

2020/21

RATE REPORT

THE RECOGNISING AND ADVANCING
TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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OPENING STATEMENT

The Stirling Student Union's RATE Awards have been going strong for over ten years, and this year was no exception despite everything that has happened in the past year.

This year we introduced new categories in digital inclusion and accessibility to highlight the many changes to learning due to the pandemic, and the RATE awards have been a fantastic way to learn what went well and to appreciate all the tremendous work of staff members across the university during such an unprecedented year.

While normally the entire university would be buzzing with anticipation of the RATE Awards celebration in April, this year we held it online in true pandemic fashion and it was amazing. It was the highlight of my year as VP Education because we got to come together with staff and students to highlight and cheer on all the amazing people who truly made a difference in such a challenging year, and that was something so special. Thanks again to everyone for everything over the past year and I cannot wait to see how we all grow over the year to come.



Lexi Ehresmann (Vice President Education 20/21)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The RATE awards provide a great opportunity every year for student voice to be heard and allow for the recognition of staff members who went above and beyond for their students. With the University having completed its ELIR review this year, achieving the highest pass rate, the data provided by the RATE Awards can help the University of Stirling build on this achievement.

During the RATE Awards for 2020-21, nominators were predominately female, aged 20-29 years old, and in their first year of study. For those nominated, they were predominately male, though the proportions of male to female fluctuated depending on the award (we were unable to access data related to staff who identify outwith male and female genders). The faculty which received the largest proportion of nominations was the Arts & Humanities Faculty, which is also the faculty which won the Faculty of the Year award. Within the faculties themselves, key themes which came out of the teaching specific nominations were staff being supportive, providing clear teaching, timely communication, being approachable and being helpful. These themes also came through during the thematical analysis on the most frequently nominated faculty members this year and helps us understand what makes a truly exceptional teacher. These are themes which have come up yearly during the RATE Awards and this gives us a clear indication of what improves the student experience.

In a year of online learning and support, both Natural Sciences and Arts & Humanities particularly shone through, receiving the greatest number of nominations under Innovation in Online Connection. Arts & Humanities also fared well when it came to ensuring accessibility and inclusion for online learning. Both were commended for their adaptability and supportive staff during a challenging time. In terms of student representation, the student Faculty Officers from the Stirling Management School received almost half of the nominations under Faculty Officer of the Year. Faculty Officers this year were considered supportive, approachable, dedicated and most importantly helped build student communities during a very difficult year. The challenges of covid-19 are far from over, and these nominations show the importance of community building during such challenging times.

As Sarah our RATE Intern sums up very well, "[t]he year of 2020 will go down in history as the one where the world stopped thanks to the COVID 19 pandemic, teaching at the university went online and we all had to adapt to a new world. The number of RATE award nominations did not disappoint, and it was a great time to celebrate the level of excellence in our university, this report has looked at the nominations and analysed (to a great detail) what makes our university so special."

WINNERS AND RUNNERS UP

Excellence in Teaching in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities

- Damian Etone (Winner)
- Guido Noto La Diega (Runner Up)

Excellence in Teaching in the Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport

- Carina Hibberd (Winner)
- Colin Moran (Runner Up) and Gwenne McIntosh (Runner Up)

Excellence in Teaching in the Faculty of Natural Sciences

- Francesca Singleton (Winner)
- Philip Wookey (Runner Up)

Excellence in Teaching in the Faculty of Social Sciences

- Kylie Bradfield (Winner)
- Edward Moran (Runner Up)

Excellence in Teaching in the Stirling Management School

- Paul Cowell (Winner)
- Till Stowasser (Runner Up)

Excellence in Teaching in INTO

- Amy Carr (Winner)

Best Tutor

- Guido Noto La Diega (Winner)
- Kylie Bradfield (Runner Up)

Fantastic Feedback

- Paul Cowell (Winner)
- Wisam Abboud (Runner Up)

Innovation in Postgraduate Teaching

- Simon McCabe (Winner)
- Paul Cowell (Runner up)

Innovation in Online Connection

- Eleanor Tanner (Winner)
- Peter Matthews (Runner up)

Research Postgraduate Supervisor of the Year Award

- Iain Gallagher (Winner)
- David Little (Runners up)

Outstanding Admin

- Lesley McIntosh (Winner)
- Roswitha Lucht (Runner up) and Lesley Robertson (Runner Up)

Outstanding Support

- Amaya Albalat (Winner)
- Pauline Darnbrough (Runner Up)

Faculty Officer of the Year

- Ethan Williamson (Winner)
- Ryan McMillan (Runner Up)

Faculty of the Year

- Faculty of Arts and Humanities (Winner)
- Faculty of Health Science and Sport (Runner Up)

Student Service of the year

- Library and Information Services (Winner)
- Student Learning Services (Runner Up)

WINNERS AND RUNNERS UP

Dedication to Sustainability

- Colin Dey (Winner)
- Clare Wilson (Runner Up)

Dedication to Online Accessibility and Inclusion

- Francesca Singleton (Winner)
- Alasdair Rutherford (Runner Up)

Dedication to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

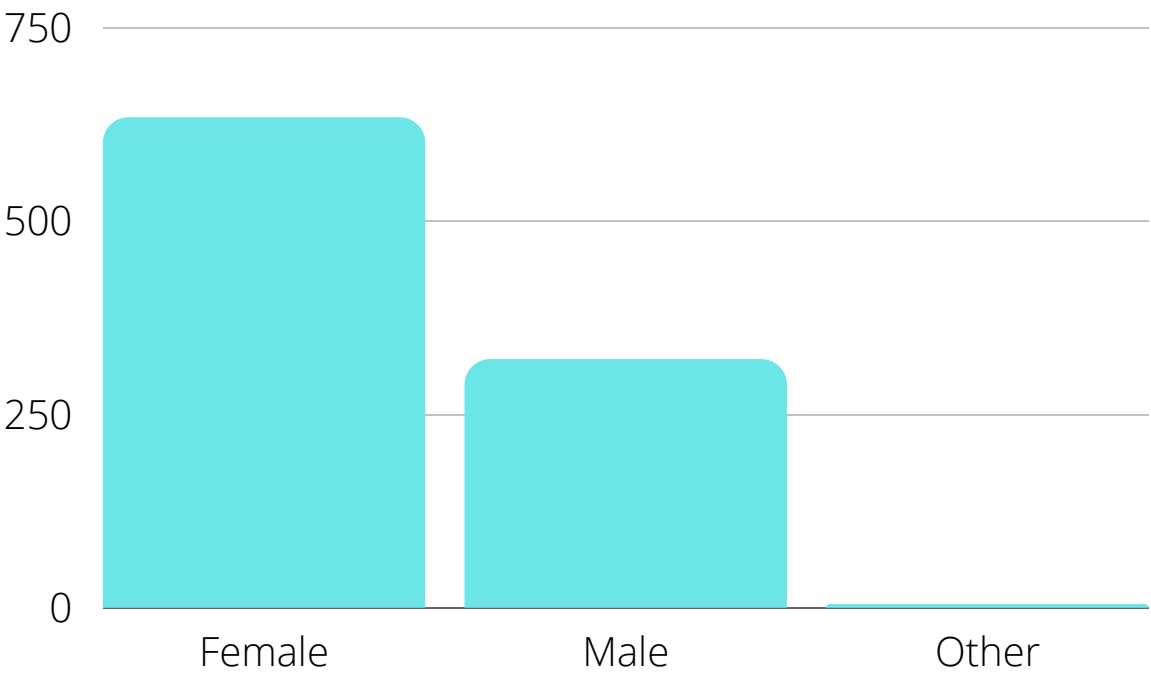
- Toni Hasstrup (Winner)
- Michelle Donnelly (Runner up)

The Kate Howie Lifetime Achievement Award

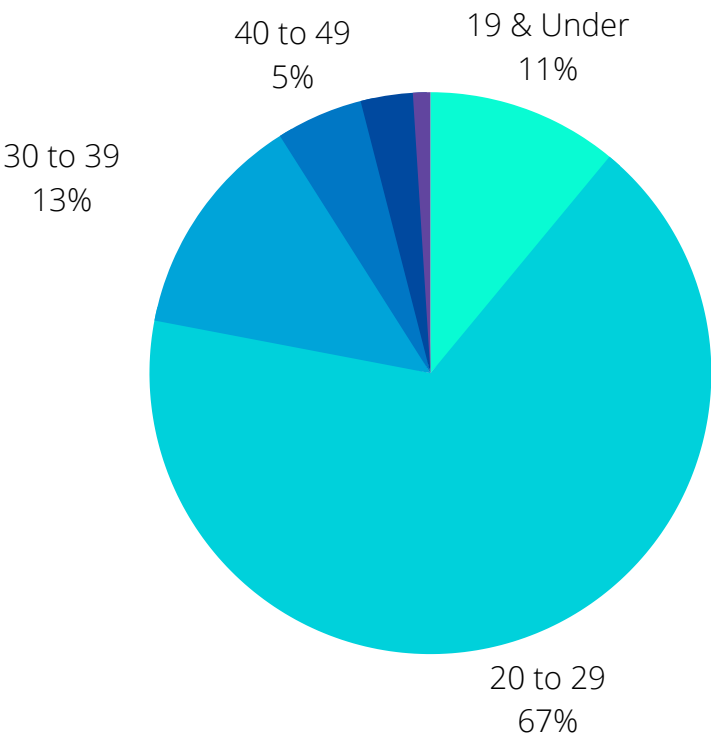
- Grace McArthur (Winner)

WHO ARE THE NOMINATORS?

Who did the nominating? We know it was the students but how does that break down?



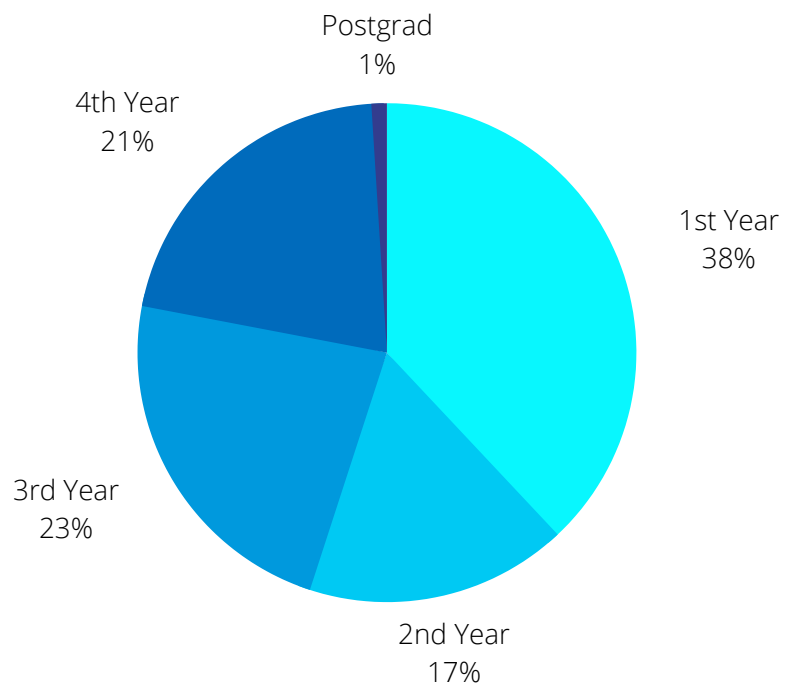
Almost double our nominations came from our female student population this year but we can see that there are still a number of nominations coming from other genders. (N.B. this is based on the information the university holds and may not be accurate with regards to gender)



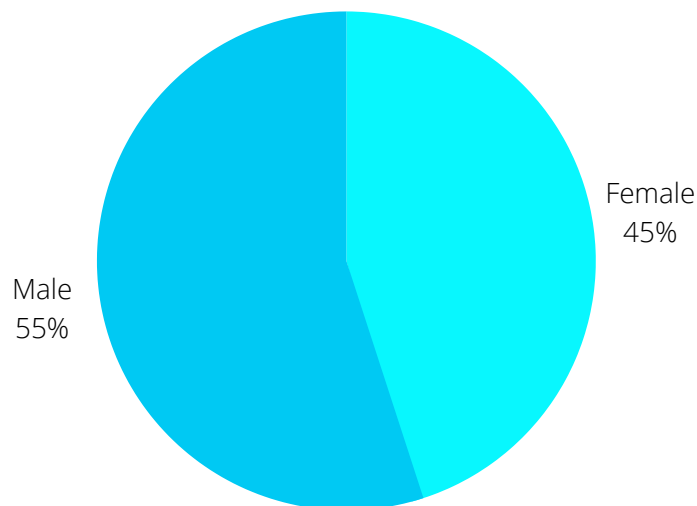
Looking at the age of our nominators it is no surprise that our traditional students make up the greatest number of nominations. There is, however, a good spread between the rest of the ages.

50 to 59 - 3%
60 & Above - 1%

As expected, the year with the greatest number of students (1st year) have given the greatest number of nominations. It is, however, also encouraging to see that students in their final years of undergraduate study have felt the need to nominate this year. In years where your studies are incredibly important is in encouraging to see that even when the university has had to move onto online teaching our students have felt that the teaching they are receiving is of a high standard.

