

University of St Andrews
Students' Association



‘Defining and promoting teaching excellence: Analysis of the nominations for the Teaching Awards 2023/4’

Evgeniya Pakhomova

Chase Greenfield

January 2025



Contents

Introduction	page 3
Methodology	7
I. Materials and activities	9
Main findings	-
Practical steps	11
II. Care	13
Main findings	-
Sub-theme: Acts of care	14
Practical steps	16
III. Student development	17
Main findings	-
Practical steps	19
IV. Students as partners in learning	20
Main findings	-
Practical steps	23
Conclusion	24
Bibliography	25
Appendix: Table of Codes	26

Introduction

The project

This paper provides analysis of the nominations made by students for the Teaching Awards 2023/4 of the University of St Andrews. The paper aims to explore the qualities, attitudes and practices of teachers which students regard as exemplary of excellent teaching. A further aim of the paper is to translate the main findings into suggestions that teaching staff can reflect upon and student representatives can use in their advocacy to continuously enhance teaching. The paper is the outcome of a qualitative thematic analysis of the student-submitted nominations.

On top of providing students with an opportunity to reward their most outstanding teachers, the Teaching Awards also generate a substantial set of data describing student-identified good teaching practices and approaches. Every year, as part of writing a nomination, students are requested to submit a 200-500 words free form written comment answering the question: “*Why does your nominee deserve a Teaching Award in the selected category?*” The guidelines are broad to allow students to express themselves and to reflect only on those aspects of teaching which they deem important. As a result, the written responses are diverse in terms of style and content. The paper analyses these responses to distinguish some common patterns, presented as **main themes** in this report.

This is a second iteration of the project, with the first instance analysing the dataset generated by the 2021/2 award cycle. Therefore, throughout the report, we reflect on the evolution of patterns found in the student nominations as well as noting key differences and similarities between the datasets. As this report demonstrates, the main themes of the previous iteration are also observable in the current dataset. However, there the prominence of individual themes varies across the years. Additionally, the researcher discerned a new theme in the latest round of nominations data.

Main Themes	
2021/2	2023/4
1. Individual care and caring attitude	1. Materials and activities ¹
2. Students as contributors and collaborators	2. Care ²
3. Adaptation of materials and learning-enhancing activities	3. Student development
	4. Students as partners in learning ³

Each of the main themes appears in 50% or more of the nominations. Teaching Awards suggest that students evaluate teaching excellence according to (1) the technical organisation of the teaching experience; (2) the care that they experience in teacher-student interactions; (3) the relation between teaching and their long-term development; (4) the sense of partnership and collaboration that they experience in the classroom.

Each of the following chapters addresses one theme in turn, presenting **main findings** and **practical steps** for how these findings might be implemented in teaching practice.

¹ Formerly ‘Adaptation of materials and learning-enhancing activities’

² Formerly ‘Individual care and caring attitude’

³ Formerly ‘Students as contributors and collaborators’

Key findings

Several key findings are present across all themes in the nominations data.

The student-submitted Teaching Awards are often presumed to be a mechanism by which students reward either the most charismatic or entertaining teaching staff, or those who far exceed the expectations of their roles to the benefit of the individual student nominator. The analysis of Teaching Awards data, however, contradicts this presumption, as most nominations present clear examples of excellent teaching practices that are not reducible to personality evaluations. Additionally, only a negligible number of nominations mention practices that would be considered outside normal expectations from a teacher.

The research does not identify a single secret component to teaching that ensures student satisfaction. Instead, each of the main themes in this report contains a variety of individual approaches by teaching staff, each of which were highly praised by students. The award data suggests that adaptation, reflexivity, and application of a teacher's personal strengths are more highly prized than any one particular practice. Students recognise that a specific class format that allows one teacher to demonstrate their expertise and excellence may not work in the hands of a different instructor. Just as the learning experience is varied and individual, students recognise and appreciate teaching staff members' individual efforts and approaches to their craft.

One of the unifying threads in the nominations is that students tend to prioritise care and partnership over knowledge and expertise. About a third (32%) of students writing the nominations acknowledged that their teachers are experts in what they teach. This represents only a small fraction of the main themes of 'Care' and 'Students as partners in learning,' which together appear in 92% of the nominations. Our research suggests that knowledge and expertise of a teacher are regarded as signs of excellence *if* they are 'activated' through a caring and collaborative approach.

When comparing the 2021/2 and the 2023/4 datasets the researcher noticed a subtle change in student priorities regarding teaching practice and approach. While in the 2021/2, students often emphasised the sense of community and belonging that they had experienced in their classrooms, such references declined in the 2023/4 cycle, potentially – due to a shift in student expectations with regards to a learning environment following the pandemic. In the 2023/4 set of nominations, students focused more on long-term evaluations of their progress and the effects that excellent teaching had on their development. Hence, the new theme of 'Student development' has overtaken the 'Students as partners in learning' in terms of the frequency of mentions between the data sets.

While it is hard to speculate on the reasons behind this shift, we suggest that it might have to do with the 2021/2 dataset still being affected by the pandemic teaching, while students writing the nominations in 2023/4 rely less on their classroom environments as an extension of their social lives. Instead, concerns about their futures in academia or employment, as well as questions about skill building, have taken the central stage. (Further reflection on this finding are discussed in the following section on 'Wider context and external influences').

Finally, when comparing the data between academic years, mentions of stress and anxiety appeared more prominently in the most recent year. While the purpose of this report is to provide actionable steps and to empower students' voices in teaching enhancement dialogues, we could not ignore how the narrative backdrop for many of the nominations is the feeling of anxiety and stress about learning and about one's future. An excellent teacher, for many students, is one who dispels their worries and helps them to feel more at ease with their

academic journeys and their lives post-graduation. It is concerning, and perhaps worthy of additional future examination, however, that stress and anxiety are often juxtaposed with 'excellence' and presented as a normalised state prior to interacting with an excellent teacher. Student wellbeing remains a growing and serious concern that demands further investigation beyond this report.

Wider context and external influences

The findings of this report can be viewed in connection to the recent literature in the educational sector on excellent teaching and caring pedagogies.

Writing on caring subjectivities in education, Motta and Bennett suggest that teachers provide emotional labour in the classroom 'which is often both invisibilised and feminised as secondary to what is represented as the important and essential labour of teaching' (2018, 642). Our report highlights the importance of such labour and the importance of creating a welcoming, inclusive, supportive environment. From the students' perspective, the 'invisibilised and feminised' labour is often the main motivation for recognising an outstanding member of staff.

