

Guide to addressing the criteria for accreditation 2026-27

This guidance document is to support institutions submitting for accreditation in 2026 and is to be read in conjunction with the [Advance HE accreditation policy 2026-27](#)

Submissions for Advance HE accreditation should use [accreditation submission templates 2027](#). These submission templates support institutions in structuring their submission narrative to present relevant information required to meet the four criteria for accreditation.

The accreditation process takes a **participant-facing viewpoint**, so the information provided for participants is a key part of the accreditation submission (submitted as Appendices – Part E). **This Guide to addressing the criteria for accreditation 2026 document focuses on the information required in Appendices (Part E)** that accompany the institutional narrative for programme-level Parts D of the submission. These appendices must include full participant-facing guidance and other relevant stakeholder guidance documents (e.g. reviewer and mentor guidance).

All accreditation submissions must use Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education 2023 (**PSF 2023**). Members of the Advance HE Accredited Programme Leader Network (APLN) have access to the Advance HE PSF 2023 guidance and images in the resource area of the Advance HE Connect APLN site, including Word.doc versions of all the guidance documents. Please email accreditation@advance-he.ac.uk if you are unable to access this information.

1 Introduction

Advance HE accredits programmes and schemes to professionally recognise individuals for their effective higher education practice through the **Fellowship scheme**. Accreditation enables an institution to award one or more of the four categories of fellowship on behalf of Advance HE.

The accreditation process takes a **participant-facing viewpoint**, so the information provided for participants is a key part of the accreditation submission (submitted as Appendices – Part E).

An **institutional narrative** (completed using appropriate accreditation submission templates for Parts A-C and Parts D) explains the infrastructure which supports the programme(s) and the strategies/systems/processes which lead to a transparent and robust judgement about fellowship being reached.

Broadly, it is expected that:

- the institution provides professional development for staff that aligns to the PSF 2023, sufficient resource is in place to deliver the accredited provision and there is appropriate management of the quality of Fellowships awarded (accreditation criterion 1).
- the design of the programme ensures that participants will engage with the relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor and evidence their effective practice to meet its requirements (accreditation criterion 2).
- participants will be effectively supported to generate appropriate evidence of their effective teaching and/or supporting learning practice (accreditation criterion 3).
- the relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor forms the basis for the fellowship judgement. The review process is clearly defined, fully explained to participants and quality assured (accreditation criterion 4).

The aim of this 'Guide to addressing the criteria for accreditation 2026-27' document is to identify the **types of information** that should be provided to address accreditation criteria 2, 3 and 4 within the **participant-facing guidance** (Appendices - Part E). Note: Part C and Parts D submission templates include full guidance about the information required within the institutional narrative.

2 Glossary of Terms

Accreditation criteria	The requirements for successful accreditation of a programme set out in the accreditation policy and applied by accreditation panel members during the review process.
Accreditation cycle	Once awarded, accreditation will be in place for a five-year period (accreditation cycle), provided appropriate Advance membership is maintained, after which a new submission for accreditation will be required.
Accreditation policy	An annually updated Advance HE document that sets out the requirements for, and Terms and Conditions of, accreditation.
Accreditation of prior learning	Recognition/credit for prior learning, avoiding the necessity of duplicating previous learning, whilst ensuring learning outcomes for the programme are achieved. Prior learning may be certificated, for example Accredited Prior Certificated learning (APCL), or experiential e.g. Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).
Advocate/referee	A person who provides a supporting statement/ advocate statement for an individual applying for fellowship
Assessor	Individual applying criteria to participants' assessment work to make a judgment about achievement of learning outcomes on a programme of study and providing feedback to participants
Authentication of practice	Confirmation that the participant's practice with learners/colleagues (depending on the Descriptor) meets the expectations of the relevant Descriptor
Collaborative partner organisation	A partner organisation delivering higher education programmes validated by the accredited institution (i.e. the accredited institution is the awarding body for some or all of the partner institution's programmes)
Commercial sale	Accreditation does not cover provision that is developed for commercial sale by the member institution, i.e. provision is accredited to be accessed by the institution's employees, including students with learning and teaching responsibilities, and those employed by collaborative partner institutions only. An exception to the regulation around commercial sale is made with respect to individuals teaching and/or supporting HE learners within clinical/health profession settings, e.g. medical consultants, nurses, etc. (refer to accreditation policy, Appendix 1vi and vii).
Employment status	Institutions may operate a range of different contracts of employment e.g. permanent, fixed term, part time, fractional, Associate Lecturer, etc. Individuals involved in direct teaching and/or supporting the learning of an accredited member institution's HE students may be classed as 'employed' by the institution for the purposes of Fellowship, whether paid or unpaid for the educational role they take (refer to accreditation policy, Appendix 1ix).

Fellowship External	Individual independent of the institution responsible for providing reassurance to Advance HE that the programme(s) continues to comply with the criteria set out in the accreditation policy and that fellowships are awarded on the basis of robust and appropriate judgements taken against the relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor
Higher Education Academy Fellowship	Advance HE operates the Higher Education Academy Fellowship Scheme. Fellows are entitled to use the following post-nominals: Associate Fellow (AFHEA), Fellow (FHEA), Senior Fellow (SFHEA), Principal Fellow (PFHEA)
Major Change	A substantial revision to an accredited programme or scheme such as a revision to programme or module outcomes or a change in assessment format or processes. A Major Change is subject to peer review and incurs a fee.
Mentor	Trained individual within an accredited institution responsible for supporting one or more participants
Minor Change	Change to accredited provision that does not materially alter the provision or any pathways to recognition within it.
Observer	Experienced colleague observing a participant teach or support learning for the purposes of authenticating practice
Participant	Individual undertaking an accredited programme or applying for fellowship through an accredited scheme
Participant-facing documentation	Guidance documents provided to participants giving the information required to meet the accreditation criteria as set out in this Guide to addressing the criteria for accreditation 2026-27, sections 10 and 11.
Probationary period	Institutions new to accreditation are initially accredited for a 12-month probationary period. Accreditation is extended for a further 4 years following successful completion of an initial review report, which includes sampling of applications.
Programme	Course of study undertaken such as postgraduate degree, module, unit, work-based programme, short course, etc.
Programme team	Individuals responsible for delivery and assessment on a programme
Reviewer	Trained individual reviewing an application for a category of fellowship in an accredited scheme/programme and making a judgement
Scheme	Series of professional development opportunities with support to apply for fellowship. This may be an experiential scheme for experienced staff to use evidence of their practice to apply for fellowship or might be an application submitted following participation on a developmental programme.

Stakeholders	Used in this context to refer to individuals involved in the delivery, support provided and/or assessment of a scheme/ programme; for example, mentors, reviewers, assessors, work-place supervisors, observers, referees, advocates, programme teams, etc.
Stakeholder-facing documents	Key documents such as assessment pro-formas/feedback sheets and guidance materials for different groups of stakeholders involved in the scheme/programme.
Submission template	Template structuring an institutional narrative to provide the information required to meet the accreditation criteria and accreditation policy requirements; to be completed in a submission for accreditation.

