

Extract from 'An Introduction to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Supporting Fellowship' (Due for publication late 2017/ early 2018)

Engaging with the UKPSF

Before you start to gather evidence and to write your application for fellowship, it is important to spend some time familiarising yourself with all the elements of the UKPSF. You could regard this phase as close reading and textual analysis. Consider, first of all, the Aims of the framework; identify and consider the key words and phrases. For example:

“... initial and continuing professional development...” (**Aim 1**)

A simple description or ‘snapshot’ of your current teaching, learning and assessment practices is not sufficient. In what ways can you demonstrate your progress from a starting point and indicate how you reflect on your practice and plan to continue this progression?

“Fosters dynamic approaches to teaching and learning...” (**Aim 2**)

What does ‘dynamic’ mean in this context? A dictionary definition suggests dynamism is something to do change and movement.

“... creativity, innovation...” (**Aim 2**)

How do plan and use creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning? Do your methods encourage creativity and innovation in your students?

“... diverse academic and/ or professional settings” (**Aim 2**)

What does diversity mean in relation to teaching and learning? Do you teach students at different levels or do you work mainly with undergraduates or postgraduates? Just as a good journalist should be able to write for any newspaper, a good teacher should be able to teach at any level; teachers can learn much from different groups of students and from working out how to respond to and cater for their different needs and motivations.

Do you work in a variety of settings – classroom; workshop; work premises; FE college; online? In what ways do you adapt and develop teaching and learning to meet the different demands of these settings?

Turning to the Dimensions of the framework, consider, for example:

“Develop effective learning environments...” (**Area of Activity A4**)

What do you understand by ‘learning environment’? Does it simply denote a physical space such as a classroom, laboratory or lecture theatre? In a classroom you can create more collaborative spaces by rearranging the furniture to avoid school style rows. Lecture theatres with fixed seating imply one-way transmission from teacher to relatively passive students – in what ways can you encourage discussion and interaction? The term ‘learning environment’ can also be understood as an atmosphere or the style of teaching and learning – how, for example, do signal you that your sessions are collaborative and participative? How effectively do you communicate with and motivate your students? If some, or all, of your teaching is online how do you create an environment and an experience that is stimulating and makes students feel ‘connected’ with you and the institution?

“... quality assurance and quality enhancement...” (**Core Knowledge K1**)

Some applicants simply describe their involvement with quality assurance procedures rather than discussing ways in which quality is manifest in the teaching and learning and how reflective practice is used to continually enhance the quality of the student learning experience; quality begins and ends with students and teachers. (See Chapter 10)

“Promote participation ...” (**Professional Values V2**)

Widening participation is not solely concerned with recruiting a more diverse range of students, especially ‘non-traditional’ students and those from under-represented groups, it also about retaining them and helping them find ways into academic study and discourse. We cannot separate widening participation from inclusion and inclusive learning.

Sources of evidence

Before you start to identify sources of evidence spend some reflecting on what you do and what you have done in relation to teaching and learning. Consider the range of your activities including:

- planning for teaching, learning and assessment (individually and with colleagues)
- preparing for teaching and learning
- researching and reading
- selecting teaching and learning methods
- planning assessment (formative and summative)
- teaching and assessing
- reflecting on and evaluating your teaching and the students' learning
- planning for continuing improvement

Your sources of evidence for your application might include:

- your own reflections
- peer observations and feedback
- student feedback and evaluations
- reading and research
- CPD
- scholarly activity
- programme and module evaluations
- external examiner reports

Writing your application

A personal approach

Your fellowship application is an opportunity to write in a more personal, first-person style than is usual in academic writing. It is a personal narrative which describes, analyses and reflects on your teaching and learning practice. Don't be afraid to write simply and directly. Much academic writing is unnecessarily wordy and opaque; reviewers will want to get an immediate sense of who you are and what you do.

Be reflective

The QAA Quality Code Chapter B3 states that "Learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship." (QAA, 2015: 13).

Your application should, as we frequently remind students writing essays, go beyond description. A simple formula for reflection is provided in Driscoll and Teh's (2001) three questions: *What?* (description); *So what?* (analysis) and *Now what?* (evaluation and

implications for future practice). The key point to get across to reviewers is that reflection has had a transformative effect on your teaching and learning practice.

Focus on teaching and learning

The UKPSF is an award based on teaching and learning in higher education; it is not an award for being an academic. The wider aspects of your academic role – research; committee work; administration; programme leadership – will only be relevant insofar as they relate to real examples of your teaching and learning practice informed by scholarly activity, reflection and continuing professional development.

Use the Framework

The UKPSF is not a checklist or a template for your application; it is a framework to support the writing of a personalised and reflective narrative account of continuing professional development in teaching and learning. You must, however, ensure that you demonstrate coverage of all three dimensions – Areas of activity; Core knowledge; Professional values – as prescribed by your chosen descriptor. Most applicants indicate in brackets which of the dimensions are covered by a particular example or theme in their narrative (see examples below). You might find it useful to map your coverage of all the elements in a grid, although it is not necessary to submit this with your application.

Make reference to literature and theory

In your application you need to demonstrate that you are familiar with the literature and key ideas and theories of teaching and learning in higher education. There are many generic texts, such as this one, which provide introductions to some of the main ideas in theory and practice, for example: constructivism; assessment for learning; academic literacy, and threshold concepts. Such generic knowledge should be balanced with your familiarity with subject-specific pedagogy. Most subjects and disciplines have journals which specialise primarily in the relevant pedagogy rather than being content-specific – it can be useful to enter terms such as ‘Biology teaching’ or ‘Psychology teaching’ into a journals search engine. The results might not all be about teaching and learning specifically in higher education but can still have value for your scholarly activity. The HEA provides discipline centres in:

- Arts and Humanities
- Health and Social Care
- Social Science
- STEM

Through these you can access a range of resources, events, webinars and blogs to support your CPD. In addition, you will be able to locate archive materials and resources from the former HEA Subject Centres in, for example, English and Engineering.

References

- Driscoll, J. and Teh, B. (2001) The potential of reflective practice to develop individual orthopaedic nurse practitioners and their practice *Journal of Orthopaedic Nursing* 5: 95-103
- QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) (2016b) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Chapter B3 Teaching and Learning* Gloucester: QAA