



FGN4: What are the Dimensions of Practice?

The HEA has developed a series of Guidance Notes to support the effective use of the 2011 Framework. These are intended as a dynamic and developmental set of documents. They will be extended and amended over time in response to the needs of the learning and teaching community.

The Framework guidance notes answer the following questions:

1. What is the UKPSF? An introduction and overview.
2. What are the transition arrangements to the revised 2011 Framework?
3. What are the Descriptors?
- 4. What are the Dimensions of Practice?**
5. How has the Framework changed?
6. To whom does it belong?
7. In what ways can the Framework be used?

This guidance note answers the following questions

- 4.1 Why are there three Dimensions?
- 4.2 How do the Dimensions relate to each other?
- 4.3 How could I evidence my engagement with the Areas of Activity? (A1-5)
- 4.4 How should I evidence my understanding of the appropriate Core Knowledge? (K1-6)
- 4.5 How should I evidence my commitment to the Professional Values? (V2-4)

4.1 Why are there three Dimensions?

The Dimensions consist of three sets of statements outlining the:

1. **Five Areas of activity** undertaken by teachers and supporters of learning within HE
2. **Six aspects of Core knowledge** that are needed to carry out those activities at the appropriate level
3. **Four Professional values** that someone performing these activities should embrace and exemplify

These reflect the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the professional role staff teaching and supporting learning.

4.2 How do the Dimensions relate to each other?

The framework identifies the separate component parts of teaching and supporting learning roles. These are articulated in the dimensions of the Framework. However, in practice when carrying out teaching and learning support roles all of the Dimensions will be manifested in varying degrees. The diagram in the Framework document is intended to illustrate the interactive nature of the three Dimensions.

It is not desirable or even possible to separate out the dimensions when considering how to evidence practice. This is particularly true when working with Descriptors 3 and 4. Linking and combining different dimensions more accurately reflects the true nature of teaching and enables the use of examples of real work. This approach might need to be supported by 'sign posting' indicating how and where the dimensions are evidenced.

4.3 How could I evidence my engagement with the Areas of Activity?

Evidencing Area of Activity A1: Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study

The evidence of Designing and Planning Learning Activities will normally be small scale for Descriptor 1, typically individual activities and/or sessions. This would range from module design to a whole programme of study for Descriptor 2 and those working towards Descriptor 3. In all cases, one would expect the design to reflect developing knowledge and understanding of the Core Knowledge and Professional Values dimensions.

Evidencing Area of Activity A2: Teach and/or support learning

In demonstrating the activities of teaching and supporting learning the evidence should demonstrate an increasing awareness of different approaches to and methods of teaching and supporting learning as well as a growing ability to choose the most appropriate approach for the achievement of curriculum aims.

Evidencing Area of Activity A3: Assess and give feedback to learners

Clear differentiation of how this area is evidenced would be expected for the different Descriptors. For example, for Descriptor 1 an understanding of the importance of assessment and feedback and of the criteria for making informed, formative judgements about work and the role this plays in supporting learning through activities such as tutorials, work placements, observations, and practical work would be appropriate. For Descriptors 2 and 3 there would be an increasing emphasis on the use of feedback and feed-forward approaches being routinely used to improve learning and develop learner autonomy. At Descriptor 4 the focus might be about a wider sphere of influence in policies and practices concerning assessment and feedback in supporting learning.

Evidencing Area of Activity A4: Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance

The definition of 'learning environments' has been widely contested and is open to diverse interpretation. Individual practitioners work beyond the local physical environment of the classroom, the laboratory, studio or work place or the distance learning or electronic learning environment. They take the nature of the learning environment, the learning culture being developed, the nature and extent of the support infrastructures into account and are able to distinguish between academic and pastoral interventions. Individuals also take the range of environments available to students into account as well as how they are enabled to access, understand and utilise them.

