

Rewarding teaching excellence: The development of an innovative index to reward teaching activity in higher education

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Abstract

In the contemporary world context, tertiary institutions and academic staff are constantly required to demonstrate their excellence. There is evidence to suggest that academic excellence in research is rewarded more highly than excellence in teaching: Researchers are perceived to have higher status and better career advancement opportunities. In Australia, successful research activity is also rewarded explicitly through the application of a Research Activity Index (RAI), which provides funds that may be used by academics to support their work. This is highly valued by staff. This paper reports on the early stages of new initiative in one university, to develop a parallel and complimentary Teaching Activity Index (TAI), to acknowledge excellence in teaching. It describes the conduct and findings of a small scale research project exploring relevant perceptions, and beliefs of academic staff, for example: The value of a TAI; the principles that should underpin a TAI; the kinds of teaching activities, and qualities that they would like to see rewarded. The insights gained through the study have supported the development of a pilot TAI which is being implemented in the second semester of 2003.