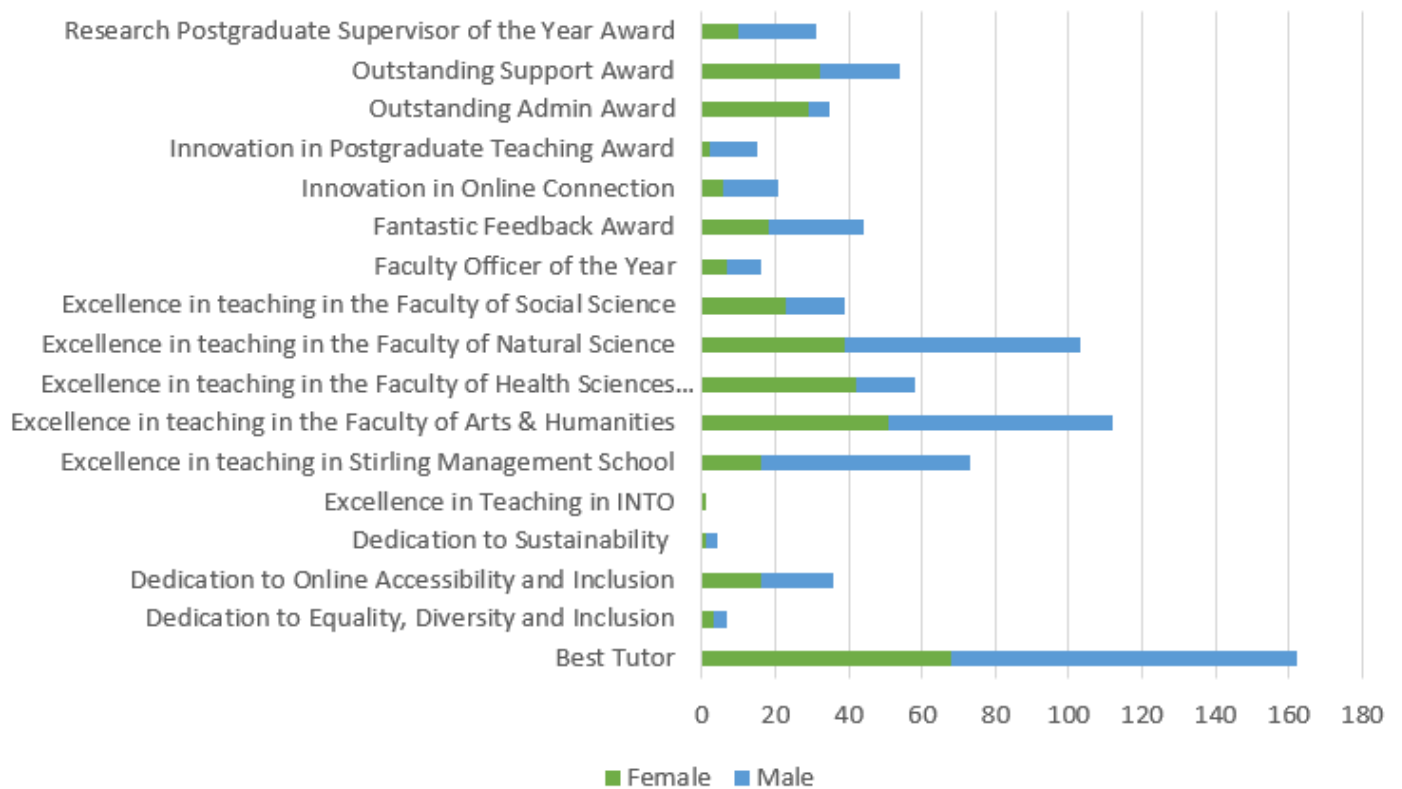


WHO ARE THE NOMINATED?



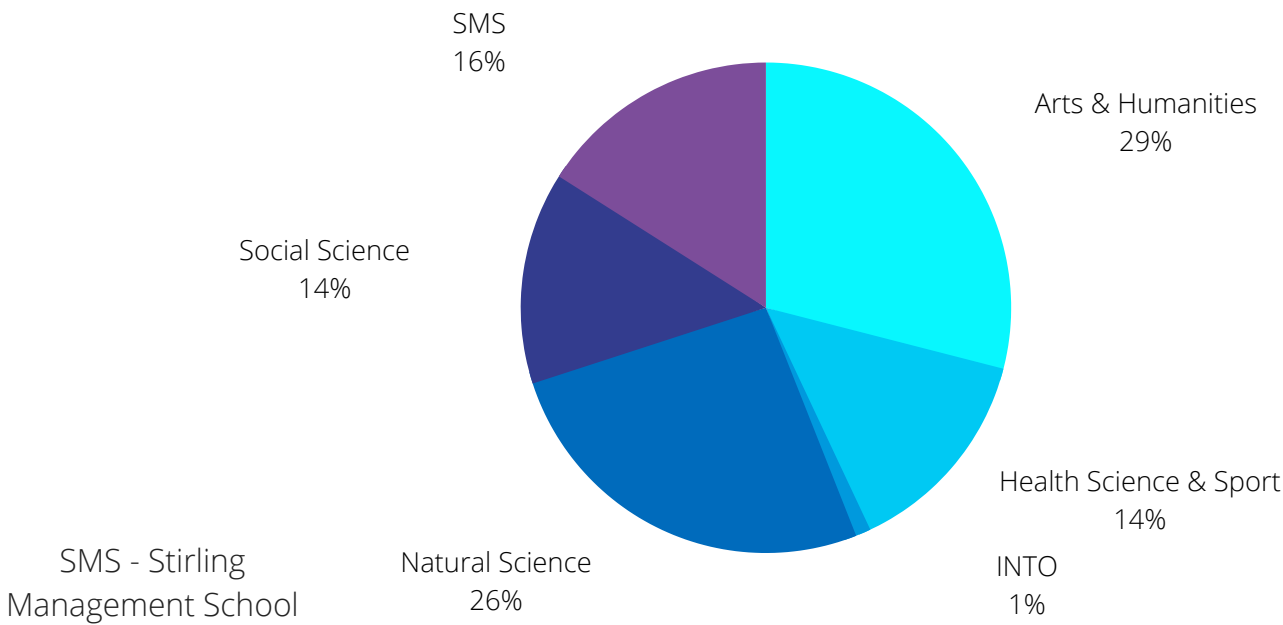
Unlike the nominators there were more male members of staff who were nominated than their female counterparts this year. (N.B. This is based on the information held by the university and may not be accurate)

Nominee Gender By Award



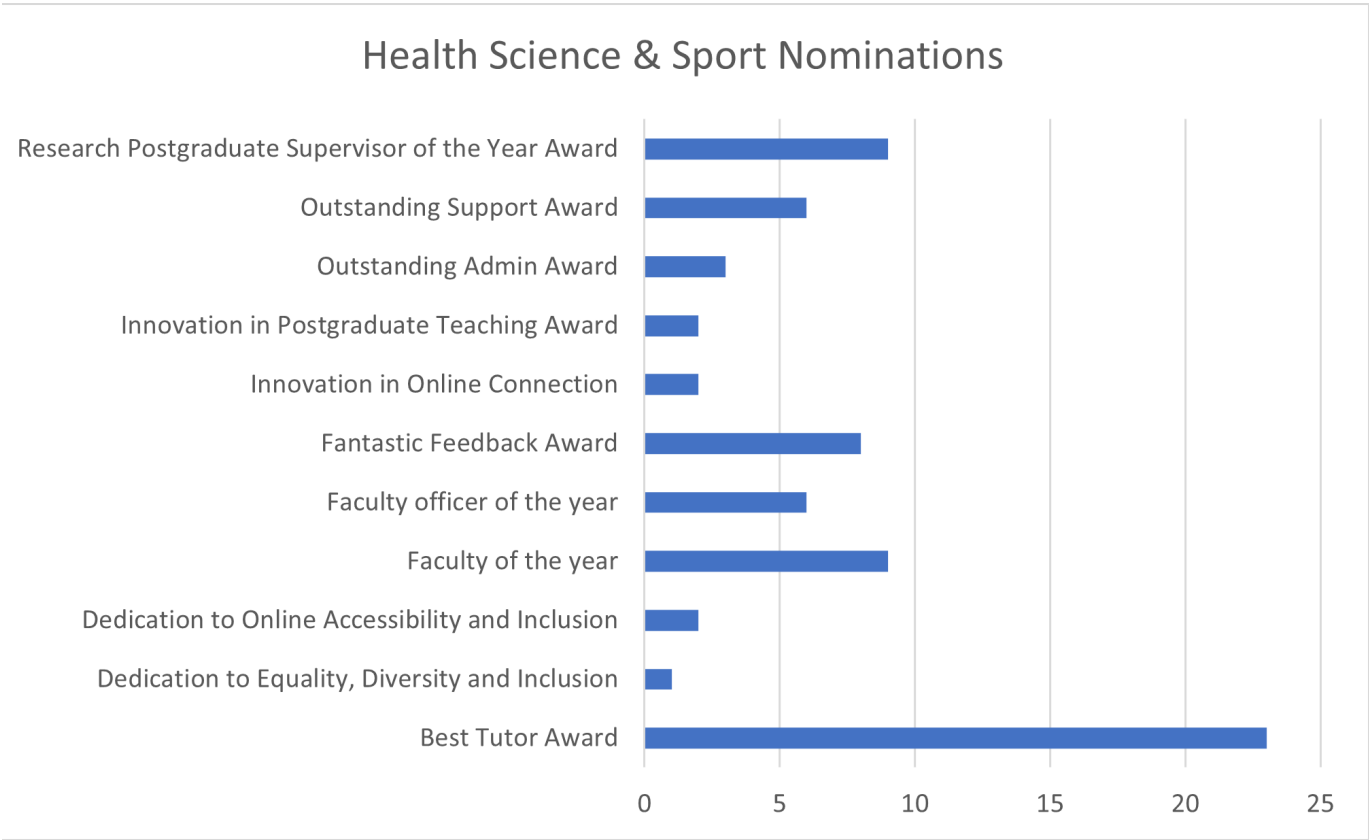
We can see from the above graph how the nominees are spread between the different awards. There are awards where there are more female nominees compared to the males, however we can see that with regards to best tutor our male staff are nominated far more than their female counterparts, (almost 100 more nominations).

FACULTY BREAKDOWN

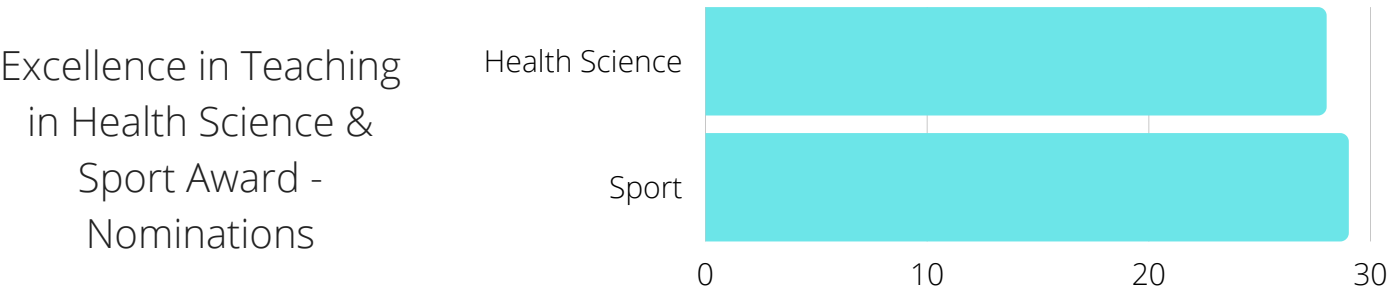


Looking at the overall nominations for each faculty we can see that Arts & Humanities and Natural Sciences are both leading the way on the number of nominations they receive. There have been individual staff helping lead this but there can be no doubt that they are ensuring their students have a fantastic experience even throughout this difficult year.

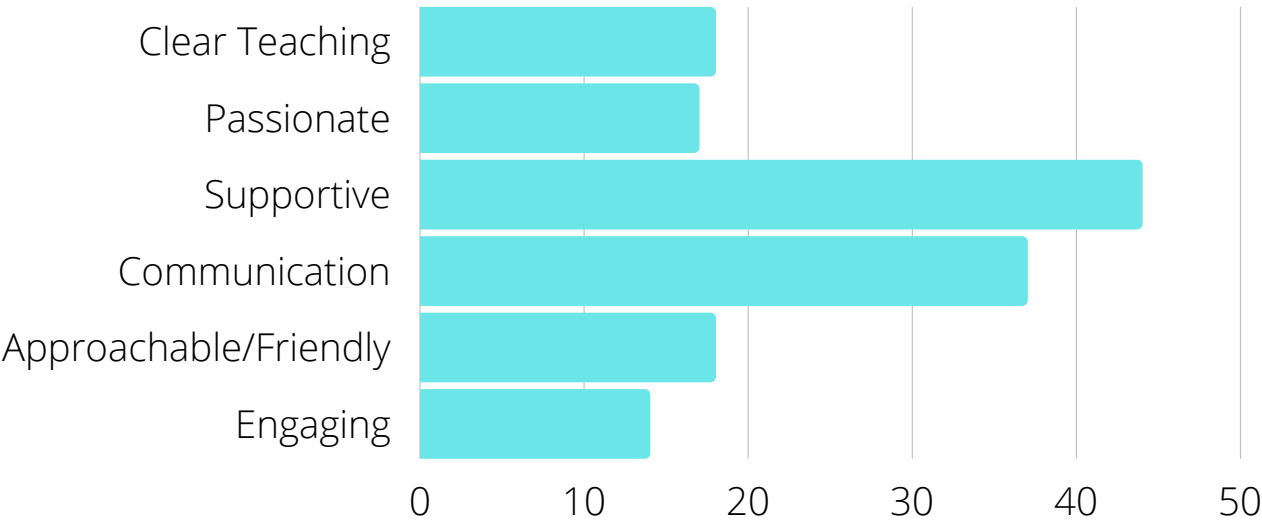
HEALTH SCIENCE AND SPORT NOMINATIONS



Within the health science and sport faculty we can see that the majority of their nominations were for the best tutor award followed by both the research postgraduate supervisor of the year and faculty of the year awards. Each of these awards require the faculty to give an excellent level of teaching and understanding to every level of student, whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate.