3 Accreditation Panel review process

Advance HE accreditation panels review application submissions against the accreditation criteria. Accreditation decisions are made by a panel, comprising independent peer reviewers, an Advance HE Chair and an Advance HE staff member supporting the Panel meeting. It might be helpful to consider the order in which the submission will be read. Panel members will review the submission as a whole (completed submission templates and stakeholder-facing guidance) against the four accreditation criteria.

Accreditation panel members will first read the completed 'Submission for Advance HE accreditation 2026 template (Parts A-C)'. They will then read each programme in turn, starting with the participant-facing guidance and other appendices (Part E) before reading the supplementary institutional narrative about each programme (each completed Part D submission template).

Throughout the submission, please use accessible fonts and page numbers to aid the review process and ensure that any tracked changes/ in-text comments are removed. To ensure consistency of information across documents, time allocation for a final proof-read prior to submission is strongly recommended.

4 Completing the accreditation submission templates 2027

Accreditation submission templates are designed to structure an **institutional narrative that supplements the required key stakeholder guidance documents** (e.g. for participants, mentors, referees, observers, reviewers). Three accreditation submission templates 2027 are available:

1. **Submission for Advance HE accreditation 2027 template (Parts A-C)**; this incorporates the details of the programmes to be submitted, institutional sign off and a Part C template: Institution-level narrative for accreditation criterion 1. This template must be fully completed for all accreditation submissions.
2. **Part D submission template 2027: Experiential scheme/non-credit bearing programme**; one to be completed for each experiential CPD scheme or developmental programme resulting in a fellowship application (if relevant).
3. **Part D submission template 2027: taught programme**; one to be completed for each taught programme submitted (if relevant).

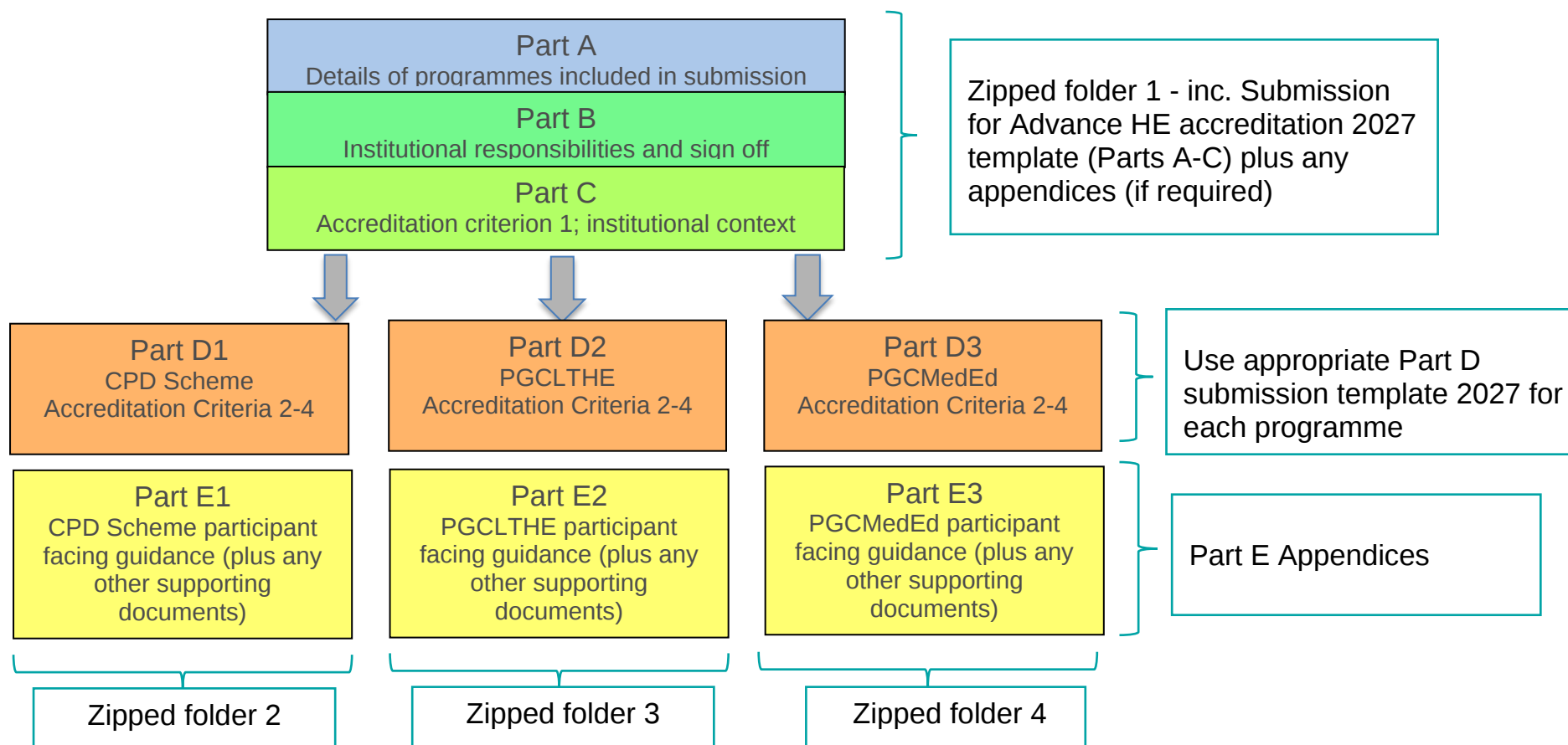
The accreditation submission templates include full guidance about the information required in each section and include reference to the relevant parts of the accreditation policy.

The narrative provided in the Part D templates will provide information about the infrastructure in place for the programme that may not be relevant/appropriate for participant-facing guidance; it **should NOT duplicate information** provided to participants and other stakeholders; please cross-reference in the template to participant guidance (appendix title and page number) instead of duplicating information within the template if/where applicable.

When completed, each Part D template should be submitted in a separate subfolder with the Appendices (Part E) that relate to that programme.

5 Structure of the accreditation submission to be uploaded to Survey Monkey Apply

Institutional submissions will be uploaded to Advance HE's Survey Monkey Apply (SMA) system. Nearer the submission deadline, institutions will be sent separate guidance to support them in using the SMA system. Upload **one zipped folder** containing the Part A-C institutional submission template **plus one zipped folder** containing a completed Part D template and associated appendices **for each programme/scheme submitted**. The example diagram below shows the structure of an accreditation submission that includes 3 different programmes: a CPD scheme, PG Cert Learning and Teaching HE (PGCLTHE) and a PG Cert Medical Education (PGCMedEd).



