

Utilising the Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning for strategic transformation

Recognising and rewarding excellence in inclusive teaching and student support

Phil Gravestock and Gemma Witton
University of Wolverhampton, UK

Edited by Jenny Lawrence, Mary Fitzpatrick and Adam Craik

Contents

1	Situation	2
1.1	The University of Wolverhampton context	2
2	Task	2
2.1	Inclusivity and equity of outcome	2
3	Action	2
3.1	Inclusion for all	2
3.2	Strategic linking of the PSF	4
4	Result	4
4.1	Impact	4
5	Reflection	5
6	Peer reflection	6
6.1	Dr Nathan Roberts SFHEA, Programme Manager and Professor Stephen Rutherford SFHEA, Head of the Education Division, Cardiff University, UK	6

1 Situation

1.1 The University of Wolverhampton context

The University of Wolverhampton is in the West Midlands of the UK. We make significant contributions to improving educational, social and economic outcomes in a region that has suffered disproportionately from industrial restructuring. We do this by prioritising education, skills, business engagement and employment. Relative to other universities, most of our students are recruited from the region and remain here on graduation.

The university has around 20,000 students studying across three faculties and three main campuses: 51% (10,226) of our students are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities; 71% (14,237) from the most disadvantaged backgrounds (based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, which divides geographical regions into five quintiles, with 1 being the most deprived. Quintiles 1 and 2 are used for the number of students quoted here). In addition, 48% (9,625) of our students are mature. A significant proportion (68%, 13,635) of our students are the first within their family to enter higher education (HE), which is far higher than the UK sector norm (45%).

2 Task

2.1 Inclusivity and equity of outcome

Our priority is the success of all those who wish to study with us. Our focus is to ensure inclusivity and equity of outcome and this commitment allows us to focus on who is participating and how they achieve. We are committed to removing barriers so that all can participate in higher education and achieve their potential.

3 Action

3.1 Inclusion for all

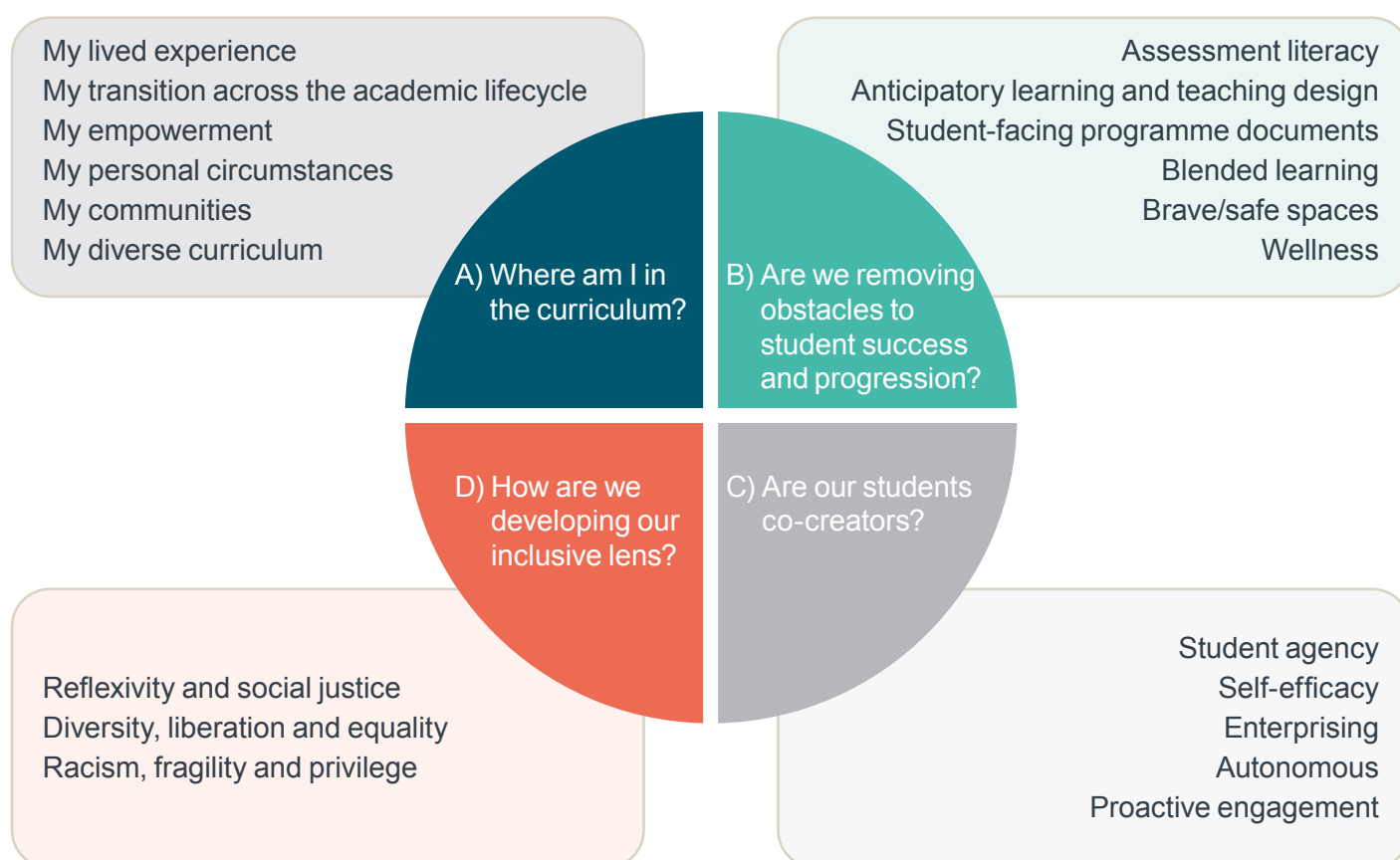
The Knowledge, Understanding, Development, Opportunity and Standing (Kudos) scheme is the university's accredited continuing professional development (CPD) scheme for recognising Associate (D1), Fellow (D2) and Senior Fellow (D3) and is delivered by the College of Learning and Teaching. Since its launch in September 2015, the Kudos scheme has recognised more than 400 members of staff with Fellowship. Many of the applications are from staff with existing Fellowship gaining recognition as Senior Fellows: 59% (247) of all applications have been for Senior Fellowship, compared with 38% (157) Fellowship (D2) and 3% (14) Associate Fellowship (D1).