Motta and Bennet also propose that there is no essentialised 'ideal' caring subject. Care is dialogical and emerges from the commitment to 'ethics of practice' (Motta & Bennett 2018, 640). Likewise, in our report, there is no figure of an 'ideal' teacher acting as a blueprint to follow. We recognise teaching excellence as stemming from reflexivity and responsiveness in conversations with students. Thus, in the practical steps offered in this research we invite teachers, professional staff, and student representatives to reflect on the types of approaches which are regarded as excellent without giving any clear-cut advice on their implementation.

Recent literature also points at a disconnect between the 'affective' and the 'practical' dimensions of teaching in research on Higher Education settings. Hagenaurer and Volet argue that this leads to the inconsistencies in our understanding of teacher-student relationships (2014). Similarly, Walker-Gleaves notes that recent studies of caring teachers tend to focus on idiosyncratic, or what we refer to as 'personality-based,' aspects instead of theorising practice of care as something transferrable (2019). We believe that our report avoids this pitfall of understanding by using Teaching Awards nominations as our source of data. In writing the nominations, students combine the affective and the practical dimensions, which allows us to analyse them together.

Students writing nominations for their staff members prioritise practical examples of teaching but connect them to overall themes such as care, development, and partnership. This is specifically illustrated by the quotes from the nominations which we use to propose the suggested practical steps throughout this report. Thus, students writing the Teaching Awards nominations present a holistic evaluation of teaching and provide insight into how the idiosyncratic qualities connect to practical actions.

The learning environment, both at St Andrews specifically and in the wider higher education sector, have changed substantially since our last report in 2021/22. Student priorities and the challenges they face are constantly evolving, and these influence the way students describe their experiences with teaching staff in their nominations. While our report doesn't present a formalised analysis between sector contexts and our data set, it's valuable to reflect on how the changing higher education landscape might affect student perceptions and priorities with regard to learning and teaching.

In the years following the pandemic, students have been particularly affected by a cost-of-living crisis with stark consequences. From a report conducted by the National Union of Students in Scotland, 'Over half (52%) of students surveyed have skipped a meal because of

lack of money, 45% have gone without heating and a third (35%) have been unable to pay their rent in full' (NUS Scotland 2023, 2). A devaluation of real-term wages for academic and professional services staff in the sector (not to mention working conditions and pensions degradation) has further exacerbated students' learning conditions. While not directly analysed in the report, further research into the connection between this harsh financial landscape and student appreciation for care and specific acts such as 'support beyond teaching' found in the nominations may prove illuminating.

Similarly, universities across the sector have recently raised lines of inquiry regarding reasonable adjustments and the university's duty of care to students. Increasingly, the educational experience is becoming more individualised to support learners in their knowledge retention and assessment. In the nominations, we see students focus on the way staff 'make content accessible' as well as staff support 'in special circumstances,' which may be indicative of wider, sector expectations on wellbeing and support.

Students are also worried about a substantial increase in competition for graduate jobs: 'Employers are seeing a record-breaking average of 140 applicants per graduate job – a significant 59 per cent increase compared to the previous year, according to the Institute of Student Employers (ISE) latest annual Student Recruitment Survey [...] this surge in applications is the highest recorded in over three decades' (Isherwood, 2024). Perhaps, given students' anxieties around mental health and support, financial security, and the competitiveness of career paths, praise for academic staff who provide support for student futures should come as no surprise.

In Scotland, the newly released [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework](#) has solidified a sector-wide emphasis on excellence in learning, teaching, and assessment, supporting student access, enhancement and quality culture, and student engagement and partnership (Scottish Funding Council, 2024). Both students and their institutions in Scotland have a vested interest in high quality teaching and involving students as partners in the overall learning process; the language selected for this report was motivated in part by these wider national conversations, and our recommendations seek to bring together student and institutional perspectives to enhance teaching quality.

Whether or not these wider landscape observations have a direct or causal influence on student nominations, it is clear that students increasingly value and appreciate staff care, partnership, and development.

Acknowledgements

The St Andrews Students' Association and the University of St Andrews recognises the importance and the value of student input into teaching. The team behind this paper would like to thank all students who submitted their Teaching Awards nominations for their contribution to continuous development of excellent teaching. We would also like to thank the University of St Andrews Careers Centre for funding that enabled the current iteration of this project. The lead researcher and report author is Evgeniya Pakhomova (PhD candidate, Department of Social Anthropology). The project was supported and initiated by Chase Greenfield, Academic Representation Co-Ordinator (St Andrews Students' Association).

The initiation of the original (2021-22) iteration of the project is credited to Alice Rickless (then-Academic Representation Intern at the St Andrews Students' Association) with funding provided by the St Andrews Enhancement Themes.

Methodology

This report analyses the nominations made by students for the St Andrews Students' Association Teaching Awards 2023/4. The nominations submitted for the following categories were analysed:

- Outstanding Teacher (Arts / Divinity) – 77 nominations;
- Outstanding Teacher (Science / Medicine) – 35 nominations;
- Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant (Arts / Divinity) – 19 nominations;
- Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant or Demonstrator (Science / Medicine) – 11 nominations.

Overall, 142 nominations were examined.

Thematic analysis is the core method behind this report (Braun and Clarke 2006). In an effort to be data-driven, inductive analysis was used for the purposes of grasping the full variety of answers to a question: *Why does your nominee deserve a Teaching Award?* (Clarke and Braun 2017). Nominations were coded with the use of NVivo software. Coding was done broadly to ensure the preservation of context (Braun and Clarke 2006, 18-19). The items that were coded included attitudes of a teacher (e.g., helpful, engaging), types of environments fostered by a teacher (e.g., supportive, inclusive), and certain 'practices', or certain actions or approaches of a teacher that have been mentioned by students (e.g., 'provided good quality feedback,' 'helped with employment,' 'connected the content of a module to real-life issues'). The resultant codes were assessed and grouped into larger themes, which inform the structure of this report.

All code statistics were rounded to the nearest percent. All percentages of code prevalence given in this paper are intended to indicate the general frequency of certain themes and patterns rather than to provide the basis for quantitative analysis.

