



How to Craft a Strong Narrative for an AAUT Application

Presented by:

Dr Joy Whitton, RMIT University

Dr Angela Jones, Edith Cowan University

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MEET THE AAUT TEAM



Professor Angela Carbone – Awards Director

Ms Angeline Sim – Awards Manager

Ms Daniele Patterson – Awards Coordinator

Acknowledgement of Country

On behalf of those present, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are all joining from today. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People of Australia.

Agenda

How to Craft a Strong Narrative:
Dr Joy Whitton

Insights from a past AAUT recipient:
Dr Angela Jones

Q&A

Key dates



Guest Presenters



Dr Joy Whitton
Grants and Awards Advisor
RMIT University



Dr Angela Jones
2024 Program Award & 2023 Citation recipient
UNIPREP Team Lead/AAUTN Mentor
Edith Cowan University

Crafting a Strong Narrative for an AAUT Teaching award 2025

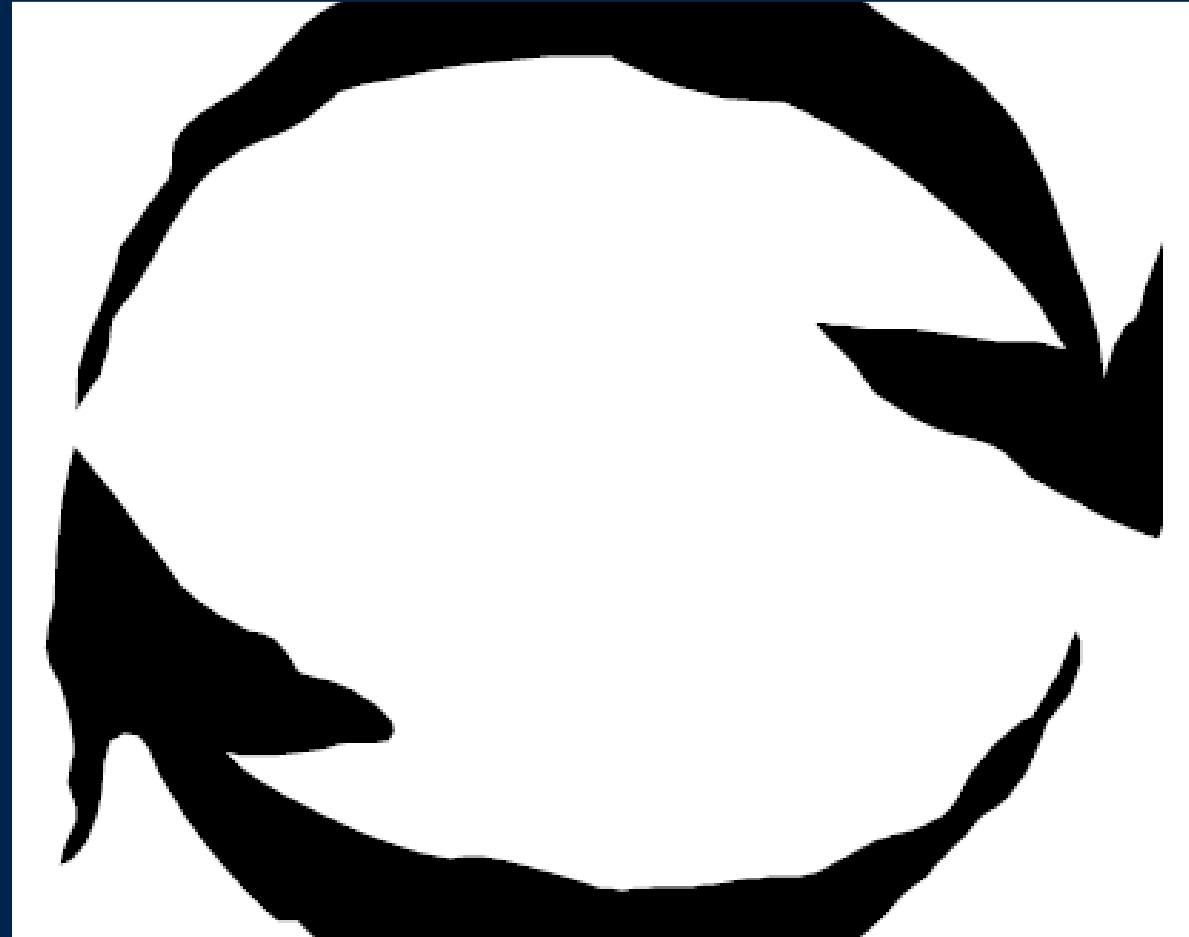
Dr Joy Whitton



Showing iterative improvement

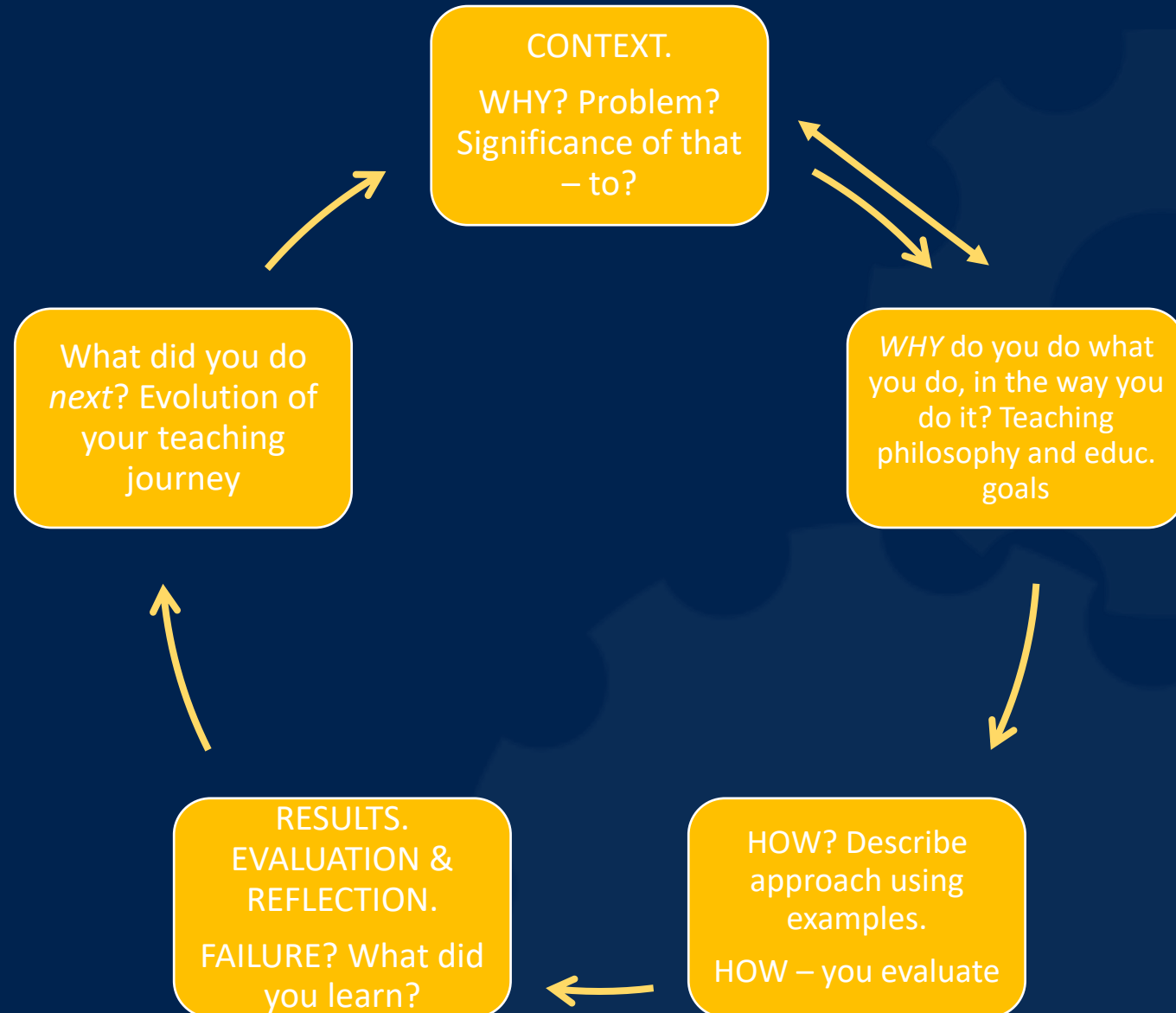


- **Context -What needed improvement?**
- **My educational goals**
- **What informed my approach?**
- **What I did**
- **How will I know if my teaching approaches had the impact/outcomes I predicted? What evidence to collect on the effects?**
- **What next?**



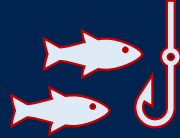
NARRATIVE

IMPACT - BENEFITS
to STUDENT



Persuasive Narrative

What is your *hook*?



What is the *focus* of your teaching/program?



What are your *strengths*?

Significance of problem? To your discipline? profession? Institution? the HE sector?

What difference have you /your team made?

Failure/What DIDN'T work – deliberate intention towards improvement & evaluation activities – HOW DID YOU RESPOND?