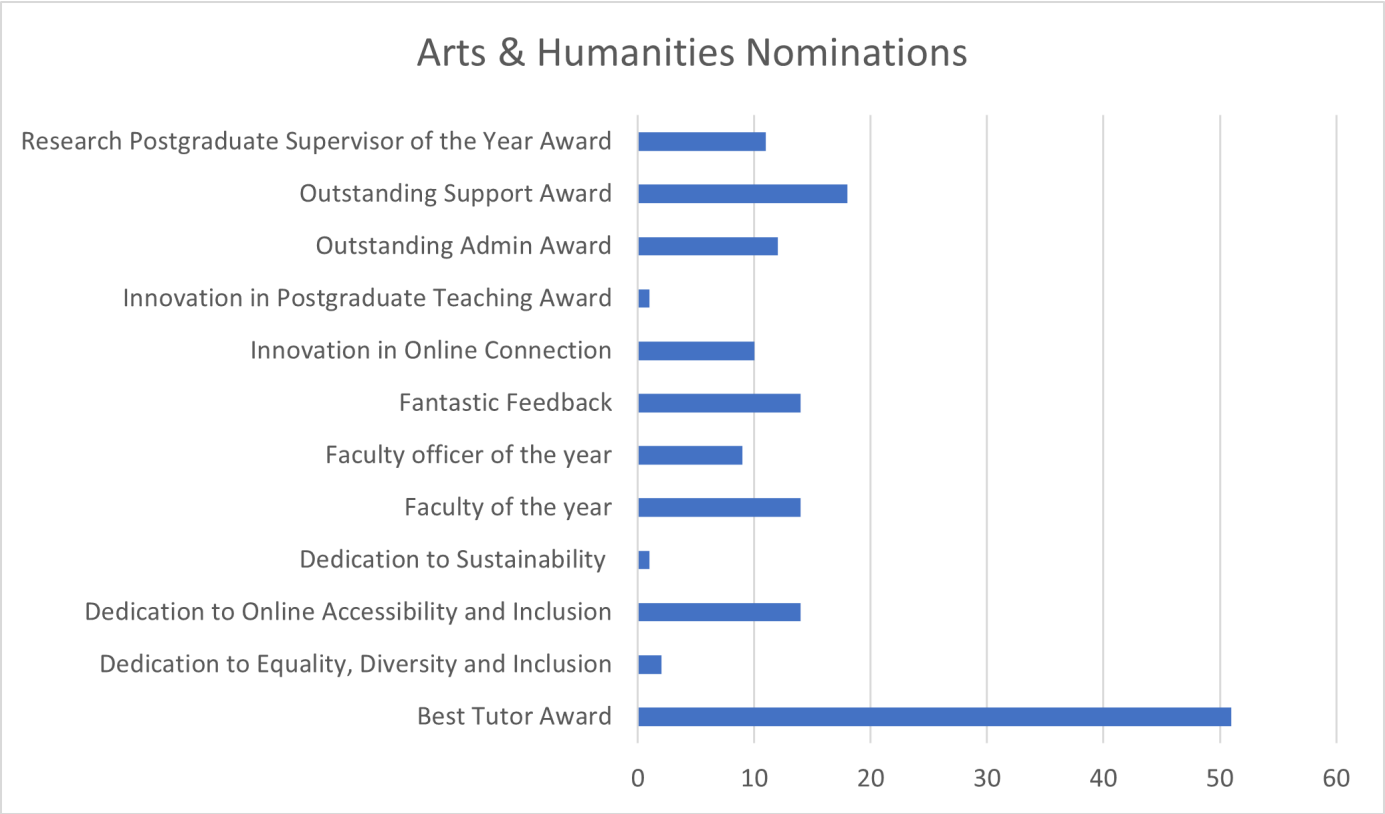


With regards to the award for Excellence in teaching within this faculty we can see that there were more nominations for the sport division than the health science division. There was not a massive difference between the two however with sport receiving 1 more nomination than health science.



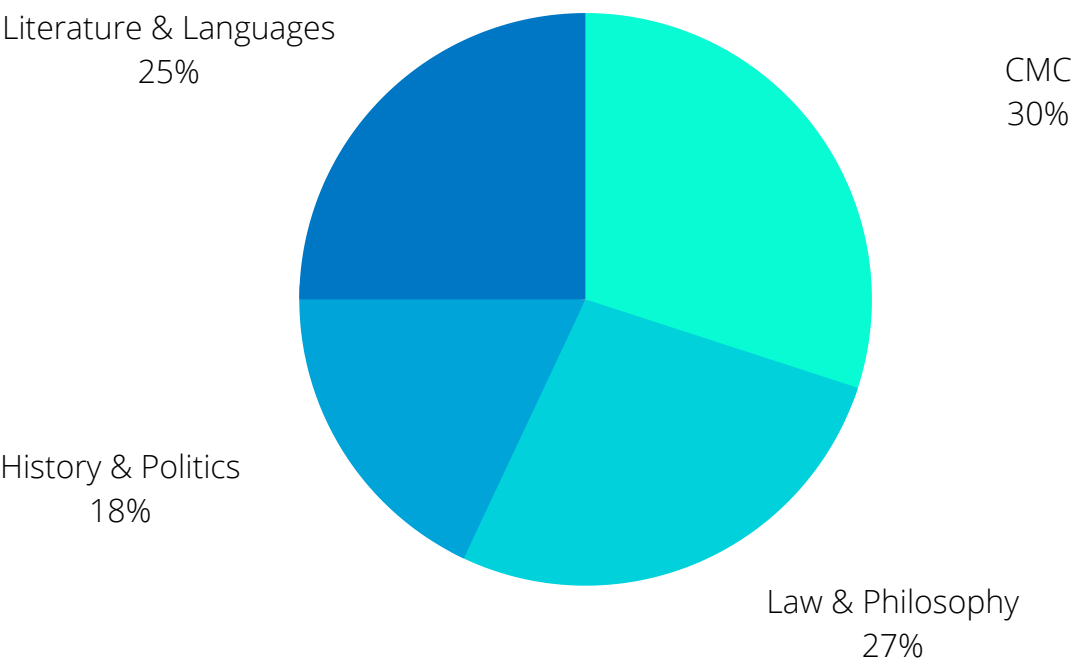
Within our qualitative analysis the above graph shows what makes the teaching in the health science and sport faculty excellent. Within the nominations we can see that staff being supportive and providing excellent communication to their students are two of the key themes within this faculty. Some examples of the nominations include, "...so supportive and full of knowledge, nothing ever seems to be an issue when raising concerns or queries..." and "...always willing to answer any questions". These are just two examples that can show what is important to the students within this faculty.

ARTS AND HUMANITIES NOMINATIONS

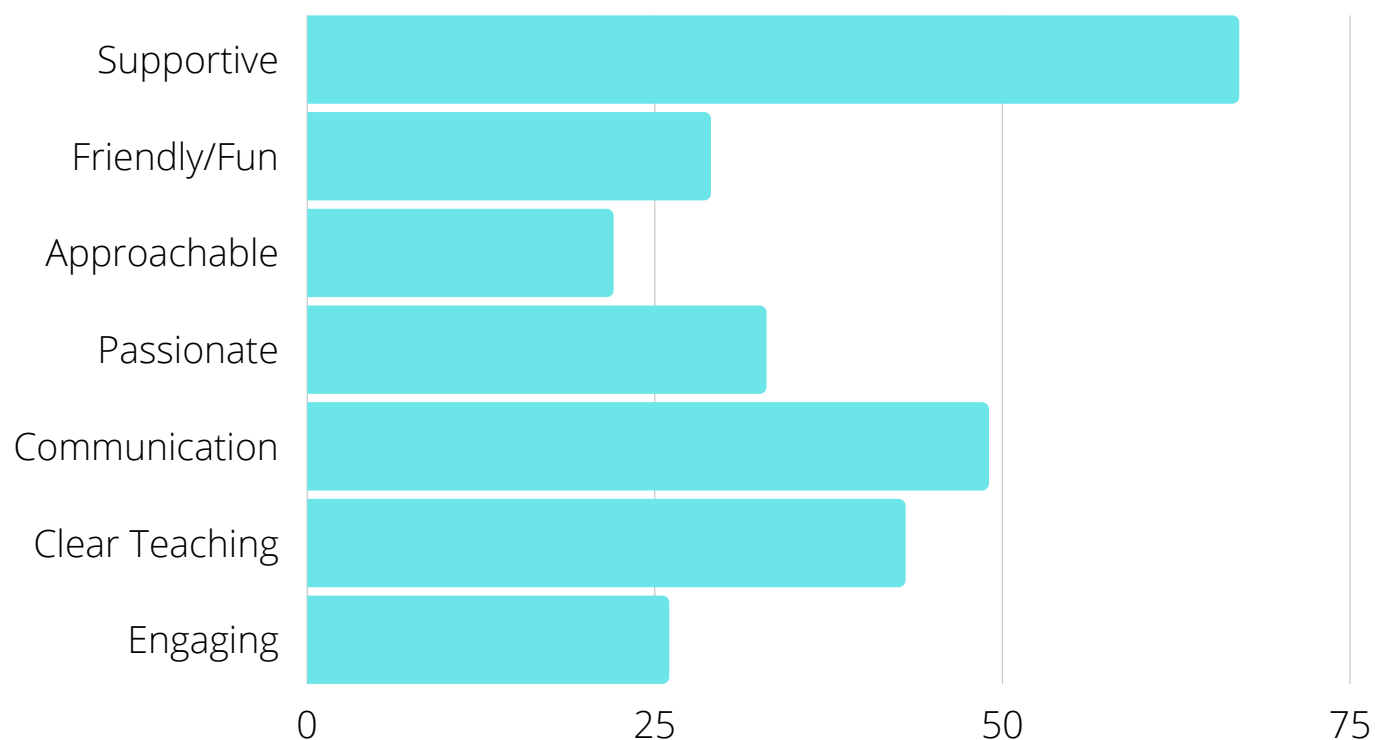


Within the arts and humanities faculty, the best tutor award doubled the nominations of the closest other award, outstanding support award. Both awards require the teaching staff to be supportive, approachable and to understand the needs of their students.

Excellence in Teaching in Arts & Humanities - Nominations

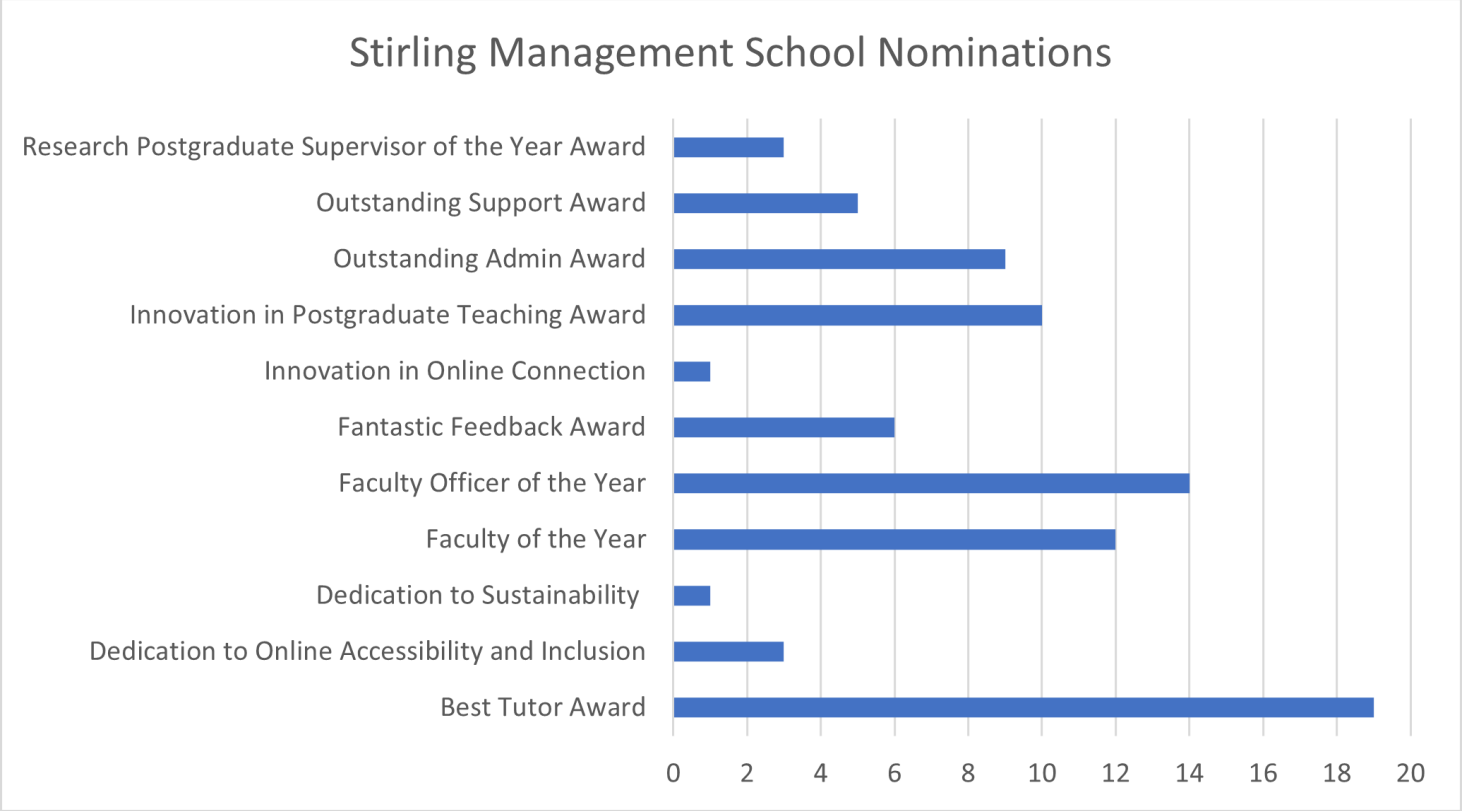


Each of the divisions in this faculty have been nominated in almost equal amounts with regards to the excellence in teaching award. This shows that the faculty as a whole are working towards providing the best experience for their students.