6 Advance HE accreditation policy 2026-27

The Advance HE Accreditation Policy 2026-27 sets out the criteria for accreditation, the key requirements and the terms and conditions applying to accreditation. **Please refer closely to the Advance HE accreditation policy 2026-27 and to the accreditation submission templates 2027** as you interpret the information within this document. Cross references to specific accreditation criteria and sections of the accreditation policy are indicated where appropriate – this is intended to support all colleagues providing commentary/programme documentation for the submission to check that policy requirements are being met in the information provided.

The Terms and Conditions of accreditation are set out in Appendix 1 of the Accreditation Policy; these must be adhered to for accreditation to be awarded and maintained.

7 Other Advance HE guidance documents available to support accreditation submissions

There are a variety of Advance HE guidance documents that member institutions are welcome to use and adapt to support their accredited provision.

The [Fellowship Category Tool](#) (based on PSF 2023) is designed to support individuals to identify the most appropriate category of fellowship to suit their practice and experience; it is freely available for individuals and institutions to use.

Institutions are strongly recommended to refer to the series of Advance HE ‘Guides to the PSF 2023 Dimensions’ documents. These provide examples of the types of practice for each Dimension that are appropriate for each PSF 2023 Descriptor. Institutions are welcome to use and adapt these examples in the guidance they create for participants/ mentors/ reviewers to suit the institutional/ subject/ specialist context.

All Advance HE fellowship guidance, including the Guides to the PSF Dimensions, direct applicant guidance, referee guidance and supporting statement templates are available on the following links:

[Associate Fellow guidance documents](#)
[Fellow guidance documents](#)
[Senior Fellow guidance documents](#)
[Principal Fellow guidance documents](#)



Please note that these links are to the full Advance HE direct applicant pack and we recommend that you only link to the actual document required – e.g. the ‘Guide to the PSF 2023 Dimensions...’ – to avoid confusion for your participants

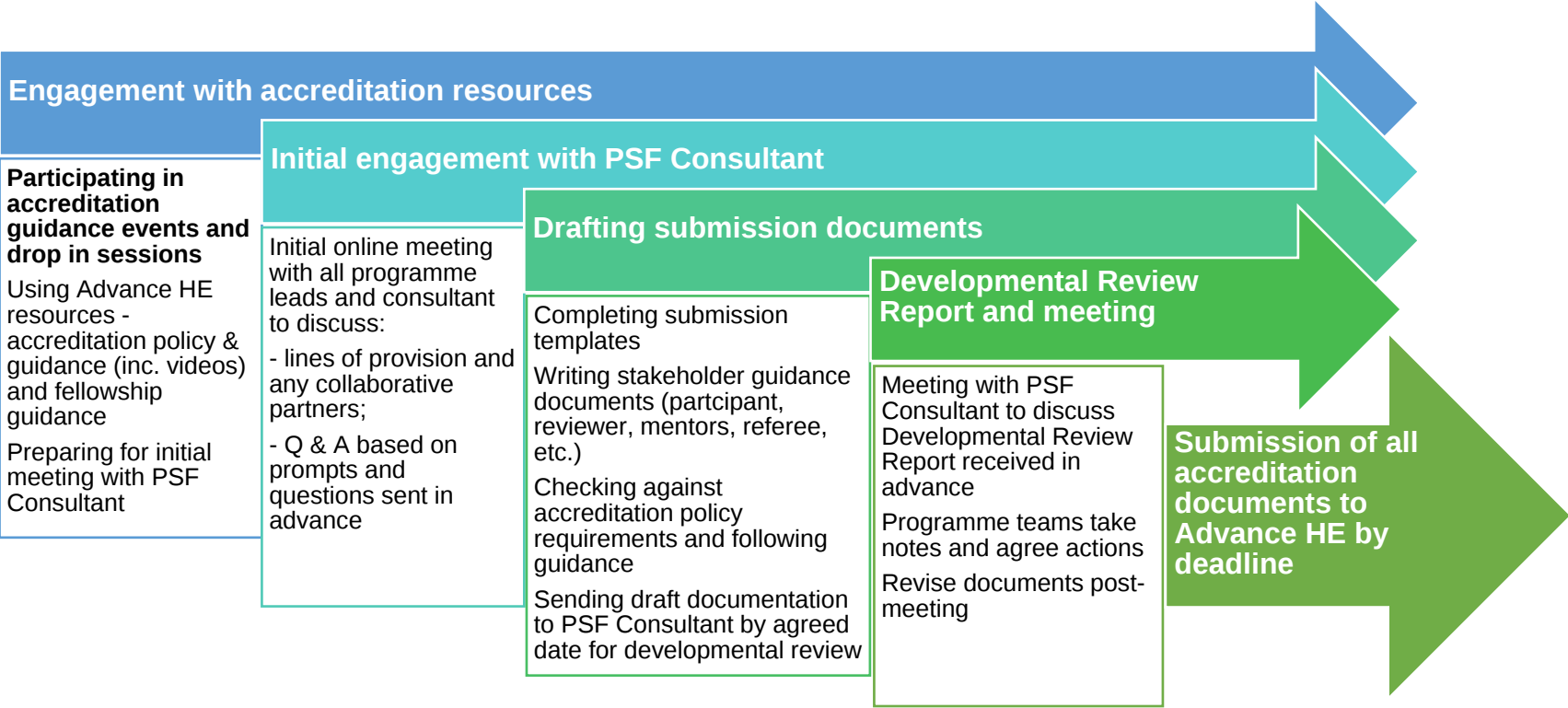
Advance HE Fellowship Reviewer Resources that are used for direct fellowship applications, including review pro-formas and feedback proformas, are available here: [Reviewer guidance and proformas](#)

While institutions are welcome to adapt and use any of the Advance HE resources, institutions need to ensure that this guidance has been appropriately contextualised; for example, in 2025-26 Accreditation Panels set conditions for several institutions to remove mention of direct application to Advance HE, contact details for the Advance HE Fellowship team and information about fees for application.

Please also check that tracked changes and any comments are removed from your final documents before submission as in 2025-26, we received a significant number of documents which included comments clearly intended for an internal audience.

8 Member benefit support for the (re)accreditation process – developmental review by a PSF Consultant:

Advance HE will arrange for a designated PSF Consultant to provide support; this is an accredited member benefit and please contact accreditation@advance-he.ac.uk to book this well in advance. An initial meeting of the Consultant with the key staff involved should take place at an early stage to ensure that **all** scheme and programme team members are clear about requirements and supporting resources required. The Consultant will then provide a developmental review of the final draft documents prior to submission (usually around 4-6 weeks before deadline to allow time for any recommended revisions). The accreditation timeline is set out below:



9 Information required in the appendices (Part E) - participant-facing guidance and other guidance documents

The Appendices (Part E of the submission) need to include information to address accreditation criteria 2, 3 and 4 individually **for each programme presented** for accreditation.

