

# School Biology Teacher of the Year Award 2025

## Guidance Document

### Background

The School Biology Teacher of the Year Award seeks to identify the UK's leading secondary education teachers, recognising the invaluable role they play in educating and inspiring the next generation of biologists.

The award is open to all teachers who are working with students aged 11-18 years old, teaching pre-university level biology programmes of study, and currently employed in a UK based school or college.

Individuals can be nominated either by self, peer, management, parent/carer, or student nomination using a nomination form.

We are seeking nominations which represent and celebrate the whole teaching community across all career stages. Nominations are particularly encouraged for women and/or people from minority ethnic backgrounds and/or from any under-represented groups because these have been under-represented in previous application pools.

The Award rewards teachers who:

- Demonstrate outstanding and inspirational teaching of biology at secondary school or college
- Contribute to the development of science throughout the school
- Influence the teaching and learning of biology beyond their own institution in other schools or educational settings

The Award was established in 2013 to provide an annual opportunity for teachers of biology to receive national recognition for their outstanding learning and teaching practices.

The Society and the sponsors, Oxford University Press, are delighted to support the continuation of this award.

## Aims of the award

The Award supports the Royal Society of Biology's objective to advance education and professional development.

The main aims of the Award are to:

- Provide national recognition and reward for excellence in teaching and supporting innovative student learning in the biosciences for individuals in any of the UK home nations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales)
- Raise the status of teaching in the biosciences as a scholarly activity
- Support individuals in reflecting upon and enhancing their professional practice in support of student learning
- Develop case studies of effective and/or innovative student learning and disseminate these nationally to enhance bioscience student learning experiences across the UK

## The prizes

The winner will receive a prize of £500 from [Oxford University Press](#) to spend as they wish. They will also receive £500 of Oxford Education resources for their school, and one year's free membership of the Royal Society of Biology at the appropriate grade (MRSB or FRSB).

The two runners up will each receive one year's free subscription to the [Journal of Biological Education](#).

The winner and two runners up will be announced online in July of the award year. The winner and two-runners will also be invited to the Royal Society of Biology's Annual Awards Ceremony during Biology Week to receive their Award certificates and prizes.

## Who is eligible?

The Award is open to all teachers who are working with students aged 11-18 years old, teaching pre-university level biology programmes of study, and currently employed in a UK-based school or college (in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales).

There is no limit to the number of applications per year from an individual school or college.

Previous winners are not eligible to apply for the Award again. Teachers who are runners-up are encouraged to apply again in subsequent years.

This award is open to **all** biology teachers whether or not they are current members of the Royal Society of Biology.

## How do I enter?

### Round 1 – Nominations

The first round involves entry by self, peer, or management nomination.

Colleagues, parents/carers and students can also suggest a teacher for nomination by completing a short nomination form. The Royal Society of Biology will later contact the teacher to complete a full nomination form. It is advised that colleagues, parents / guardians / carers and students submit their suggestion with plenty of time for their teacher to complete the full nomination form.

Applications should address the criteria as set out below and should aim to give the judging panel enough information to build up a picture of the nominee's teaching. A limit of 500 words applies to each section of the application form.

Please note that all applications reviewed by the judges in the Round 1 will be anonymous. The name on your application and your school will be anonymised.

Applications will be judged using equal weighting given to the following three criteria:

- Demonstrates outstanding and inspirational teaching of biology at secondary school or college
  - *Makes use of imaginative, innovative and inclusive teaching methods and pedagogy that have proven successful in promoting bioscience student learning and achievement*
  - *Shows a deep and wide knowledge of biological principles with a clear enthusiasm for biology*
  - *Exhibits good behaviour and classroom management skills and clear evidence of value added to student learning*
- Contributes to the development of science throughout the school
  - *Inspires students beyond the classroom by supporting high quality extra-curricular learning opportunities*
  - *Delivers inspirational INSET training for colleagues to share best practice in the teaching of biology and spreading their enthusiasm for the subject*
  - *Shows leadership within the development of science teaching*
- Influences the teaching and learning of biology beyond their own institution in other schools or educational settings
  - *Proactively engages in dialogue at teacher events, online, etc.*
  - *Shares best practice in bioscience teaching beyond their own institution through training or mentoring*

Nomination forms should be received by: **23:59 GMT on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025.**

A shortlist of up to three teachers will enter the second round. This shortlist will be announced on the Royal Society of Biology website.

