

Office of the Chief Dental Officer's step by step guide to developing a Queen's Honours citation

To note: The following guidance is based on the office's lessons learnt and current guidance which is available including: [Honours nomination form and guidance - GOV.UK](#)

If you have any feedback/ comments based on your experience of using this guidance we would be delighted to hear from you at: england.cdoexecutive@nhs.net

1. What is a citation and why is it so important?

Honours recognise and celebrate outstanding achievement.

There is considerable competition for honours as there are fewer honours than people who deserve them. Therefore each nomination faces rigorous evaluation and decisions are based on the information contained on the **citation** form.

The English Oxford Dictionary's definition of a citation: the note accompanying an award, describing the reasons.

The way the honours process works is that the nominator writes the citation (describing the reasons why the nominee should receive the award) at the outset to give the committees the information they need to consider the case fully and in context. Once final decisions have been made by the committees, the citations are then used to prepare briefing for the Prime Minister and Her Majesty the Queen, and to provide briefing for the press when the final Honours list is announced.

2. How to write a Citation

When crafting a nomination, please remember it is not about replicating an individual's CV.

You must make it clear whether someone has gone above and beyond their work activities – if the committee is unsure, they will assume that what is being described is paid activity.

A frequent complaint is that the person recommended is “doing no more than their paid job”.

Success is usually achieved with a compelling and evidenced narrative on:

- what the candidate has achieved;
- the challenges that were overcome;
- what made their contribution special;
- their personal commitment/investment and the significant difference that this has made for patients and service users, whether locally, regionally or nationally.

For example: “The hospital was notorious, with many cases of MRSA, dirty wards and an attitude that patients were a nuisance. She arrived and worked hard to improve standards over a two year period by instilling pride in her staff, and giving bonuses for those staff with clean wards where efficiency and a helpful attitude were the norm, not the exception. The **rates of MRSA are now amongst the lowest in the country and staff turnover has been halved.**”

2.1 The Story

Every citation is different. But it must tell the story of what your candidate has done and put in context for the reader who won't necessarily have detailed knowledge of the person/subject.

You need to start building the story and the **evidence of what they've done as an individual and how they've made things better for others.** This could be as simple as searching the internet or discussing the nominee with their peers.

As well as facts, it is also important to bring out the character of the individual rather than becoming arid recitations of data

- The first and most important step is to decide what the focus of the story is - by answering these questions:

Why is the individual being recommended, have they (could be more than one achievement)?

- made a difference to their community or field of work?
- brought distinction to British life and enhanced its reputation?
- exemplified the best sustained and selfless voluntary service?
- made an outstanding impact on patients or public?
- demonstrated innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship?
- changed things, with an emphasis on achievement?
- improved the lot of those less able to help themselves?
- displayed moral courage and vision in making and delivering tough choices?

- carried the respect of their peers?
- exemplars of best practice in their field?
- taken on a role, which is not traditionally done and is regarded as a role model?
- improved patient safety by reducing risks or incidents;
- Made a particular breakthrough or proponent of a particular change;

Has the nominee’s work had an international, national, regional or local impact?

Why are they being nominated at this particular time?

- The next step is to start writing the Story

It is helpful to prepare the long citation in the style of about **four paragraphs** and broadly in the order as below:

SUMMARY

Suggest a brief overview is provided: what is special about the nominee’s achievements and outlining the key contributions they have made. You'll be able to show how their work has had a wider positive impact and at what level this has been (for example, a local, regional or national level).

Furthermore why are they being nominated at this particular time (when did they carry out the activity and why should they be recognised now? Is there a time factor involved – an anniversary, a launch, a dissolution of the organisation, a particular target reached or some other success?).

First sentence: A good opening sentence will catch the attention of the Committee - providing the compelling reason(s) of why the person has been **recommended**.

EVIDENCE & CONTRIBUTION

The main section of the citation expands on the summary providing further details of why the individual has been recommended giving one or two specific and detailed examples of their achievement/s.

