Guidelines

The annual VC Excellence Awards reward exceptionalism and outstanding service by Western Sydney University staff. The awards are the University's premier recognition for staff who excel and consistently deliver on the mission of student success, impactful research, and stronger communities.

The awards promote the strategic goals of WESTERN 2030 and the University's values and encourage professional development.

These guidelines outline:

1. Categories
2. Eligibility
3. Assessment Criteria
4. Nomination process
5. Prizes
6. Judging Panels

1 Categories

1. VC's Excellence in Teaching Award | Teacher of the Year
2. VC's Excellence in Research Award | Researcher of the Year
3. VC's Excellence in Service Award
4. VC Excellence Award | Strengthening Student Success
5. VC Excellence Award | Putting Our People First
6. VC Excellence Award | Leading Indigenous Acceleration
7. VC Excellence Award | Unlocking Global Impact
8. VC Excellence Award | Driving Research and Innovation
9. VC Excellence Award | Unleashing Western Sydney
10. VC Excellence Award | Securing Sustainability

2 Eligibility

Eligible staff

The annual VC Excellence Awards are open to all ongoing and fixed term staff who have worked at the University (including any controlled entities) for a minimum of one year. External contractors and casual staff are not eligible.

For team nominations, staff who do not meet these eligibility criteria but whose contributions to the award initiative are to be acknowledged may be included as members of a team nomination. However, they are not eligible to receive financial awards.

Previous winners

Winners of awards (either individuals or groups) in a particular category are not eligible for nomination (as an individual or group leader) in the following year in the same category.

If staff who implement initiatives and policies relating to the VC Excellence Awards are nominated for an award, as individuals or as part of a team, they should refrain from organising any part of the category in which they are nominated. This category should be coordinated by other staff members throughout the entire process.

The VC Excellence Awards are intended to recognise achievements over the previous year.

VC's Excellence in Teaching Award

The VC's Excellence in Teaching Award |Teacher of the Year does not accept nominations and is instead given to one of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Students (DVCES) Excellence in Teaching Award winners.

3 Assessment Criteria

The VC Excellence Awards Judging Panel for each category will assess the winner/s based on demonstration of excellence and their commitment to the University's values of:

- Boldness
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Fairness, and
- Trust.

The following criteria for each individual category will also be considered:

VC's Excellence in Teaching Award |Teacher of the Year

The VC's Excellence in Teaching Award | Teacher of the Year may be awarded to an individual or group.

The recipient/s must have an exceptional record of advancing student learning, educational leadership, and scholarly contribution to learning and teaching.

The Judging Panel recommends one of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Students Excellence in Teaching Award winners for the award.

The Judging Panel will assess:

a. The extent to which the claims for excellence are supported by formal and informal evaluation.

b. The extent of creativity, imagination, or innovation, irrespective of whether the approach involves traditional learning environments or technology-based developments.

c. Information contained in student data or institutional students' surveys, references and selected teaching materials submitted in the nominations.

d. Innovation or leadership that has influenced and enhanced learning and teaching and/or student experience.

VC's Excellence in Research Award | Researcher of the Year

This award is for research undertaken by an academic staff member who is considered an outstanding researcher or research by a team. It acknowledges the very best research achievement at the University with demonstrable impact which extends beyond the institution. It is awarded to an individual or team.

The Judging Panel will assess:

a. Research rigour and quality – evidence of the sustained quality of the research and academic performance of the individual and/or team involved.

b. Research impact –impact and benefits of:
   i. the research, and
   ii. evidence of local, national, and/or international recognition.

c. Evidence of how leadership has improved research culture or built relationships internal and external to the University.

d. Evidence of mentorship activities.

VC's Excellence in Service Award

The VC's Excellence in Service Award recognises an individual or team that has delivered meaningful impact. The award encourages applications that demonstrate the importance and benefits of the University's outreach activities to the University, community, and business.