Talk to students and your peers – what do they say about your teaching?

YOUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY – lends COHESION

Responds to your teaching context

The problems/challenges inherent in it

Why is being an educator is important to you? What are your *aspirations* for students?

Your understanding of :

- *how students learn*
- your role as teacher, and your approach and goals in the learning process
- the roles and responsibilities of the students in their learning

(reference the T&L literature that informs your understanding))

Evaluation - How you ascertain whether your approach/es are having their intended effect? How do you *design-in* data collection in an ongoing way as part of your educator role? *(reference the T&L literature that inform your evaluation methods)*

The Story of Your teaching journey

- More personal than academic writing. Use the active voice ('I designed', 'I tested', 'I led')
- Your teaching philosophy underpins the WHY you do it and HOW (strategies you employ)
- Make clear how your approach is relevant /appropriate to your teaching context
- Include your *development over time as a teacher*, and how you have taken on board feedback (students/peers/ T&L input) to improve.
- Describe something that went wrong and how you responded - the decisions (changes, adaptations, adjustments) you made in response to evaluation data to improve it

You are making a case for your claims - an argument.

Your context, and teaching philosophy - Example

Delivering a learning program to enormous first year cohorts is a significant challenge. The diversity in Level 1 chemistry classrooms stretches from students who have never studied chemistry before, to students who have warmly embraced the topic throughout high-school, and have excelled in the subject. Many students see it as a critical stepping stone in their education, while many others lack a genuine passion, merely following prerequisite pathways to an alternate goal. The challenge then is to design a curriculum which serves all students, providing support where required yet enabling the top-end to remain stimulated and achieve true excellence.

My philosophy has been to tackle this diversity by implementing a broad range of learning opportunities across the program which students can selectively choose from. We cannot assume that 'one-size-fits-all', instead we need to accommodate for the range of student learning preferences and their assorted priorities.

Chemistry has traditionally been a 'nuts 'n' bolts' science, taught to students as a rigorous and robust collection of reactions, observations, equations and calculations. Accepting that not all first-year chemistry students will go on to do post-graduate chemistry has been an important step in overcoming the cultural barrier which has propagated a content-heavy syllabus, and arguably stopped us from focusing on the main goals of breeding students who are strong critical thinkers and problem solvers.

Defines teaching context and teaching challenge.
Student diversity requiring different approaches.
Responsibility of students

Role as a teacher.
Summarise the approach taken.

Concise describes the contentious area and where main focus is directed

Examples help the reader to see inside your classroom and your head

Use *examples* to illustrate how you convey a concept/teach a skill, develop curricula, etc

Not bragging!