As mentioned earlier (p5), accreditation panel members will review the participant and other stakeholder-facing guidance prior to reading the supporting narrative in the Part D templates.

Where guidance to participants is online and not in the format of a 'handbook', there is no requirement to create a handbook. However, the Accreditation Panel will need to see the specific information relating to fellowship on the programme/scheme that is set out in the guidance in sections 10 and 11 below to meet accreditation criteria 2-4. Therefore, we ask that you provide a collation of this specific information in a logical order with an accompanying narrative that explains how this information fits together from a participant-facing viewpoint. Please note that screenshots are of limited use, as text will be difficult to read and accreditation panel members are looking for the full information required to meet the criteria. As accreditation is a documentary submission and Advance HE stores the final accredited documents, hyperlinks to VLE pages or an institution's website are not appropriate.

Appendices should be carefully considered to ensure that only relevant information is submitted in addition to the guidance for participants. For example, a set of separate appendices to accompany a Postgraduate Certificate programme typically includes the following - programme handbook to provide the overview of the programme design, module handbooks including full details of assessment tasks, assessment proformas and possibly mentor guidance. Please ensure that each appendix includes page numbers to enable the Accreditation Panel to identify where information is found (or not found if conditions are set), and if relevant, you cross reference to relevant pages in the Part D narrative.

Please note that when referring below to 'participant-facing documents', these may incorporate assessment pro-formas/feedback sheets (where these are not already embedded within the participant guidance), and guidance for other stakeholders such as internal and external reviewers, mentors, work-place supervisors and referees/advocates.

Tables/flow charts/diagrams, etc. are welcomed and please use these to add clarity and aid understanding wherever appropriate.

Reminder

- **Do** submit participant handbooks/full participant-facing guidance (e.g. programme/module handbooks, etc.), reviewer proformas and information used by mentors that provides the information identified in the guidance in sections 10 and 11 below.
- **Do not** submit additional information such as programme specifications, module descriptors, session materials such as PowerPoint presentations, marketing materials, staff CVs, full strategy/policy documents, etc.
- **Do not** combine all scheme/ programme guidance documents into one large file but submit as individual documents. This makes the Panel review process easier to navigate and also makes it easier for the programme team to make any revisions to specific documents required to meet panel conditions. All programme documents (Appendices) will be submitted along with the completed programme-level Part D in a zipped folder on Survey Monkey Apply (SMA). Please keep file names as short as possible e.g. E1.1_SFHEA_Participant_Handbook.
- Please also remember to include page numbers in each document. Panel members may choose to print your submission so please use a font size that is accessible and easy to read in hard copy (e.g. minimum size of Arial 11).

Please contact the Advance HE accreditation team if you have any queries (accreditation@advance-he.ac.uk)

10 Guidance documents: required information for Experiential CPD Schemes/ fellowship application following developmental programme'

This section provides guidance about the information to be included within participant and other stakeholder-facing guidance documents (e.g. for mentors, referees, observers, reviewers) for experiential CPD schemes and/or programmes where participants complete an 'application' for fellowship (which might take a variety of formats such as written, dialogue, presentation, etc.) rather than undergo a formal taught programme (credit bearing or non-credit bearing) where different assessment tasks contribute evidence towards the relevant Descriptor. Please contact the accreditation team (accreditation@advance-he.ac.uk) if you are unsure whether this guidance or the guidance below for Taught Programmes applies to your programme.

Participant-facing guidance documents form appendices to a completed Part D submission template. The Part D submission template is designed to structure the narrative accompanying the required key guidance documents (e.g. for participants, mentors, referees, observers, reviewers) to provide the additional information required to address accreditation criteria 2, 3 and 4 (accreditation policy, p3-4). The narrative in this template will provide information about the infrastructure in place for the programme that may not be relevant/appropriate for participant-facing guidance; it should NOT duplicate information provided to participants and please cross-reference in the template to participant guidance (appendix title and page number) instead of duplicating information if/where applicable.

In the guidance below, links to sections in the Part D Submission Template for Experiential CPD schemes/ fellowship application following developmental programme are indicated where most relevant.

10.1 Design of the scheme/programme (accreditation criteria 2a, 2b, 3c)

10.1.1: Guidance about the appropriate category of fellowship (link to Part D submission narrative: S4)

Provide guidance for participants to help them determine the most appropriate category of Fellowship and the optimum route for them to achieve this. The guidance should be inclusive for all groups of staff that wish to apply for recognition. Information about the [Fellowship Category Tool](#) may be helpful to include along with guidance about the different routes to Fellowship available at the institution.

Expectations about the **currency of practice** are also important to include in the guidance to ensure participants are clear about what practice examples they might be able to base their application on; examples of effective and inclusive practice appropriate to the relevant Descriptor should be drawn from recent practice - Associate Fellow/Fellow practice 'normally' from within the last 3 years, Senior Fellow evidence of leadership/influence on peers' practice 'normally' from the last 3-5 years and Principal Fellow evidence of strategic leadership

of learning and teaching 'normally' from the last 5-7 years. If an applicant reflects on any historic professional practice beyond this timeframe as part of their evidence, they should explain how this has ongoing impact on their current practice. Applicants taking a career break for a variety of reasons (e.g. maternity cover, illness, etc.) or working in a variety of contexts such as fixed-term/part-time contracts/tenures, should not be disadvantaged and accredited institutions can offer flexibility to accommodate specific needs.

10.1.2: Explanation of PSF 2023:

In participant-facing documents explain that the PSF 2023 consists of two elements – 15 Dimensions and 4 Descriptor statements. The Descriptors incorporate the PSF Dimensions and so the full Descriptor criteria (and not simply the Dimensions) must be included in the guidance and in the assessment process (please refer to PSF 2023, pp4-6). Explain how the programme/scheme has been designed and structured to enable the requirements of the relevant Descriptor to be met. It should be clear how the PSF 2023 Dimensions build towards the Descriptor criteria.

Guidance needs to fully and accurately explain the requirements of the relevant Descriptor(s). **Examples of practice need to be provided that are appropriate for each PSF 2023 Descriptor** to guide participants, mentors and reviewers. The Advance HE Guide to PSF 2023 Dimensions documents provide typical examples of successful engagement with the PSF 2023 Dimensions at Descriptors 1-4 and institutional teams are strongly recommended to make use of these examples when constructing guidance for participants. This will help participants to understand how effective engagement with the Dimensions will need to be evidenced differently at each Descriptor; e.g. Descriptor 3 focuses on evidence of influence and impact on the teaching and learning practices of colleagues.

When writing guidance about the PSF 2023 in comparison with UK PSF 2011, remember the increased emphasis on 'context', 'impact' and 'effective and inclusive' practice. **Descriptor Introductory ('stem') sentences must be included** as these are part of the Descriptor (along with the three criteria) and set out the nature of practice required. The **Dimension stem sentences must also be included** as they are part of each set of Dimensions, i.e. In your context, **show how you use** the Professional Values; In your context, **show how you apply** the Core Knowledge'; In your context, **demonstrate effective and inclusive practice** in the Areas of Activity'.

