

HOW TO WRITE A TEACHER/TRAINER AWARD

Read this in conjunction with the [official Victorian Training Award resources](#).

It takes time to prepare an award application and gather the materials you need.

Keep in mind that you may be chasing busy people for information or feedback, and waiting to get approvals signed off.

But the effort will be worth it...

Understand the Steps

To get a clear sense of what you'll need and when, take a look at the official Victorian Training Award information plus our '[how to win an award checklist](#)' and the general '[how to write an award guide](#)'. The information in these resources will help you to plan and follow all the right steps.

This guide right here will help you to focus more on the detail. It's been prepared so you can respond directly to the 2020 teacher/trainer of the year selection criteria.

Blow your own Trumpet

You might work in a team and have great colleagues who've helped you to deliver excellent initiatives. You absolutely can acknowledge collaboration. But remember that this is an individual award. You are being asked to step up and showcase your unique skills.

Nope. It's not easy to talk or write about yourself. It can be even harder to say (out loud) that you're really good at stuff, especially if you're the quiet type who just gets on with things.

But this is not a moment to be modest or hold back. And it is possible to be humble, gracious *and* confident all at once.

The judges are looking for someone who's comfortable in the awards spotlight, of quality worthy of the outstanding tag. So think about what you do that's different to others. Sure, it might be *your* normal, everyday but the judges are curious about how you go above and beyond to deliver excellence in training.

THE APPLICATION

There are three parts to this application:

- Overview
- Responses to the Selection Criteria
- Supporting Evidence

SECTION A: OVERVIEW

Think of this as your ‘who, what, where, why and how’ story. It’s a 300 word summary for promotional material, something that will be shared with the media and public when you hit the spotlight. It’s the good news story.

To write this, imagine that you’re having a conversation with someone who only knows a little bit about TAFE.

You want to tell a bit of background about yourself and the TAFE, community and industry contexts you work in. Explain what you teach and how your qualifications and life experiences inform your work. Share what motivates you, what challenges you and how you’ve tackled any tough stuff.

You can write the overview in cohesive form, or answer in bullet point.

SECTION B: SELECTION CRITERIA

The serious business. Your answers here will be carefully assessed by the judges. Remember, they’re looking for evidence of excellence.

You have a 600-word limit for each response. There are four to answer in the teacher/trainer award – so that’s 2400 words in total for Part B.

Maybe break up each 600 word section into an introduction plus three or four paragraphs, each addressing a key point. Blend general and specific information.

Then add a concluding sentence or two that hammers home your answer to the criterion question. It can be helpful to mirror back or paraphrase the words in criteria to show that you have delivered what was required.

The information that follows relates directly to what you are asked to submit for this 2020 award. We’ve provided general tips and made-up example answers. These should give you a few ideas to get cracking and write about yourself.

CRITERION 1 *Excellence and initiatives (600 words)*

START BOLD, ADD GOLD

Start writing for each criterion with a bold general statement that shouts ‘I’m outstanding’, speaks directly to the question and signals what you’re about.

Don’t be afraid to blow your own trumpet. The judges want to choose someone confident enough to represent the state. So knock their socks off from the start.

But as you proceed, remember that you have to deliver the details that back up and justify your boldness. Excellence does not speak for itself. You need to deliver the gold (not just glitz and glamour). A good intro statement would cover what you’ll go on to explain next. For example:

Year after year students in our ABC course struggled with a particular cluster of competencies. This became a sticking point with employers; the weakest link back on the tools. In 2017, I led colleagues in a brainstorming project, visited employers and gathered student input. This prompted me to redesign our course delivery and learning and assessment tools. This project changed the way I (and now my team) teach XYZ. Our results show we transformed how students learn, engage and perform in the workplace. Earlier this year I spoke at an industry conference to share the innovations, and I won my TAFE’s excellence award.

Below are the types of things you could talk about in more depth for the rest of the word count. The example introduces these points and story in some way.

The intro also clearly states that you’re a high quality specimen; that you exceed standard teacher/trainer practices. You operate at the local level and also think create possibilities beyond your patch. It can also help to use active language that shows leadership e.g. managed, introduced, transformed, led or initiated...

Consider

- what involvement you have had in the development of new learning methodologies and training delivery
- an initiative you have implemented which has led to innovation or improvement in your delivery and/or assessment practice
- how you have shared the outcomes of your innovation or improvement with your colleagues
- the impact of these initiatives or improvements on your learners, your colleagues and your industry partners.

CRITERION 2 *Learner needs and focus (600 words):*

SHOW, DON'T TELL

A good tale weaves in aspects of a journey - like where you came from and got to, the challenges you overcame, the problems solved and what you collectively learned and achieved along the way. All of this leads into the grand finale of what the collaboration contributes - for all of the characters in your stakeholder story.

For an award submission you can't simply say, what I do is 'innovative' or 'excellent' and leave it at that. The judges want proof in the pudding.

You can use raw data and quotes; a combination of qualitative and quantitative. You might already have information in your administrative systems. You can also gather additional material, perhaps through a survey or testimonials.