This report also provides suggestions of '**Practical Steps.**' These were formulated based on the aspects or approaches that students most frequently highlighted as exemplary of excellent teaching. In the 'Practical Steps' sections, this report moves from describing data to proposing change. The team behind this project notes this significant methodological shift and caveats that the suggested 'Practical Steps' are *not*, in and of themselves, sufficient to measure pedagogical excellence. While there is therefore no guarantee that anyone who puts such practices to use will certainly become an excellent teacher, they do indicate students' perceptions of teaching excellence and are valuable indicators of student satisfaction. The researchers further need to clarify that a teacher's excellence cannot be measured by looking at how many 'Practical Steps' they adhere to. Rather, our report presents a perspective of a particular group – students who submitted their nominations for the Teaching Awards. All of them had unique visions of the attributes of an excellent teacher. With this report, our primary aim is to give student's visions a voice in the discussions of enhancement of university teaching.

Since the aims of the paper included both a description of general attitudes and a degree of practical applicability of the findings, it should be acknowledged that the formulation of themes was informed by these goals (see Braun & Clarke 2006, 7). The team behind this project focused on the most prominent themes which, to the best of our judgement, might be curious to the readers or might inform or inspire innovations to the teaching practices at the University.

This project is a reiteration of the AY2022-23 Teaching Awards Research Project carried out by the same team. Most of the main themes and some of the individual codes were present in the first version of the project, but some findings are new, and/or their prevalence in the

student nominations has changed. We reflect on the differences between the two reports wherever relevant throughout the chapters. Occasionally, fragments of the 2022-23 report are reimplemented in this report.

Students' consent for their nominations to be included in this study has been collected at the time they submitted the nominations. All nominations were anonymised. Names of students and teachers were omitted; different nominations are referred to by numbers in order of submission from latest to earliest across all categories. The direct quotes were slightly edited to maintain anonymisation and grammatic coherence while preserving the meaning.

Finally, a note should be made about the meaning of the umbrella term, 'teacher,' that is used throughout this report. As the biographies and individual preferences of the nominees are not accounted for in this analysis, we refer to all academics (regardless of their job title) as teachers, corresponding to the name of the awards. We acknowledge that not all nominees would choose the word 'teacher' to describe their identity or their role at the University (see Barrow et al. 2022). The word 'teacher' in this report should be treated as a generalised placeholder for a staff member that interacts with students in teaching capacity.

Theme I. Materials and Activities

Main findings

The most frequently mentioned theme discerned from student nominations focuses on the adaptation of materials and introduction of learning-enhancing activities. This theme includes mentions of the practical aspects in the nominations for Teaching Awards, such as:

- Lecture formats (pre-recorded, live, accompanied by supplementary materials, etc.)
- Practices related to organising work during tutorials (presentations, mock interviews, debates, etc.)
- Supplementary materials (lecture summaries, email catchups, revision materials, etc.)
- Provision of additional learning components (class trips, guest talks, revision materials, etc.)

Students often acknowledged staff members' efforts to tailor learning materials and class activities to the learning objectives of the course, and the effect that these activities had on the quality of teaching they receive. An excellent teacher, according to the nominations, was not necessarily someone who can come up with new, creative and thus entertaining approaches, but someone who prepared their methodology in a manner which, from the students' perspective, was consistent and added clear value to the overall learning experience.

Students who submitted the Teaching Award nominations studied a diversity of subjects in different ways – for example, some had laboratory-based practical classes, while others had discussion-style tutorials. Additionally, students were at different stages in their degrees and thus had different number of contact hours and dealt with materials of varying complexity. Since this research examines both the Outstanding Teacher and the Graduate Teaching Assistant categories, it is also important to acknowledge that not all the nominees had the same teaching instruments at their disposal (i.e. some nominees organised their own modules, while others provided instruction on modules that were developed by other members of staff). Given the variety of perspectives represented in the nominations, it is difficult to argue based on the submitted nominations whether there are any forms of teaching that are preferred by all or most students. Too many factors would need to be taken into consideration to suggest whether, for example, students prefer live lectures to pre-recorded ones or vice versa.

However, the nominations do reveal some common trends among the codes that are worth considering in discussions of excellent teaching.

In total, the mentions of the formal aspects of teaching (materials and activities) were made in 116 of 142 (82%) nominations analysed. The prevalence of such mentions has increased substantially since the 2021/22 cycle, when materials and activities were mentioned by 48% of the students. This is partially due to incorporating the 'making content accessible' code into the theme, which was analysed as a standalone code in the previous report. However, even without this code, the mentions of 'materials and activities' rose substantially in 2023/24: from 48% to 68%.

The largest constituent code of this theme relates to the mentions of teachers **making content accessible** through such tactics as effectively breaking down complex information, spending as much time as necessary on the most complex parts of the material, changing approach to aid comprehension. In total, a third of nominations mentioned a teacher making content

accessible as the relevant criterion for the nomination. Unsurprisingly, this code is also related to the other main themes – ‘care’ and ‘students as partners in learning’. A teacher who is seen as prioritising student voices in the learning process and paying attention to student needs would likely be also complimented for making complex information accessible.

Nominations included mentions of **delivery style** as a factor to consider in evaluations of excellent teaching, especially in relation to lectures. The two words used most frequently by students to describe their preferred delivery style were ‘engaging’ and ‘passionate.’ The nominations suggest that students appreciated a variety of approaches to lectures as long as a teacher utilised their preferred methodology successfully and with a focus on presenting complex material in an easy-to-comprehend way. Some teachers were praised for using traditional methods, such as speaking without slides and only using a whiteboard. Others were commended for pacing the lecture around student comprehension, stopping to ask questions and to take student opinions. Still others were highly regarded for providing ‘bite-sized’ recordings of module content.

Another sub-theme emerging among the mentions of materials and activities is **skill-based and applicable learning**. This sub-theme covers students commenting on how their teachers’ use of real-life examples and focus on applicable knowledge was a sign of excellent teaching. ‘Applicability’ here does not necessarily imply life outside academia. Students appreciated, for example, opportunities to practice research skills or to attend research events, such as departmental seminars. Among other examples were guest-lectures by specialists in the studied field and assignments modelled to imitate real-life situations, for example, having a job interview or presenting a project to peers.