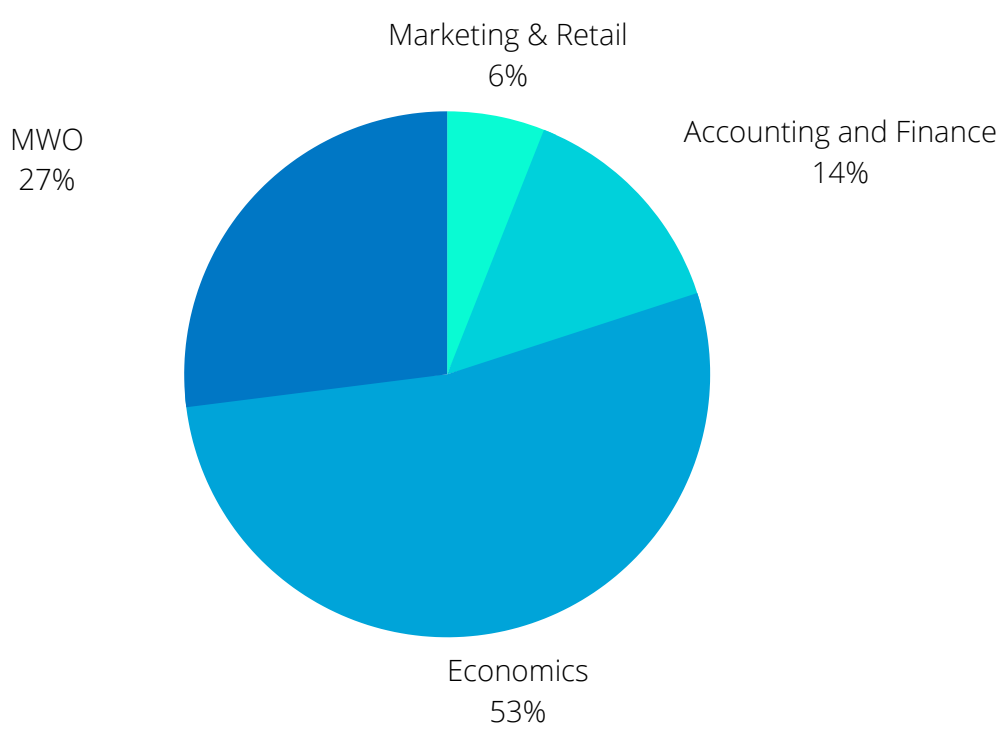
Within the qualitative analysis we can see the most frequent theme for the arts and humanities faculty is supportive followed by great communication and clear teaching. Each of these themes are key areas in which our academic staff can make a real difference to a student's experience. Some examples from the nominations are "...maintained extraordinary communication with students amidst unforeseen challenges in the programme as well as covid-19 updates." "...inbox was always open for support, and they provided many useful opportunities for one-to-one sessions..." and "...always seems really passionate about the topics and has the ability to make difficult things seem super easy."

STIRLING MANAGEMENT SCHOOL NOMINATIONS

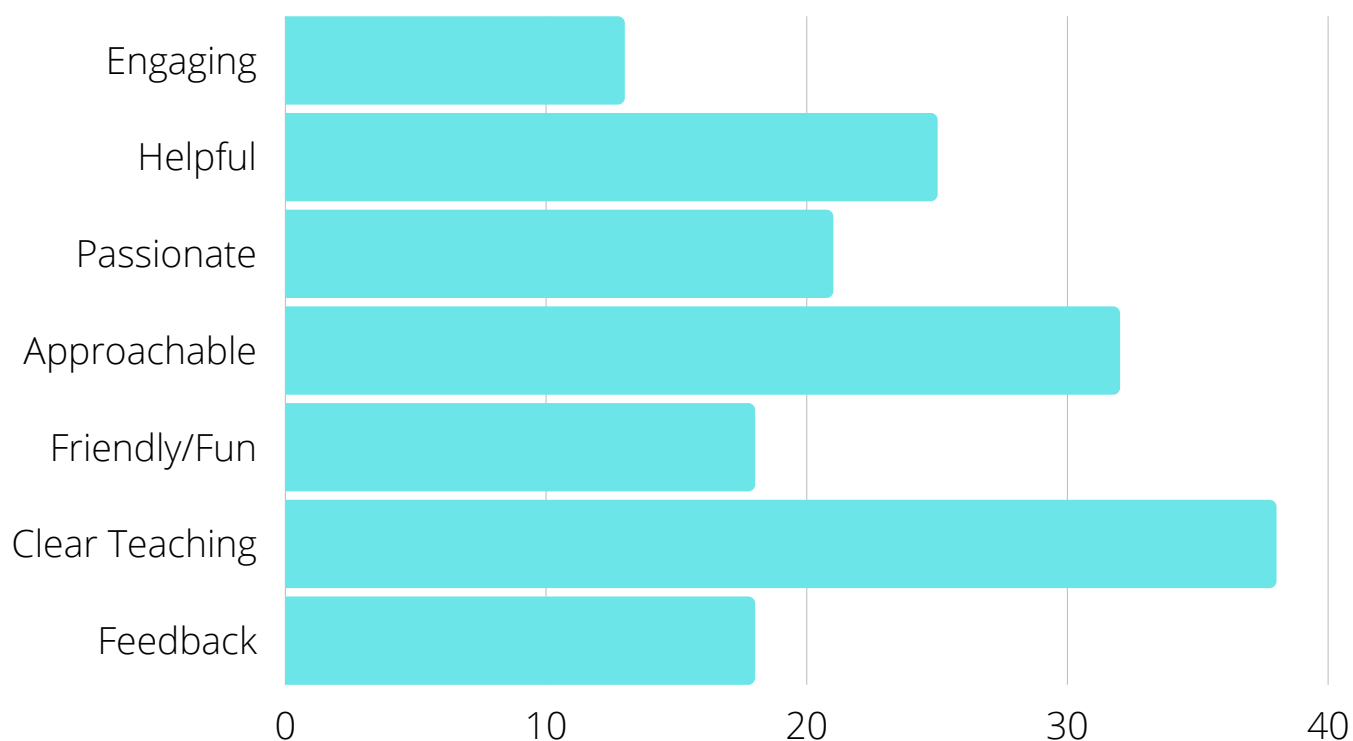


The Stirling Management School's nominations were spread mainly between the best tutor award, faculty officer of the year and also the faculty of the year award. These awards require the faculty to be able to be supportive of their students, to work well together and to work with their students as a community.

Excellence in Teaching in the Stirling Management School - Nominations

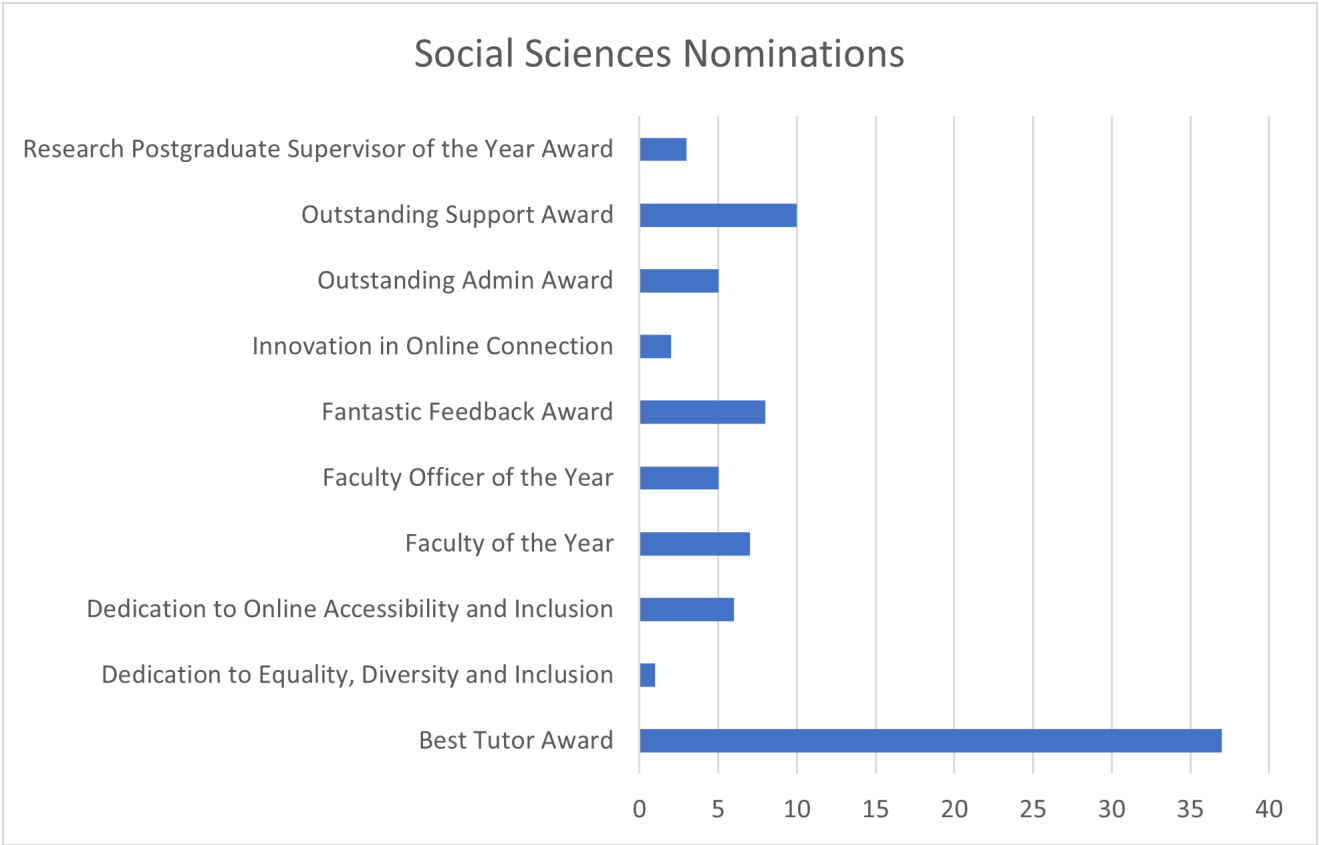


The Economics division received over half of the nominations for excellence in teaching. This could be due to the clear level of teaching as well as how approachable the teaching staff are according to the nominations.



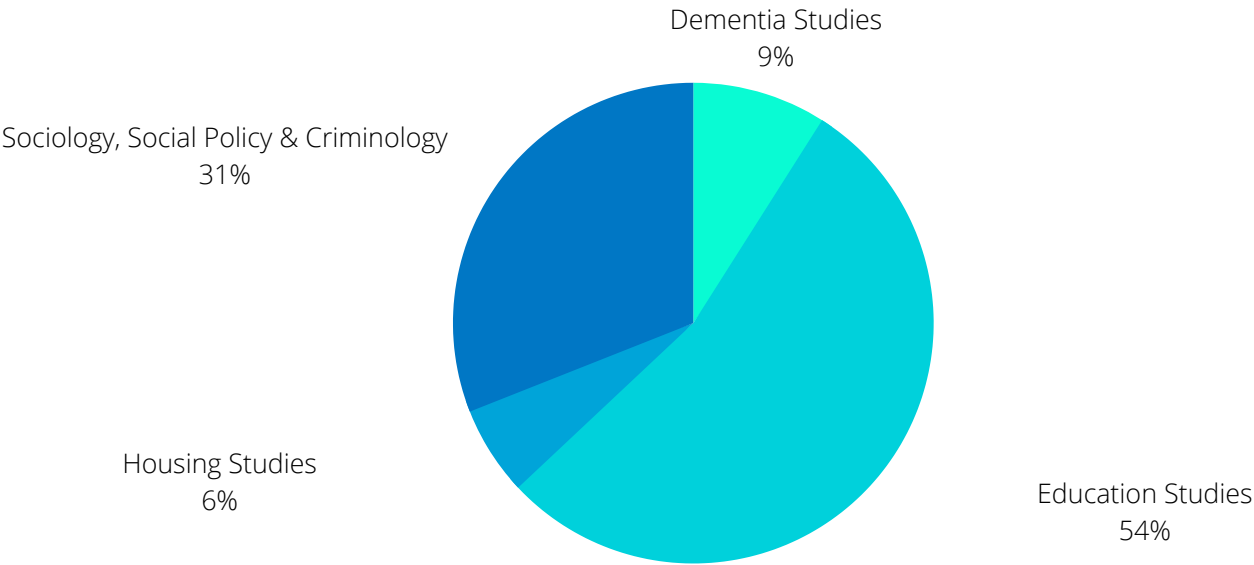
Looking at the qualitative analysis for the division we see that clear teaching, approachable staff and helpful staff are the more frequent themes within the nominations. Each of these show an individual technique where the staff are adapting to what the students require as the university had to move to a purely online teaching model last year. Some examples from the nominations include: "...helpful and encouraging, going through assignment after assignment trying to make what we have to do as clear as possible...", "...is extremely approachable with any queries..." and "...makes sure everything is fully explained, broken down, and provided with a step-by-step example."

