

FACULTY OF NATURAL SCIENCES- PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE 2026

The Prizes for Excellence are designed to recognise and celebrate staff who make a major contribution to the Faculty of Natural Sciences. The prizes are open to staff from all job families, working in all functional areas across the Faculty of Natural Sciences and its Departments, and are available in six broad categories.

Prize categories

Inspirational Leadership- to recognise staff who effectively lead and inspire individuals and/or teams to reach their full potential. Nominees may have leadership responsibility at any level, they are not required to be direct line managers. This could include leading projects, initiatives or working groups, as well as managing teams. This category is open to staff only.

Outstanding Contribution- for individuals who have made a significant contribution to promoting improvements or making a positive difference to the Faculty community. They may have utilised technology, innovation and/or their own creativity to develop brand new or significantly improve existing processes or initiatives. This category is open to both staff and students.

Outstanding Team- to recognise teams who invest time and energy into delivering outcomes and achieving goals through collaboration and sharing of knowledge. This could be a project team, a service delivery team or any other group of colleagues that are working together to demonstrate excellence. This category is open to teams of staff, or mixed teams of staff and students.

Unsung Hero- to recognise staff who go out of their way to make a positive difference to the Faculty community, who embody Imperial Values in their work and in the way they engage with everybody they encounter. They make a difference to people every day through supporting others and communicating effectively, yet may not realise the positive impact they have. This category is open to staff only.

Health and Safety- The Jan de Abela-Borg Prize – this award is given in recognition of excellence in promoting and implementing safe practices across the Faculty. This Prize is named in memory of Jan de Abela-Borg, Faculty Safety Manager, who passed away in 2014. Nominations may be made for a group or team, as well as for individuals. This category is open to both staff and students.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) - This award recognises those who have developed a project or initiative that significantly contributes to the enhancement of equality, diversity and inclusion across the Faculty. Nominations may be made for a group or team, as well as for individuals. This category is open to both staff and students.

The nomination process

Any member of staff from across FoNS may make a nomination.

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Nominations will open on Monday 26 January 2026 and close on Friday 17 April 2026. Please note that there will be no extensions to this deadline.

Nominations can be made via the online nomination form accessible via this link: https://imperial.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_38hLGjPXWcIQ2ZE

All nominations must be supported by a seconder and must:

- Describe clearly, in no more than 400 words, and no less than 100, the nature, value and impact of the work carried out by the nominee(s)
- Include a one-sentence citation - which will be used in the end-of-year publication and when introducing the nominee at the prize giving event

Please note that all nominees will be notified of the full details of their nomination, including their nominator and seconder, nomination statement and citation- so please bear this in mind when completing the nomination form.

Timing of nominations is aligned, as in previous years, with the timing of the President's awards.

The winner(s) in each category will be decided by a Faculty-level panel which will include the vice-Deans for Education/Research, Faculty Senior Tutor, Associate Dean (EDI), Head of Health and Safety, plus other managers at Director-level from across the Faculty.

All nominees will be celebrated and winners announced at the End of Year event which is planned to take place on 02 July 2026.

What the panel are looking for in a nomination

Generally, the panel will be looking for examples of staff who make a significant, positive contribution to the work of the Faculty and its departments, or to the FoNS community.

When making a nomination, nominators should use the nomination statement to clearly explain how the nominee's work has had a positive impact. We strongly recommend using the full 400 word limit where possible- and there is also the opportunity to attach supporting documentation. This might include a statement of support from a student, for example, where the nomination involves supporting students, or delivering excellent teaching and learning activities.

Some examples of successful nomination statements from previous years' awards are included in the appendix.

Please also see our FAQ document for additional information.

Questions regarding the prizes and nomination process should be sent to the Faculty Education Team, who manage the prizes, at fonsedusupport@imperial.ac.uk.

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Appendix A- Nomination statement examples

Note that previous years' prizes were within different categories, but the statements below should give a flavour of the type of information that the panel are looking for.

Winners of the 2025 Health and Safety Prize

*** and *** have been instrumental in improving the safety procedures associated with the Hazardous Area Emergency Contacts App, Laser Safety App, Computer Health Assessor App and the High Hazard Chemical App and the Health and Safety Training Records App. They have designed and implemented this suite of safety Apps to enable improved user experience and ensure regulatory oversight of these key areas in the departments and faculties safety management systems.

Two of the Apps they have developed are being used as the basis for a university wide App, namely the Hazardous Area Emergency Contacts App and the Health and Safety Training Records App. Their solution driven approach to these issues has helped to ensure these safety items are accessible and appropriate for the varied department structures ensuring there is a suitable system for members of the departments to use.