A significant number of students also mentioned **variety** of available materials and activities as a sign of excellent teaching. For example, students positively commented on broad literature lists, supplementary video and audio recordings on the topics of the module, or additional classes provided outside of the standard teaching for those who want to deepen their skills and knowledge. This shows, once again, that students study in different ways and appreciate different methodologies. Teachers who provided their students with alternatives ways of engagement were described as excellent for this reason.

Students also spoke about clear and consistent **structure** of a module as exemplary of excellent teaching. Nominations reveal students’ attention to how different components of teaching and covered themes fit together.

A common assumption about the Teaching Award nominations is that they act a forum for rewarding the most experimental teachers. According to the nominations, students indeed appreciate creative elements of teaching such as unique assessment formats or online forums for peer-to-peer exchange. However, the nominations reveal that students evaluate modules as ‘products’ and pay attention to their internal logic. Creativity is less explicitly commented upon than consistency and organisational skills.

Finally, a smaller but still important subcategory relates to the mentions of teachers providing **extracurricular** activities and materials – for example, organising departmental social events or distributing resources that might help students decide on future studies and career. Nominations reveal that students took note of the life of their departments and schools. The participation of teachers in this life was regarded as a sign of their dedication to the quality of student experience.

Practical steps

Making space for additional explanations

Students writing the nominations often highlighted how important it had been for them to be able to ask their teachers for additional explanations of complex content. It can be difficult to point out that one does not understand something in front of the whole class. Thus, teachers who made **the space for additional questions a part of their regular teaching** were highly praised as exemplary.

Her dedication to ensuring comprehension was unwavering; if a concept wasn't grasped initially, Maddie was always prepared with alternate explanations. She didn't hesitate to hand-draw graphs or solutions, guiding us through complex problems step by step. She was empathetic in recognising that the content was hard to learn and never made me feel embarrassed to ask as many questions as it took to understand.

Actualised knowledge

Students seem to highly appreciate a chance to expand and test their knowledge beyond the classroom. **A connection between contents of a module and life beyond university education** is often described as a sign of excellent teaching by the students writing the nominations. This connection may be in the form of teaching students skills for the job market or explaining to them how the education that they receive is embedded in the wider world of academia.

She connects classroom learning to the real world, helping me see the bigger picture and understand the relevance of what I am studying. Her assessments ... provided practical insights applicable to real-life situations.

His use of case studies to show how the skills we are practicing in the lab are applied in research ... It also gives me motivation to constantly improve and expand my knowledge to be able to design experiments in a similar manner.

Evident module methodology and structure

An idea that a clearly explained course structure is favourably regarded by students might seem to be too obvious to mention at first glance. However, the nominations suggest that this is something that students pay close attention to. A creative mode of delivery or a unique learning opportunity was likely to be regarded as excellent only in the wider context of a module. Students tended to evaluate university teaching in modules, and they were **likely to praise a certain module if it had an evident degree of integrity and coherence**.

The teacher utilised original, innovative, and effective teaching methods. Built into the rhythm of our classes were the key practices designed to aid our understanding. Recalling the past class at the beginning of the next one, asking for questions, and integrating this into the discussion is a very underrated part of a classroom dynamic, that this teacher implemented successfully.

In my past three years in the University, I have not come across any module coordinator who has taken module planning or feedback as seriously as my nominee.

Accommodation of different ways of learning

The nominations suggest that there is no methodological 'mould' of excellent teaching that all students expect to be reproduced in every module that they take. At the same time, quite a few students writing the

She has no shortage in variety of sessions that she runs for our cohort. She clearly understands the importance of making language learning non-monotonous. ... She is without a doubt one of the most creative and passionate teachers I have had and never fails to find ways to make her classes engaging, active, and memorable.

nominations appreciated how their teachers offered them **a variety of different materials and activities, encouraging the students to study in the way that suited them best.** Students reported feeling more curious about the material and more engaged with their studies when provided with various options to diversify their learning process.

He encouraged us to find different ways to study, for example in one tutorial he asked us to bring newspaper cuttings that helped us understand the topics through a new and fascinating lens. Although I took his module without much interest in some of the topics, his approach has entirely changed my perspective.

Theme II. Care

Main findings

The Teaching Award nominations show a high importance of care for students. Among the multitude of characteristics and actions that students saw as worthy of a Teaching Award, the descriptions of acts of care and of a compassionate, understanding approach appeared in an overwhelming majority of the nominations, consistently with the 2021/2 findings.

The nominations for Teaching Awards show that attention to students' needs, compassion, and willingness to be a good listener are highly regarded qualities in teachers. Students in their nominations often evaluated teaching excellence through the lens of care. Other perspectives, such as focusing on the knowledge or expertise of a teacher, were less prominent – and usually accompanied by a further focus on how a teacher communicated knowledge in a caring way. For example, students who pointed out that their nominees were highly knowledgeable would usually characterise this by saying that the nominees were approachable with regards to sharing this knowledge and willing to use it to support students.

As in the 2021/22 report, the theme of care consists of two main components: (1) acts of individual care; (2) caring attitude. Any help or support that a student has received in a one-on-one setting with a teacher is analysed as **acts of care**. The examples vary, including both academic and pastoral help. Their complexity varies as well. Sometimes, “acts of care” were described as simply listening attentively to a student’s problem, other times, they were more demanding, such as making changes to assessment style to accommodate for special circumstances.

There were also general mentions of **caring attitude**. This sub-theme corresponds with the affective and relational aspects of care as narrated by the students which are harder to formalise in terms of concrete examples, for example, general descriptions of empathy and supportiveness experienced in communications with a teacher. Students writing the nominations drew on both definitions of care, and often the nominations included both mentions of a general caring attitude and of individual acts of care.

The difference between acts of individual care and caring attitude allows us to acknowledge that teacher-student relationships can be conceptualised both as something practical, consisting of tangible support, and as affective and relational (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014).

In total, care was mentioned in 115 of 142 (81%) nominations analysed. Acts of individual care attitude were mentioned in 93 (65%) nominations, caring attitude – in 58 (41%) nominations.

In the nominations submitted for the 2021/2 cycle of Teaching Awards, care was mentioned in 82% of the analysed nominations, acts of individual care – in 70%, and caring attitude – in 53%.

Subtheme	Prevalence - Current Cycle	Prevalence - 2021/2022 Cycle
Acts of Care	65%	70%
Caring Attitude	41%	53%
Total (Care)	81%	82%

As mentioned above, the sub-theme of caring attitude is less practically grounded than the sub-theme of individual acts of care, as it covers descriptions of nominees being empathetic, approachable, caring personalities. Thus, for the remainder of this chapter of the report we instead discuss the acts of individual care, as those allow us to focus on tangible practices associated with excellent teaching.

