Create a convincing case for NTFS

This document is designed to provide some support and guidance for potential NTFS applicants. The points below have been developed from examining previous successful applications and from the feedback provided by reviewers.

It is important to remember that the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme is a competition, and applications are of a consistently high standard year on year. Some excellent applications may not be successful, given the competitive characteristics of the award. It is important, too, to remember that this is an individual award, and individual excellence comes in many forms. The information provided below draws on this diversity to provide some general guidance, but individual applications will always have their own styles and strengths.

We hope, however that the points below provide some guidance to help candidates who are preparing an application. Each point below is a general statement referring to a characteristic of successful applications supported by further unpacking of this characteristic.

1. **Provide detail of a range of activities and the evidence of impact - include quantitative and qualitative sources**

   More successful nominees were able to demonstrate a breadth and depth of activities which provided clear evidence of impact on teaching and learning. However, it is worth noting that some successful candidates also identified a clear focus for this range of activity: their claim was framed by a particular theme, or approach, or innovative strand.

   Successful applications clearly set out the benefits of the impact for students and colleagues as well as clearly describing what evidence they had to back this up. They also described how their evidence proved they had made an impact e.g. what changed as a result and how they could tell whether the changes had been positive or not?

   In criterion 3 nominations were enhanced by a mix of informal and formal activities with an emphasis on reflection, self-awareness, personal growth, self-advancement and impact on others.

2. **Provide a depth and breadth of evidence - from within the institution and extending to national and international networks, professional and disciplinary areas**

   Stronger nominations were able to provide evidence of longitudinal studies, as well as quantitative and qualitative evidence. They were able to quote improved student attainment figures, improved student retention and/or student satisfaction scores. Impact demonstrated at all levels (local, school, faculty, institution, national and international) provided a strong indicator of success for Criterion 2. Successful candidates were also able to identify their specific role in achieving these positive outcomes.
3. Use short quotes to add new dimensions/illustrations rather than merely confirm elements of the narrative

In general quotes are best used in thoughtful and targeted ways. More successful nominations used quotes as a stage in a reflective process leading on to further transformative developments rather than an end in themselves. They should provide evidence of impact on student learning and future development as well as a strong sense of the wider fulfilment of the criteria from the point of view of students, staff and colleagues. In some successful applications, quotations from people at various levels have provided useful evidence of breadth of impact. Some successful claims have included quotes from people who have changed their practice (or learned something explicitly) or can evidence that other people’s practice has changed. This can be more effective than quotes which simply say something is ‘good’/exemplary.

4. Include examples of dissemination through conferences and publications with evidence of demonstrable impact

Scholarship, dissemination and publications were widely noted and welcomed by reviewers in criterion 2. Strong nominations could provide evidence of impact grounded in sound scholarly and pedagogic principles. They could describe what impact their activities had on teaching and learning as well as the result of any changes they made following the activities.

5. Highlight activities beyond the normal role

Depending on the nominee’s role, it can be difficult to identify activities which go beyond. However successful nominees tended to be unusual in their approaches, or to be taking their normal activity into new arenas. Their work tended to impact outside the local context. Stronger submissions provided examples of innovation which was reshaping the context, and developing new elements to teaching and/or learning in the discipline or field.

In general, personal reflection and commentary about how different ways of working impacted on colleagues are welcomed by reviewers and provide indication of the wider impact on the practice of others, consistent with the award of NTF.
6. Base the narrative for each criterion on a personal philosophy and critical reflective dialogue

Successful nominees were able to provide ‘a sense of person’ and articulation of a personal philosophy and values. Conversely, writing from a personal philosophical perspective has to be balanced with the need for sufficient scholarship related to the experience of learners.

Reviewers welcomed a personal perspective to underpin the narrative within nominations.

Stronger nominations provided evidence linked to reflection and personal challenges in the area of learning and teaching; their narrative was articulated through reflection and self-awareness. They were also able to describe what changes they had made, what had worked and what had not. They could then determine why changes had worked or not, as well as articulating how they could tell whether the changes had worked.

More successful nominees provided specific evidence of development and impact on teaching and learning through undertaking a CPD activity. Reviewers welcomed specific evidence that activity was linked to reflection and personal challenges in the area of learning and teaching in order to be convinced of ‘a commitment’. This highlights the need for the narrative to be articulated through reflection and self-awareness.

Personal reflection and commentary about how the nominee’s different ways of working impacted on students, colleagues and their own practice were compelling and attracted higher grades.

7. Make reference to awards and external recognition in relevant areas

Stronger nominations were able to provide evidence of awards and external recognition. These are clearly seen as an indicator of esteem and a recognised level of practice, reputation and influence. Some successful nominations also used evidence of external recognition to further develop their reflection on their own practice and move forward with their ongoing development of practice.

8. Ensure coherence across all the documentation and use the supporting statement and CV to endorse and further illuminate the written claim

Reviewers use all of the supporting documentation in considering the grade they award. So nominees and their institution are strongly advised to ensure all the documentation submitted is consistent and collectively supports the nominee’s claim. A holistic approach is likely to enhance a nomination.

The supporting statement and the CV were also noted as important documents in verifying an individual’s ‘commitment’ to CPD. The supporting statement can be an important document for highlighting the institutional impact of the candidate, the value the institution places on their work, and also provides a high level endorsement of their innovative practice and its broader impact.
9. Portray energy, commitment and enthusiasm throughout your nomination

It is difficult to determine how nominees portray enthusiasm in their nominations, however when this is achieved it is strongly valued by reviewers. This was especially evident in feedback for Criterion 1 but was also relevant to all criteria.

Stronger nominations were able to articulate how their practice had developed. Their claims gave the sense of a journey. They described how they felt about how their practice had developed as the result of their education and experiences. They were able to evidence what had worked and what they might change or develop as the result of those experiences. They were able to show how they ground their work in relevant literature and could provide evidence that supported their account of practice development.

More successful nominations also tended to be framed in a personal vision, or include a strong focus, or frame for the candidate's journey. Some applications had one or two key strands to the practice described highlighting the nominee's energy and commitment to particular approaches or areas of teaching and learning.