

What is the Professional Standards Framework?

The UK Professional Standards Framework (PSF) is a short document which represents the benchmark onto which the level of achievement of university teachers and learning support staff can be mapped. Launched in 2005, it has two complementary functions.

1. Collectively, as a benchmark for the accreditation of training and development for academic staff in UK Higher Education.
2. Individually, as a benchmark for membership of the Higher Education Academy and as a tool for practitioners to use in articulating their own achievements.

(Both these functions are explained in more detail in the preamble to the document.) In satisfying the requirements of multiple stakeholders, the authors of the document had to balance breadth of scope against the danger of complete generality. (The document is currently in the process of revision.) As a 'descriptor based' approach, the Framework can be seen to belong in the same tradition of 'reflective practice' which in the UK generated – to take another example – the use of 'personal development planning' (PDP) with students. The underlying idea is that having a checklist or taxonomy of some kind triggers insight and enables you to think about and articulate processes which might otherwise remain tacit and unexplored. To put it another way, the boxes are meant to be emancipatory rather than enclosing.

The Framework thinks in terms of three domains: 'areas of activity'; 'core knowledge'; and 'professional values', each of which in good taxonomic fashion it splits into five or six elements. Since there isn't very much this collection of activities could do about your values (except incite you to keep thinking about them), most of the activities contained within this set of resources bear upon 'areas of activity' and 'core knowledge'. At the end of each resource you will find suggestions about how you might 'map' the activity you have just undertaken onto relevant elements of the framework.

1 | *This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.*

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The resources in The Pool are designed to focus ideas about the six areas of activity.

1. Design and planning of learning activities and / or programmes of study

These resources are designed to help you explore – in quite practical ways – the dimensions and meanings of teaching and learning in the subject. You are invited to explore the relations between learning activities at the different levels of the programme, the module, and the individual session.

2. Teaching and / or supporting student learning

You have the opportunity to explore the idea that support for learning needs to go beyond planning teaching occasions to encompass the whole environment in which students learn.

3. Assessment and giving feedback to learners

We seek to demonstrate the need for effective assessment to be integrated within the total learning environment that a module or seminar leader seeks to create. In other words, we incite you to view assessment and giving feedback holistically. A strong element here is the importance of offering varied forms of assessment, and of not simply falling back on default models.

4. Developing effective environments and student support and guidance

Engagement with these resources enables you to develop understanding of the design and development of programmes. The ethos of these resources - like the ethos of the Subject Centre which designed them - is one where students are seen as partners in the learning process. But also where teachers have the responsibility of building environments where that partnership can be most productively experienced.

5. Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning

Many of the readers of these resources are probably early career scholars, who have recently emerged from the intensive process of writing their PhD. One of the aims of the



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collection is to help you to envisage your specialism pedagogically, aligning what you have learnt in terms of subject knowledge and research skills with the forms of enquiry that you want students to undertake. You are guided towards seeing the commonalities and synergies between their subject scholarship and pedagogic practice. Precise attention to language, willingness to speculate and weigh ideas, attention to dialogue and to audiences are matters of central importance to English academics. In these resources we seek to demonstrate that they are of as much concern in teaching as in subject knowledge.

6. Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development

This collection seeks to encourage the ethos of the 'reflective practitioner'. We make the assumption that a good teacher or facilitator of learning will be self-aware, but will also develop a form of confidence which enables them where necessary to be firm with others. We seek to point towards ways of building on and developing what you are learning as an early career teacher.



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