This is your chance for others to hear *how* and *why* you do it the way you do in your course/s

Enough description to *make sense of* your unique/significant contribution



SUFFICIENT INFORMATION

DESCRIBE in
SUFFICIENT DETAIL

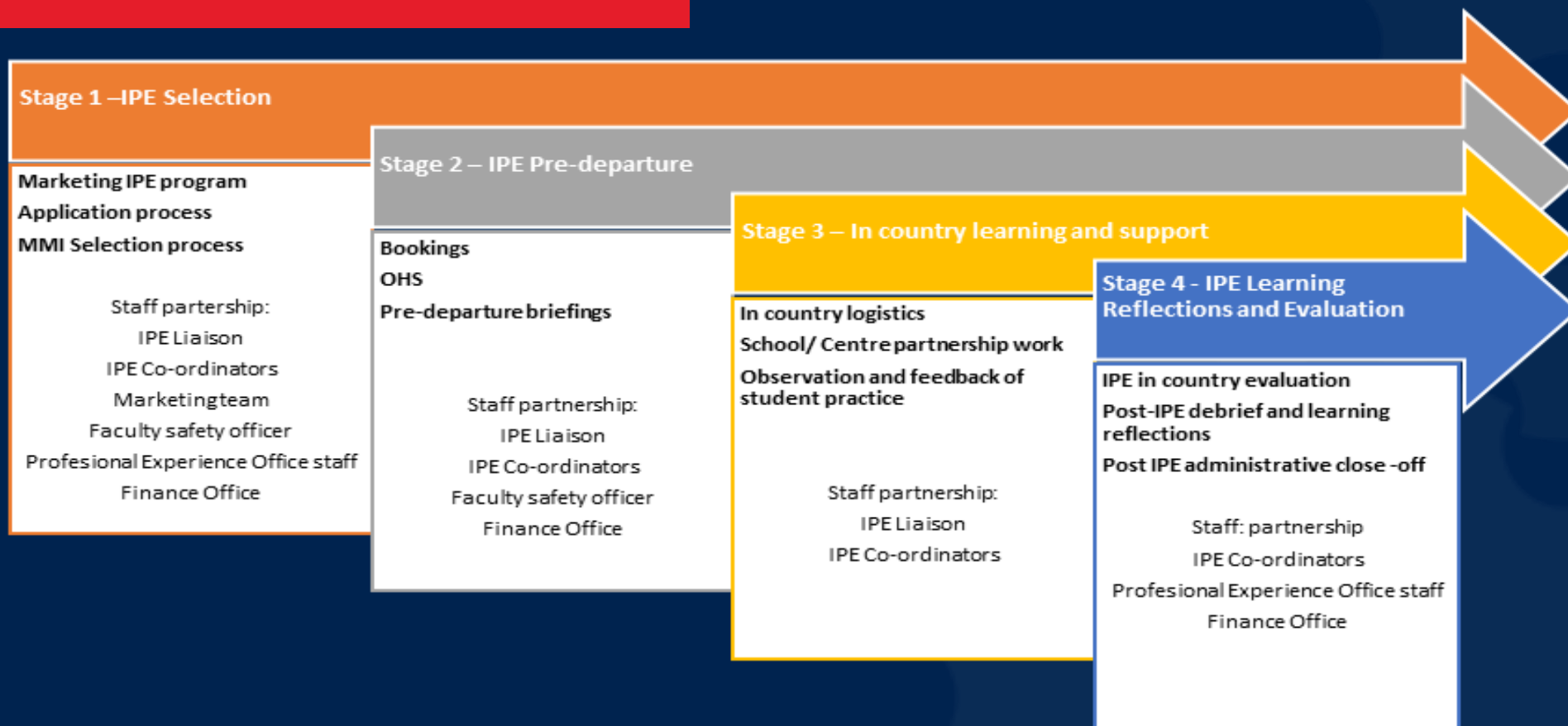
- what goes on in your unit/lecture/class/program/
- curriculum/resources

to inspire the positive
student learning
experiences



Use diagrams to clarify your story

Show stages of development of a program over time



Example – demonstrate, don't assert

A sensational cheating scandal shook the Australian tertiary education sector in late 2014. A national media outlet revealed that over 1,000 students had purchased personalised essays from the MyMaster online commercial cheating service (Gniel, Treloar, Marcon & Maclean, 2023). This practice, called 'contract cheating', threw into question the effectiveness of existing detection practices and created the need for a broader response.