Sub-theme: Acts of individual care

The acts of individual care were further subcategorised according to the type of support provided by a teacher.

The most common sub-category covers the nominations in which the teachers were noted for being **available and approachable**. This category includes teachers establishing effective out-of-class communication, such as by email or during office hours. Teachers were praised for signalling to students their availability and sticking to it. Timeliness and responsibility of teachers were both highlighted. Students often connected their appreciation for teachers' availability and approachability with a feeling of being seen, and students value when their difficulties are appreciated and given sufficient attention.

A second sub-category relates to instances where the acts of care extended **beyond teaching**. This sub-category includes the mentions of teachers providing students with guidance on module selection, future academic and career prospects, as well as providing references. Thus, the sub-category 'beyond teaching' covers acts of individual care that are not related to the exact subject that a student was taking with their nominee, but rather, extend to other elements of their educational journey and broader ambitions. Students highly praised such acts of care and often took them as signs of commitment to students' long-term success, which is something that we discuss in more detail in the chapter of the report titled 'Student Development.'

While it might seem that the 'availability and approachability' and the 'beyond teaching' sub-categories have loose boundaries and may cover the cases of unreasonable adjustments, only a small number of students mentioned that their nominees went beyond what could be described as expected in a university setting. 8 out of 142 (6%) nominations mentioned such practices, for example, providing feedback exceeding the length of an assignment or purchasing equipment for a student. These were not systematic. The Teaching Awards nominations instead show that students often appreciate the time commitments of their teachers and reflect on how their nominees combine teaching responsibilities with other parts of their academic jobs.

The data from student nominations also reveal three sub-categories related to completion of assignments: **guidance with assignments**, **feedback**, and **suggestions of further resources** that could be used in working on an assignment. Students interpreted the acts of care that had to do with assignments as signs a teacher's dedication to student success and achievement within a module.

Regarding **feedback** in particular, students especially highlighted the constructiveness and future applicability as two important qualities. The nominations praised feedback that helped the students understand the shortcomings of their work in a non-judgemental manner and inspired them to do better.

Finally, some students mentioned the acts of care that they have received from their teachers in response to **special circumstances**. These included mentions of how a teacher reacted empathetically towards a student who was affected by an illness or bereavement, or those who otherwise faced difficulties with certain formats of work such as public speaking. Teachers were praised for taking into consideration student's unique background (ethnic, class, educational) throughout their educational journey. Students positively regarded teachers who actively listened to students' concerns and helped to ease their worries, and, where appropriate, offered reasonable adjustments.

Only 11 nominations (8%) have mentioned support with special circumstances as one of the reasons of the nomination. Similarly, in 2021/22, this category covered 14% of the nominations. In contrast, in the current Teaching Awards cycle 'availability and approachability' was mentioned by 57 nominations (40%).

The nominations suggest that most students writing the nominations have not experienced acts of care that can be described as exceptional or pertaining to special circumstances. A teacher being an active, empathetic listener and positioning themselves as open to conversation may be regarded as excellent even if they do not 'go out of their way' to deliver exceptional forms of care.

Practical steps

Timely responses

For teachers, a delayed response to a student might be perceived to be little more than a slight inconvenience. Students, however, describe how the timeliness of a response can determine their level of anxiety and stress — even if on the surface the question is rather inconsequential. **Teachers who were seen as reliable in their responses to students' questions and concerns were often described as exemplary of an excellent teaching approach.**

Emphasis on availability of support

Students, especially at sub-honours level, might be unsure of what level of academic support is available to them or might not know what types of questions should be brought to office hours. **Teachers who emphasised their availability for students were praised even, occasionally, when students writing the nominations did not acknowledge personally benefitting from their one-on-one help.** What mattered was knowing that they could rely on it if needed.

Encouraging feedback

Students describe feedback as an important learning tool. At the same time, they imply that feedback can be demotivating if it solely focuses on pointing out mistakes and has no future practical applicability. **Feedback that highlights reasonable areas for improvement and motivates students to achieve their best is treated as a sign of deep care for academic development.**

'His quick responses to emails helped students to get the answers they needed in a timely manner while also helping to ease the stress that many students face when we have trouble in understanding content. This ability to ease the fears of students is what makes him one of the most approachable and understanding teachers that I have had the pleasure to work with.'

'She provides swift clarification of doubts, promptly responding through online channels such as email and Teams on the same day. Moreover, she encourages offline clarification, dedicating fixed time slots each week for face-to-face Q&A sessions.'

'I was told going to university that you have to do it on your own and lecturers won't care to help you, but I've found that to be the opposite with my nominee. I find that asking for help can be intimidating but he has made me feel comfortable to ask him any questions that I have.'

'She always gave me very high quality and useful feedback each time after I submitted my essay, explaining to me the reason for all corrections, providing me with very detailed information, and giving me the guidance on how to improve my essay, in terms of my point of view and choice of literature.'

'He always gives insightful and useful feedback on everything. He genuinely cares about students.'

Theme III. Student development

Main findings

Most of the themes discussed in this report looked at the aspects of teaching which are contemporaneous with the teaching process. To put this in a different way: they provide descriptions of materials, activities, care, etc. which students experience during their university journey. The theme of student development is an exception, as it looks at students' mentions of how an excellent teacher has affected them from a long-term perspective. This theme covers descriptions of how excellent teaching made a lasting impact on students' career options, educational journeys, and self-perception in academia.

This is a new theme in this report which did not appear in the 2021/22 Teaching Awards nominations. While in the previous report a minor theme of Employability was discussed, with the new dataset the comments on how a teacher has impacted a student from a long-term perspective have become prominent enough to warrant a separate thematic heading.

The University of St Andrews utilises the rubric of Graduate Attributes to evaluate long-term student development. However, only one student mentioned the Graduate Attributes formally in their nomination. When it comes to nominating excellent teachers, students instead preferred to construct emotive narratives of their relationship with a teacher. These narratives are hard to reduce to the formal characteristics of teaching or assessment criteria. For example, it was common for students to profess that a teacher 'changed their life' or 'opened a door that they had not known existed.' Yet, as the rest of the chapter shows, despite the highly personalised nature of the stories that some students have decided to include in their nominations, there are some repeated elements in their narratives.