Evidencing Area of Activity A5: Engage in continuing professional developments in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices

The Framework provides a powerful means of articulating the varied aspects of role and the potential for development in all areas of the teaching and supporting learning endeavour. This Area of Activity is concerned with enhancement and comprises three elements integral to teaching and supporting learning roles. Whilst the three elements might be viewed holistically it is important the elements are understood and demonstrated, particularly at Descriptors 1 and 2 to ensure successful integration.

The elements are:

- Continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy
- Incorporating research and scholarship
- The evaluation of (one's own) professional practices

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Evidence could appropriately focus on the question: How might an individual demonstrate that they have become a better teacher through continuing professional development, research and the evaluation of their teaching and learning related practices?

4.4 How should I evidence my understanding of the appropriate Core Knowledge?

The Dimension of Core Knowledge is most easily evidenced through the Areas of Activity. For example, designing and planning a learning activity (Area of Activity 1) successfully would be determined by the use of appropriate teaching and learning methods (Core Knowledge 2), an understanding of how the particular students learn (Core Knowledge 3) and the use of appropriate learning technologies (Core Knowledge 4). Linking the Core Knowledge to Areas of Activity provides greater coherence and depth to the evidence and more accurately reflects the reality of practice.

Evidencing Core Knowledge K1: The subject material

This area is effectively evidenced with reference to the Areas of Activity or other areas of Core Knowledge. Evidence should fundamentally relate to how an understanding of the nature of the subject is used to inform the design and planning of learning activities and programmes of study, the teaching strategies, the assessment and feedback. This would normally make reference to the distinctive nature, or culture, of the discipline and the particular expectations of teaching; the issues or challenges arising from the context in which teaching takes place, and the appropriate methods of delivering the subject at different levels (e.g. first year undergraduate to masters level).

Evidencing Core Knowledge K2: Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme

This is concerned with pedagogic approaches that are distinctive and/or characteristic of the subject, or what makes the teaching or supporting of the learning in the subject different to the teaching of another one. It is also concerned with acknowledging that some approaches may be more appropriate than others given the nature of the learning desired, the level of the material being taught and the readiness of students. This is clearly linked to demonstrating Core Knowledge 1 with its focus on an understanding the subject material, but is specifically concerned with the strategies and approaches used to teach or support the learning of the subject.

Evidencing Core Knowledge 3: How students learn, both generally and within their subject/discipline area?

How students learn might be evidenced through demonstrating how an understanding of the characteristics of different learners (such as mature students, recent school leavers or workplace learners) impacts on how their needs might be met in the context of learning, how this might reflect on the learning environment, teaching approaches and practices. Reference could be made to different theories of, or approaches to, learning and how these are evidenced by the use of different strategies for teaching and supporting learning. This might relate specifically to the nature of the subject (Core Knowledge 1).

Evidencing Core Knowledge 4: The use and value of appropriate learning technologies

Evidence needs to demonstrate how and why specific technologies, of all types and ages are used appropriately to support learning. Evidence will address what the learning and teaching needs are and why particular technology is used to address them. Evidence is likely to be linked to other areas of Core Knowledge, for example; how and why technology is used within a specific discipline, professional or vocational areas; for specific groups of learners; in specific learning contexts or environments.

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Evidencing Core Knowledge 5: Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching

An essential part of work in Higher Education is ensuring the effectiveness of teaching practices. This focuses on the methods (formal or informal) employed to gather information and data about the impact of teaching, how they are used and the impact of their use on developing practice.

Evidencing Core Knowledge 6: The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching

Quality assurance and quality enhancement are deeply embedded in higher education through procedures such as programme validation, monitoring and review. These processes shape academic practice and are implicit in what individuals do. Key to evidencing this area is how an individual might demonstrate engagement with feedback to enhance practice and the student learning experience. This might include an account of how they seek opportunities to obtain feedback other than relying on the institutional procedures already in place. For those working outside higher education institutional policies and practices, they will need to evidence a personal interest, understanding and commitment to quality assurance and enhancement procedures established and embedded within their practice. This will include knowledge and understanding of the quality assurance frameworks at a national level and how these are manifested at an institutional level.