SOCIAL SCIENCES NOMINATIONS

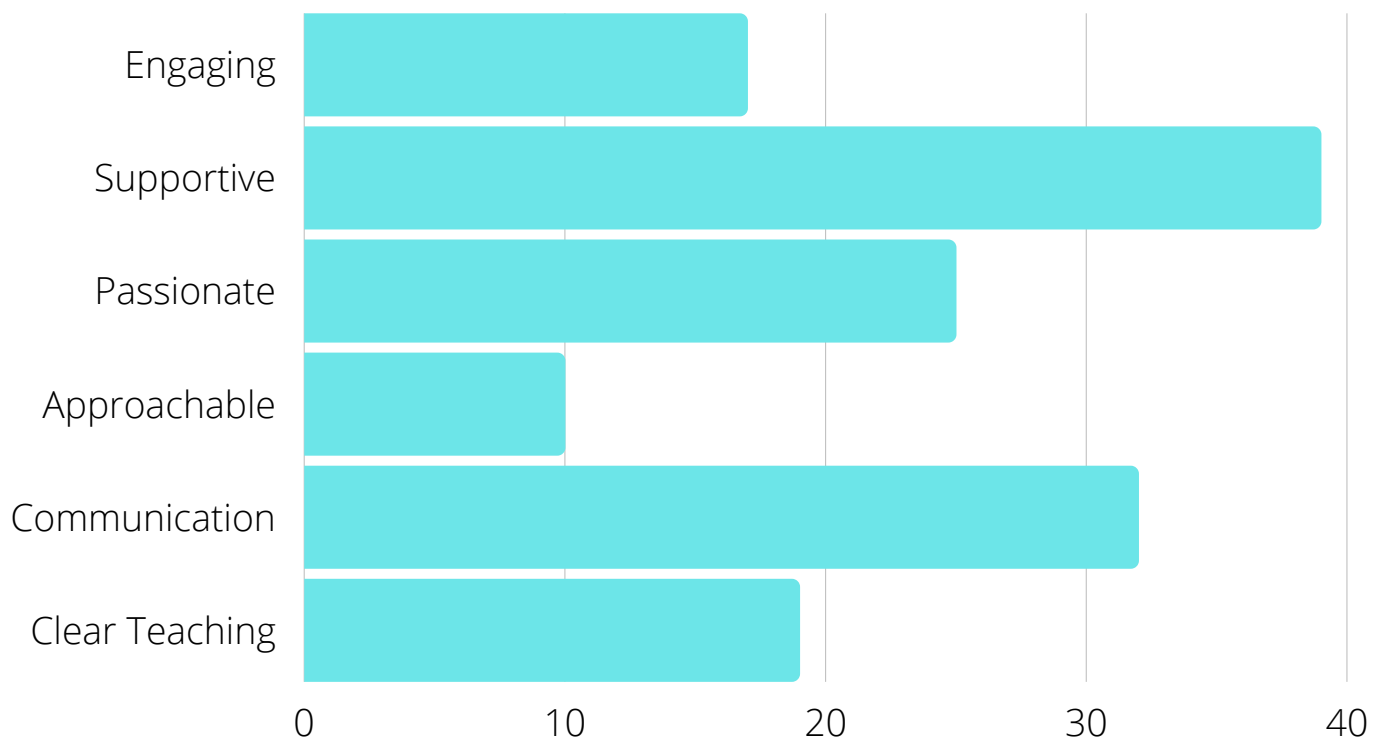


Social Science faculty received three times the number of nominations within the best tutor award compared to any of the other award nomination. The best tutor award requires the academic staff to work with their students, ensuring that they support them in the way that suits them the best. The staff are able to adapt to the needs of their students as well as ensuring that they are adapting their teaching to suit the changes to the teaching environment.

Excellence in Teaching in Social Sciences - Nominations

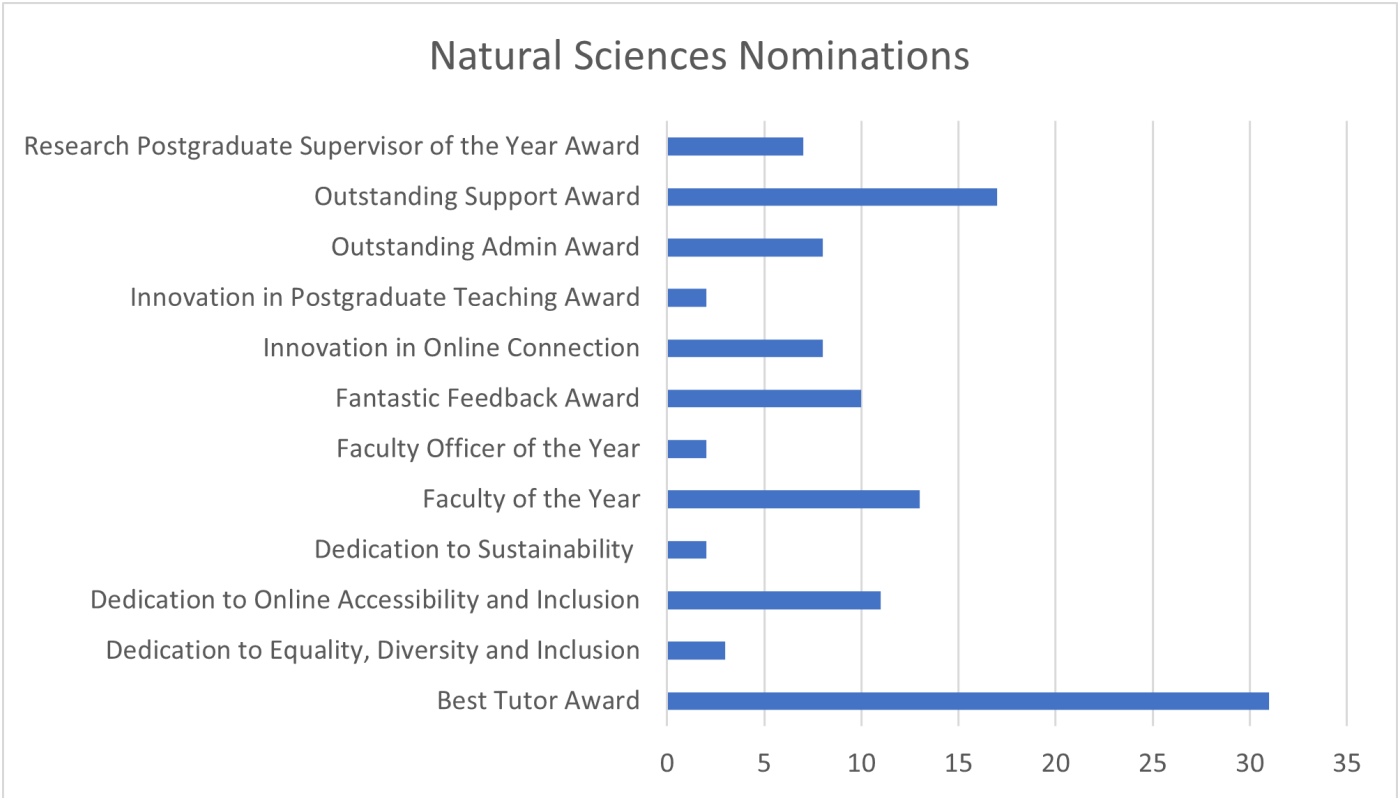


Looking at the nominations for excellence in teaching we can see that the Education Studies division had more than 50% of the nominations. Given the challenging year most of our students have had due to the pandemic it is encouraging to see that the Education division has managed to shine. With all of the lockdowns and changes to the schools the division stands out within these hard times.



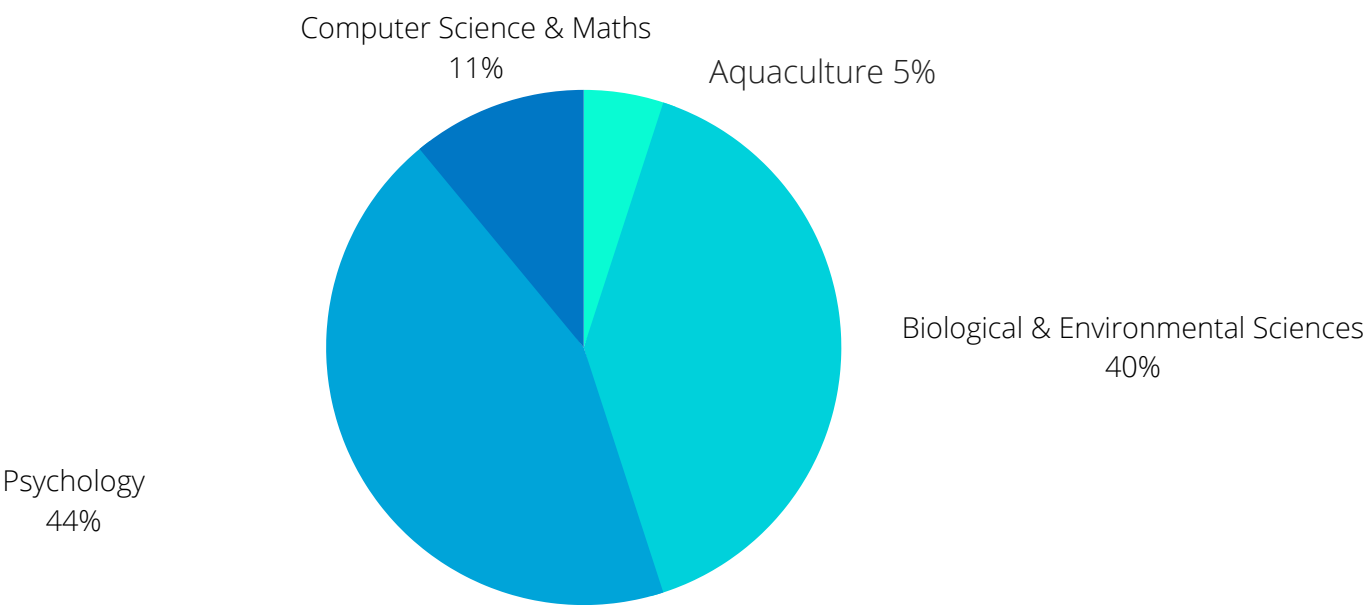
Within the qualitative analysis we can see that supportive, communication and passionate are the main themes within the Social Science nominations. Given that the division receiving the greatest number of nominations is one where the career progression requires someone to be these three things then it is no surprise that these would be the main themes. Some examples from the nominations are: "...always does their best to ensure that you get an answer to every question you may have...", "...supported me and made me feel welcome within the faculty even when things were tough..." and "...passion for education is inspiring."

NATURAL SCIENCES NOMINATIONS

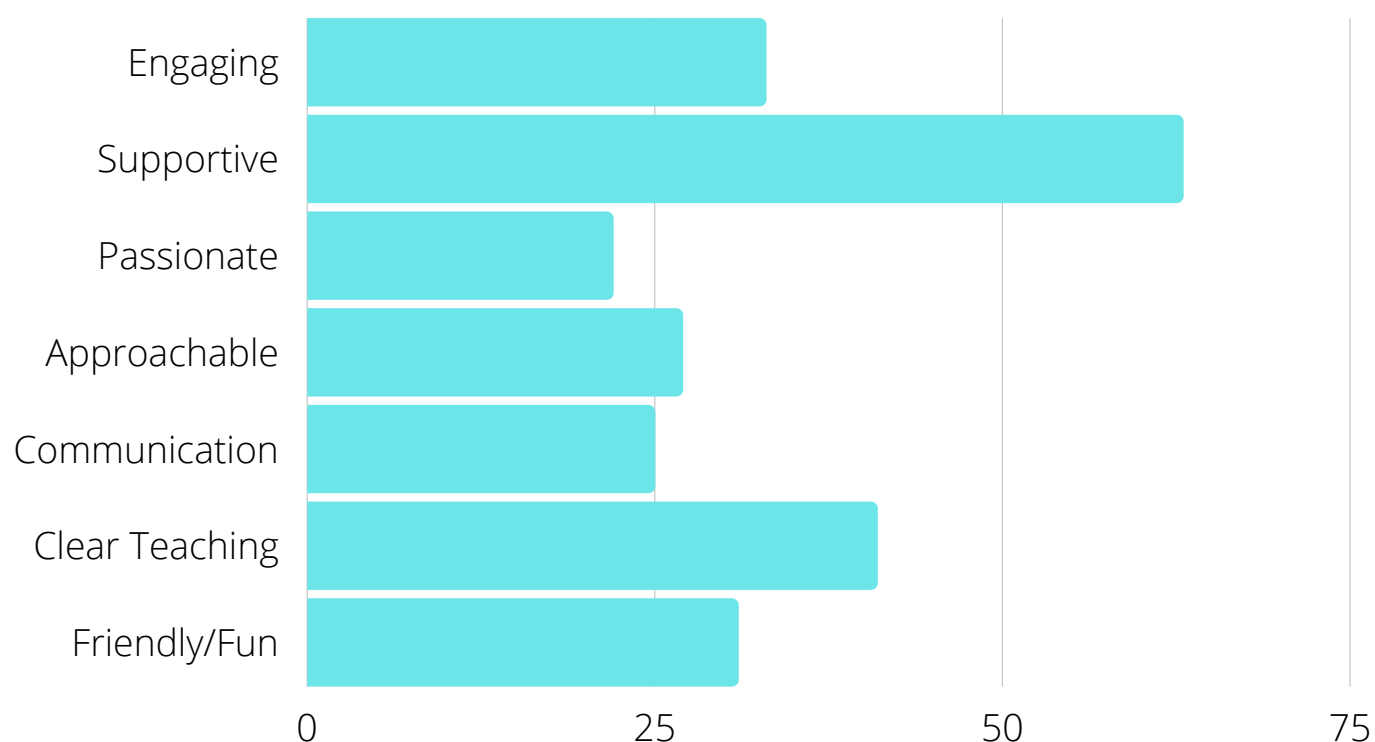


The faculty of Natural Sciences has received the greatest number of nominations within the best tutor award followed by the outstanding support award and faculty of the year award. Each of these awards require the faculty to support their students, listen to them, work with them and ensure that they have the best experience no matter what the world is like.

