

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

Making parity of esteem a reality: rebalancing teaching and research within a research-intensive university

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Contents

1	Situation	2
1.1	A brief introduction to the University of Warwick	2
2	Task	2
2.1	Warwick in 2030: excellence with purpose in research and education	2
2.2	Reward and recognition of teaching	2
3	Action	3
3.1	Championing Fellowships	3
3.2	Fellowships	3
3.3	Celebrating excellence	4
3.4	Academic probation and promotions	4
4	Result	5
4.1	Increased engagement in teaching-focused CPD	5
5	Reflection	6
6	Peer reflection	7
6.1	Dr Alison Nimmo, Head of Academic Development, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland, UK	7

1 Situation

1.1 A brief introduction to the University of Warwick

Established in 1965, the University of Warwick is a research-intensive university with a reputation for excellence in education. We have almost 30,000 students across 30 academic departments and we guarantee a high degree of departmental autonomy, fostering a richness of signature cultures and approaches. Our mission is to enable excellent educational experiences that are transformative and enriching for our students and their impact on society. We are among the top 10 in UK league tables and the highest-placed Russell Group university for student satisfaction with teaching quality.

2 Task

2.1 Warwick in 2030: excellence with purpose in research and education

Our strategy foregrounds Warwick's core purposes of research and education, with a strong explicit commitment to excellent teaching that is research-informed, international in outlook and interdisciplinary.

To enable consistent, high-quality educational experiences for all students, our staff engage in continuous enhancement of teaching and learning through partnership with students, communities of practice, teaching-related research and wider continuing professional development (CPD) schemes.

2.2 Reward and recognition of teaching

Our efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic focused on pedagogies of care and the student experience. Warwick's exceptional performance in the National Student Survey (NSS) this year and our recognition as Times Higher University of the Year for teaching quality are a testament to this approach and to the high standards of teaching across the institution. We continue to build a culture of parity of esteem between teaching and research through reward and recognition and, as shown below, our use of the PSF in this process has been highly impactful.

3 Action

3.1 Championing Fellowships

We champion awareness of, and engagement with, the PSF as a recognised national/ international benchmark and have embedded the framework across a range of strategic areas.

3.2 Fellowships

We have made a clear strategic, institutional and resource commitment to staff development.

Reaccreditation in 2015-16 provided a timely opportunity to further focus our institutional commitment to teaching enhancement and align our provision to the PSF in ways that were tailored to our context. We adopted a holistic approach to educational development with a view to achieving meaningful, long-term culture change. We redesigned all our accredited CPD provision around the PSF and introduced four Academic and Professional Pathways (APPs): for Teaching Excellence (APPTE), Postgraduate Researchers (APPPGR), Technology Enhanced Learning (APPTTEL) and Experienced~Pathway (APPEXP), intentionally placing the emphasis on the journey, not the destination. These pathways are each specifically designed to meet the needs and ambitions of different colleagues (respectively new staff on probation, postgraduate students who teach, staff interested in using technology to enhance learning, and experienced staff at various career stages).

Key practical steps included:

- + moving away from the traditional PGCert as a requirement for new academic staff on probation and replacing it with a 12-month learning programme aligned to Fellowship (D2). We adopted a resource-intensive model to support this, with an emphasis on pedagogy and quality of learning rather than on set targets
- + diversifying assessment on our experiential pathway, offering a choice between written and dialogic route. To support this, we invested in building and maintaining expert mentoring and reviewing capacity
- + focusing our initial efforts on Senior Fellowship (D3) recognition to socialise the PSF among those colleagues who operate in a wider sphere of influence
- + capitalising on the expertise of Fellows across all descriptors (D1-D4) by inviting them to contribute to a range of CPD
- + engaging senior leadership in our pathway for experienced staff at Principal Fellowship (D4) to signal institutional commitment.

Most importantly, we enhanced the quality of our programmes by modelling good practice and creating opportunities for meaningful engagement with scholarship and reflection on/in practice. The pathways enable participants to engage critically with the dimensions of the PSF and to reflect on the connections between their practice and Warwick's strategic directions: student research, interdisciplinarity, internationalisation and disciplinary excellence. By championing teaching as a process of enquiry, our pathways centre participants' individual exploration of teaching in their disciplinary context, scaffolding their engagement with educational research relevant to their discipline.

This year, in preparing for the reaccreditation of the scheme, pathway leads within the Academic Development Centre (ADC) met regularly over a period of six months to reflect on current approaches, share ideas and critically interrogate each other's practice. The process itself became an enriching and valuable developmental opportunity for both staff and the fellowship pathways.

3.3 Celebrating excellence

Alongside our focus on quality and engagement, we recognise and celebrate exceptional contributions to learning and teaching through our Warwick Awards for Teaching Excellence and the tailored support we provide to applicants for National Teaching Fellowships. Both processes at Warwick build on the dimensions of the PSF with a distinct emphasis on professional values.

Fellowship awards are reported to senate every year and are regularly celebrated and disseminated within the wider Warwick community through internal communication and intranet spotlight features, thus contributing to raising the profile and status of teaching.

