Distinction and Diversity in Higher Education

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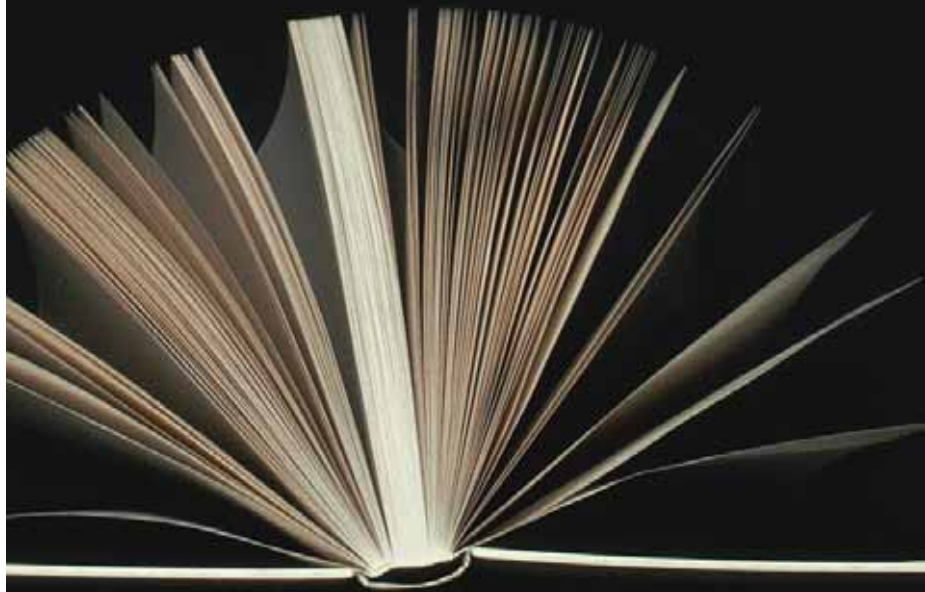HIGHER EDUCATION hefce FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

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The Higher Education Academy

The UK
Professional Standards Framework
for teaching and supporting learning in higher education

DEVELOPING THE HE SECTOR-OWNED STANDARDS

This paper describes the new National Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education.

The idea of a framework for professional standards for teaching and supporting learning in higher education was proposed in the White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (2003). In response to this the UUK, SCOP and the UK HE funding bodies invited the Higher Education Academy to consult with the sector to develop such a framework.

Following extensive consultation with the sector a National Professional Standards Framework has been developed for institutions to apply to their professional development programmes and activities and thus demonstrate that professional standards for teaching and supporting learning are being met.

At the heart of this framework is acknowledgement of the distinctive nature of teaching in higher education, respect for the autonomy of higher education institutions, and recognition of the sector's understanding of quality enhancement for improving student learning. The framework recognises that the scholarly nature of subject inquiry and knowledge creation, and a scholarly approach to pedagogy, combine to represent a unique feature of support for student learning in higher education institutions.

The standards framework aims to act as:

• an enabling mechanism to support the professional development of staff engaged in supporting learning

• a means by which professional approaches to supporting student learning can be fostered through creativity, innovation and continuous development

• a means of demonstrating to students and other stakeholders the professionalism that staff bring to the support of the student learning experience

• a means to support consistency and quality of the student learning experience.

THE STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

The framework is a descriptor based approach whereby HE institutions determine their own criteria in the application of the standards framework. In order to demonstrate application of the standards, six areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values (all derived from the Higher Education Academy's existing Accreditation Scheme) are applied to learning outcomes and assessment activities within the institution's professional development programmes.

THE STANDARDS

Standard descriptor	Examples of staff groups
1. Demonstrates an understanding of the student learning experience through engagement with at least 2 of the 6 areas of activity, appropriate core knowledge and professional values; the ability to engage in practices related to those areas of activity; the ability to incorporate research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities	Postgraduate teaching assistants, staff new to higher education teaching with no prior qualification or experience, staff whose professional role includes a small range of teaching and learning support activity
2. Demonstrates an understanding of the student learning experience through engagement with all areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values; the ability to engage in practices related to all areas of activity; the ability to incorporate research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities	Staff who have a substantive role in learning and teaching to enhance the student experience
3. Supports and promotes student learning in all areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values through mentoring and leading individuals and/or teams; incorporates research, scholarship and/or professional practice into those activities	Experienced staff who have an established track record in promoting and mentoring colleagues in learning and teaching to enhance the student learning experience

AREAS OF ACTIVITY, CORE KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONAL VALUES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK

Areas of activity
1. Design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study
2. Teaching and/or supporting student learning
3. Assessment and giving feedback to learners
4. Developing effective environments and student support and guidance
5. Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning
6. Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development

Core knowledge
Knowledge and understanding of:
1. The subject material
2. Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
3. How students learn, both generally and in the subject
4. The use of appropriate learning technologies
5. Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching
6. The implications of quality assurance and enhancement for professional practice

Professional values
1. Respect for individual learners
2. Commitment to incorporating the process and outcomes of relevant research, scholarship and/or professional practice
3. Commitment to development of learning communities
4. Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity
5. Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice

RELATIONSHIP TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SCHEME

Guidance and support is offered through the work of the Higher Education Academy for HE institutions to be accredited for their application and use of the new standards framework.

Please see **www.heacademy.ac.uk** for further details.