10.1.3: Guidance about the design of the application format for the relevant Descriptor (link to Part D submission narrative: S12)

Guidance about the design of the scheme and application requirements should incorporate meaningful engagement with the PSF to help participants to make clear associations between their practice and the PSF 2023.

Outline how the format of the ‘application’ (assessment) has been designed to align with the relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor for the appropriate category of fellowship.

Where different forms of assessment are offered, the design of the assessment (e.g. written/ dialogue/ presentation/ portfolio) for each format needs to be well-defined. **Provide a diagram/ table showing the assessment requirements (all formats) for each fellowship category** (which need to align with benchmark equivalences set out in Appendix 1 of this document). **Application templates** for each format (per category) should be included in Part E appendices.

If the application format has a number of element (for example, written element followed by dialogue or recorded presentation followed by question and answer), guidance needs to clearly explain the **purpose** of each element in providing practice evidence which will combine overall to meet the requirements for the relevant Descriptor – i.e. evidence should not be duplicated across different elements of the application and guidance needs to make explicit what evidence is required in each element so that the Descriptor will be met overall.

If an oral assessment format is used, guidance should explain how this will operate. Exemplar questions should be provided to guide both participants and reviewers. Teams can refer to the Guide to the PSF 2023 Dimensions series for appropriate category-specific exemplar questions.

Where formative feedback is offered pre-submission, guidance for participants and mentors must explain how this will operate for the different formats of assessment included in the scheme, for example, draft review of a written application, opportunity for a practice dialogue, etc.

Provide a clear timeline for participants, including for example registration –support workshops/mentoring/formative feedback- submission dates - assessment- outcomes – resubmission if required.

Include in the guidance a list of those delivering the scheme/programme and their fellowship status.

Most institutions are not accredited for Descriptor 4 (38 of 184 institutions in August 2026). If you are including Descriptor 4 in your submission, and this is part of a CPD scheme including other categories, please use this section to clearly articulate the types of participants expected and how it is ensured that participants applying through your scheme for Descriptor 4 will have appropriate professional practice to demonstrate a sustained record of effective and inclusive strategic leadership of learning and teaching and extensive impact on student learning as a result.

10.2 Ongoing support (accreditation criteria 2b, 3a, 3d) (link to Part D submission narrative: S11)

Guidance for participants and mentors should explain how mentors/tutors/ workplace supervisors, etc. are allocated and how mentoring/support will operate. Guidance should set out the boundaries of the role and what support is offered, for example, whether a review of a draft application/ practice for a professional dialogue, etc. is offered. Mentors need to be informed about the initial training in place and the requirement for regular ongoing PSF-related updating that ensures they remain current in their knowledge and understanding of the PSF 2023 requirements.

Guidance needs to enable participants to understand the requirements of the relevant Descriptor(s) and how the application format is designed to enable them to meet these requirements within this programme. Guidance needs to clearly reflect that appropriate evidence of practice for each of the Dimensions will be different in nature depending on the Descriptor being evidenced, i.e., the scope/scale of practice and impact on students resulting (refer to the Guide to the PSF 2023 Dimensions documents for examples).

Participants progressing towards Associate Fellowship should be provided with specific guidance/support about how to select which two Areas of Activity (minimum of 2 practice examples for each AA and different for each) to evidence (along with K1, K2 and K3 plus V1 and V2). (Please note that Descriptor 2 requires a greater range of more significant practice examples which evidence the 'breadth and depth' of effective and inclusive practice required).

Explain the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) to underpin a career in teaching and/or supporting learning beyond the current award and outline relevant opportunities.

10.3 Authentication of practice (accreditation criterion 2d) (link to Part D submission narrative S13)

The professional practice of participants must be 'authenticated' as part of the application process. The purpose of this is to confirm that the participant is practicing in line with Descriptor expectations and is providing an honest and fair representation of their practice in their application.

Supporting statements by referees/advocates can be used to authenticate practice and the requirements for the number of statements per Descriptor are set out in the accreditation policy, section 4.2. Where supporting statements are used to authenticate practice, guidance should be provided about how participants choose appropriate referees/advocates. There should be specific guidance on the role that these supporting statements play in the overall claim for fellowship as well as the expected format, required content and process for submitting these. (Institutions are welcome to use and adapt Advance HE resources – follow applicant pack links on p8). Participants must

be informed about the requirement to provide referees with their final application, portfolio or material for a presentation/dialogue in order for referees/advocates to write the supporting statement. Include guidance and templates for referees in part E appendices.

Alternatively, a formal observation of teaching and/or supporting learning practice by an experienced peer/ member of the scheme team can be used to authenticate practice at Descriptors 1 and 2 (but not at Descriptors 3 or 4). Guidance should explain the process and its purpose in the application and provide an appropriate observation pro-forma. Participants should also be informed as to how they access an experienced peer.

10.4 Assessment requirements (accreditation criteria 2c, 3b, 4b, 4c) ([link to Part D submission narrative: S12, S16](#))

Explain how the design of assessment enables participants to generate evidence of practice to meet the requirements of the relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor. PSF 2023 Descriptor criteria must be embedded in full in the assessment criteria/pro-formas used by reviewers as these criteria are the basis for the award of fellowship. Assessment proformas must be included in the participant facing information so that it is clear how the relevant Descriptor criteria will be applied by reviewers to reach the fellowship judgement.

Where different forms of assessment are offered, the design of the assessment (e.g., written/ dialogue/ presentation/ portfolio) and each stage in the assessment process leading to the award of fellowship needs to be well-defined in guidance for participants, mentors and reviewers.

If the overall assessment has a number of components (for example, written element followed by dialogue or recorded presentation followed by question and answer), guidance needs to clearly explain the **purpose** of each component in the assessment process and to explain what types of evidence of practice should be included in each component; participants need to understand how the different components they complete will **combine to cumulatively provide sufficient and appropriate evidence** to fully meet the Descriptor criteria (including the process for a resubmission). It should be clear how reviewers will reach their overall judgements that the requirements for the category of Fellowship have been met.

The process of submitting an assessment/application must embed the requirement for participants to confirm that they are submitting their own work. The institution should also explain to participants the measures they have embedded to protect academic integrity, for example to mitigate against unethical use of AI.

Guidance should explain that the fellowship judgement must be free from any reciprocal external relationship and conflict of interest (e.g. a mentor may not act as a reviewer for a participant they have supported).

10.5 Review/Assessment process (accreditation criteria 4a, 4c, 4d) (link to Part D submission narrative: S15, S17, S18, S19)

Participants should be provided with the information as to where the pool of reviewers is drawn from.

Each stage in the review/assessment process needs to be clearly articulated so that participants will understand how relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor criteria are explicitly applied to the evidence of practice submitted for reviewers to reach a judgement about fellowship.