A proven record of achievement in learning and teaching enables academic staff, professional service staff and students to apply to become fellows of our Warwick Academy (WIHEA). The WIHEA fellowship scheme complements institutional provision aligned to the PSF by providing opportunities to lead educational policy research and institutional transformation in areas such as academic promotions, peer dialogue on teaching, review of assessment, inclusive pedagogies and module evaluation.

3.4 Academic probation and promotions

We purposefully reference the PSF dimensions across a range of academic processes and established markers of esteem.

Fellowship is integral to career advancement for new assistant professors on probation, who are supported through our accredited Pathway for Teaching Excellence to evidence their competencies and gain promotion to associate professor.

The integrated approach to practice that underpins the PSF is central to our new promotion criteria. Relevant Fellowship categories are embedded into academic promotion guidance and carry currency for colleagues across all career tracks and at all levels. (Our new promotion criteria, fully introduced in 2017, enables progression to professor for teaching, research and research/teaching focused staff). However, true to our ethos of inclusion, we firmly resisted the trend to prescribe fellowship as a condition to progression, recognising that this could result in a misperception of its value as an instrumental and necessary attainment rather than a thoughtful, personal and rewarding achievement.

Opportunities to mentor and assess on our experiential pathway to Fellowship also enable colleagues to evidence collegiality and claim institutional impact in their case for promotion.

4 Result

4.1 Increased engagement in teaching-focused CPD

Socialisation of the PSF as a sector-wide standard and alignment of reward and recognition processes with the framework have resulted in increased engagement with CPD. We have been on a sustained upward trajectory in the number of staff with Fellowship: from 12.2% (318) in 2015 to 49.2% (1,555) in 2021, placing us considerably above our mission group average (reported by Advance HE at approximately 35%). We are confident that these figures stand for high-quality teaching as our emphasis is not on short-term gains but on meaningful and transformative engagement through dialogue, criticality and reflection.

The institutional impact of this model has been recognised, internally and externally, and has served as a model for the development of similar accredited provision at Monash University in Australia.

Fellowship is championed by our senior leadership. Our pro vice-chancellor (education) and four members of his executive have gained Principal Fellowship, thus leading by example and signalling the importance of teaching-related professional recognition. Three members of the education executive are also National Teaching Fellows.

Since 2014, 10 Warwick colleagues have been awarded a National Teaching Fellowship, bringing the total of Warwick-related National Teaching Fellows to 27. We also have 15 Principal Fellows in strategic leadership positions across the university.

The Academic Development Centre (ADC) makes a significant contribution to the delivery of the education strategy and the development of a culture that holds learning and teaching in high esteem, supporting reward and recognition of teaching, championing inclusive and learner-centred education, and encouraging the critical and effective incorporation of technology to enhance learning. ADC became an academic department in August 2020, which better reflects its expertise and function, recognises growing credibility among staff and signals wider institutional endorsement of educational development.

5 Reflection

Professor Chris Hughes, PFHEA, Pro Vice-Chancellor/ Vice-President (Education)

Our strategic commitment to educational excellence is underpinned by core principles and values akin to those inscribed in the PSF.

Our Academic Development Centre drives engagement with the PSF and champions its strategic embedding across a range of important processes, including academic promotion, curriculum design and policy developments for pedagogic enhancement. Our accredited pathways are a core element of our staff development strategy and have enabled Warwick to demonstrate a strong commitment to the enhancement of learning and teaching.

A majority of our WIHEA fellows, who engage in disciplinary, policy and pedagogic enquiry to inform institutional debates, have achieved recognition aligned to the PSF.

Adopting the PSF as a benchmark allows us to ensure alignment with the wider sector and our use of the PSF has made a strong contribution to the development of a culture which holds learning and teaching in high esteem and supports reward and recognition of teaching.

6 Peer reflection

6.1 Dr Alison Nimmo, Head of Academic Development, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland, UK

Reflecting on this case study reveals that the similarities are greater than the differences in the engagement with the PSF in our distinctly different institutions. While Warwick is clearly positioned as a research-intensive university and Glasgow Caledonian is a post-92 university (a technical college given university status through the UK's Further and Higher Education Act 1992), both clearly see the value in designing the PSF to provide strategic leverage in realising our strategic aims to provide excellent teaching and scholarship. Both universities have adopted a structured CPD framework based on a distributive leadership model, each with distinct developmental pathways aligned to fellowship. The flexibility of the PSF to provide a consistent set of criteria while allowing for local customisation is perhaps one of its greatest design strengths.

The potential to create parity of esteem between research and teaching activity is a keystone in Warwick's approach and offers inspiration to any institution invested in their staff.

At Glasgow Caledonian University we are aiming to enhance academic leadership capacity and we have developed a number of networks and communities to achieve this, which are working well. A new Strategy for Learning Innovation fund has been launched this year to build capacity in the scholarship of learning and teaching, and project leads are expected to have HEA Fellowship. In 2022-23 we will be refreshing our teaching awards to provide exciting new opportunities and a developmental pipeline to the national teaching awards. We see clear potential in the Warwick Academy model to enhance and extend our current networks of senior fellows, educational research communities and wider development activities. We are already exploring how the Academy model could inform how we further raise the prestige of achieving fellowship and of taking academic leadership action to enhance the student learning experience. Importantly, we would borrow from Warwick the focus on creating a community of practice that breathes our organisational values and is inclusive to all staff and students who achieve Fellowship.



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