

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

A 'one institution' approach to staff development and recognition

—

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1 Situation

The University of Brighton is a University Alliance institution, with a focus on applied, professional and vocational education. We have approximately 18,000 students across seven schools, including significant apprenticeship provision. Our mission is “to realise potential and shape futures through high-quality, practice-based learning, teaching, research and enterprise” via values which underpin our 2025 strategy, including our Putting Students at the Heart of Everything We Do (PSATH) education and student experience workstream. Institutional accreditation includes our Professional Recognition and Development (PRD) scheme, which awards Associate (D1), Fellow (D2) and Senior Fellow (D3), a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCert), which awards Fellowship (D2), with an exit point after module one awarding Associate Fellow (D1), and specialist provision within our School of Sport and Health Sciences (at Associate D1 and Fellow D2).

2 Task

PSATH focuses on empowering students to succeed and gain graduate-level employment through developing their confidence and capacity to make a difference and strengthening engagement in their own learning. This is leveraged via our fourth priority – developing and valuing staff. We have ambitious institutional key performance indicators (KPIs) for teaching qualifications and professional recognition, which have been translated into school-specific targets. Recent data shows that approximately 76% (715) staff have a teaching qualification, with 50% (470) currently holding Fellowship.

3 Action

We have taken a ‘one institution’ approach to developing all staff who teach and support student learning, ensuring that appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities are available and well promoted. These are coordinated by the Learning and Teaching Hub (L&T Hub), supported by learning and teaching leads in schools (part of the newly established school leadership framework), who have developed plans outlining how they will meet school-level KPIs and raise the profile of professional recognition.

3.1 Professional Recognition and Development (PRD) Scheme

Established in 2012, the scheme enables staff to gain Associate Fellowship (D1), Fellowship (D2) or Senior Fellowship (D3). Flexibility of format allows colleagues to submit a written application or apply via an e-portfolio and dialogue route. Development offered by the Learning and Teaching Hub includes initial briefing sessions, an online application builder, detailed handbooks with examples from successful submissions, and popular bootcamps providing focused writing sessions. One participant

told us, “the whole process had a really positive impact on the way I think about my teaching”. This is complemented by a mentoring system, empowering existing Fellows to support colleagues and be eligible to join the assessor panel, which participants appreciate: “the assistance one provides for other staff via mentoring is valuable in terms of developing both people skills as well as enhancing the environment itself”. Mentors and assessors benefit from initial training, shadowing opportunities and at least one annual calibration event.

3.2 Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP)

The PGCAP, leading to Fellowship, is a formal requirement for all new staff who do not hold an existing qualification. The course consists of two modules, and provides collaborative opportunities for participants to enhance practice, with a particular focus on the values articulated in the PSF.

3.3 Introduction to Learning and Teaching in HE workshops (ILTHE)

This workshop has supported PhD students since 2014 and, during 2021, it became a policy that they should take the workshop prior to teaching and be supported to achieve Associate Fellowship via our PRD Scheme.

A version has been designed for technical staff and the first iteration in June 2022 has attracted over 20 signups. This opportunity was embedded in our Technician Commitment in 2021 where post-course workshops support technicians to gain Associate Fellowship/Fellowship.

3.4 Promotion and celebration

Colleagues are celebrated at an awards event at the annual Education and Student Experience Conference, PGCAP completers attend graduation and all those gaining Fellowship receive a specially designed pin badge. Regular news items highlight those gaining Fellowship and additional stories feature individual journeys and the benefits of engaging with the PSF.

4 Result

An evaluation during 2019–20 found that engagement with the PGCAP or PRD scheme is perceived by senior leaders as significantly contributing to enhancing learning and teaching: “the major part of change that’s happening in the school is through staff doing the PGCert”. Other comments indicate impact on teaching culture:

“It’s not just that they’re doing a PG Cert course but they’re using the course to help others. For example, we’ve got a project going on and we’ve been talking about that process of research around the teaching of sensitive subjects. We’ve done a lot of work on that, and it’s now being fed into university policy.”

Colleagues with Fellowship/Senior Fellowship are extremely likely to hold one of a range of school education and student experience lead roles established in 2021:

- + PGCAP participants are strongly represented (in two schools, four out of the seven roles are held by recent PGCAP graduates)
- + six out of seven associate deans have Fellowship or Senior Fellowship
- + each school has a learning and teaching lead with Fellowship/Senior Fellowship.

Those engaging with Fellowship are often awarded recognition in other ways, for instance winning university teaching awards:

- + in 2021, both winners held Senior/Fellowship and one has been put forward for an NTFS
- + the group award was won by a library team, including two members holding a category of Fellowship
- + the 2022 winner is a holder of D2; out of three team awards, one was led by a Principal Fellow, one by a Senior Fellow and the final team included three lecturing staff, two of whom have Fellowship.

5 Reflection

Dr David Walker, PFHEA, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students)

The university's engagement with the PSF embodies our institutional values of inclusivity and partnership, providing development opportunities and focused guidance for all colleagues engaged in teaching and/or the support of learning, with the aim of providing our students with the highest quality education, supporting all our students to succeed and achieve their individual goals. Our inclusive approach is reflected in the undertakings we have made as part of our Technician Commitment and opportunities to seek professional recognition for our doctoral students. The importance of the PSF to the university in shaping our education offer and the wider student experience is evidenced by the growing prevalence of individuals in leadership roles holding teaching qualifications and Fellowship. There is, however, still more to do, reflected in ambitious KPIs set at institutional and school level consistent with our stated objective to develop and value our staff in terms of learning and teaching excellence and innovation.

6 Peer reflection

6.1 Jo Peat, FSEDA, PFHEA, Head of Educational Development in the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit, University of Roehampton, UK

University of Roehampton is a post-1992 university in southwest London with approximately 10,000 students, studying across six schools: life and health sciences, psychology, education, humanities and social sciences, arts and the faculty of business and law. Roehampton is a member of the Cathedrals Group and gained university status in 2005. Although Brighton is larger than Roehampton, there are significant commonalities between the two PSF schemes. Most striking is the emphasis on a holistic approach to staff development, considering the institution as a learning place for all. The development of all staff features in both narratives, from doctoral students through to those on an academic contract. I was very struck by the development of a PSF-related opportunity into the Brighton Technician Commitment, which is a clear indication of the holistic approach taken at the university.

There is much in Brighton's provision that would be of benefit to Roehampton. Foremost is the flexible approach to recognition, where applicants can choose written submission or an oral route with accompanying e-portfolio. Acting as the external advisor to the Brighton PRD until 2020, I assessed applications via both routes and was struck by the richness of the oral submissions. This route allows for more personal insights and brings good practice 'to life,' particularly when facilitated by the highly experienced assessors. The level of support available to PSF applicants is impressive, and the online application builder is a feature that would benefit most schemes and would remove the need for such intensive one-to-one mentoring.



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