4.5 How should I evidence my commitment to the Professional Values?

The focus of Professional Values is the integrity of the individual practitioner. How they are manifested is likely to be different if the individual has the identity of an academic (working within an academic discipline) as compared to a professional (working in a professional or vocational area). Much will depend on the context and nature of their work.

Professional values are often considered implicit within professional practice; there are, however, few assurances that this is the case. The UKPSF articulates how the professional values should explicitly underpin teaching and support learning in higher education; it requires the explicit demonstration of 'a commitment to all the professional values'.

As with the other dimensions there is some utility in separating the different components to ensure an understanding of each, but in reality the professional values overlap and are integrated in individual and institutional practice. For example, the Professional Values impact on the Core Knowledge and the Areas of Activity by shaping the activity and the understanding and knowledge in an almost unconscious way. Evidencing the Professional Values takes place in a setting which itself reflects values through the institutional mission and culture, although this may shift in emphasis over time. Individuals may themselves place different emphases and importance on values in their professional practice and, like all values, they are hard to evidence..

For Descriptor 1, 2 and 3 the evidence of commitment to the professional values in practice will be demonstrably linked to the level of regard for institutional/organisational values and how these influence teaching and learning, and to the adoption and communication of positive attitudes and behaviours. In the process of programme accreditation, this will be demonstrated through exploring the ways the institutional processes (such as promotion and developmental review or appraisal) reflect the Professional Values. This could be through the alignment of the UKPSF Professional Values in institutional/organisational statements about their own values.

In Descriptor 4 the Professional Values are enshrined within evidence of 'a commitment to and an understanding of the use and value of the UKPSF'. This locates the Professional Values at the heart of why things are done a certain way, what is held as important by the individual and the aspirations and forces driving their work. Evidencing this might draw on examples of how practice is influenced by an individual's personal obligation and responsibility to the Professional Values.

Evidencing Professional Value 1: Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities

This focuses on the way teaching and supporting learning incorporate activities, actions and approaches which respect individual learners. It depicts the ways we communicate and interact with individuals and different communities in the context of teaching and supporting learning. The term 'diverse learning communities' might include campus based groups of students, electronic communicates, work based communities, or be defined on the basis of ethnicity, faith, social class age etc. The practitioner needs to be able to demonstrate that they value and can work effectively with and within these diverse communities.

Evidencing Professional Value 2: Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners

The focus here is on providing evidence of how a commitment to participation in Higher Education and equality of opportunity for learners underpins practice related to teaching and supporting learning. There is potential to cover a broad spectrum of activities, approaches and behaviours linked to all the Areas of Activity and Core Knowledge. Evidence should ideally indicate wide and pervasive approaches to ensuring equality of opportunity.

Evidencing Professional Value 3: Use evidence informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development

This focuses on the use of evidence informed approaches, the ability to draw on and contribute to many sources of evidence and to use them to inform teaching and learning practice. It is about using the outcomes from research, scholarship and professional development to make principled, informed and considered judgements which enhance practice and the learning experience. This value advocates the importance of direct professional involvement in enquiry (in teaching and learning) to support the individual's own professional development and to enhance their teaching or learning support activities.

Evidence might include consideration and application of the findings from studies, reading, personal enquiry of (for example) teaching, learning, learners, the subject, the environment etc to enhance practice and the student learning experience. Using one's own discipline based research to enhance the curriculum should be informed by reading or research about curriculum design, the nature of the subject itself and the learners in order to provide a rationale for the design of the curriculum and its delivery.

Evidencing Professional Value 4: Acknowledges the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice.

This is concerned with being alert to the issues that may impact on institutional missions and/or which might have an influence on curriculum design and/or personal and collective professional practice. This might for example, may include how an individual has responded to the current demands of the Disability Discrimination Act, the employment agenda, or the widening access and participation agenda. Current agendas include; sustainability (the practice of sustainability and education for sustainability), and student engagement.