Urgently, I investigated student dishonesty in assessment in scholarly literature and across institutional practices...Although research about online cheating grew, its translation into crucial institutional decision-making lagged. So, I developed an evidence-based institutional framework for academic integrity work (Figure 1). I shared the framework and its practical implications to support other institutions across contexts, including at the 6th IAFOR International Conference on Education, 2021, the International Center for Academic Integrity's Annual Conference, 2022 and the HERDSA Annual Conference, 2022; as well as an invited plenary at the 2021 Australian Chairs and Secretaries of Academic Board and Senates Conference.

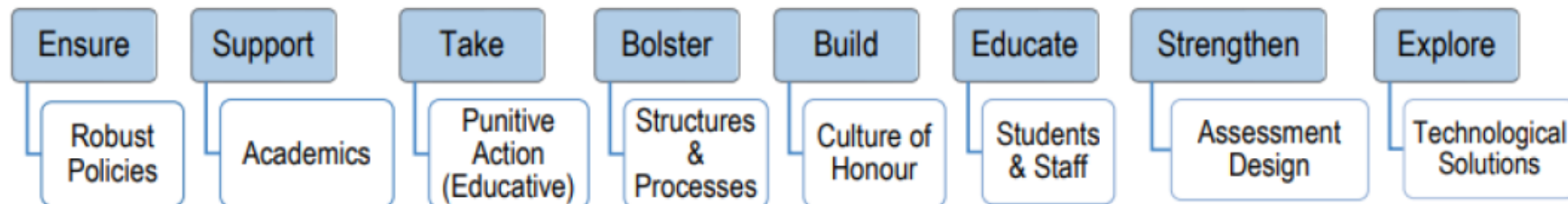


Figure 1. Framework for Academic Integrity Work

Teaching approach example

“I run practical classes where students draw on themselves and their classmates with marker pens detailing the surface projections of various organs and structures in the body. By incorporating visual, kinesthetic, verbal and literary cues, students who learn in each of these ways embrace another learning opportunity that creates a more lasting memory than a simple didactic lecture\.”

Teaching approach example

“Student revision sessions are delivered using quiz based games such as ‘Who wants to be a millionaire’ and ‘The weakest link’. Using a power point generated game show platform and audio, I act as question master getting the students to gain points by answering questions on topics they themselves had previously selected. In this way the revision session is focused on topics of interest to the students and is delivered in a more interactive way. This provides students with immediate feedback and an opportunity to clarify ‘muddy issues’.”

Readers/ assessors
can't see into your
classroom/
program

UNLESS

You *help* them



Tell a story

Absorb
your
reader

Lead your
reader along
a mental
pathway

In summary – Demonstrate your case; *Avoid assertion*

For each sub-category, show (don't just say) that your approach is innovative/imaginative/creative or excellent –

describe the WHY, the HOW, and HOW you knew if it was working (what data you analysed)

THEN

provide evidence of your evaluation of its impacts over time, **the benefits to students** (including differentiated groups of students). AND Peer assessment as corroboration.

Assessment criteria

A. Positively impacted on student **learning**, student **engagement** or the **overall student experience** for a period of **no less than three years** (two years for Early Career),

B. **Gained recognition** from colleagues, the institution, and/or the broader community

C. **Shown creativity, imagination and/or innovation**, irrespective of whether the approach involves traditional learning environments or technology-based developments.

D. **Drawn on the scholarly literature** on teaching and learning **to inform the development** of initiatives, programs and/or practice.

Innovative/ creative or imaginative? How do you know?

- If the approach is being taught in other discipline/s but not in your field. Explain WHY is it relevant to your cohort.
- If the approach was built on the basis of models in the T&L literature, *how does it differ/depart?* (Creativity = combining elements in new ways that haven't been done before)
- Publication = evidence of innovation
- Innovation's link with technology as an enabler of collaboration
- Dealing with complexity & indeterminate problems – (HOW) Does your theory of learning account for HE's goal to build leaders & learners' capacity?

