



NUE Awards: Hints and tips for writing your submission

I've judged quite a few sets of industry awards, including the National Undergraduate Employability Awards and the annual awards for AGCAS, AGR and NASES. The best nominations have a number of things in common and I'd like to share my top tips for writing a strong submission.

Writing an awards entry is all about telling an eye-catching story about your achievement, using facts as well as narrative to help the judges understand the impact of what you have done. The NUE Awards attract lots of entries so your submission needs to be clear and concise, and structured to show how your work meets the judging criteria. It needs to leave a lasting impression too, something that will stay in the judges' minds during shortlisting to give you the best possible chance of winning.

Here are four simple steps that will help you to do this:

- **Create impact early.** A good submission makes a strong statement up front explaining why the initiative is worthy of consideration. This catches the judges' attention and sets the context for the rest of the document. Make sure that the first paragraph shows why your achievement is outstanding, picking a couple of highlights which will resonate with the judges, and then use the rest of the submission to build on this statement.
- **Use statistics and stories.** We all respond to information in different ways, but using a combination of numbers and narrative will appeal to those that judge with their head, and those that judge with their heart. Statistics and data show the impact your initiative has made in concrete, quantifiable terms. The story about how you've achieved success, perhaps supported with quotes from people who have felt the benefits, will bring the statistics to life.
- **Think like your audience.** What kind of reaction will your submission provoke when the judges read it? It can be hard to assess this when you are close to the subject material, so ask someone who is not connected with your team to read it through. What do they remember? Do they ask questions because they don't understand something that is obvious to you? What emotions do they feel when they read your words?
- **Follow the guidelines.** It sounds simple, but let's face it this is something we wish our students would do when they apply for jobs. Make sure your submission covers all the judging criteria, arranging the information to make it easy for judges to find. And remember the value of brevity: a two-page submission for an award which has a word limit of 250 will frustrate a judge who has a pile of 20 more entries to read, and may actually dilute impact by hiding the best bits in a forest of text.

These steps will help you to structure an awards submission or indeed any document designed to influence a decision, such as a business case for your senior team or a marketing message for students.

If you would like some help with the process, I would be happy to talk about how I could help you to showcase the work that you do. You can find me at www.graduate-transitions.co.uk.

Good luck with your submission and I'll see you at the ceremony!

Gary Argent, Graduate Transitions