In total, the mentions of long-term student development were made in 92 out of 142 (65%) of the nominations analysed.

Some of the nominations focused on how the nominee provided **motivation** to their students – for example, to tackle a difficult topic or learn a new approach. Other students, however, credited their teachers with motivating them to stick with their studies at a difficult moment, or even to continue with further education. This shows that an excellent teacher can have an impact that is far beyond the functions of a competent educator.

Some students also acknowledged how their nominees' approach **fostered confidence**. It could be confidence to choose a challenging degree pathway or confidence in one's abilities to be a successful student. Confidence was often linked to the main theme of care. The nominations provide descriptions of caring and empathetic teachers helping students to realise their full potential. There is a strong interconnectivity among the themes in this report. The actions and approaches taken by teachers in the classroom or during the learning process can lead to a long-term impact on a student's sense of self.

The sub-themes of motivation and confidence reveal narratives of stress and anxiety implicit in the nominations. Students writing the nominations often reflected on how they felt demotivated about their studies or unsure of their abilities to succeed in university. Stress and

anxiety were mentioned as factors negatively impacting these students' educational journeys. An excellent teacher for them was the one who helped to alleviate these negatives states and encouraged them to push forward.

Students also commented on how their nominees provided them with **employment opportunities and advice**. Students appreciated both the discussions of their teachers' experience and useful links to newly advertised internships. The nominations show that some students were concerned about 'education for education's sake' and wanted to learn more about the future applicability of their knowledge. A teacher who demonstrated how a certain degree or a sphere of interest could lead to a future career and shared or created opportunities to follow through with it was likely to be regarded as deeply committed to students' development.

In the 2021/2 dataset, employment opportunities and advice were mentioned in 11% of the nominations. In the 2023/4 dataset, the prevalence of this code has risen to 18%. While it is hard to speculate on this number alone, the overall growing prevalence of the mentions of long-term impact might suggest that in early post-pandemic teaching students prioritised a feeling of presence from their teachers more so than long-term impact.

Finally, the nominees mentioned **high expectations set by a teacher** as a factor that influenced the long-term impact of teaching. This subtheme appeared frequently alongside mentions of motivation and confidence. Some students mentioned how their teachers having high expectations of them led them to feel that they were treated seriously and trusted to match the challenge.

Overall, the new theme of student development highlights that in evaluation of excellent teaching, most students writing the Teaching Awards nominations tend to reflect not only on how welcoming a teacher was or how well the module was run in the moment, but also on the impact a teacher had on their long-term progress. Students considered both the effects that teaching has on their career and further education, and on them as individuals who grew and became more experienced through university education.

Practical steps

Display of belief in students' abilities

The nominations show that when students doubt their capabilities, **they appreciate a teacher who reassures them of their skills by motivating them to push further.** Teachers who displayed belief in their students' abilities to handle coursework and assignments were described as excellent. The impact of such belief was described as not only educational but also personal. Students who felt that their nominees believed in them acknowledged that this had a deep, personal impact

In some cases, belief in students' abilities took the shape of a teacher sharing how they overcame similar challenges in their academic career and an explanation of how these challenges were normal and not a sign of failure. In other cases, students perceived belief in their abilities from a teacher being patient with them, offering to explain difficult concepts or questions again and again until full comprehension was achieved. Yet other examples were of teachers assigning students with complex tasks and materials while reassuring them that they were fully capable to take this step towards further complexity. While there is no universal recipe for improving students' motivation and confidence, these examples of excellent teaching can be reflected upon to develop educational strategies.

Employment and further education advice

Students might feel unsure about the transition from education into a workplace or into a further stage of their academic journeys. Nominations suggests that provision of **advice on how to navigate such transitions and on where to find help with the next steps** is regarded as a sign of excellent teacher. Employment and further education advice reassures students about the applicability of their studies and helps with the stress of not knowing where to start.

He had great empathy for the difficulties many of us had with the subject. In one memorable class, he told us how much he had learned from being the least knowledgeable person during his masters, which gave us confidence in our own abilities and ensured that we did not get discouraged when the materials became progressively more difficult. Thanks to his class, many students improved their performance even in other modules.

Each week she pushed me to further my knowledge of the subject, and the impact she had on me was remarkable. I was motivated to attempt work in advance as each week I knew she would be able to help me work through any areas I got stuck in, without fear of judgement. Her advice was always insightful and directed me towards resources that would further aid my study. The impact of this was a renewed enthusiasm for chemistry, as I could see real improvement in myself, which in turn motivated me to work even harder.

We were aware that participating in the class we were held to an expectation that was equally met by our tutor. How rare this is! A teacher who understands that they must put in as much dedication as they expect from their students, aware that often students will fail to match it, and yet always trying. The fruits are there — visible trust in students pays off with enthusiasm and increased interest.

His contribution to our learning went beyond the classroom as he gave us advice on PhD applications and career prospects, encouraging us to look beyond the obvious opportunities.

One of his standout qualities is his adeptness in guiding students towards discovering their interests within the domains of study abroad opportunities and potential career paths. By understanding students' abilities, he helps them navigate through the choices available to make informed decisions about their academic and professional trajectories.

Theme IV. Students as partners in learning

In the 2021/2 report, this theme was titled 'Students as contributors and collaborators'

Main findings

The final major theme in the nominations includes the mentions of the opportunities and encouragement for students to act as partners in learning and knowledge production. The nominations suggest that students highly commended the efforts teachers put into fostering an environment in which all opinions and questions were given consideration and were taken seriously. What mattered to students was not only an ability to develop a critical perspective on the material, but also a chance to contribute to conversations – to discuss ideas, questions, and mistakes in a non-judgemental, respectful atmosphere.

A partnership-based approach was taken even further in some cases, where students were invited not only to contribute to the in-class discussions but also to the module's structure and content. Teachers who acknowledged students' feedback and used it to adjust the course and its materials to students' needs were regarded as exceptional. An opportunity to collaborate on the course content and structure was seen as exemplary of a deep commitment to academic values. In certain cases, it was also seen as exemplary of a staff member's commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

Thus, students writing Teaching Awards nominations highly evaluated active, participatory approaches to learning as opposed to 'passive' listening and memorising. The difference between these two styles of teaching was often acknowledged as one of the main reasons for considering a certain teacher to be 'excellent.'