Excellence in Teaching in Natural Science - Nominations

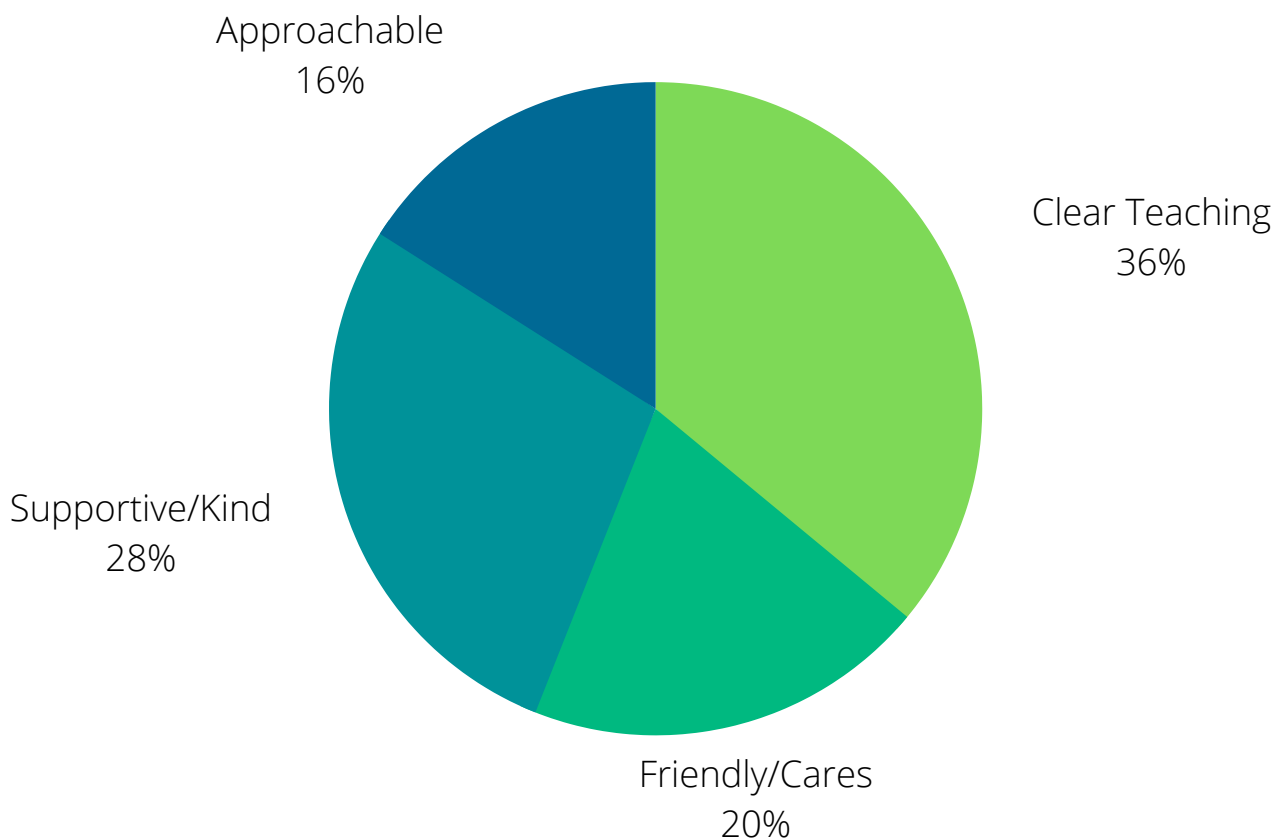


With the divisions Psychology and Biological & Environmental Science have received the greatest number of the nominations. Within both of these divisions there is a great need for compassion as well as support from the faculty. The students nominating these divisions have found that although the courses can be very practical, they have still managed to ensure that their teaching has met the high expectations which have been expected.



Through the qualitative analysis supportive, clear teaching, engaging and friendly/fun are the themes that have the greatest number of nominations. Each of these are important to ensure that the students receive not only the level of teaching they expect but also the support they deserve throughout this difficult period. Some examples of these from the nominations are: "...the module was extremely well organised, all the material was interesting and the activities diverse, and always engaging...", "...goes the extra mile to make a novice understand their teachings...", "...tries to answer every question asked to the best of their ability and makes every student feel supported..." and "...it might sound dry when you read it, but it was delivered in a way that made it super interesting, this was due to the relaxed and friendly atmosphere created..."

WHAT MAKES AN EXCEPTIONAL TEACHER?

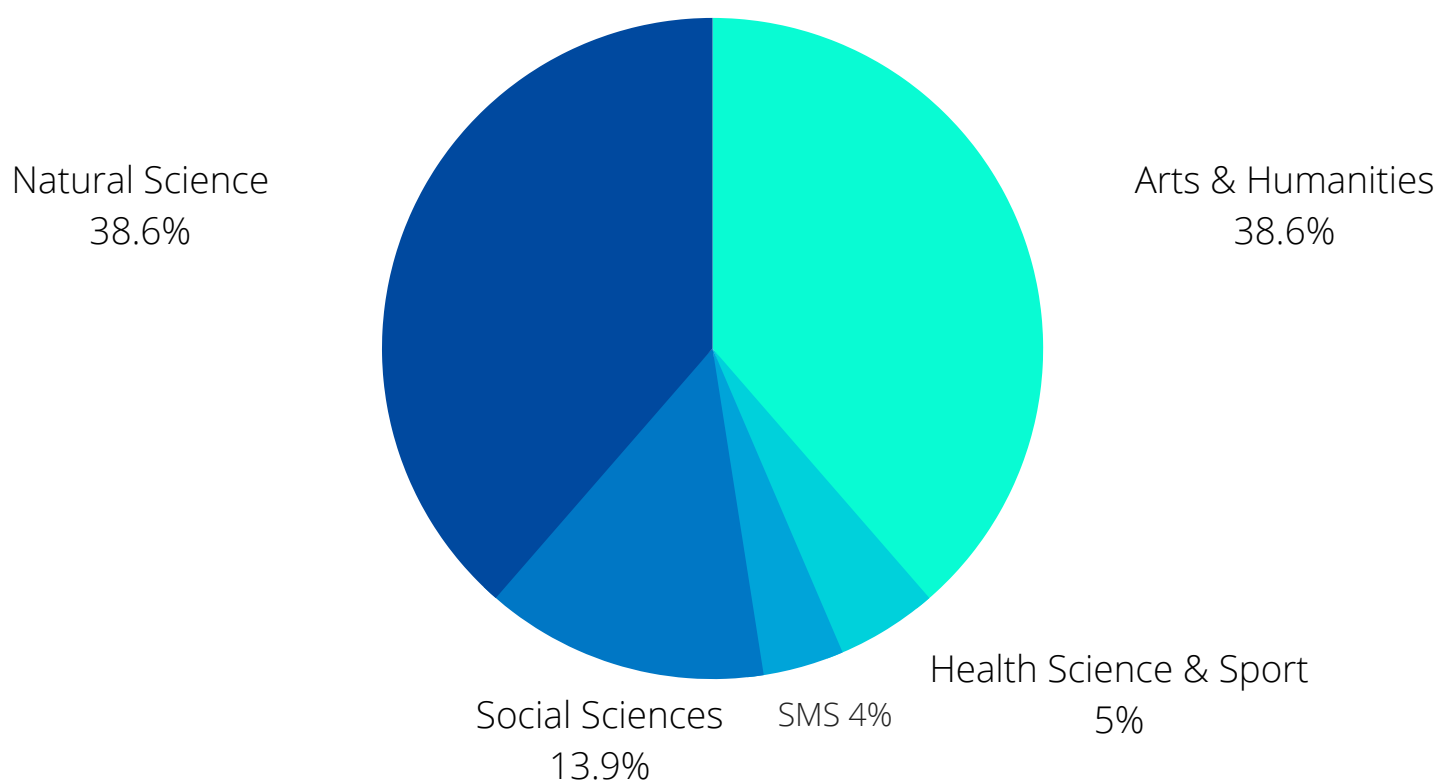


What makes an exceptional teacher? By completing a thematic analysis on the most frequently nominated faculty members this year, we were able to show what our students believe to be the ingredients required. Each member of the faculty investigated had a number of nominations that showed each of these themes. In a year like no other it has been important to our student population that they have a teacher who makes their teaching understanding no matter what level of the course you are at. They need to be supportive and kind, they need to show their students that they understand that it is a difficult time at the moment and try to ensure the well-being of their students are important. Being friendly and showing you genuinely care has been incredibly important this year. Many of our nominees ensured that they reached out to students throughout the year to check in and ensure that they have all of the resources required to be successful. Finally, they need to be approachable. This does not mean that they need to be available at all times of the day but that they need to ensure that their students know that when they need someone for help and support that they can reach out.

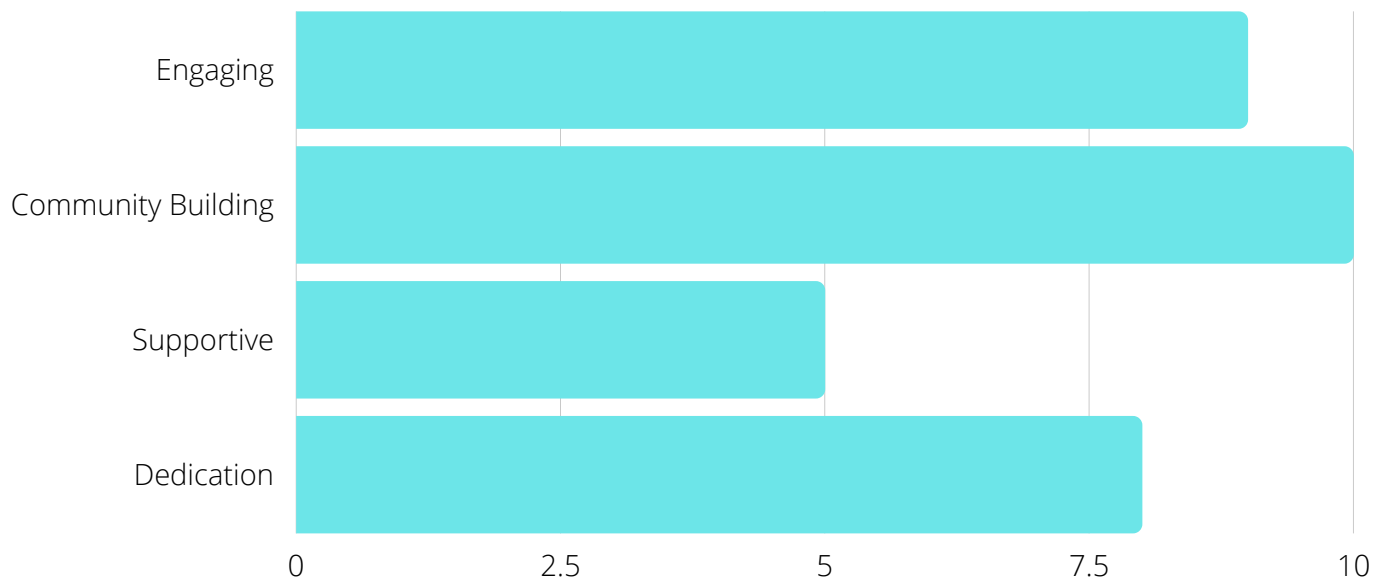
SPOTLIGHT ON ONLINE LEARNING

Given that the year we have all just been through has been one where we spent the vast majority of our time staring into the glowing lights of our computers, it feels right to spend a little time investigating the nominations and nominees of our online teaching awards.