Review proformas should be shared with participants. Proformas need to provide a full audit trail of the review process, i.e. individual reviewer initial judgements and combined agreed reviewer judgements and outcomes (consensus or majority decisions) need to be fully documented.

Clear criteria need to define each possible outcome; for example, if there is a Minor Refer option, the criteria applied by reviewers in reaching this outcome must be fully explained. Review proformas need to provide reviewers with space to record all the possible review outcomes. Should two reviewers not be able to reach a consensus decision, the process by which this is resolved (e.g. through use of a third reviewer) should be explained in the guidance and embedded in the review proforma(s).

The resubmission review process and timeline needs to be documented – this may require reviewers to reuse and add in to their original combined review form (e.g. using a different font colour) or to use a different pro-forma.

External moderation processes should be explained, including how they influence the final judgement decision. The role of the Fellowship External should be included in this explanation. It is highly recommended that a diagram of the assessment/review process is included which clearly defines each stage in the Fellowship judgement process and the timeline involved.

Guidance should include details of the expected timeline and mechanisms for feedback as well as all possible outcomes and the basis for these. The format (e.g. whether there is an additional word allocation, follow on dialogue, etc.), support in place, review process and possible outcomes for resubmission needs to be fully explained.

Participants should be informed about an appropriate appeals/complaints procedure and the procedure for raising a 'matter of concern' in a confidential manner, without disadvantage.

10.6 Appendices – Part E

Appendices for an experiential CPD scheme typically include the following:

- participant handbooks
- application templates
- review proformas –ones used by individual assessors and those for recording a joint outcome (may be the on same form).
- mentor guidance
- reviewer guidance
- referee guidance and associated templates

11 Guidance documents: required information for Taught/Credit bearing programmes

This section provides guidance about the information to be included within participant-facing documents for taught programmes (credit bearing or structured non-credit-bearing) leading to the award of Associate Fellowship (Descriptor 1) and/or Fellowship (Descriptor 2). Please note that Advance HE does not accredit taught programmes at Descriptors 3 or 4.

For each programme submitted for accreditation, participant-facing guidance documents are appendices to a completed Part D submission template. The Part D submission template is designed to structure a narrative that provides supplementary information about the infrastructure in place for the programme that may not be relevant/appropriate for participant-facing guidance; it **should NOT duplicate** information provided to participants; please cross-reference to participant guidance within the submission template (appendix title and page number) instead of duplicating information if/where applicable.

In the guidance below, links to sections in the Part D Submission Template for Taught Programmes are indicated where most relevant.

11.1 Design of the programme/scheme (accreditation criteria 2a, 2b, 3c)

11.1.1: Sufficiency of practice (link to Part D narrative: T4):

To ensure that all participants enrolling onto the programme have sufficient appropriate practice (accreditation policy, section 4.3.2), provide guidance that makes clear the nature of practice required to achieve the category of fellowship the programme is designed to award. PSF 2023 Descriptor 2 is '*suitable for individuals whose practice with learners has **depth and breadth**, enabling them to evidence all Dimensions*'; this is not an appropriate Descriptor for individuals with no prior experience (e.g. at a very early career stage) who do not have the opportunity to engage in substantive teaching and/or support for learning whilst undertaking the programme.

For Descriptor 1, participants will need to provide a minimum of **two different examples to evidence for each of the chosen two Areas of Activity (AA) and be different for each of AA** (a minimum of 4 practice examples).

The scale and scope of practice at Descriptor 2 is distinctly different from Descriptor 1. Multiple examples of the individual's effective and inclusive practice (already completed) with learners for each of the 15 Dimensions will be required to evidence the 'depth and breadth'. For example, a summative assessment task for A3 at Descriptor 2 might involve design of a new assessment strategy. The design of this would need to draw in **a range of examples** (breadth and depth) showing how the participant has been effective and inclusive in their

practice assessing and giving feedback to learners as well as reference to evidence informed approaches from the literature. Guidance for each assessment task needs to fully explain the scale and nature of appropriate practice evidence required.

Programme teams should refer to the Advance HE Guide to the PSF 2023 Dimensions for [Fellowship \(Descriptor 2\)](#) and [Associate Fellowship \(Descriptor 1\)](#) when considering the type and range of professional practice required to appropriately evidence these two Descriptors. Information about the [Fellowship Category Tool](#) may be helpful to include along with guidance about the different routes to Fellowship available at the institution.

11.1.2: Explanation of PSF 2023:

In participant-facing documents explain that the PSF 2023 consists of two elements – 15 Dimensions and 4 Descriptor statements. Guidance needs to explain the framework **before** participants encounter individual Dimensions being ‘mapped’ to learning outcomes, sessions, assessment tasks, etc. to ensure that participants will understand these references.

When writing guidance about the PSF 2023 in comparison with UK PSF 2011, remember the increased emphasis on ‘context’, ‘impact’ and ‘effective and inclusive’ practice. **Descriptor Introductory (stem’) sentences must be included** as these are part of the Descriptor (as well as the three numbered criteria) and set out the nature of practice required. The **Dimension stem sentences must also be included** as they are part of each set of Dimensions, i.e. In your context, **show how you use** the Professional Values; In your context, **show how you apply** the Core Knowledge; In your context, **demonstrate effective and inclusive practice** in the Areas of Activity’.

11.1.3: Guidance about the design of the programme in relation to the Descriptor:

Guidance needs to clearly explain how the programme has been designed and structured to enable the requirements of the relevant Descriptor (1 and/or 2) to be met. A **diagram of the programme structure is helpful to aid understanding**.

The Descriptors incorporate the PSF 2023 Dimensions and the full Descriptor criteria (and not simply the Dimensions) must be included in the guidance and in the assessment process (i.e. within the assessment rubric/proforma used). It is key that the requirements of the Descriptor(s) are accurately portrayed and where more than one Descriptor is included within the programme (e.g. programme leading to Fellowship with Associate Fellowship embedded as a first stage) there is appropriate and explicit differentiation between the distinctive requirements of each Descriptor within the design of the programme.

Outline how the programme has been designed to align with the category(s) of fellowship. For example, this could include mapping of the PSF Dimensions to the modules in a programme, to learning outcomes, observation proformas and/or to the content of taught sessions.

The design should incorporate **meaningful** links with the PSF 2023; for example, it is likely that sessions/workshops will touch on multiple Dimensions but should only signpost to the key Dimensions to help participants to make clear associations between their practice and the PSF.

Provide a timeline for participants including for example, registration – taught module/support workshops/mentoring/formative feedback-assessment- outcomes – reassessment (if required).

Include in the guidance a list of those delivering the programme and their fellowship status.

