This article should be read in conjunction with the article on ‘Initial Education for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education’[1], as there is no clear division between initial education and continuing professional development for academic staff working in higher education (HE).

Continuing professional development (CPD) may include a wide range of activities, from short courses to higher degrees. There is no legal requirement for academic staff in HE to undertake professional development, though there is an expectation that they will do so.

Organisational aspects

A number of organisations and frameworks exist which support higher education institutions (HEIs)[2] and their academic staff in fulfilling the expectation to undertake professional development.

Quality Code for Higher Education

The expectation that academic staff in higher education will undertake professional development is expressed through the Quality Code for Higher Education[3], produced by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)[4]. As outlined in the advice and guidance document on learning and teaching[5], HEIs are required to demonstrate the following core practice:

‘The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. In practice, this means that providers ensure individuals and teams involved in teaching and supporting students demonstrate an appropriate mix of academic, professional and pedagogic knowledge and skills’ (p. 2).

Moreover, HEIs in England are encouraged to follow this guiding principle:

‘Effective learning and teaching is underpinned by routine evaluation of provision to manage and enhance their learning and teaching activities, including achievement of qualification and award outcomes. Providers use a range of internal and external information and feedback to enable them to keep their approach to learning and teaching under review, taking deliberate steps to facilitate the continuous improvement of the learning opportunities and support they provide. Evaluation and enhancement takes place for all learning and teaching activities’ (p. 3).

The indicator of good practice is illustrated as follows:
Effective learning and teaching occurs when staff display a sound understanding and up-to-date knowledge of their subject, pedagogies and/or professional practice and bring this to a variety of appropriately-designed learning and teaching activities. Recruitment and appointment procedures ensure that new staff have an appropriate level of competence for teaching and supporting learning. Providers consider the extent to which staff have:

- appropriate and current practitioner knowledge and an understanding of the subject they teach (which may be demonstrated by an academic qualification and any relevant professional or industry qualification or recognition), and an understanding of the disciplinary scholarship appropriate to the academic level of the students they are teaching;
- the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise to facilitate learning using processes and approaches grounded in sound learning and teaching scholarship and practice.

Staff draw on scholarship, research and professional activity to facilitate student learning which may include conventional research (discovery of new knowledge), innovative application or integration and synthesis of existing knowledge (for example, in professional practice), or the study of learning and teaching processes and practices (pedagogic development). Teaching staff model good academic practice to students which reinforces their understanding and appreciation of ethical research behaviours and academic integrity.

Specialist support staff contribute to learning and teaching (for example, in the design and delivery of inclusive curricula and learning environments), while learning facilitators, library staff, demonstrators and technicians work alongside teaching staff to support students’ learning across a range of environments. Awarding bodies ensure that staff of third-party organisations who deliver their courses are appropriately qualified and supported. Visiting lecturers, including graduate alumni, enhance the professional/vocational relevance of course content and delivery.

Staff are encouraged to value their own and others’ skills, to recognise that they have a responsibility to identify their own development needs and to engage in initial and continuing professional development. Staff new to teaching or supporting student learning engage in appropriate induction and mentoring activities (such as observed teaching) and may also access postgraduate teaching qualifications. Once appointed and throughout their careers, staff engage with CPD to develop and extend their teaching capabilities and reflect critically on their teaching practice. The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) provides a mechanism for recognising and benchmarking teaching and learning support roles within higher education by ensuring that they meet expected national standards. Providers may use the UKPSF to support staff recognition and reward processes and promotion opportunities for all academic career paths through professional accreditation at relevant levels of Fellowship (Associate, Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow).

Staff development activities are planned strategically with sufficient resources being allocated to cover the needs of both research and learning and teaching development, including protected time factored into staff workload allocation. Providers assure themselves of the effectiveness of their approaches to staff development and have procedures to identify teachers in need of additional support, providing them with opportunities, support and mentoring to enable the improvement of their skills and competency to an agreed level. Providers ensure that part-time and associate tutors, including graduate teaching assistants and visiting lecturers, have the necessary support.
for teaching and assessing students both formatively and summatively.’ (pp. 7-8).