*In total, the mentions of students being treated as partners in learning were made in **85 of 142 (60%)** nominations analysed.*

This is a slight decline from the percentage of the nominations mentioning the same theme in the 2021/2 cycle of Teaching Awards – 69%. While it is difficult to speculate on the reasons of this decline solely based on the available data, it is worth noting that the current Teaching Awards cycle saw fewer explicit mentions of how a teacher created an atmosphere that fostered friendships in the classroom.

One possible explanation for this shift may be that the previous iteration of this project assessed the data from students just emerging from the pandemic; the nominations in the current data set (2023/24) now place less emphasis on building intimate peer-to-peer connections, perhaps because student social life can take many forms outside the classroom again. There is less emphasis on the notion of 'belonging' than in the previous dataset.

The theme of 'students as partners in learning' bears many commonalities with the 'care' theme. And, indeed, the overlap between the two themes is significant: a teacher who has a keen interest in the perspective of their students is likely to also be approachable during office hours, for example.

The difference between the two themes for the purposes of this research is in terms of the level on which an interaction occurred. The theme of ‘care,’ as mentioned earlier in this report, corresponds to one-on-one interactions and general descriptions of a teacher as caring (including other descriptors such as empathetic, supportive, etc.). The theme of ‘students as partners in learning’ covers interactions that happened in the learning environment (such as during a class or in other group settings), as well as descriptions of the broader classroom atmosphere.

The most common sub-theme related to student partnerships includes mentions of teachers **inviting participation** from students. It covers the instances in which a teacher took a proactive position and stimulated class engagement with a certain topic or task. The scope is varied – from inviting students to contribute to a tutorial discussion to offering them an opportunity to shape their assignments to their needs. In any case, students frequently described such invitations to participate as exemplary practice, as it demonstrates attentiveness to students’ interests and fosters a positive class environment.

Similarly, descriptions of an **engaging environment** were also very common. While there may be different ways of interpreting what the word ‘engaging⁴’ means to students, a noticeable trend among the nominations was a connection between engagement and participation. Students praised teachers who created a learning environment where all felt eager to contribute to a lively discussion and participate in learning activities.

Students also praised teachers who created **supportive** and **inclusive environments**. A supportive environment can be distinguished from the ‘care’ theme by being a concerted effort from both teachers *and* students. Descriptions of supportive environments included references to being able to share questions or discoveries with the collective. An inclusive environment is one in which students from different backgrounds felt as though their perspectives were welcome and given consideration regardless of their cultural or educational background.

An interesting shift since the 2021/22 cycle of Teaching Awards has occurred in terms of the language that the students use to describe excellent teaching. The descriptor ‘engaging’ has appeared in 33% of the nominations in the 2021/22 cycle in contrast with the 46% of the nominations submitted for the current cycle, showing an increase of 13%.

Particularly in the context of the ‘students as partners in learning’ theme, a more popular way to describe participatory approaches in the 2021/22 cycle was from the perspective of fostering democratic, inclusive, and welcoming environments. While this perspective is still present in the current set of the nominations, comments highlighting engaging environments are more frequently and deeply elaborated upon.

Another significant sub-theme relates to **teachers treating student contributions as valuable**. Practices of thinking about students’ queries before responding and seriously considering the ideas proposed by students were highlighted as excellent.

Students commented positively on instances in which a teacher **considered feedback** on a module, with a wide variety of applications. Some nominations described lecturers checking whether the students understood the material, offering additional resources on particularly challenging topics. In other cases, teachers inquired about students’ spheres of interest and

⁴ Some students used the word “engaging” as a description of a teacher without providing any further details.

tailored the content of the module in response to their preferences. The students reflected in the nominations on how the practices of taking and reflecting on student feedback by their nominees made them feel valuable and improved their experience of a module.

The nominations show that students appreciate early and mid-semester feedback. This allowed students to see the feedback being implemented during their learning process.

The nominations also reveal that the current Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) system does not offer a full feedback loop. Only two students noted that they were aware of how their nominees implemented changes suggested in the MEQs and acknowledged that this was a rare occurrence. In one case, this knowledge was explained by the nominator having a representative role in the school and thus having access to information arguably unavailable to an average student.

This finding is consistent with the 2021/2 report.

Finally, a few students have commented on the practices of **curriculum co-creation** as exemplary of teaching excellence. This sub-theme covers more substantive student-led approaches refers to instances in which a module was built dynamically around students' interests, preferences, and requests. For example, in one module the nominee invited their students to present materials of their choice throughout the semester and then based the final assignment on those presentations. Another nominee was praised for introducing vertically integrated methodologies into their module.

Due to the small size of the 'curriculum co-creation' sub-theme (10 nominations – 7%), it is possible for the authors of the report to speculate on its example that students' expectations of excellent teaching may transform over the course of their degrees. Out of the ten nominations, nine were written by honours and PGT students. Only one first-year student reflected on the chance to choose their own essay topic as exemplary of excellent teaching.

Practical steps

Reassurance regarding mistakes

Students' nominations reveal anxieties about making a mistake in front of the class and / or being disregarded if such a situation were to occur. Additionally, students described a hesitancy to ask what they believed to be a 'silly question.' **The nominations reveal appreciation for the teachers who addressed any mistakes and questions as a normal and welcomed part of the learning process.** Students noted that such an approach helped them to approach material with more confidence and curiosity.

Welcoming a range of perspectives

Depending on their class, educational, ethnic, and race background, students may feel that their perspectives and experiences are not welcome or useless in a university environment. **Invitation and appreciation of contributions from different backgrounds was noted by students as conducive to an excellent learning environment.** Students appreciated learning about the various 'subaltern' perspectives and being given the opportunity to introduce examples from their experiences or cultures.

Early- and mid-semester feedback

For some students, being a partner in learning meant being consulted on how the module was run. While this is not something that can be realistically implemented on a large scale for all modules, even some minor changes, like additional elaboration of complex material or flexible tutorial structure, was sometimes regarded as exemplary of excellent teaching. Moreover, **the willingness to act upon feedback made students feel like their participation in the module was sincerely valued.**

'In his own words, "I want this to be a place where we can experiment, including with half-baked thoughts... And what I want the course to give you are the skills with which to express yourself more clearly." This philosophy enriches us personally and intellectually.'

'He went above and beyond with our seminar group - constantly offering to explain and always happy to chat about ideas. As a state school student, I felt that his seminars were entirely accessible and non-judgemental, convincing me that I have made the right choice of a degree subject.'

