

Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy

Guidance notes

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1. Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy

These guidance notes provide you with an overview of the process required to apply for Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

Associate Fellowship of the HEA is awarded to professionals who can demonstrate they meet the criteria of Descriptor 1 (D1) of the [UK Professional Standards Framework](#) (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in higher education.

By applying to be an Associate Fellow of the HEA you will present an understanding of specific aspects of effective teaching, learning support methods and student learning and demonstrate:

- D1.I Successful engagement with at least two of the five Areas of Activity.
- D1.II Successful engagement in appropriate teaching and practices related to these Areas of Activity.
- D1.III Appropriate Core Knowledge and understanding of at least K1 and K2.
- D1.IV A commitment to appropriate Professional Values in facilitating others' learning.
- D1.V Relevant professional practices, subject and pedagogic research and/or scholarship within the above activities.
- D1.VI Successful engagement, where appropriate, in professional development activity related to teaching, learning, and assessment responsibilities.

By applying to become an Associate Fellow you will have the opportunity to:

- think broadly about and thereby enhance the quality and effectiveness of your work in the area of teaching and supporting learning in higher education;
- gain national and increasingly international recognition for your role as a teacher and/or supporter of learning within the higher education context.

The [UK Professional Standards Framework](#) (UKPSF) is central to the recognition of individuals as Associate Fellows. You will need a working knowledge of its contents in order to prepare your application.

2. What are the main evidence requirements for Associate Fellowship?

There are two main elements to your application:

- an Account of Professional Practice (APP);
- supporting statements from two referees (REF).

The APP consists of:

- a reflective commentary on your higher education roles, responsibilities and professional experience focused on selected Dimensions of the [UK Professional Standards Framework](#).

3. Your Account of Professional Practice (APP)

When preparing your APP, there are some general principles to consider:

- Associate Fellowship is based on meeting Descriptor 1 (D1) of the UKPSF and your APP is the core of your application.
- Your reflective commentary (APP) is focused around selected Dimensions of the Framework and structured across **two of the Areas of Activity** of your choice which should evidence how you meet the requirements for Descriptor 1.

- There will be considerable variation in applications, reflecting differences in individuals' experience, their job roles and institutional contexts. The reflective commentary enables such diversity to be appropriately represented.
- Your APP is a personal account and its focus throughout should be on your own professional practice and decision-making.
- You should include appropriate rationale for the choices made and any evidence of success and effectiveness in teaching and/or supporting learning. All your evidence will be based on real examples of practice which draw upon scholarly activity in learning and teaching.
- Provide selective examples of practice in your APP and ensure they have direct relevance to your claim for Associate Fellowship. The quality of the examples of evidence is much more important than the quantity. Where you reflect on any historic professional practice as part of your evidence, ensure you reflect on its impact on your current practice. Incorporate relevant subject and pedagogic research and/or scholarship in your approaches. How you evidence this will depend on the context in which you are working, the nature of the subject, discipline or profession in which you teach and the expectations of the institution in which you work. Your application should reflect a process of continuing professional development which demonstrates your understanding of specific aspects of effective teaching, learning support methods and student learning.
- It is important that you address the relevant Dimensions of the UKPSF. Given the complex and integrative nature of professional practice, avoid a mechanistic or tick-box mapping approach to ensure appropriate coverage. Refer to our guidance notes on the [Dimensions of the UKPSF](#) to help support your understanding of the Dimensions.
- Aim to include example(s) of your use of/commitment to the relevant Professional Values and Core Knowledge of the UKPSF throughout your APP.
- Adopt a reflective stance to your APP and make clear why and how you apply appropriate Core Knowledge and understanding of at least K1 (the subject material) and K2 (appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessment in the subject area and at the level of the HE provision).
- Include evidence of how you demonstrate your commitment to appropriate Professional Values set out in the Framework. It is at your discretion which Professional Values you choose. Provide rationale and explanations of how you carry out your practice and ensure you provide reasons for the choice of activities you describe, and demonstrate that you have been effective and successful in these activities. This reflection and alignment of your work to the UKPSF is essential.
- Where appropriate, explicitly incorporate in your chosen Areas of Activities how you have successfully engaged in professional development activity related to teaching, learning and assessment responsibilities.
- The overall word count for the Associate Fellow APP is 1,400 words. This is your combined evidence across the whole claim, working to 700 words per section. Throughout your application, the quality of reflection on your professional practice should be the focus of your narrative, rather than description of it.
- Any citations to publications, journals, books, websites you choose to include will be accommodated in addition to your overall word count. Include these after the relevant section of your APP.
- If you wish, use the space provided in this guidance to draft your evidence for your two chosen Areas of Activity. Alternatively, you can directly draft and save your application as you go along in [MyAcademy](#).

