely about taking a look at what's going on nice and early. Building up that evidence base. Definitely I've tried to allow my applications produce a broad array of evidence. I used quite a lot of quotes maybe overused, some people said too much. I think it's good. I mean, it's worked for me anyway, I find it quite hard to beat myself up and talk about some of the things that I've done. Quotes are great because basically, it's someone else, right, telling you that "hey, you've done a good job for this reason or that reason", or "I really enjoyed this". So just copying and pasting that quote across is a great way to tell your story but using someone else's words,

especially if you're sort of new to writing award application. Definitely collecting quotations, going through student surveys and those kinds of things to understand.

HOW HAS THIS AWARD IMPACTED YOUR CAREER?

The other thing I'd say is that since the award I've actually been asked to sit on other award bodies in the Early Career category that I've noticed by starting to review more applications. I think that's quite strong to talk about that body of work that you're doing and you're trying to afford talking about playing How does teamwork work in this huge course compared with when you're doing it in a very small How do you change your teaching style thing really facilitated base to being maybe more like lecture. A lot of the applications that I have seen so far have sort of been more research papers, talking about a particular aspect of teaching into a real deep level.

Was I think for some of the things or the early career awards, you want to be talking about that breadth of stuff that you've done and there's never enough space to really talk about to a huge degree, having that breadth and bringing in different examples different case studies and so on. It can be really valuable.

My overall thought is just applying for the award meant that I actually stopped a thought about my own teaching practice, as I've transitioned between Early Career and now I very start that Mid-Career process. Reflecting has been really valuable to me and I have been doing more recently I want to build on what I've done over the last few years and start to explore different techniques, different teaching philosophies and start to work on different kinds of courses, try to explore a bit more about my teaching practice.

I wouldn't have done that if I hadn't stopped and actually thought that what I've done, capturing that in an award application. It is a great thing to do as well.

I wish you the best of luck with your own teaching journey and award application.

AAUT CONTACT DETAILS

Click [2022 AAUT Awards](#) for more information.

For any further questions, please contact the Awards Team aaut@rmit.edu.au