



**Book review: Grimwood, M. and McHanwell, S. (2024)  
*Evidencing teaching achievements in higher education*. St.  
Albans: Critical Publishing.**

***A concise guide to evidencing teaching: supporting career development  
across roles in higher education***

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The blurb introduces *Evidencing teaching achievements in higher education* as an ‘essential read for all lecturers who might need to evidence their teaching achievements within the contemporary HE landscape in a range of high-stakes contexts, including job applications, promotions and Advance HE fellowship’. The range of potential readers is further expanded by the announcement that it ‘also provides a framework for how institutions can support staff in collecting and developing qualitative and quantitative evidence of teaching achievements’. While this suggests a useful ‘how to’ book for pretty much anyone working in HE teaching in any capacity, the Critical Practice in Higher Education series is presented as one in which ‘each book ... explores an individual topic in depth, providing an overview in relation to current thinking and practice, informed by recent research.’ Such announcements left me equally intrigued and a little worried about how such a slim volume (just over 100 pages) could be so many things to so many different readers.

To explore how the authors deal with potential tensions arising from these claims, I would like to examine what its seven chapters could offer to readers, particularly to those working in learning development (LD). Chapter 1 establishes a holistic notion of what teaching means: not just standing in front of a classroom, but the many activities related to this, from curriculum design to pastoral care, scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), and maintaining currency in one’s own field. This approach is useful for learning developers

(LDers), whose activities rarely involve only synchronous group teaching. The argument in favour of parity of esteem between research and teaching will be welcomed by an LD audience. Nonetheless, the brevity of these sections and the concise treatment of the concept of 'quality' mean that, for readers with more background knowledge, the introduction may serve as a helpful refresher, though it might not offer much depth.

A brief critical review of some key concepts is offered in Chapter 2, including individual teaching performance, teacher versus teaching excellence, and the notion of expertise in teaching. These concepts are used to describe a set of criteria for teaching fellowships and a CV of an individual's teaching career in separate text boxes. This connection between the concepts and specific examples makes this chapter accessible to readers who are relatively new to teaching in HE or new to documenting and reflecting on their teaching. For more experienced colleagues, the annotated reference list can provide a useful guide to further reading, even if it is relatively short. Overall, this chapter offers a useful overview of concepts that are central to LD and summarises relevant debates well.

Chapter 3 is the first of the chapters offering a practical, hands-on approach that helps guide individual HE teachers. Its focus on 'building an education-focused career' tries to be inclusive. Both real-life examples of teaching-focused careers presented follow paths beyond traditional lecturer roles. The critical issues and question boxes are also helpful to foster reflection from a range of different perspectives on teaching, including LD. While little of this may be new to experienced HE teachers, including LDers, it can still offer a useful tool for either group when reviewing their career development.

Questions focusing on the rationale for evidencing teaching effectiveness, the nature of teaching evidence, and potential sources of evidence form the core of Chapter 4. Each of these sub-sections provides a clear overview for newcomers and a useful checklist that allows more experienced staff to reflect on the evidence they have used in their work so far – and potentially identify sources of evidence they could tap more. I particularly appreciated the 'critical issues' box on contributions in teams. Like many LDers, most of my work is collaborative, so this section was particularly useful in sparking some thoughts on the relation between individual contribution to group efforts and the impact of these efforts, and I would have liked to see references to other relevant thinking on this topic.

Chapter 5 is divided into three parts: 'presenting the evidence' for specific types of applications (promotion, professional recognition, and teaching awards); key issues that are relevant to all of them; and the process of developing an application. Given the necessary brevity, the first section reads like a taster for anyone who is new to these applications. The second part on key issues focuses on the importance of narrative. It is equally brief. I was wondering whether the very useful list of prompt questions could have been combined with some examples of practice presented in an appropriate narrative. However, this might have tilted the book too strongly towards those new to such applications, so perhaps the reference to Knight's (2021) DRIVE (description, rationale, impact, verification, and evidence) model is a good alternative.

The two final chapters change perspective. Chapter 6 focuses on 'support for applicants' and 'institutional perspectives on teaching evidence and some conclusions'. As someone without responsibility for supporting colleagues beyond individual mentoring, I found this change in perspective interesting. Yet I could not help wondering whether these chapters could offer much to anyone who was already running staff development programmes. The authors seem to be conscious of this problem and aimed to circumvent it by formulating a surprisingly big part of the chapter in questions that spark reflections and invite readers to use the book as a springboard for their own thoughts, rather than serving answers. As a result, these chapters might be useful for LDers who have responsibility for staff and would like to explore what their institution is currently offering in terms of professional support.

Chapter 7 explicitly justifies the combination of a focus on (institutional) policy and conclusions by emphasising that the former creates the bigger picture in which individual HE teachers operate. Again, there are helpful questions to spark further reflection, but for LDers who are approaching this book for advice on evidencing their achievements in teaching, it might have been more useful to conclude this book with a focus on practice rather than on broadening the scope.

In some way, then, Chapter 7 prompts a return to my initial questions: can a slim volume be so many things to so many different readers? It certainly offers a lot to LDers working in different settings and at different stages of their career, but for most, it will be an opportunity to practise what we preach to students: to read selectively depending on our context and purpose. In sum, Grimwood and McHanwell have given us a useful book for

picking up initial prompts or pertinent questions when working on an application, a career plan, or a staff CPD programme, rather than a go-to resource that accompanies every step of such projects.

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## ***References***

Knight, R.A. (2021) 'Supporting individuals to apply for reward and recognition – the DRIVE model of evidencing educational impact', *Learning at City St George's blog*. Available at: <https://blogs.city.ac.uk/learningatcity/2021/03/18/supporting-individuals-to-apply-for-reward-and-recognition-the-drive-model-of-evidencing-educational-impact> (Accessed: 3 November 2025).

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