11.1.4: Guidance about the design of programme assessment to meet the Descriptor (links to Part D narrative: T13 and T18):

**Please note that the Accreditation Guidance Event for Taught Programmes goes into more detail about the different ways that programmes might be designed to evidence and assess Descriptors 1 and 2 (contact accreditation@advance-he.ac.uk for more information).*

Guidance must clearly explain how assessment across the programme is designed to align with the relevant category(s) of fellowship. As well as the programme-level information, **module-level information including full guidance about assessment tasks and their relationship to the Dimensions and Descriptor is required** so that it is clear how each element of assessment contributes and combines to meet the relevant Descriptor overall.

As in 11.1.2 above, the PSF 2023 requires assessment to be designed to assess that Professional Values have been ‘used’, Core Knowledge ‘applied’ and effective and inclusive practice demonstrated in each of the Areas of Activity – at a scale and scope appropriate to the Descriptor.

The awards of Associate Fellowship and Fellowship must be based on evidence of effective practice ‘**already completed**’ with participants’ own students; where assessment tasks on the programme include future facing elements (for example a redesign of a module assessment strategy that has not been implemented), it must be clear how evidence of participants’ effective and inclusive practice to date has underpinned the work.

The point at which the final summative assessment of each Dimension required for the Descriptor (1 and/or 2) must be clearly identified and explained in the guidance. Appropriate assessment rubrics/proformas need to explicitly assess the Dimensions specified in each summative assessment task.

If the programme is credit-bearing (e.g. PGCert/module) the relationship between the achievement of academic credit and the award of Fellowship needs to be clearly explained.

In an **integrated model** (where academic credit and fellowship are assessed and awarded simultaneously), explain where and how each required PSF 2023 Dimension is summatively assessed so that full evidence against Descriptor 1 and/or Descriptor 2 is assessed and signed off as met by the end of the programme. To give an example to illustrate this, in a programme with three modules, the first module may assess Descriptor 1 for the award of Associate Fellowship, guidance needs to explain this and the assessment rubric must embed the requirements for Descriptor 1 (2 AAs, K1, K2 and K3 and V1 and V3) so that these are explicitly applied in the module assessment process. The second module might then assess a specified number of the 15 Dimensions at the depth and breadth required for Descriptor 2 (range of appropriate practice examples), leaving the remaining Dimensions to be assessed in the final third module. Rubrics/proformas used in Module 2 and Module 3 assessment tasks will need to clearly specify which of the Dimensions are being summatively assessed in that module (and 'signed off as being sufficient evidence for that Dimension towards Descriptor 2 at that point). Alternatively, the assessment design might be for a final portfolio at the end of the programme where all 15 Dimensions are summatively assessed and assessment until that point in the programme assessment is formative for Descriptor 2.

Where there is an interim award of Associate Fellowship at a point within a programme that leads to Fellowship, the design of assessment at both Descriptor 1 and then Descriptor 2 should be clearly explained. Guidance needs to make clear the process by which Descriptor 1 will be assessed and awarded at the interim point and whether everyone taking the programme will be assessed and awarded Descriptor 1 at that point, or only those leaving the programme. The rubric/proforma that is used to apply Descriptor 1 criteria in the assessment process needs to be included. Guidance needs to also make clear how the wider programme is designed to evidence the 'depth and breadth' required for Descriptor 2; this will also support participants to consider whether progression on to the second part of the programme is appropriate for their practice or a step-off point at Associate Fellowship is most appropriate.

In a **disaggregated model**, where academic credit and fellowship are assessed separately, explain how and when the PSF 2023 Dimensions building to the relevant Descriptor are assessed and signed off as met; **this involves an additional step to review the additional practice evidence provided for fellowship** (e.g. at the end of the programme). If the assessment for fellowship is carried out by a different group of assessors to those assessing academic credit (e.g. if the final assessment for fellowship is via an accredited CPD scheme), this must be fully explained.

Whichever design model is chosen, the relevant Descriptor must be included in full and explained within the guidance and the assessment process must be fully explained from a PSF perspective and include the rubrics applied for the award of Associate Fellowship and/or Fellowship.

11.2 Ongoing support (Criterion 2b, 3a, 3d) (link to Part D narrative: T12)

Guidance should explain the support provided by the programme team and (where appropriate) how mentors/personal tutors/ workplace supervisors/observers, etc. are allocated and how mentoring/support/observation will operate. There may be opportunities for formative feedback, mentoring support, peer review, etc. Group activities such as a microteach to peers may be a developmental part of the programme, but it is important to note that evidence towards Associate Fellowship/Fellowship must be 'genuine' practice carried out with participants' own students.

An Associate Fellowship programme may be designed to assess two specified Areas of Activity, but if this is not the case participants should be provided with guidance/support about how to select which two Areas of Activity to evidence (along with K1, K2 and K3 plus V1 and V3)

Explain the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) to underpin a career in teaching and/or supporting learning beyond the current award and outline relevant opportunities.

11.3 Authentication of practice (Criterion 2d) (links to Part D narrative: T12)

Participants enrolling onto programmes must have sufficient genuine practice in HE teaching and learning to be able to evidence the relevant Descriptor by the end of the programme. In the case of a programme to be accredited at Descriptor 2, evidence of effective and inclusive practice needs demonstrate both 'depth and breadth' for all 15 Dimensions. The Guide to the PSF 2023 Dimensions for Fellowship provides guidance about appropriate practice examples and a range of these examples will be needed to demonstrate the depth and breadth required for Descriptor 2; enrolment processes need to ensure that those enrolling will have the practice to be able to meet these requirements.

Participants must be informed about how their professional practice will be ‘authenticated’ as part of assessment on the programme. For example, where a formal observation of practice by an experienced peer/ member of the programme team provides the means for authenticating practice, explain the process and its contribution to the programme assessment to participants. Participants should also be informed as to how they access an experienced peer. Should the formal observation not demonstrate that the participant’s practice is in line with the Descriptor expectations, a mechanism should be in place to record this and to request another observation.

Alternatively, where supporting statements by referees/advocates are required to authenticate professional practice, guidance should be provided about how participants choose appropriate referees/advocates. There should be specific guidance on the role that these supporting statements play in the overall assessment for fellowship as well as the expected format, required content and process for submitting these (Advance HE resources may be adapted).

Include the guidance and templates for referees/advocates and/or peer observation forms in Part E appendices.

11.4 Assessment requirements (Criteria 2c, 3b, 4a, 4b, 4c) (links to Part D narrative: T13, T14, T15, T16, T17, T18 and T19)

Linked to 11.1.4 above, explain how the design of assessment tasks across the programme enables participants to generate evidence of practice to meet the requirements of the relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor. Guidance must explain how evidence of practice included in each assessment task will combine to cumulatively provide sufficient and appropriate evidence to fully meet the Descriptor criteria (including the process for a resubmission). Most taught programmes use one of two approaches; either summative assessment of the Dimensions is split across different assessment tasks (e.g. in different modules) or takes place in a final portfolio. Whichever approach is taken, the assessment criteria/rubrics/pro-formas used by assessors must include the relevant Dimensions that are summatively assessed within the assessment task.

