

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

Using the PSF to value individuals and build capability in community

—

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1 Situation

The University of Roehampton is a member of the Cathedrals Group (an association of UK universities founded as teacher training colleges by the Church of England, Roman Catholic Church or Methodist Church). It is a post-1992 university (a technical college given university status through the UK's Further and Higher Education Act, 1992) in southwest London with approximately 10,000 students across six schools: Life and Health Sciences, Psychology, Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Arts and the Faculty of Business and Law. The university is made up of four colleges, including Whitelands College, the first higher education institution (HEI) in the UK to admit women.

2 Task

Our values are built on our belief that we can help all students realise their ambitions. Roehampton's mission is to change lives by helping our students to develop the confidence, knowledge and adaptability they need for a successful graduate career and fulfilling life; to understand and help improve our world through a spirit of curiosity and discovery; and to support, encourage and challenge each other in a friendly and inclusive community that values people as individuals.

Roehampton's staff development framework, Enhance, includes our Advance HE-accredited CPD, our taught programmes, Recognition for New Academics (R4NA) accredited to award Fellowship (D2), Staff and Educational Developers Association (SEDA) Introduction to Supporting Learning and Teaching, accredited to award Associate Fellow (D1) and University of Roehampton Reflective Account of Practice (URRAP) which awards Associate (D1), Fellow (D2), Senior (D3) and Principal (D4) Fellowships.

According to Advance HE statistics for 2020-21, the university has 108% (555) of staff with PSF recognition, including those not on an academic contract (percentages are counted by staff on academic contract). This is against a sector average of 53.7% and a Cathedrals Group average of 72.7%.

3 Action

The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit (LTEU) leads staff development, informed by the university's Enabling Strategies. The LTEU works collaboratively, taking a holistic approach to staff development across professional services, academics and doctoral students hoping to teach. The head of educational development has a critical link role with human resources, enabling the PSF to be embedded in all staff development.

3.1 The PSF and staff development

The PSF is central to the enhancement of teaching and all pedagogic CPD is explicitly aligned to the PSF. Recognition against the PSF has been built into strategic aims and processes and the dimensions inform learning and teaching from level three to level eight.

Engagement with the PSF is a formal expectation outlined in probation and promotions documentation. R4NA is compulsory for all inexperienced colleagues. Our SEDA- accredited programme is mandatory for doctoral students wishing to teach and open to professional services colleagues, providing them with added credibility when working with academics and helping to bridge the gap between the two groups. The LTEU runs a mandatory programme for doctoral supervisors in conjunction with the Graduate School, using Taylor (2016) and the VITAE framework (a development framework that articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages them to realise their potential) to ensure alignment with the PSF. Taylor (2016) demonstrated how the Descriptors could be interpreted in terms of doctoral supervision. Linking the PSF to those focusing on research helps an institutional nexus between research-active colleagues and those focusing on pedagogic practice.

All academics must engage in annual peer review of teaching and the peer review template references the PSF, providing a common language for the process. This allows colleagues to develop a good working knowledge of the framework and an understanding of how to use it to gauge the quality of performance and as a scaffold for improvement and identifying relevant CPD.

3.2 The PSF and career development

The PSF is embedded in the university's academic framework. Successful recognition as Fellow in the first year of employment at Roehampton is a condition of probation. To retain the PSF's developmental nature, colleagues not initially successful are deemed not to have 'failed' but to require further support to reach the required threshold. Fellowship is a criterion for promotion beyond senior lecturer, promotion to principal teaching fellow requires Senior Fellowship, promotion to chair requires colleagues to demonstrate that they are actively working towards Principal Fellowship. This helps to engender high engagement with the PSF.

Senior management actively supports the PSF. The pro vice-chancellor (education) sits on recognition panels, giving him an insight into pedagogic practices across the university. Deans encourage colleagues with recognition to become mentors and assessors, which is recognised on workload allocation. This engagement provides evidence of good standing and further embeds the PSF. Fellows present at the annual Learning and Teaching Festival and successful applicants are celebrated in the LTEU newsletter and school meetings.

4 Result

Impact of the PSF is seen variously, including through a trajectory through the different categories of Fellowship, which leads to escalating positions of responsibility. Of the colleagues who engaged in R4NA and were awarded Fellow three to five years ago, 26% (17) have, or are applying for, Senior Fellow. Many then work as informal mentors with junior colleagues to help develop their pedagogic practice.

Engagement with the PSF is considered important for formal learning and teaching roles. All school learning and teaching leads have Senior Fellowship. Four Principal Fellows have gained promotion to professor because of their excellence in learning and teaching and their championing of pedagogic developments.

A further example of impact is the innovative practice emerging from case studies submitted by colleagues for PSF recognition. This is disseminated via the VLE and showcased at our festival. This:

- + allows otherwise potentially undiscovered good practice to be surfaced
- + enables wide dissemination of good practice
- + builds credibility and esteem for colleagues
- + raises the profile of learning and teaching across the university.

Engagement with the PSF has created communities of practice beyond the usual disciplinary silos. These include colleagues applying for recognition who meet for workshops, peer mentoring and to discuss applications. Mentors meet to share experiences and take part in bespoke CPD. Panellists report the benefits of assessing, helping reflection on practice and on what constitutes 'good' teaching. These communities of practice provide space and legitimacy for discussions about learning and teaching.

5 Reflection

Dr Stephen Driver, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)

I am proud that recognition still exceeds the sector and benchmark averages. This reflects our continued and unequivocal commitment to the recognition of excellent teaching. Through our accredited provision we have developed a community of practice focusing on high-quality teaching. Colleagues with recognition have become champions for the scheme. They support others through their work as mentors, and act as assessors and advisers to further develop Enhance.

The value that Enhance brings to learning and teaching at Roehampton cannot be overestimated. We have had pedagogic CPD in place for many years, our key focus being on the quality of teaching and student academic outcomes. Enhance has formalised this and is fully embedded in institutional processes. It will certainly be a key element in our next Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission.

6 Peer reflection

6.1 Juliet Eve, PFHEA, Head of the Learning and Teaching Hub, University of Brighton, UK

The University of Roehampton has a similar mission to the University of Brighton in terms of developing the confidence of students within an environment that values diversity and inclusive practice. While it is considerably smaller than the University of Brighton and has an educational portfolio different to our vocational focus, there are clear similarities between both institutions' approach to coordinating development opportunities for staff at all levels of their career, and these have evidently been very successful in enabling Roehampton to achieve high levels of Fellowship. I was particularly impressed by the building of communities of practice and the approach taken to disseminating best practice arising from the case studies submitted by applicants for Fellowship and this is an aspect of work that would be particularly beneficial to expand at Brighton. There are other aspects of Roehampton's provision that would be both desirable and possible to achieve at the University of Brighton. For instance, the clear embedding of the PSF in development and promotional structures is an aspect that would strengthen engagement with the PSF in our institution. In particular, it would be useful to pursue the strategy at Roehampton of linking the PSF to the work of those who are focused on research, in order to strengthen research-teaching links across the university, and we are already beginning to explore ways we can draw on the experience of professors who have engaged with our Professional Recognition and Development (PRD) scheme to promote the benefits to other colleagues.

7 References

- Taylor, S (2016) *UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF): Dimensions of the framework for doctoral supervisors*. York: Higher Education Academy. Available at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/ukpsf_dof_doctoral_supervisors_150416_final_0.pdf [accessed 10 May 2022].
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