He creates a positive and inclusive classroom environment through open discussion with the students which encourages more diverse, expansive, and critical ways of thinking.

His emphasis on the importance of intersectional approaches gave me the theoretical founding for my own personal interests and exposed me to the literature I now draw upon in other modules and in my personal endeavours. He got to know us as individuals and supported us in our search of our own interests. This is ultimately what helped me find my love for learning again after a period of burnout and disinterest.

'Every week, she would craft class around our questions, to foster our interests and curiosities. Although certainly much more demanding, her student-led teaching style fed our passions, invited us into the researching process, and motivated our academic independence.'

'We can also provide feedback on small cards that she places in front of the lecture room, and I was pleasantly surprised by how she incorporated and improved upon my suggestions.'

Conclusion

This report has analysed the main themes appearing in the student nominations for the Teaching Award cycle of 2023/4 (for the ‘Outstanding Teacher’ and ‘Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant (or Demonstrator)’ categories). Since this is a second iteration of the report, the gained advantage of continuous investigation of the Teaching Awards nominations is the new dynamic dimension and the ability to compare earlier findings with the current ones. In this conclusion we reflect on the main findings, on how they have changed since 2021/2, and on the benefits that the continuation of this project can bring in the future.

The two most prevalent themes of this report are ‘Materials and Activities’ and ‘Care.’ The theme of ‘Materials and Activities’ covers all practical aspects of teaching, such as a teacher’s style of delivery and different components of a module. The prevalence of this theme has raised substantially since the previous report. This was partly due a different approach to coding between iterations of the report. However, even without this change in approach, the theme has become more prominent among the students’ nominations.

‘Care’ is a theme covering mentions of caring, empathetic, supportive attitudes of teachers as well as individual examples of acts of care experienced by students in one-on-one interactions with teachers. The scope of the theme is consistent with the previous report.

‘Student development’ is a new theme that was not observed in the 2021/2 nominations. It covers mentions of how a nominee’s actions made a lasting impact on a student. The emphasis that students have put on their futures when writing the nominations suggest a shift of priorities. Concerns and anxieties about managing one’s wellbeing and post-university life are observable in the nominations and noticeable in the higher education sector in general.

Finally, the last theme mentioned in the report is ‘Students as Partners in Learning.’ This theme is less prevalent than in the previous iteration of the report. A possible explanation for that could be that students are relying less on their teachers to create horizontal ties in the classroom since pandemic teaching, hence the establishment of student-to-student ties has become a less prioritised aspect of excellent teaching.

We believe that our report can be of value to student representatives, teachers and university stakeholders invested in excellent teaching. Academic literature on education often highlights how theory-driven and practice-driven approaches to enhancement of learning are challenging to combine. Research into Teaching Awards nominations bypasses this problem as it works with a student-generated dataset which allows for highly individualised descriptions of excellent teaching. Thus, this project prioritises actual student views and concerns instead of presupposing them, as might be the case with questionnaire- or interview-based methodology.

The added temporal dimension of the current report shows that excellent teaching is not something that can be standardised or developed once and for all. As student priorities evolve and change, so do the Teaching Award nominations. The current version of the report has allowed us to connect these changes to wider sector trends, emphasising how analysis of the Teaching Awards nominations can generate insights about the impact of educational, social, and economic shifts onto student priorities in learning.

It is our aspiration that this project will continue in coming years, consistently tracking the shifts in student perceptions of excellent teaching practices to create a record that is both historical and actionable.

Bibliography

Barrow, M., B. Grant and L. Xu (2022) “Academic identities research: mapping the field’s theoretical frameworks,” *Higher Education Research and Development* 41(2), pp. 240–253. doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1849036

Braun, V. and V. Clarke (2006) “Using thematic analysis in psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2), pp. 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Clarke, V. and V. Braun (2017) “Thematic analysis,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12(3), pp. 297–298. doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613.

Hagenauer, G. and S.E. Volet (2014) “Teacher–student relationship at university: an important yet under-researched field,” *Oxford Review of Education* 40(3), pp. 370–388. doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2014.921613.

Isherwood, S. (2024) *What does the graduate jobs market look like right now?* Available at <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/what-does-the-graduate-jobs-market-look-like-right-now/> (Accessed: 16 December 2024).

NUS Scotland (2023) *Fighting for students: The cost of survival*. Available at: https://assets.nationbuilder.com/nus/pages/358/attachments/original/1676990009/NUS_Cost_of_living_Crisis_presentation_reduced.pdf?1676990009 (Accessed: 16 December 2024).

Motta, S.C. and A. Bennett (2018) “Pedagogies of care, care-full epistemological practice and ‘other’ caring subjectivities in enabling education,” *Teaching in Higher Education* 23(5), pp. 631–646. doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2018.1465911.

Scottish Funding Council (2024) *Scotland’s Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework* (Accessed: 16 December 2024).

Walker-Gleaves, C. (2019) “Is caring pedagogy really so progressive? Exploring the conceptual and practical impediments to operationalizing care in higher education,” in Gibbs, P. and A. Peterson (eds.), *Higher education and hope: Institutional, pedagogical and personal possibilities*. London: Palgrave-MacMillan, pp. 93–112.

Appendix: Table of Codes

Only codes appearing in more than 5% of the nominations and discussed in this report are included in the table

Code	In how many nominations (out of 142) appears + percentage	
Materials and activities	116	82%
Making content accessible	49	35%
Delivery style	37	26%
Skill-based and applicable learning	31	22%
Variety of materials and activities	26	18%
Structure of a module	21	15%
Extracurricular activities	15	11%
Care	115	81%
Acts of care	93	65%
Being available & approachable	57	40%
Beyond teaching	27	19%
Guidance with assignments	24	17%
Feedback	22	15%
Suggestions of further resources	14	10%
Special circumstances	11	8%
Caring attitude	58	41%
Student development	92	65%
Motivation	26	18%
Employment opportunities & advice	25	18%
Fostering confidence	22	15%
High expectations set by a teacher	16	11%
Students as partners in learning	85	60%
Inviting participation	37	26%
Engaging environment	31	22%
Treating student contributions as valuable	28	20%
Supportive environment	20	14%
Consideration of feedback	19	13%
Inclusive environment	13	9%
Curriculum co-creation	10	7%