## Round 2 – Case studies and school visits

In the second round, the shortlist of teachers will be asked to prepare a written case study and visit will be made to each of their schools by the Award's judging panel.

Case studies should provide information on teaching methodology and practice.

Shortlisted teachers can, but are not limited to, include evidence of the following in their case studies:

- Imaginative and innovative teaching methods and pedagogy
- Value added to student learning and inspiring students beyond the classroom
- Contribution made by the teacher to the development of science throughout the school
- Teaching and learning of biology beyond their own institution

The case study can be submitted as a written piece of approximately 1500 words (including images) or a short video of about 10 minutes in duration.

Case studies from previously shortlisted teachers are available online: <https://bit.ly/2Z5kNaR>

Case studies should be received by: **23:59 GMT on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

Two of the Award's judging panel will also visit each of the shortlisted teachers following the submission of their case studies. The judges will look for positive and inspiring learning outcomes to help highlight the influence you have on your students.

The programme for each school visit will include the following:

- Observation by judges of one lesson taught by the shortlisted teacher
- De-brief session after lesson with the shortlisted teacher
- Discussion with the shortlisted teacher
- Meeting with the head teacher
- Meeting with the head of science and/or head of biology
- Meeting with a group of students
- Meeting with a lab technician

The order for each school visit can be arranged by the school to suit the timetable and availability of staff and students.

The Royal Society of Biology's Senior Outreach, Engagement and Grants Officer will arrange the dates for the school visits with each shortlisted teacher to take place between **March and May 2025**.

### Advice to applicants

On the basis of previous years, the following are characteristics of a strong application. This advice applies equally to Round 1 and Round 2.

- *Personality and passion.*  
We want to get to know you as an educator. What drives your teaching philosophy? Why do you think you connect well with students? What makes you an effective colleague in driving teaching innovation? In general, applications written by the nominee are more effective at communicating this than those written by for example Heads of Science, but applicants will be scored equally whether it is a self or colleague nomination. We would recommend that colleagues work with applicants on their nominations to ensure that the applicants 'voice' is well represented.
- *A short statement explaining your teaching context*  
Give an indication of your level of responsibility, the types of teaching you do (for example, online, practicals, etc.), and the student cohort at your institution (for example, student socioeconomic backgrounds, etc.)
- *A clear explanation for the rationale behind your teaching approach*  
Why do you teach in the way you do? This might be informed from the scholarly literature, workshops/conferences attended, formal or informal teaching networks that have influenced your practice, etc.
- *Quantitative evidence of your impact*  
This might be in terms of assessment results.
- *Qualitative evidence of your impact*  
This might be in terms of testimonials from colleagues or students, or external comments.
- *Student voice*  
Supportive statements from students or examples of work produce can really lift an application. Make sure you have permission to share any student-generated materials.
- *Consideration of inclusivity*  
Is there evidence that your teaching strategy is actively inclusive of BAME students, neurodiverse students, etc.?
- *Figures or visual aids*  
Consider including graphs to illustrate quantitative data, screenshots of your teaching materials, examples of student work, etc.

## The judging panel

The judging panel will consist of the following:

- Dr Mark Winterbottom CBIol FRSB (Chair of judging panel) – Senior Lecturer in Science Education, University of Cambridge
- Dr Melissa Glackin MRSB - Senior Lecturer in Science Education, King's College London
- Charles Gill MRSB – Teacher and Previous School Biology Teacher of the Year winner (2022)

## Further information

Please email [engagement@rsb.org.uk](mailto:engagement@rsb.org.uk) with any comments and/or questions you may have about the award.

Nomination forms should be sent by email to [engagement@rsb.org.uk](mailto:engagement@rsb.org.uk) by **23:59 GMT on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025**.