*** and *** have developed the Apps by:

- 1) Identifying the key safety information required, along with the processes needed to engage with staff and students.
- 2) Coordinating safety information between the departments, central services (i.e. safety dept and security) and the Faculty Safety Team.
- 3) Leading on safety testing and incorporating feedback on the trials of the Apps they have developed.
- 4) Maintaining and further developing the Apps once they are launched.

The Hazardous Area Contacts App won the Emergency Response and Crisis Management Award at the University Safety, Health Association (USHA) Awards in 2024.

The use of Apps to help with management of various safety procedures has been a demonstration of excellent service to the departments and faculty, and in some cases this has then been adopted more broadly by other faculties and the university. *** and *** encapsulate the flexible approach needed at department and faculty level through their development of the safety apps.'

Winners of the 2025 EDI Prize

***, *** and *** have made a significant impact in EDI at within the Department of Physics by establishing the women & non-binary network mentoring scheme in 2023/24, which has continued and expanded in the current academic year.

This initiative is designed to support undergraduate students transitioning into PhD students, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and community among women and non-binary individuals in the Department of Physics. Through the scheme, final-year undergraduate students are paired with PhD mentors who provide tailored guidance on PhD applications, research opportunities, and the challenges of postgraduate study. By matching students with mentors based on their specific needs or identity, the initiative ensures personalized support that enhances both academic and professional development.

The mentoring initiative plays a crucial role in strengthening the pipeline of women in physics by

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removing barriers to academia, providing targeted support for the transition to PhD study, and fostering an inclusive environment that empowers women and non-binary individuals to pursue and thrive in research careers. It has helped mentees build confidence and navigate the application process while providing PhD students with valuable leadership and mentoring experience and there has been positive feedback from both mentees and mentors involved in the programme.

This initiative is a fantastic example of a student-led EDI initiative, and demonstrates how partnerships between students and staff can create meaningful, lasting improvements in academic and research communities.'

Winner of the 2025 Excellence in Teaching Prize

*** joined the department in 2024 as a teaching fellow and has had an immediate and positive impact. She teaches across two years on both degree streams (Biological Sciences and Biochemistry) delivering lectures, practicals, tutorials and workshops with enthusiasm and a love for the subject. *** was nominated for Excellence in Teaching by undergraduate students in years 1 and 2, in both our degree streams in townhall meetings.

*** designs opportunities for students to be more interactive and connect with one another and herself during her teaching. When designing lectures she reviews the flow of the sessions ensuring student engagement has been built in so she can assess if the group are understanding or becoming lost in the content. One example of engagement and formative assessment is the inclusion of Menti-meter questions within every lecture, giving time for students to discuss the question with one another before submitting their answer, providing space for learning to take place, employing a more interactive environment within lectures. This is echoed in student feedback "Great approachable teacher. I thought the way she encouraged interaction was helpful."

A feedback questionnaire follows every lecture to drive engagement on what they liked or found interesting and, in the future, to include what they did not enjoy or could be removed, currently this can be added to the any further comments. The feedback received is addressed in the following lecture with content modified based on feedback, giving *** the opportunity to identify misconceptions and address them, it makes students feel heard, empowering student voice.

Outstanding teaching sessions have been developed by listening to students. Students had concerns about answering multiple-choice (MCQs) and longer exam questions therefore, the module workshops focussed on strategizing and practicing problem-solving and data analysis questions alongside peers in a supportive environment. Each workshop tailored to fit specific student needs based on the feedback and questions received during the lecture series.

In summary, *** has developed and delivered high quality, effective teaching that both challenges and supports our students.'

Winner of the 2024 Prize for Support of Teaching and Learning

'As a Teaching Technician, *** is at the heart of student experience and welfare in the chemistry department. *** leads from the front educating and mentoring the next generation of technicians and

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scientists, tackling issues head-on and giving students the confidence and skills to work through complex practical challenges and arrive at their own solution. *** is an excellent role model for those looking to embark on a scientific career and embodies all the qualities desirable in a STEM professional; professional, personable, reliable, highly knowledgeable and continually engaging in professional development.

As a Teaching Technician *** works hard to ensure the laboratory adopts a positive culture of diversity through inclusion in which everyone deserves and receives respect, fairness and compassion. *** recognises the disadvantages that poor practice can have on minority and underrepresented groups and that everyone benefits from good practice. *** regularly communicates with the students and actively listens to their needs, appropriately adjusting the level of support and encouragement given. When students first begin the level of practical laboratory experience and confidence they have can differ enormously; *** is a vital support for many students and ensures all receive the advice and mentoring they need to thrive in the laboratory environment.

*** maintains a strong pastoral role in the laboratories and ensures that the students' welfare and experience is at the heart of everything he does. For this, I am nominating *** for a for one of the prizes for Excellence in the Support of Teaching and Learning.'