This article focuses on professional development activity beyond the initial development experienced by academic staff on the commencement of their work in higher education. It should however be read in conjunction with Chapter 9.4 Initial Education for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education \[1\] as there is much overlap between the organisations that are involved and the frameworks that apply.

Continuing professional development (CPD) may include a wide range of activity from short courses to higher degrees.

While there is no legal requirement for academic staff in higher education to undertake professional development courses, in practice higher education institutions (HEIs) do provide CPD opportunities and often have a structured framework for the development of their staff.

Their structures may take into account the discipline specific professional standards frameworks developed by some professional bodies, as well as the frameworks developed by higher education sector bodies such as those described below.

**Organisational Aspects**

CPD is typically provided and organised within HEIs. It occurs in working time but is typically optional, though there may be an expectation in individual institutions or Faculties/Schools that staff will participate. Organisations involved in the professional development of higher education staff include the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Staff Education Development Association (SEDA).

The [Higher Education Academy](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk) (HEA) is an independent organisation with the remit of championing excellent learning and teaching in higher education. It is funded by grants from the four UK higher education funding bodies, subscriptions from HEIs, and grant and contract income for specific initiatives.

The HEA accredits professional development programmes for teachers in higher education delivered by institutions. Accreditation provides external confirmation that the institutional provision is aligned with the [UK Professional Standards Framework](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk) (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (developed in 2006, and revised 2012).

While the Framework is not mandatory, the standards are applicable UK-wide and can be used to facilitate and support the design and delivery of initial and continuing education development programmes and activities within HEIs, demonstrating to students and other stakeholders the professionalism that staff and institutions bring to teaching and support for student learning.

The UKPSF is central to the HEA’s accreditation and professional recognition services for professional development programmes and has two main components, the Descriptors and the Dimensions of Practice. The Descriptors outline the key characteristics associated with four broad categories of
typical teaching and learning support roles within higher education. The Dimensions of Practice identify what expertise someone performing such roles should be able to evidence.

In 2012/13 the HEA commissioned the Staff and Educational Development Association (see below) to examine the impact on HEIs of the revised UKPSF. The resulting report, Measuring the Impact of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning [4] (UKPSF), found that the UKPSF has been influential across the sector in changing institutional practice in four main areas:

- Shaping accredited courses
- Influencing institutional CPD frameworks
- Supporting reward and recognition
- Influencing institutional strategy and policy.

The HEA also provides support at subject level, for example by initiating, gathering and disseminating examples of good practice in learning, teaching and assessment which have been developed and implemented by subject specialists in HEIs across the UK. It employs a number of subject-specific discipline leads.

The Staff and Educational Development Association [5] (SEDA) is the professional association for staff and educational developers in the UK, and aims to promote innovation and good practice in higher education. It operates a nationally-recognised, integrated Professional Development Framework to support the planning, operation and recognition of professional development for staff working in higher education.

SEDA has developed a range of awards within its Professional Development Framework which are aligned with the UKPSF.

**Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Activities**

Most HEIs operate some form of staff appraisal/performance management system. The aim of performance management is to create a shared understanding of what is required to improve performance and how this will be achieved.

Typically, performance management processes involve the following four stages:

- Planning and defining expectations and setting personal objectives
- Implementation and action
- Monitoring performance
- Reviewing performance.

Performance management provides a structured system for identifying any development needs and monitoring whether they are met. It thus acts as a driver for continuing professional development.

HEIs are autonomous and it is for them to determine how participation in CPD is supported and recognised. However, it is widespread that the achievement of agreed professional development goals will form a component of staff members’ annual appraisals or reviews of performance. Staff will attend relevant training to enable them to meet such goals, usually in work time. Achievement of these goals may contribute to promotion at the discretion of the employer.

Individual teachers in higher education may apply for professional recognition from the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Eligibility for membership is based on evidence of professional activity in
six broad areas:

- Teaching and the support of learning
- Contribution to the design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study
- Assessment and giving feedback to learners
- Developing effective learning environments and learner support systems
- Evaluation of practice and personal development
- Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning.

Demonstrating these activities is incentivised by the possibility of gaining the entitlement to use post-nominal letters:

- AFHEA (Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy)
- FHEA (Fellow of the Higher Education Academy)
- SFHEA (Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy)
- PFHEA (Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy)

The four Descriptors of the UKPSF correspond to the HEA Fellowship categories. They are labelled D1 to D4 and thus D1 corresponds to Associate Fellow, D2 to Fellow, D3 Senior Fellow and D4 Principal Fellow.

It is for individual HEIs to decide whether to make it mandatory for staff to possess such accreditation for appointment to senior positions. Some require appointees to senior lectureships to have achieved Fellowship (FHEA).

The report by SEDA (referenced above) indicates that by the end of the 2011–12 academic year, over 184,000 individuals had been recognised against one of the descriptors of the UKPSF, the great majority of them (171,000) at the level of Fellow.

The HEA also manages a National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) which applies across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. NTFS recognises and rewards excellent learning and teaching and is open to directly-funded HEIs and further education colleges in the three nations.

Each year every eligible institution may nominate up to three candidates and in total up to 55 awards of £10,000 are made to recognise individual excellence. The award is intended to be used to fund its recipients’ professional development in teaching and learning or aspects of pedagogy.
Source URL:
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/continuing-professional-development-academic-staff-working-higher-education-86_pt-pt

Links
[1] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/initial-education-academic-staff-higher-education-87_en