The Judging Panel will assess how staff have:

a. Made a significant contribution to the effective operation of University administration to deliver measurable benefits.

b. Demonstrated a consistently outstanding level of professional service to the University's students, staff, or external stakeholders, including the community.

c. Introduced an innovative idea where the benefit to the University and/or community can be detailed and evidenced.

VC's Excellence Awards – WESTERN 2030

These awards recognise staff contributions to furthering the University's mission. They may be awarded to an individual or a team and focus on recognising excellence across the seven key priorities of WESTERN 2030.

VC Excellence Award | Strengthening Student Success

This award recognises an individual or team who has excelled in strengthening the success and experiences of students.

The Judging Panel will assess how staff have:

a. Delivered outstanding student learning, including through innovation.

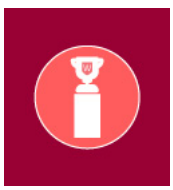
b. Positioned Western as a first-choice university in the Western Sydney region.

c. Measurably increased student attraction and retention.

d. Measurably improved the student experience and student connection.

e. Measurably lifted graduate outcomes.

f. Introduced personalisation and student choice.



VC Excellence Award | Putting Our People First

This award is designed to recognise an individual or team who has fostered a positive, inclusive, and supportive workplace culture.

The Judging Panel will assess how staff have:

a. Led the engagement and career development of staff.

b. Fostered a supportive and inclusive culture committed to excellence and high achievement.

c. Driven career development and professional development.

d. Improved staff wellbeing, including through leadership or the introduction of initiatives.

VC Excellence Award | Leading Indigenous Acceleration

This award recognises an individual or team who has proved exceptional in advancing Indigenous education, research, and engagement.

The Judging Panel will assess how staff have:

a. Centred Indigenous voices in learning and teaching, research, engagement, or governance.

b. Built the cultural capabilities and responsibilities of non-Indigenous staff and students and embedded Indigenous approaches and decision-making throughout the University.

c. Demonstrated excellence in advancing Indigenous culture and engagement.

d. Increased the attraction, progress, and retention of Indigenous staff.

e. Increased the attraction and retention of Indigenous students.

f. Demonstrated excellence in Indigenous Teaching and Learning.

g. Demonstrated excellence in advancing Indigenous research.

h. Supported Indigenous leaders, within the University and broader community, to excel.

VC Excellence Award | Unlocking Global Impact

This award recognises the efforts of an individual or a team to enhance the University's international collaboration, reputation, and reach.

The Judging Panel will assess how staff have:

a. Delivered actions or initiatives that have enhanced the University's international reputation for excellence and world-class partnerships in education and research.

b. Lifted and/or diversified international student enrolment, maximising the University's offshore presence.

c. Encouraged and supported student and staff mobility across the University's international network.

d. Driven improved international collaboration to deliver benefits for students, staff, and communities.

e. Excelled in international education, including through innovation

f. Forged international partnerships that have strengthened transnational education and transnational research in country and in Australia, delivering benefits to students and the community.

VC Excellence Award | Driving Research and Innovation

This award recognises an individual or team who has produced research excellence and high-impact solutions.

The Judging Panel will assess how staff have:

a. Positioned the University as a research partner of choice for industry, government, and the community.

b. Delivered locally or globally significant research and/or innovation that has led to measurable impact.

c. Delivered research or innovation that has helped drive the development of new industries in Western Sydney.

d. Driven entrepreneurship and the startup economy to grow the regional innovation ecosystem.

e. Enhanced the University's global reputation for research and excellence through initiatives or actions.

VC Excellence Award | Unleashing Western Sydney

This award recognises an individual or team who has demonstrated excellence in engaging with Western Sydney and empowering the region.

The Judging Panel will assess how staff have:

a. Attracted new and significant partners, including industry and philanthropic partners, delivering measurable benefits to students, staff, and the community.

b. Enhanced the reputation of the University as a force for public good in the broader Western Sydney community through specific actions or initiatives.

c. Worked with partners to expand meaningful work-related opportunities and experiences for students and delivered improved graduate employment opportunities.