The university has a strong inclusivity agenda that we apply to staff as well as students. When the university's Kudos scheme was first accredited, staff could only apply through a written submission. We recognised that this was not inclusive to all staff and, as part of the reaccreditation in 2019, we introduced a dialogue route. Approximately one third of our submissions are now through this route (with an average of 125 Fellowship submissions per year, dialogue accounts for approximately 42).

The Kudos scheme has always been open to all staff who teach and/or support learning, whatever their job role. We believe that it is important to recognise the work of all staff contributing to enhancing students' learning experiences. The Kudos scheme has recognised staff from the library, careers service, registry, external engagement and estates and facilities.

In July 2020, the university launched its 'Inclusive Framework: curriculum design and delivery' (IF) (Figure 1). The IF supports staff to develop an inclusive curriculum for students. Although aimed primarily at academics, it is applicable to all staff, recognising that inclusivity is an issue that extends beyond the classroom.

Figure 1. Wolverhampton Inclusive Framework: curriculum design and development



3.2 Strategic linking of the PSF

Two important elements of our Students and Education Sub-strategy are 1) the development of an inclusive curricula and 2) the recognition and reward of excellence in teaching. Our conferment process for those wishing to be promoted to associate professors and professors of learning and teaching is aligned with the PSF, so that Senior Fellowship is a requirement for these roles and Principal Fellowship is a recommendation for professorship.

Explicit linking of the IF and the PSF has been achieved through:

- + identifying relevant PSF dimensions and IF priorities on the university's Observation of Teaching scheme recording and feedback form
- + providing resources on the Kudos virtual learning environment site, linking advice on addressing specific PSF dimensions with the IF
- + restructuring the university's Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) Professional Development Framework courses (Learning to Tutor Online; Digital Transformations) to align with the PSF and the IF
- + requiring all applications for funding through the Wolverhampton Learning and Teaching (WLT) awards to be led by a Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow, and to align proposed projects explicitly to institutional inclusivity priorities.

4 Result

4.1 Impact

The obvious impact of the linkage between the IF and PSF has been an increase in references to activities addressing the IF in Fellowship applications, particularly in case studies supporting evidence for Senior Fellowship (through the written and dialogue routes). This has allowed us to identify colleagues for membership of relevant task and finish groups (eg decolonisation) and/or submitting case studies to our monthly inclusivity podcasts, quarterly inclusivity newsletter and annual inclusivity conference.

Effective inclusive practice identified through the Observation of Teaching Scheme has been highlighted through faculty learning and teaching dissemination events.

More than £145,000 has been awarded through the Wolverhampton Learning and Teaching (WLT) awards to support enhancement of our inclusivity agenda.