INNOVATION IN ONLINE CONNECTION

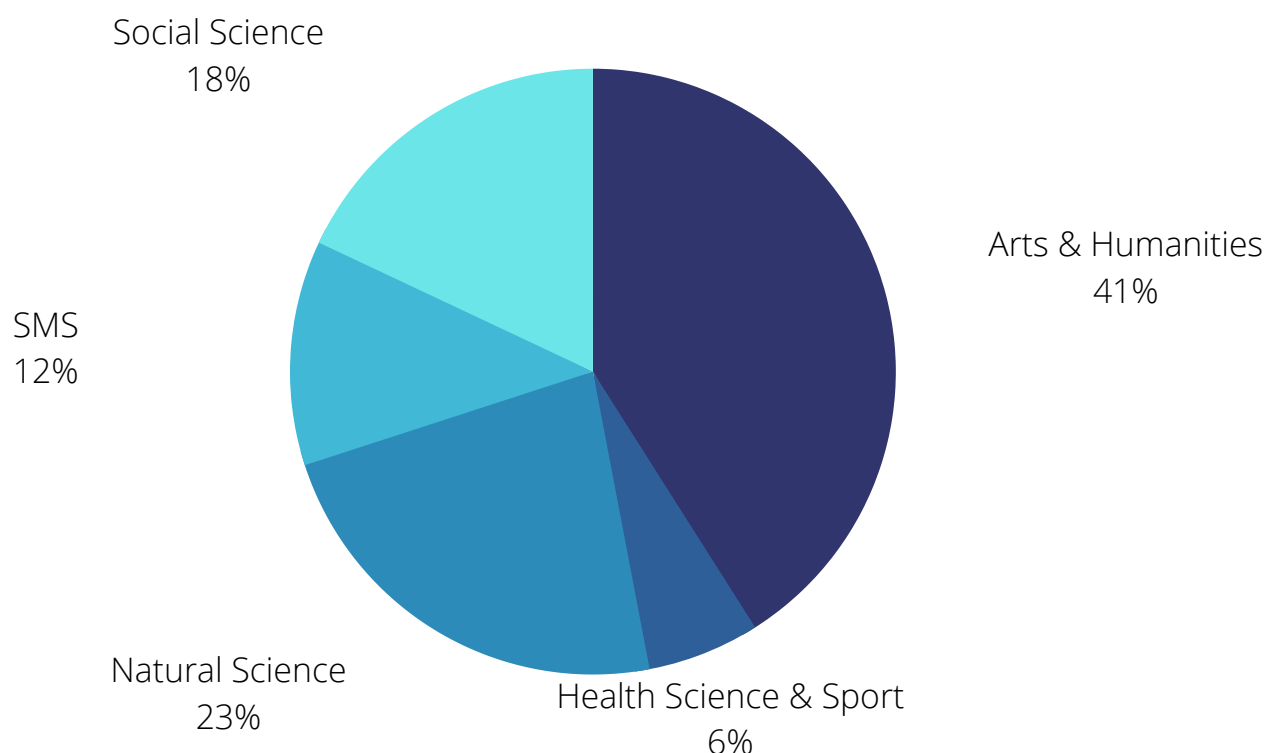


We can see from the graph above that the faculties of Natural Science and Arts & Humanities have received the largest portion of the nominations for Innovation in Online Connection award. Both of these faculties have ensured that throughout the year they have listened to their students and made changes where needed to ensure that each one can have a meaningful connection while experiencing this new online teaching environment. Although more difficult for faculties such as Health Science & Sport as they are a very practical faculty, it is still encouraging to see that they received nominations in this area.

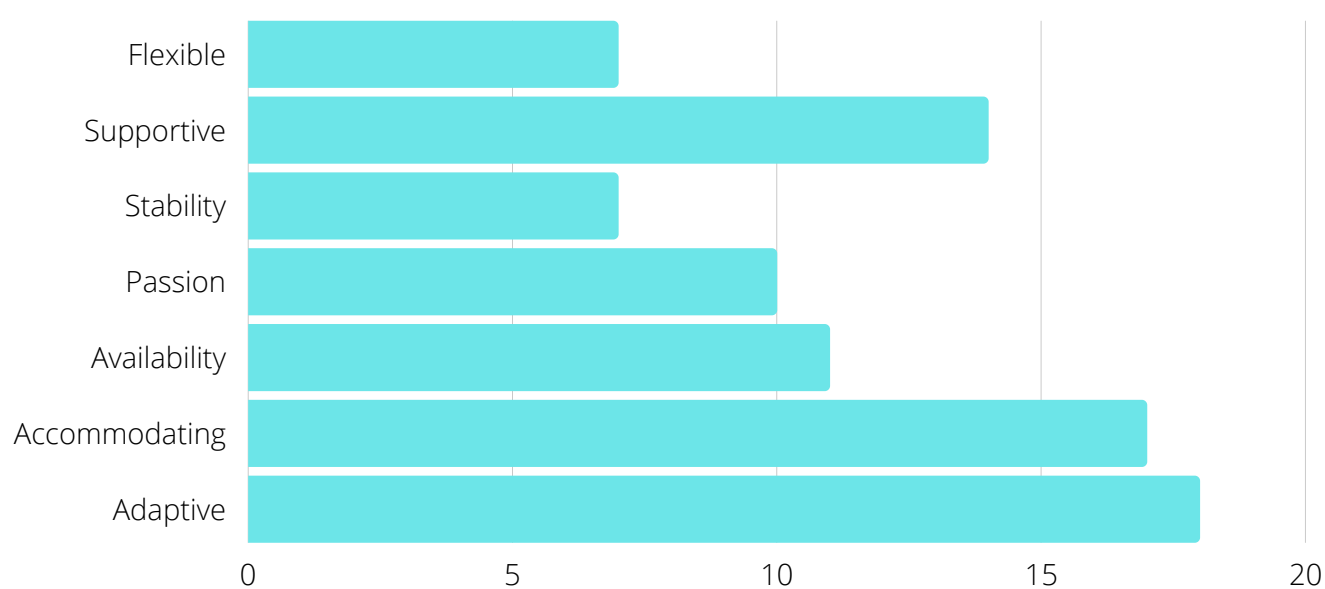


Looking at the qualitative analysis we can see that the nominators valued community building, engaging connections, and dedication the greatest within their nominations. Examples of these from the nominations include: "...lessons online were very engaging and they ensured everyone had the chance to participate in every lesson...", "...feel part of the group with discussions over coffee as well as full support throughout the term, it was refreshing to have this during the pandemic and feel less lonely..." and "...has been dedicated to running a social event every Wednesday for students to come together and discuss anything we want..."

DEDICATION TO ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION



Possibly one of the more important awards in the last academic year, dedication to online accessibility and inclusion showed that faculties were ensuring that each decision made in the move to online teaching was made with the student at the heart of them. Arts & Humanities led the way with the majority of nominations in this award category, showing that they are able to adapt to the new way of learning while keeping as inclusive as they can.

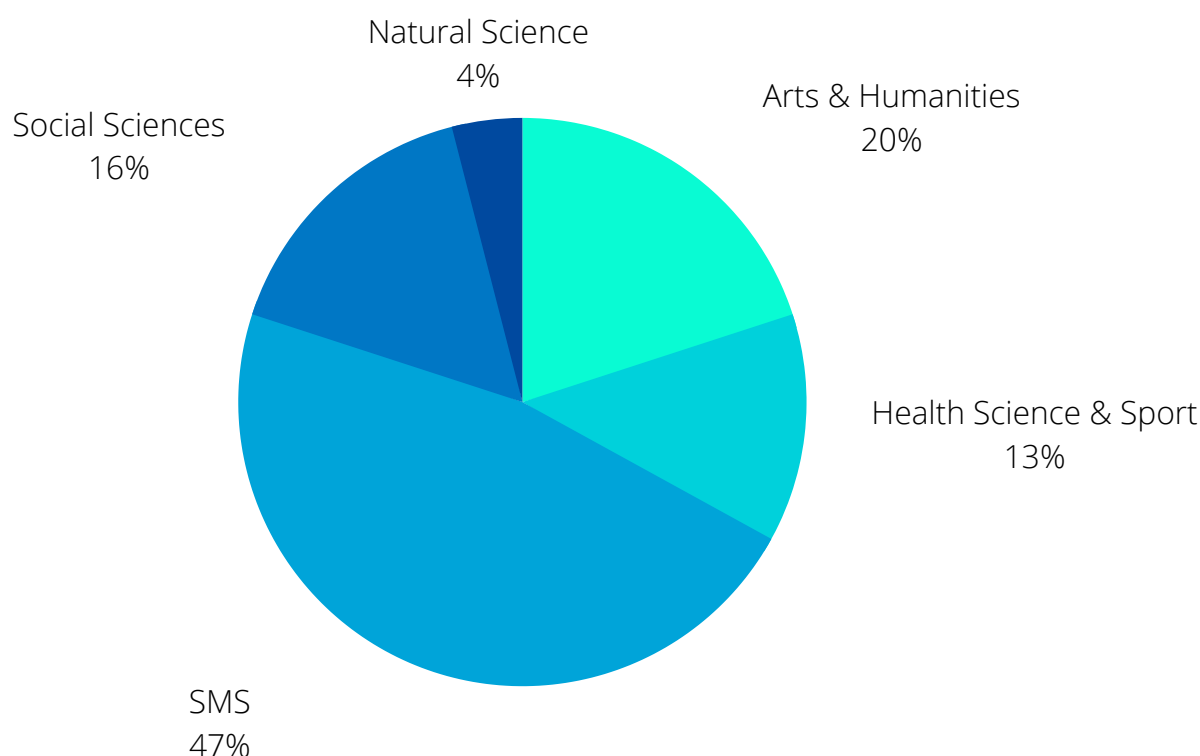


Looking again at the qualitative analysis we can see three main themes emerge from the nominations, adaptive, accommodating, and supportive. These are unsurprising given that the nature of this award is to ensure that changes can be made to keep online learning open to as many students as possible. Some examples from the nominations include: "...as soon as they were made aware they were incredibly accommodating and were able to source copies of just about every resource needed...", "...made sure that the exam was accessible to all by making it in the form of a podcast, allowing for it to be easier to complete on a mobile device for those who may not have access to a computer..." and "...always making sure they email or makes contact if they think there might be some difficulty and discusses how they can possibly improve this."

AWARDS SPOTLIGHT 2021

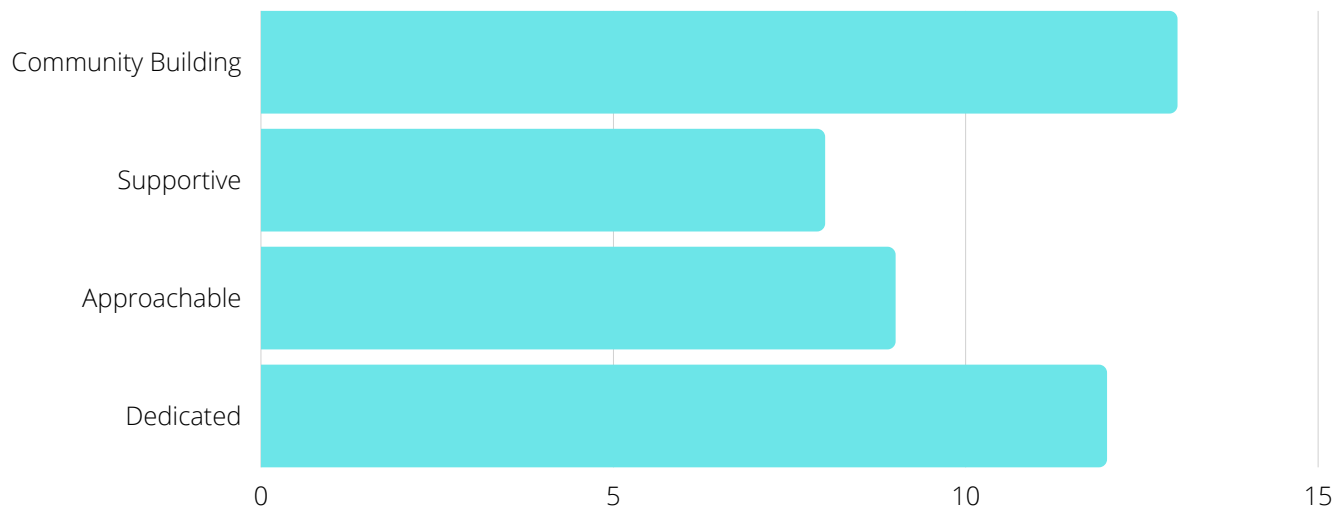
This year on top of looking at our fantastic faculty-based awards we are going to place some spotlight on three awards where the nominees make a difference in a different way. These awards are the Student Service of the Year award, the Outstanding Admin award and finally the Faculty Officer of The Year award. All of our RATE awards are fantastic ways to show appreciation to our faculties but these three looks at some of the unsung heroes, those who we need to ensure that the university continues to thrive in the way it does.

FACULTY OFFICER OF THE YEAR



Each of our faculty officers do an amazing job at bridging the communication gap between staff and students. On top of this they also have their own projects which they design and complete themselves. These projects can be anything at all as long as they are supporting or making the experience of the students in their faculty better. Students and staff should keep an eye out for this year's projects and get involved!

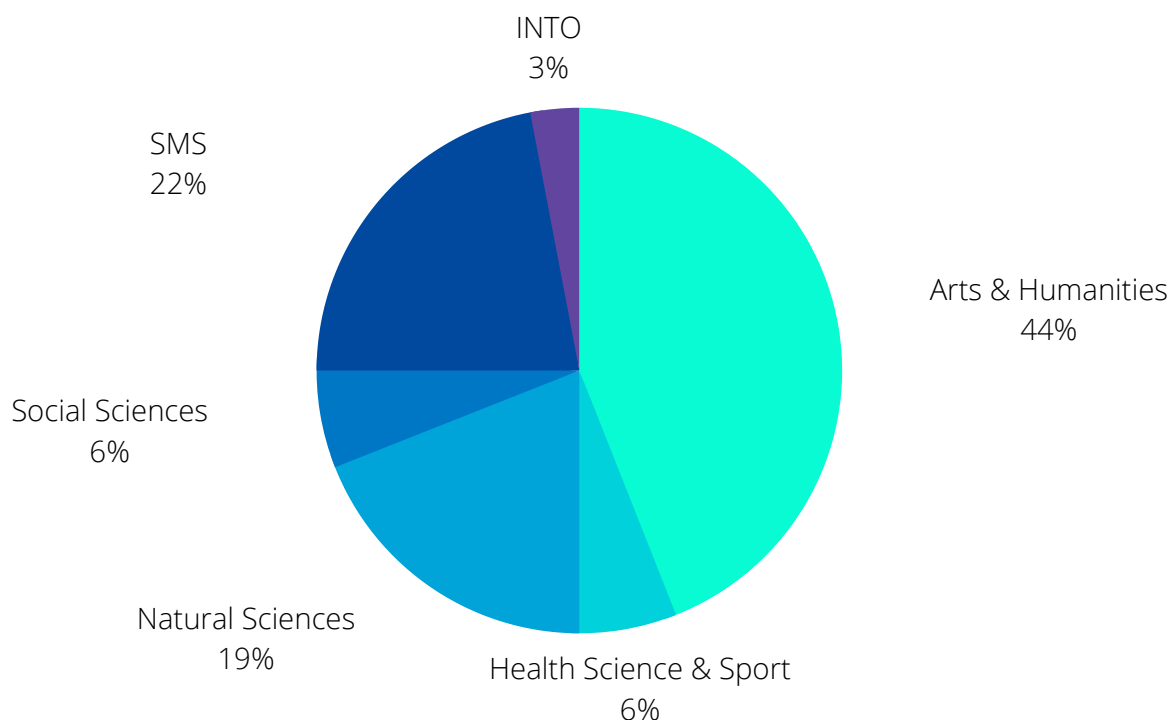
Looking at the nominations the Stirling Management School led the way this year. Did you try out their management Mondays? These guys worked together to bring together their faculty, and the rest of the student body, during the pandemic. Well done guys!