Creativity /imagination /innovation

- Originality, a complete break with the past? - rare endowment possessed by talented individuals (Martingdale, 1999).
- Build on the foundations of preceding products, conventions and/or received knowledge (Weisberg, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996)
- Novel juxtaposition or new combination of elements/ideas or strategies – (Ricoeur, 1975/2003 Koestler, 1978)
- Vygotsky - that meaning-making is mediated by skilled others (e.g. peers, teachers, parents) who bring the learner into a 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD).
- Innovation is also frequently linked with technology as an enabler of collaboration – leading to new ideas, products (Florida, 2002)
- The ability to think through complex indeterminate problems, whether they are abstract or concrete (Jackson, et al. 2006)

Themes of attributes involved in Creativity as a process

- Risk-taking
- Persistence
- Difficulty in Problem Formulation / Problem finding - as opposed to solving a given problem or solving it within conventional frameworks
- Questioning, & reframing the problem –
- Creative thinking generates new ideas and possible solutions - *critical* thinking assesses their validity or effectiveness in the context. Both together lead to new and better solutions (Nickerson, 1999)
- How does your teaching stimulate and reward curiosity and exploration?
- How do you provoke motivation, especially internal motivation, into the design of learning – how the learning environment influences motivation is important here

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Draft several times
- Get people to read your drafts – can they follow it? Do they get a feel for what you’ve been doing to earn such accolades? Is any part confusing?
- Ask to be in a mentor scheme – AAUT? Your institution?
- Could it do with more/different subheading signposts? (don’t overdo colour or bold)
- Visual appeal of application – use of space
- FOCUS – don’t try to tell everything! - Identify an aspect/s of excellence in your contribution
- Use the active voice - “I coordinated”, “I designed”, “I evaluated”
- Topic Sentences at the start of each sub-category – show the connection between what you are saying and the subcategory

Resources



2025 SANTPEN Workshop - Distinguished Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington AO - video



2025 SANTPEN Workshop - Prof Sally Kift - video

AAUT Resource materials - including [mentor scheme](#), videos, and the assessment rubrics for AAUT awards

A critical friend (who *doesn't know* you as an educator) to read the application- is it readable & compelling?

2025 Writing tips for Neville Bonner nominations

2024 EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE EVIDENCE

AAUT ASSESSMENT MATRIX

Reflections and insights from a successful AAUT award recipient

Dr Angela Jones
Edith Cowan University



How to slay your application (and not die in the process): A Bard's tale

- Be the Bard
- The bard's tale: warrior vs the dragon
- Your merry of band of players

Be the Bard: Choosing one story to tell

Choose:

- An appropriate award type
- The best category
- One good story
- A good mentor



The bard's tale: the warrior vs the dragon

Clarity of journey

- The synopsis highlights the nomination claims regarding the success and quality of the program linked to internal and external collaboration and partnerships.

Strong narrative and a balanced tale

A variety of evidence and evidence types

- Ample and varied evidence that systematic evaluation
- Evidence of positive impacts on students
- Evidence of wider influence

Supplementary materials

- Well-organised and clearly referenced in the nomination for ease of navigation.
- Strengthens the evidence for claims made in the nomination against the criterion.

Strong references



Co-Pilot image of a dragon vs warrior

Trust Your Band of Merry Players

- Your mentor
- Your application team
- Your university awards team
- Your data person

- Avoiding pitfalls
 - Focusing on broad results
 - Cherry picking data
 - Relying on small results
 - Manipulating data presentation
- It is a journey: Take time and breaks!
- Listen to your mentor





2025 AAUT Key Dates



Nominee Resources



Nomination Packs

AAUT Mentor Scheme

Recordings of the full suite of PD sessions are available online on AAUT- UA webpage, for each award type and subcategories:

- Teaching Awards
- Program Awards
- Citations
- Neville Bonner Award for Indigenous Education
- Early Career Award



Thank you for joining!
**CONNECT
WITH US**



More information
[AAUT-UA webpage](#)

Mentoring Scheme
[aautn.org](#)



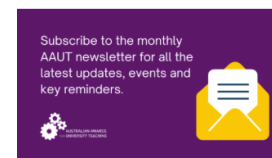
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