Assessment for Descriptors 1 and 2 on a taught programme should focus on whether there is sufficient appropriate practice evidence of each required Dimension (7 for Associate Fellow or 15 for Fellow) as this meets the relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor overall. **Assessment rubrics/proformas should therefore embed the relevant Dimensions for the task**; the Descriptor criteria should only be used within a rubric/proforma if the task being assessed covers all required Dimensions, such as a final portfolio assessment (in which case, no Dimensions should be summatively assessed towards Descriptor 2 elsewhere in the programme).

The process of submitting an assessment must embed the requirement for participants to confirm that they are submitting their own work, and the institution should explain to participants the measures they have embedded to protect academic integrity, for example to mitigate against unethical use of AI.

Where it is possible to **accredit prior learning** within a structured programme, guidance needs to make clear how this will operate with respect to the requirements of Descriptor 2; i.e. participants will need to align their prior learning with the requirements of Descriptor 2. Both participants and those assessing must be clear how this prior learning will combine with evidence generated on the rest of the programme to provide the depth of breath of evidence of effective and inclusive practice across the PSF 2023 Dimensions to fully meet the requirements of Descriptor 2 by the end of the programme. Guidance must also make clear how practice will be authenticated (APL must include authentication of practice).

Although programmes may be intended to lead to Fellowship, some institutions may also wish to award Associate Fellowship to a participant leaving the programme at mid-point; if this is likely to be a rare occurrence, teams could consider whether an 'exit handbook' (which will need to be submitted for review) focused on assessment for Descriptor 1 might be developed for these cases as this might mitigate the need for Descriptor 1 to also be fully embedded in the programme guidance and assessment for all participants.

11.5 Assessment process and timeline (Criteria 4a, 4c, 4d) (links to narrative T15, T16, T17, T18)

Participants should be provided with information about who will be assessing their work.

The process and timeline of assessment should be explained. Linked to section 11.4 above, assessment rubrics/proformas must be included in the participant facing information so that it is clear how assessors are applying the relevant PSF requirements within the assessment of each task to meet the Descriptor requirements overall by the end of the programme.

Internal and external moderation processes should be explained including how they influence the fellowship decision. The role of the Fellowship External should be included in this explanation. It is highly recommended that a diagram of the assessment/review process which clearly defines each stage in the fellowship judgement process and the timeline involved is included.

Where a Descriptor 2 programme has an interim/exit award at Descriptor 1, it must be clear how the Descriptor 1 criteria are explicitly applied at that point and the steps by which Associate Fellowship is awarded (e.g. which Board/Committee, etc. confirms the award).

Guidance should include details of the expected timeline and mechanisms for feedback as well as all possible outcomes and the basis for these. The process, timeline and support in place for resubmission needs to be fully explained.

Participants should be clearly sign-posted to the appropriate appeals/complaints procedure and are informed about the procedure for raising a 'matter of concern' in a confidential manner, without disadvantage.

11.6 Terms and Conditions of accreditation (refer to accreditation policy 2025-26, Appendix 1)

The Terms and Conditions of accreditation must be adhered to throughout the submission. Accredited programmes may not be offered for commercial sale. Staff employed by collaborative partner institutions are entitled to access accredited provision (if arrangements are set out in the submission narrative) but will need to pay an additional fee (*one-off not annual*) for fellowship to Advance HE if they are not employed by an Advance HE Member Institution when they complete the programme. This fee is 50% of the direct application fee and this **fee needs to be highlighted** within the guidance participants receive. This fee also applies to medical/clinical educators, who are also entitled to access accredited provision.

11.7 Appendices – Part E

Appendices for a taught structured programme (e.g. PG Certificate) typically include the following:

- programme handbook
- module handbooks including full details of assessment tasks
- assessment criteria/proformas for assessing specific Dimensions that build to the Descriptor being met overall
- observation proforma/ supporting statement guidance and template
- there may also be distinct guidance for mentors relevant to the PSF element of their role

Appendix 1: Baseline equivalences for typical formats of assessment for Fellowship

Section 4.4.1 of the Advance HE accreditation policy 2026-27 sets out that institutions may design the format of the assessment through which Fellowship judgements are made but must demonstrate equivalence to the requirements of the **Reflective Account of Practice** in a written direct application to Advance HE for each category of Fellowship. Academic taught programmes generally require assessment that exceeds this baseline requirement.

The table below is intended to provide institutions with *some* indication about how the baseline requirement for 'equivalence' could be met through oral or portfolio assessment strategies utilised in experiential routes. These are baseline equivalences and not intended to constrain approaches that institutions have found to work well in allowing applicants to fully show how they meet the relevant Descriptor.

It is anticipated that oral forms of assessment will also build in additional time for settling in, introductions, etc. Broadly the baseline listed for oral assessment reflects one minute of presenting/speaking being equivalent to around 120 written words plus time for introductions, etc..

Portfolios of evidence should be limited to a number of key items evidencing practice appropriate to the relevant PSF 2023 Descriptor and should have a mechanism for participants to articulate how each item relates to the relevant Descriptor criteria as well as the reflective narrative; it is anticipated that reviewers will not need to scrutinise each portfolio item during the assessment process as the mechanism of demonstrating alignment to the Descriptor and the overarching reflective narrative will provide sufficient information to meet the relevant Descriptor.

In addition to the Reflective Account of Practice, Advance HE direct applications also require a Context Statement (up to 300 words) and a Record of Educational Impact at Principal Fellowship. A separate word limit is also included for citations (please see accreditation policy 2026-27, section 4.4, p5 for full details). Institutions may have other elements within application requirements that sit outside the baseline equivalences, e.g. Role and responsibilities, CV, CPD record, record of peer observation, etc.

Category	Advance HE written Reflective Account of Practice	Oral assessment (pre-submitted information needs to be sufficient for referees to corroborate practice and reviewers to prepare)	Portfolio with written reflective narrative
Associate Fellowship	1400 word limit for Reflective Account of Practice	Pre-submitted evidence plus 15 minute dialogue/ presentation	Portfolio of evidence mapped to the Descriptor plus 1000-word written reflective narrative
Fellowship	3000 word limit for Reflective Account of Practice	Pre-submitted evidence plus 25-30 minute dialogue/ presentation	Portfolio of evidence mapped to the Descriptor plus 2250-word written reflective narrative
Senior Fellowship	6000 word limit for Reflective Account of Practice including Case Studies	Pre-submitted evidence plus 45-50 minute dialogue/ presentation	Portfolio of evidence mapped to the Descriptor plus 4500-word written reflective narrative
Principal Fellowship	REI and 7000 word limit for Reflective Account of Practice	Pre-submitted evidence plus 55-60 minute dialogue/ presentation	Portfolio of evidence mapped to the Descriptor plus 5250-word written reflective narrative