**SEDA Professional Development Framework (SEDA-PDF)**

The **SEDA Professional Development Framework (SEDA-PDF)** [6] provides a set of standards which can be used to facilitate and support the design and delivery of initial and continuing education development programmes and activities within **higher education institutions (HEIs)** [2]. It provides recognition for HEIs, accreditation for their professional development programmes and recognition for the individuals who complete those programmes. The SEDA-PDF is owned by the **Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA)** [7], the professional association for staff and educational developers in the UK. SEDA uses a range of **named awards** [8] to accredit different types of professional development within the PDF and also offers **Fellowships** [9] and **courses** [10] in supporting and leading educational change.

**UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)**

The **UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)** [11] aims to support the initial and continuing professional development of staff engaged in teaching and in supporting learning. It was developed and managed on behalf of the higher education sector by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). In March 2018, the HEA merged with the Equality Challenge Unit and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education to form **Advance HE** [12], a single sector agency for equality and diversity, learning and teaching, and leadership and governance in higher education.

The UKPSF has two main components: Descriptors and Dimensions of Professional Practice. The Descriptors outline the key characteristics associated with four broad categories of typical teaching and learning support roles within higher education. The four Descriptors - labelled D1 to D4 - correspond to the HEA fellowship categories, with D1 being Associate Fellow; D2 Fellow; D3 Senior Fellow; and D4 Principal Fellow. The Dimensions of Professional Practice are:

- areas of activity undertaken by teachers and support staff;
- core knowledge to carry out those activities at the appropriate level;
- professional values that individuals performing these activities should exemplify.

An account of the development of the UKPSF as well as an overview of activities attempting to enhance the quality and professional status of teaching in higher education over the past three decades is provided by SEDA’s 2013 evaluation report **Measuring the Impact of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning** [13].

Advance HE offers accreditation for courses and wider professional development opportunities that support staff who teach and / or support learning. For individual staff, it offers professional recognition services, which are underpinned by the UKPSF. Professional recognition means that individual staff have completed accredited programmes or have a proven track record of experience within the UKPSF. They may apply for Fellowship on the following incremental scale:

1. **Associate Fellow (AFHEA)** [14]
2. **Fellow (FHEA)** [15]
3. **Senior Fellow (SFHEA)** [16]
4. **Principal Fellow (PFHEA)** [17].

For an overview of the professional development needs of holders of different academic roles, see this research commissioned by the HEA in 2014 to inform its support offer: **Shifting Academic Careers:**
Implications for Enhancing Professionalism in Teaching and Supporting Learning [18].

Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

In the May 2016 higher education White Paper, Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice [19], the Government committed to the introduction of a new system for recognising excellent teaching in higher education. The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 [20] provides the legislative basis for the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), which assesses the quality of higher education institutions (HEIs) in terms of teaching and ensuring students get good outcomes. It operated for the first time in the 2015/16 academic year. From 2017/18, in England only, performance on the TEF will be linked to the level of fees that HEIs may charge students. HEIs in England with a TEF award will be able to charge a higher maximum tuition fee than those institutions without an award. For full details of how the TEF is intended to work, see the Office for Students (OfS) [21] website. See also the article on ‘Quality Assurance in Higher Education’ [22].

Incentives for participation in continuing professional development (CPD) activities

The provision of incentives to staff to participate in continuing professional development is a matter for individual higher education institutions (HEIs) [2].

In order to ensure that learning opportunities and teaching provided to students are of high quality, HEIs generally operate a structured system for identifying any professional development needs of staff, and monitoring whether they are met. These performance management systems therefore act as a driver for continuing professional development. Performance management processes involve the following four stages:

1. planning and defining expectations and setting personal objectives
2. implementation and action
3. monitoring performance
4. reviewing performance.

In addition, Advance HE manages a National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) [23], which rewards excellent learning and teaching with a financial award intended to be used to fund its recipients’ professional development in teaching and learning or aspects of pedagogy.

Article last reviewed September 2019.