



## PSF Review Project 2021-2022: Initial Stakeholder Consultation Briefing

Advance HE, as custodians of the UK Professional Standards Framework (PSF, 2011), have a strategic commitment to refresh the framework, and are therefore facilitating a PSF Review Project which, having commenced in November 2021 will run until November 2022.

Thank you for participating in the **Initial Consultation with Key Stakeholders** phase of the PSF Review project. This briefing note outlines the context of the project and prompt questions in advance of the stakeholder discussion.

For reference, the current UKPSF (2011) can be found at: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/uk-professional-standards-framework-ukpsf> and details of the most recent publication 'A brief history of the Professional Standards Framework' (Bradley, 2022) can be found at: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/brief-history-professional-standards-framework-teaching-and-supporting-learning-0>

### Context for the PSF Review Project

Since the framework was revised in 2011, there have been several opportunities to gather feedback from users and numerous published reports on its application, efficacy and value. Data exists from sector input at an Open Space consultation and Principal Fellow Review in 2015, feedback on a planned revised version in 2017-18 (implementation was subsequently postponed largely due to Advance HE's merger), Round Table discussions in 2020, annual discussions with Accreditors and Programme Leaders and ongoing feedback from colleagues and institutions. These data sets evidence strong support for the value of the framework in both facilitating conversations about learning, teaching and assessment and raising the esteem in which these activities are held.

However, sector feedback has confirmed that aspects of the framework are in need of updating in order to continue to be fit for the future in both national and international settings. The project seeks to retain the strengths of the current framework, and in consultation with the sector, to propose amendments which will build on its positive impact on learning, teaching and the student experience.

The project aims to launch a refreshed PSF in November 2022. Broadly, the methodology includes:

- analysis of all existing data sets (Nov-Jan);
- initial consultations with key stakeholders (Feb-March);
- analysis of stakeholder feedback and creation of a draft refreshed PSF document (April-May);
- release of the draft for online (written) consultation to the inter/national sector (June);
- analysis of feedback (July-August) and revision of draft;
- approval and launch of a refreshed PSF in November 2022.

The project team acknowledges that since any period of change may be potentially unsettling to individuals and institutions, special consideration will be given to working towards the full transition from 'old' to 'new' in an appropriately staged timeframe. Advance HE will release full details as to how this transition will be managed following further engagement with members.

## **Analysis of Existing Data Sets**

Arising from qualitative thematic analysis of the existing evidence base, the project team acknowledges a clear message that there is no sector appetite for dismantling the current structure of Dimensions and Descriptors. It wishes to maintain the framework's unique capacity, recognising its 'elasticity' to support the diversity of higher education learning and teaching in all its varied contexts and settings. Accordingly, there is no intention to disrupt a framework that has been so globally adopted and valued when used for a wide variety of purposes including professional development, probation and promotion pathways.

## **Stakeholder Consultation**

Since existing data sets evidence rich commentary on the benefits and points of tension within the existing PSF, it is essential that we ensure these voices and views are fully considered. Although our focus is on 'the framework', we recognise its many implications for individuals and institutions, the Fellowship and accreditation services operated by Advance HE, other organisations using the framework and wider academic practice.

The qualitative analysis has identified a number of issues arising which will be summarised and shared in the Stakeholder Consultation sessions. Drawing from the existing evidence base, most issues have proposals for solutions and a way forward; including for example, aspects related to the nature of Senior Fellowship (D3); overlap between Dimensions and a need for clear articulation between Dimensions and Descriptors etc.

However, five 'knotty' issues have been identified within the data which are extremely complex and multi-layered. These present a range of potential solutions which require further exploration and will form the basis of the initial Stakeholder Consultation sessions. All five are summarised below with prompt questions which may help to stimulate your thoughts, ideas and crucially – your ideas for potential solutions:

- 1. Digital approaches** have become both ubiquitous and widely embedded into most aspects of our practice in design and delivery of learning, teaching and assessment.
  - Should digital practice be appropriately captured in one or more Dimensions?
  - How best to maintain the wide diversity of digital approaches?
  
- 2. Inclusion**, at its broadest, is a critical aspect of our practice in HE, relevant to both students and colleagues. It is currently represented as a Professional Value in V1 and V2, though feedback tells us there is some confusion and overlap.
  - Should the framework be more specific about what is meant by inclusive practice?
  - Is it necessary to distinguish between knowledge and values when describing inclusive practice?
  - Should inclusion remain as a single Dimension in Professional Values?

3. **International perspectives** are fundamental to relationships with our students, collaborative partners and practice in many countries worldwide. At present this is not currently represented in the PSF, although may be referenced as part of V4 'the wider context in which HE operates'. There is a need to retain, and opportunity to enhance, the framework's international portability and value within different global contexts.
  - How and where can the refreshed PSF be enhanced to be inclusive of different international perspectives?
  - How can the framework most effectively retain and enhance its international portability and value within different global contexts?
4. **Impact and effectiveness** are critical considerations in evidencing the outcomes of practice. Currently words such as 'effective', 'successful' and 'impact' are reported to be ambiguous and difficult to apply.
  - Should impact/effectiveness be best represented as:
    - Enhanced Dimension(s)?
    - A concept in the Descriptors?
    - Another way and if so, how?
5. **Descriptor 4** with its focus on strategic leadership does not always resonate with individuals with such responsibilities. Several reasons are reported to have relevance here, including a lack of clarity in relation to the nature of 'strategic leadership' and the scope and scale of practice, given the variety of ways this might be enacted.
  - How might a refreshed PSF enhance Descriptor 4's relevance to appropriate individuals?
  - How could Descriptor 4's appeal be enhanced?

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing your thoughts at the consultation session.