VC Excellence Award | Securing Sustainability

This award recognises an individual or team that ensures Western can continue to lead the world in promoting environmental, financial, and social sustainability.

The Judging Panel will assess how staff have:

a. Led efforts to address social, ecological, cultural and climate changes through actions or initiatives that have delivered measurable results.

b. Delivered impactful multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

c. Delivered distinctive programs that equip the next generation of thought leaders and global citizens to address complex sustainability challenges.

d. Led in the education of Indigenous knowledges as pathways to sustainability and Caring for Country, guiding nature-based solutions to climate risk adaptation.

e. Through targeted investments and a demonstrated commitment to ethical social procurement, Western Sydney University is recognised as a leader in responsible investment.

4 Nomination process

Any staff member can nominate an eligible individual or team as a nominator via the Microsoft Form available here. Self-nominations will not be accepted.

To support the application, nominators will be required to submit:

> A **short summary** of no more than 150 words on what the individual or team has achieved in the relevant category and why they deserve to win the award.

> A **supporting statement** of no more than a total of 500 words. Nominators are asked to detail how the nominated individual or team has met the relevant criteria (listed above) in the category they are being nominated in. The Judging Panel will assess each nomination based on how well they meet the relevant criteria. It is therefore important that applications specifically address these points.

Documentary evidence is needed to support nominations with at least one and no more than three documents to be uploaded.

The following are examples of supporting evidence:

a. Benchmarking services against external providers of similar services (for example, in other universities).
b. Testimonials or letters of support from students, staff, community members etc.
c. Feedback from student groups or other recipients of initiatives to support claims of positive outcomes, gathered from whole cohort or group (rather than selected individual testimonial) through formal surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.
d. Comparison of experience, results, etc. between pre-intervention and post-intervention.
e. Improvements in achieving key performance indicators, for example, retention and progression rates of students, or outcomes of the students learning experience.
f. Public recognition of excellence, for example prizes and awards received, referenced conference presentations and publications both nationally and internationally, features in broadcast media.

Submissions must be lodged by the due date. Late entries will not be accepted.

Nominators must ensure that the proposed nominee/s are willing to accept the nomination.

5 Prizes

Awards do not have to be made in every category.

The total allocation of funds for Excellence Awards and their distribution across the award categories will be determined annually by the Vice-Chancellor and President.

For 2025:

- Individual award winners will be allocated $3,000 to be spent on professional development or other purposes as set out below.
- Winning teams of two will be allocated $5,000 to be spent on professional development or other purposes as set out below.
- Winning teams of three or more will be allocated $7,000 to be spent on professional development or other purposes as set out below.

Award funds are to be spent within the next calendar year following receipt of the award at the University's annual VC Excellence Awards ceremony.

Award funds may be expended to further development of the initiative(s) for which the award has been conferred, or:

a. professional development of individuals, for example conference or workshop attendance and associated costs
b. team building events
c. allocation to a research fund that the individual or team have a primary interest in
d. contribution towards the purchase of equipment, including texts and electronic equipment
e. allocate to student needs at the University including study supplies, books, scholarships, pantry supplies etc.

6 Judging Panels

The responsibilities of the Judging Panel for the VC Excellence Awards are to:

a. Assess nominations against the specified criteria and make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor and President.
b. Make further enquiries if necessary, ensuring that enquiries are directly relevant to the award criteria and comply with privacy principles.

The 4-person core Judging Panel consists of:

- The Provost
- The Chief Operating Officer
- The Chief of Staff, and
- The Chief People Officer.

Where awards are aligned to one of the seven WESTERN 2030 pillars, an additional judge with subject matter expertise can be invited to join the Judging Panel. Where members are unavailable, the Vice-Chancellor or the Chief of Staff will approve substitute members.

The Judging Panel makes recommendations for all awards to the Vice-Chancellor, who then makes the final decision.