At an institutional level, we have seen an impact of the IF in our award gap between white students and students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (decrease from 19.9% in 2017-18 to 16.3% in 2019-20), and also from student feedback. For example, in the 2021 Jisc digital insights survey, 71.8% (1,067) of students who responded to the survey agreed their learning materials were accessible. We appreciate that there is more work to do, but the alignment between university initiatives has helped to ensure effectiveness and impact.

One Kudos colleague noted that:

“Developing an inclusive curriculum was always my intention for the modules I took over, as this improves student performance and ensures their progression. Learning about that [...] gives me good insight to factors that I might have not considered, as well as how the university considers inclusivity in its programs. Moving forward, I want to incorporate different approaches which would lift the barriers from even more students and allow them to progress.”

5 Reflection

Professor Julia Clarke, PFHEA, Deputy Vice-Chancellor

The university recognises the importance of aligning priorities to ensure that they are enacted effectively. When responding to internal and external drivers, it is important to highlight the linkages between actions. Staff need to see the relevance and importance of these activities to their academic practice when responding to multiple, often overlapping, action plans.

One of the ambitions in our students and education sub-strategy is for ‘all our students and staff to believe they belong’. To meet this ambition, we have committed to recognise and reward excellence in inclusive teaching and student support. The primary ways in which we do this is through the Kudos scheme and through our conferment process. Ensuring that these initiatives are aligned (eg through explicit reference in the conferment criteria to the PSF and our Inclusive Framework), highlights their importance from a senior management perspective.

6 Peer reflection

6.1 Dr Nathan Roberts SFHEA, Programme Manager and Professor Stephen Rutherford SFHEA, Head of the Education Division, Cardiff University, UK

The University of Wolverhampton has created an immensely useful framework for understanding inclusive practice in curriculum design. In breaking down a complex and multifaceted issue into four key areas, it is easy to see how the Inclusive Framework can support colleagues to quickly understand why aspects such as assessment literacy and individual lived experiences should be part of the conversation on inclusive design. It can be challenging for those involved in teaching and supporting learning to grapple with the values ‘respect individual learners and diverse learning communities’ (Values 1) and ‘promote participation in HE and equality of opportunity for all learners’ (Values 2) of the PSF: appreciating the complex intersectionality inherent to diverse learning communities and how to respond in module and programme design. It is not surprising that this has been picked up and used so readily throughout the University of Wolverhampton.

Cardiff University, a large research-focused institution in Wales, UK, shares many of these challenges and the themes are familiar. We often ask ourselves, how do we build a culture around programme design that sees student co-creation, reflexivity and well-thought-through blended learning as fundamental? As well as surfacing the Inclusive Framework to those working towards Senior Fellowship and promotion by embedding it in institutional accredited provision, it would be great to see the Framework and institutional accredited provision formally embedded as part of programme development and review processes. This is where institutions such as ours could scale up the use of valuable tools such as a curricula framework and assertively aligned CPD and Advance HE-accredited academic taught programmes. By supporting programme development teams to engage with the Framework or equivalent as part of programme development, we would also be in a good position to chart the longer-term impact on students as they progress through provision that has been inclusively designed from the outset, and the impact of our institutional accredited provision.



Contact us

General enquiries

+44 (0) 3300 416201

enquiries@advance-he.ac.uk

www.advance-he.ac.uk

Media enquiries

+44 (0) 1904 717500

communications@advance-he.ac.uk

www.advance-he.ac.uk/contact-us

 **in f** @AdvanceHE

Advance HE helps HE and research be the best they can be.

We are a member-led, sector-owned charity that works with institutions and higher education across the world to improve higher education for staff, students and society. We are experts in higher education with a particular focus on enhancing teaching and learning, effective governance, leadership development and tackling inequalities through our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work.

Our strategic goals to enhance confidence and trust in HE, address systemic inequalities and advance education to meet the evolving needs of students and society, support the work of our members and the HE sector. We deliver our support through professional development programmes and events, Fellowships, awards, student surveys and research, providing strategic change and consultancy services and through membership (including accreditation of teaching and learning, equality charters, knowledge and resources).

Advance HE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 04931031. Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 1101607 Registered as a charity in Scotland no. SC043946. The Advance HE logo should not be used without our permission.

© 2022 Advance HE. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of Advance HE. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the copyright owner. Such permission will normally be granted for non-commercial, educational purposes provided that due acknowledgement is given.

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format, please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at Advance HE:
+44 (0) 3300 416201 or publications@advance-he.ac.uk