Look for specific achievements wherever possible, but if the subject area is specialised or outside your own expertise, be aware of implied achievements; a short general statement about running a committee or completing a planning project may be hiding a large amount of work.

Furthermore a good nomination describes as vividly and precisely as possible the difference their contribution has made. The following questions may help to provide a framework:

- **where there has been a significant difference and/or improvement ?**
- **how were things before they began?**
- **how are they now? Why are things better?**
- **what makes your nominee different from others doing the same thing?**
- **what has the impact been?**

Evidence – Evidence – Evidence

It important to support the claim/s by using relevant facts, figures, publication and evidence of outstanding impact.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PARAGRAPH:

An opportunity to include information not already covered within the citation/nomination such as the nominee's wider contribution including past roles, another area/field, voluntary or charitable work.

Exemplar achievements will still be recognised but a wider contribution will make a strong case even more compelling.

THE ENDING:

Last sentence: It is helpful, similar to the first sentence, to use the final last line to summarise the individual's personal overall impact.

Finding the right words to use:

As long as they are accurate, do not be afraid of using superlatives in citations. Honours exist specifically to recognise superlative achievement.

Below are examples of words and phrases which could be used in a citation – however if used don't forget to support the assertion with hard evidence and examples.

Words such as

<i>Admired</i>	<i>Ambassador</i>	<i>Articulate</i>	<i>Campaigned</i>
<i>Committed</i>	<i>Conscientious</i>	<i>Contributed</i>	<i>Creativity</i>
<i>Dedicated</i>	<i>Determination</i>	<i>Devoted</i>	<i>Diligent</i>
<i>Dogged</i>	<i>Drive</i>	<i>Enthusiastic</i>	<i>Exemplary</i>
<i>Fair</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Innovation</i>	<i>Inspirational</i>
<i>Passionate</i>	<i>Peerless</i>	<i>Performance</i>	<i>Persuasive</i>
<i>Pioneered</i>	<i>Recognition</i>	<i>Resourceful</i>	<i>Respect</i>
<i>Selflessness</i>	<i>Supportive</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>	<i>Sympathetic</i>
<i>Tenacious</i>	<i>Trusted</i>	<i>Unflustered</i>	<i>Unstinting</i>
<i>Vibrant</i>	<i>Wise</i>	<i>Zeal</i>	

Phrases such as:

- Making a difference
- Going the extra mile
- Overcoming obstacles
- Head and shoulders above the rest
- Turned around
- Leading proponent of
- Key figure
- Helped shape
- Embodiment of

- Outstanding contribution
- An inspiration for the next generation
- Moral courage
- Ability to make tough choices
- Seeks resolutions
- Proactively engaging
- Devoted time, effort and personal reputation to take on ...
- Using tenacious and persuasive skills
- One of the major barriers
- Her/his awe inspiring enthusiasm for improving
- Drive for improvement does not stop at work ... she/he regularly
- Brought enthusiasm, fresh ideas and provided support
- She/he had confidence and expertise to hold his own
- She/he was an excellent negotiator and dedicated observer who made a difference
- His/her successful involvement
- As a result of this, a clear plan of action
- Produced, perhaps against the odds
- Earned the respect of peers

Checklist

	Y/N
Does the citation provide a strong case for an honour?	
Is the citation less than 3,000 characters	
Does the opening sentence summarise the person's achievements / contribution in a way likely to capture the interest of the Honours Committee?	
Have you included a strong closing sentence?	
Does it include dates where known?	
Have you reinforced why it's important for the nominee to receive the award now?	
Does it spell out the names of an organisation when first used, then use the abbreviations?	
Have you referenced how geographically wide they are active (local, regional, national or international)? This helps to determine the level of any award.	
Is all the text you have added relevant/ non duplicated information?	
Have you explained the relevant contributions / achievements and not include unsubstantiated or doubtful information	
Have you used plain English and short unambiguous sentences?	
Have you substantiated all superlative words/phrases?	
Have you included any work the candidate does for voluntary bodies?	