Whatever you include, don't assume the results speak for themselves. Chunks of data without context won't cut it. Grab snapshot highlights to prove your claims (full results can be included the evidence section). For example:

Our XYZ apprenticeship program has one-third mature age students. Feedback showed they often felt frustrated and held back by the pace of learning with people straight from school. I investigated options for cohort streams but it was not feasible in my department. Also, many employers I spoke with thought that TAFE should teach teamwork. So I researched best practice models, then piloted a mentoring project, integrated with project assessments. Anecdotally, class dynamics have improved dramatically and the evaluation shows 83% improvement in satisfaction of mature age students. Younger students report being more confident relating with colleagues in the workplace. We're now rolling out this training model across the department.

You can maybe add a sentence or two of a student quote about relating to colleagues. But don't waste your precious word count by limiting yourself to one achievement. Show breadth and range:

- how you support your learners' diverse needs and ensure they continue to be engaged in their learning journey
- what evidence there is of the effectiveness of the design and delivery methodologies of your training program
- examples where you have initiated a new idea or activity etc. in response to feedback
- what learner, industry and/or community feedback mechanisms you have utilised.

CRITERION 3 *Commitment to VET teaching and learning (600 words)*

CREATE A RIPPLE EFFECT

While this is an award for you, an individual teacher or trainer, the work you do does not exist in a vacuum. You want to show the judges that you cast a wide net, and that you are proud of the part you play in our training system.

The judges want to see that you believe in what VET offers, and to understand how that motivates your work. Maybe share a snippet of your own career pathway.

Outline the networking you do, any relevant memberships, professional and personal development, or any mentoring and leadership activities you're involved in. Remember, leadership can be informal. There's not always a badge.

Show that you understand what is unique about VET. Explain how you connect with students, peers and colleagues, and facilitate their success. Share some of the results that have flowed from your support and practices.

Outputs are the tangible things (e.g. improvement by % in student satisfaction rates or sharing your insights at a regional VET meeting). The outcomes are the bigger flow on effects of what the outputs do (e.g. student satisfaction that leads to better workplace culture and productivity; or collaborative peer networks that improve sector capabilities in ABC). For example:

I worked in industry XYZ for eight years. My boss recognised my people skills and encouraged me to mentor newcomers. It was informal but that's where I got my taste of facilitating people to become their best. For professional development I did a Cert IV, then developed a formal induction program at work. I realised that I wanted to try full-time teaching, and that my industry experience and engagement skills meant I could make a difference. I've now supported over 150 students to transition into their future. Last year I completed a Diploma of Vocational Education and Training and my student satisfaction exceeded our TAFE's average by 22%. Colleagues ask me 'how?' so I share and learn from these conversations. Next year I will present at the AVETRA conference.

Consider:

- how you maintain and grow your own skills and knowledge
- how others are supported by you to develop skills and knowledge
- examples of your engagement with other VET professionals.

CRITERION 4 *Links with industry and the community (600 words)*

THINK BIG

Winners of this award can see and are part of the bigger picture.

The judges want to learn about how you work in relation to the bigger context, and also how you connect and represent VET to the outside world. This includes engagement with people, ideas, trends and issues; both in local and broader regional or national settings. Outline how these connections inform your own attitude and teaching practices.

Industry engagement is what makes TAFE unique. It's expected by all VET teachers and trainers. Demonstrate that your links go beyond the everyday. List what you attend or participate in - formally and informally, regular and occasional. Explain how this builds your awareness, and how your links and relationships boost the effectiveness and reputation of the VET sector.

Try to be clear about why you see VET in general, and your program in particular as the best solution for a problem. Include some of the nuts and bolts of how you solve these problems, create outstanding opportunities for stakeholders, and how you share the good news stories. An example:

I have exceptional understanding of industry XYZ, through career experience, plus the professional networks I have nurtured since becoming a teacher. As an educator with industry experience I am well equipped to understand both sides of the coin. This helps me to grasp and articulate issues, obstacles and challenges, particularly when it comes to the retention and skills shortages faced by this industry. I bring VET perspectives to LLEN, as a committee member, and as associate of the industry peak body. I am a strong advocate for work based learning and in the past 18 months have developed three tailored programs with business, one of which received media attention for its local success.

Consider:

- the how active links with industry and the community are implemented in practice
- the major issues confronting the industry/industries your program engages with
- how VET practices can help address these issues
- what level of engagement you have with industry and professional bodies
- how you promote VET in industry and the community.

SECTION C: SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

There are mandatory inclusions and up to five (5) pages of optional extras for you to include. These take time to gather so get onto this early.

You must include a high res photograph (smile!), evidence of your qualifications, a signed Employer or Training Provider Declaration authorising your entry, and at least one reference testimonial.

The five pages can include whatever you think adds value and gives the judges additional insight. The evidence should back-up or expand your story.

Items could include course materials you've made reference to in your criteria, a copy of a local news story or a testimonial from a student, colleague, employer or person of influence. You could expand the data that you could only share as a snapshot in your answers.

When requesting testimonials ask people to be specific. Don't be afraid to offer suggestions on what they could include. The most effective feedback identifies the outstanding impact and shows real familiarity with the work that you do and the impact you have. So it needs to be a bit fancier than someone just saying they know who you are because you've been teaching in this course for five years.

*If you need more information to respond to the criteria, have a chat to colleagues who've done this before. If you are successful and get to the shortlisting stage, we've developed specific resources to help you prepare for the panel **interview**.*