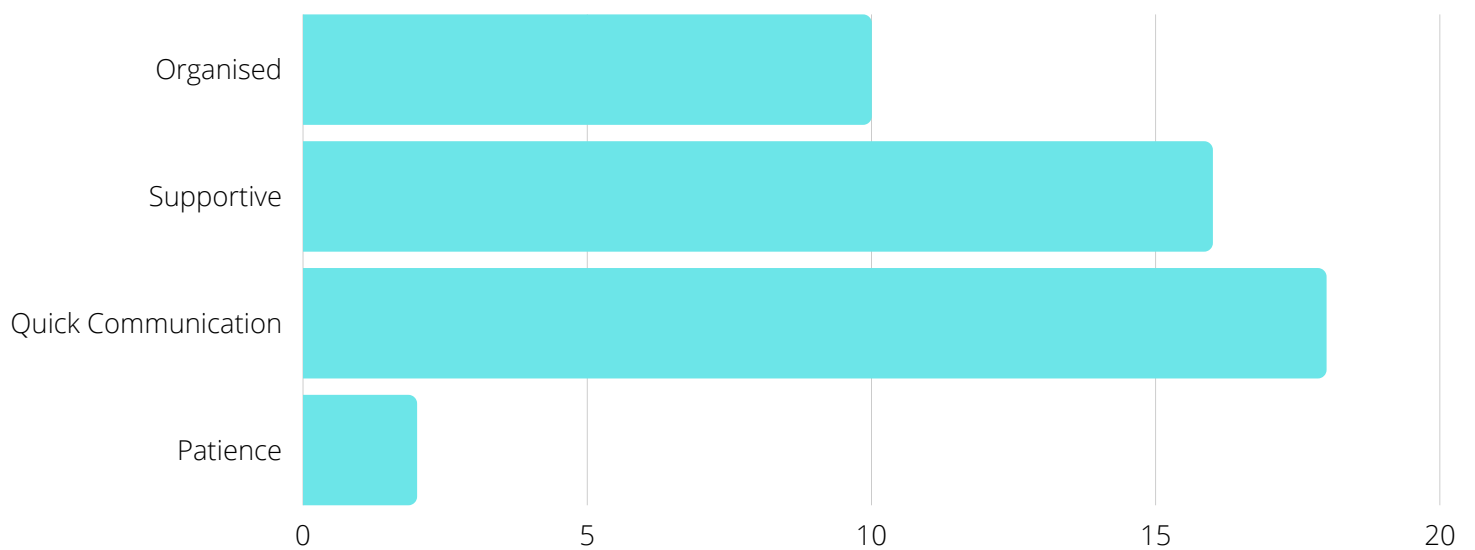
Looking at the qualitative analysis we can see four main themes, however the two which were the most present were dedication and community building. Both of these skills are incredibly important when you are a faculty officer as you are there to help make your faculty the best environment for your students. The dedication all of the faculty officers showed last year was amazing, imagine doing all the work they did on top of their academic studies during the pandemic!

Some examples from the feedback include: "...dedicated to the role of faculty officer, organised an event for soon-to-be graduates to get industry insights which the students felt they lacked support in...." and "...created the sports society so the students can meet together from all years, where they can help each other out and get to know each other..."

OUTSTANDING ADMIN

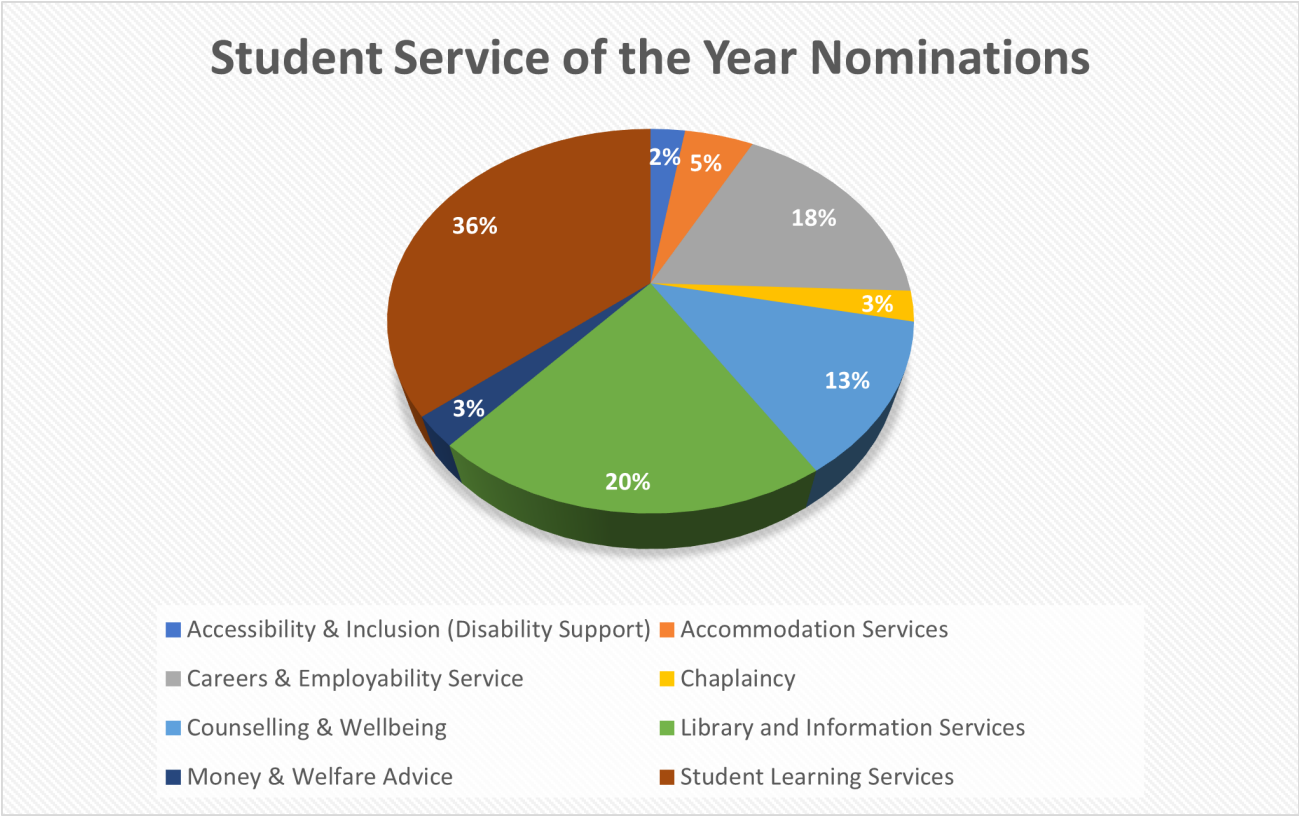


Continuing our theme of unsung heroes, the spotlight moves to the outstanding admin award. The admin team with each of the faculties are there to make sure that each year group has everything they need and they are tirelessly ensuring that the faculty have provided everything the students need at the right time. These are the individuals who are behind the scenes in every module the university provides. The team within Arts & Humanities have received the greatest number of nominations this year and have done an amazing job considering the very strange year we have all had.

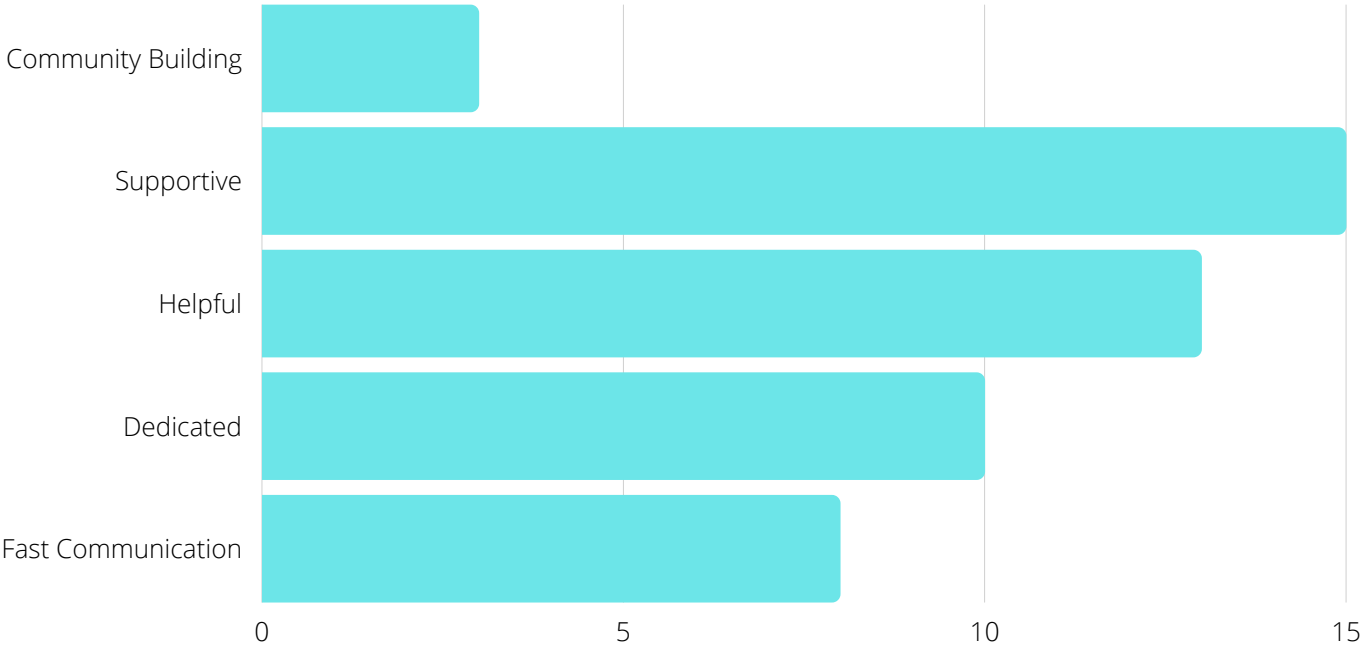


Looking at the qualitative analysis there is no surprise that quick communication and being supportive were the main themes from the outstanding admin nominations. Some examples from the feedback include: "...provided timely guidance during the COVID crisis as if they were working in the office when they were actually working from home..." and "...provides excellent support to students as well as providing excellent support to the law society..."

STUDENT SERVICE OF THE YEAR



The Student Service of the Year award recognises all of the hard work our non-faculty staff do for us students. From money help to chaplaincy, they are all covered here and receive some amazing feedback each year. This year the Student Learning Services had the greater nominations which shows that they were able to grow and adapt to the students needs this year, which could be argued to have been one of the most important years we have had.



Looking at the qualitative analysis we can see that the key themes emerging from the nominations were supportive and helpful. Both of these themes have been instrumental in ensuring that our student body have been as successful as they have in this past academic year. Some examples of these themes from the nominations include: "...I have had a lot of help from this service, it is a very undervalued service and not enough people use it..." and "...my own personal experience has been amazing and I have felt so supported by them..."

CONCLUDING STATEMENT FROM SARAH

After an incredible year with a lot of firsts for both the student and staff population it has been incredible to see that our students have managed to not only engage well with their studies but have also received some incredible teaching. Staff who have been able to adapt and take up the challenge of the year in a positive light have been rewarded in an amazing way. It will be exciting what the new academic year will bring and how our fantastic staff will rise to the new challenges!

With great thanks to my son Thomas who put up with me doing this work over his summer holidays.



Sarah Gardiner (RATE Intern 2021-22)

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

My predecessor ended the concluding statement in last year's report by mentioning that the "20/21 academic year is going to look very different from any year previously". She certainly was correct. The last 18 months have been a challenging time for all, with the pandemic affecting learning and teaching significantly. The move to online created the chance for a more inclusive and fair education, with more students being able to access learning. The University teaching staff embraced this opportunity and created inventive ways to engage students in their online education, something that has reflected well in this year's nominations.

The Rate Awards captured and recognised the great work and effort that University of Stirling staff have put in over the course of 2020/2021. The staff show that they are continually improving teaching and the learning environment at the University, harnessing inclusivity and equipping students with the skills needed for success in their studies and life beyond university. I know that staff will use their experiences of the online learning environment to revitalise the more traditional classroom setting and continue to provide a prosperous education for all at Stirling University.



Calum Brown (Vice President Education 21/22)



This project was partially funded thanks to the philanthropic support of staff, alumni and friends via the Stirling Fund.

