

Student measures of teaching excellence and teacher esteem in a research intensive university: the students' value economy in a TEF world



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Excellence: the students' value economy

What do they weigh up? What is most important?

To whom do they hold highest value (=highest esteem)





Department
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FULFILLING OUR POTENTIAL

Teaching Excellence, Social
Mobility and Student Choice

NOVEMBER 2015

The government view of 'excellence'

What do we mean by excellence?

15. There is no one broadly accepted definition of “teaching excellence”. In practice it has many interpretations and there are likely to be different ways of measuring it. The Government does not intend to stifle innovation in the sector or restrict institutions’ freedom to choose what is in the best interests of their students. But we do think there is a need to provide greater clarity about what we are looking for and how we intend to measure it in relation to the TEF. Our thinking has been informed by the following principles:

- excellence must incorporate and reflect the diversity of the sector, disciplines and missions – not all students will achieve their best within the same model of teaching;
- excellence is the sum of many factors – focussing on metrics gives an overview, but not the whole picture;
- perceptions of excellence vary between students, institutions and employers;
- excellence is not something achieved easily or without focus, time, challenge and change.

Setting some institutional context for the study: Faculty of Engineering, Imperial College, a research intensive institution

Methods

Focus group discussions with student representatives to identify student perceptions of teaching excellence and esteem



Identification and ranking of key attributes or representations of excellence



Identification and ranking of key attributes or representations of highly esteemed teachers



Initial findings

Lecturers held in high teaching esteem are:

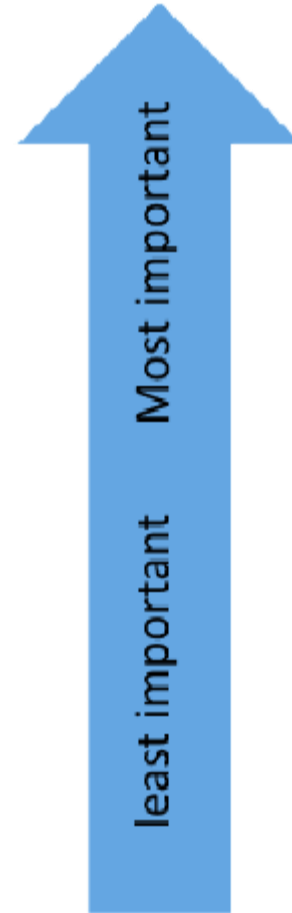
- organised, presentable, timely, planned, good feedback
- clear, concise, tone/style of lecturing, focussed
- approachable, availability, time
- inspiring, motivated, committed, passionate, enthusiastic, extra mile
- holding a position of leadership
- perception of ability, good feedback, their value of teaching, measurable results

But what is most important for students?

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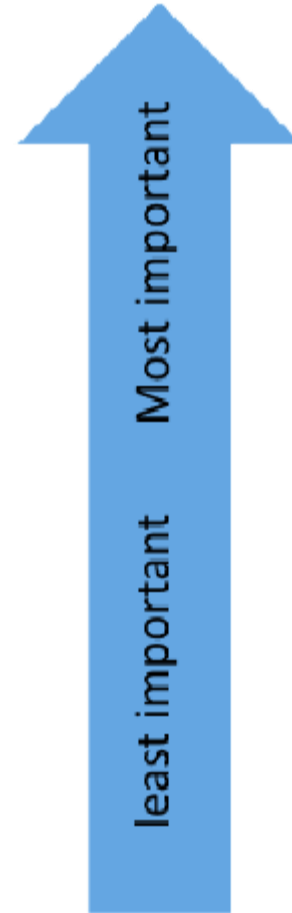
- understanding of courses, technical skills, organisation
- compassionate, empathetic, helpful, emotional intelligence
- enthusiasm, engagement
- flexibility, student needs, reacting to change
general awareness
- Subject skills, knowledge

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Summary

- The students value economy of teaching excellence is focussed towards qualitative and personal attributes of the lecturer that foster a caring and supportive learning environment
 - The value economy used to recognise highly esteemed teachers is focused on the teaching pedagogy and not on any quantitative measure
 - Teaching qualifications have practically no value in the students' value economy
 - Research esteem is valued in certain defined circumstances
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- **A students' Teaching Excellence Framework is one of qualitative attributes.** They are subjective and likely vary from one institution to the next and from one subject area to the next.
 - Can we really produce a national Teaching Excellence Framework that is necessarily flexible and able to recognise qualitative attributes?

A qualitative TEF to a quantitative outcome

Assessment process

9. TEF assessments will be independent from Government. We propose that TEF judgements will be made by a panel of independent experts against an assessment framework, based on the evidence submitted. The proposed panels will be made up of a balance of academic experts in learning and teaching, student representatives, and employer/professional representatives. In time, it is envisaged that panels will be convened for each discipline (subject) and include experts in that discipline to make relevant and robust judgements.

- The assessment of qualitative submission is down to 'independent experts' !?
- Only in time will subject specific panels be convened....better....but what about framing in the institutional context too?