All the experience and evidence included in your APP must relate to HE provision such as:

- level 4 or above within the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications \(FHEQ\)](#) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- level 7 or above within the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#) in Scotland on the Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions (FQHEIS);
- first cycle or above of the [Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area \(QF-EHEA\)](#);
- level 6 or above of the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#);
- level 5 or above of the [New Zealand Qualification Framework](#);
- other equivalent higher education frameworks;
- delivery of non-accredited continuing professional development for academic and learning support staff may also be considered as evidence equivalent to the higher education academic frameworks.

4. Evidencing Area of Activity 1: Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study

This Area of Activity refers to all your professional educational activities where you are preparing for engagement with learners. The evidence of designing and planning learning activities will vary depending on the context of your work. For Descriptor 1, typically these might be individual activities and/or sessions in modules, courses and programmes and range from session/module design to a whole programme of study. In all cases, the design should reflect a developing knowledge and understanding of the Core Knowledge and Professional Values Dimensions.

You might include examples of:

- designing or redesigning curricula, courses and programmes of study;
- identifying and planning different kinds of interaction with learners in various contexts, whether for single sessions or larger courses/programmes;
- participating in validation panels;
- determining learner needs;
- planning tutorials and study sessions;
- contributing to the creation of learning resources – physical and/or online;
- developing learning materials;
- preparing virtual learning environments.

If you wish, use this space to draft Area of Activity 1 by reflecting on:

1. The main ways in which you design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study;
2. The reasons for your choice of:
 - a. subject material;
 - b. activities and techniques;
 - c. the particular learning technologies included in your plan.
3. How you make choices to facilitate learning in general and within your learners' subject area;
4. How you incorporate other Dimensions of the Framework, for example:
 - relevant Core Knowledge that you utilised and why;
 - relevant Professional Values that you utilised and why.

5. Evidencing Area of Activity 2: Teach and/or support learning

This Area of Activity is about your direct engagement with learners whether in groups or individually. These encounters may be in a wide range of environments, such as teaching rooms, seminar rooms, lecture theatres, labs, learning support centres, offices, professional settings, etc.

Your evidence here will include teaching activities such as lecturing, tutorials and seminar work, studio, clinical, laboratory, supervision, workplace-based teaching, distance learning and the use of virtual learning environments.

The support you provide might include teaching and supervision of undergraduates and postgraduates. You might also mentor learners to support their learning and contribute to courses and programmes that develop learning in higher education.

In demonstrating the activities of teaching and supporting learning, ensure your evidence demonstrates 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 learning aims.

If you wish, use this space to draft Area of Activity 2 by reflecting on:

1. The main ways in which you teach and/or support learners;
2. The activities or techniques you use and why;
3. How you came to use them and why you think they were successful in supporting student learning. Give reasons for your choice of activities and techniques and how they relate to developing the learners' understanding of the subject/discipline;
4. How you incorporate other Dimensions of the Framework such as:
 - relevant Core Knowledge that you utilised and why;
 - relevant Professional Values that you utilised and why.

6. Evidencing Area of Activity 3: Assess and give feedback to learners

Your evidence should emphasise your direct knowledge and use of effective assessment and feedback/feed-forward approaches. Assessment and feedback is routinely used to measure and support learning and you should demonstrate an understanding of appropriate assessment and feedback techniques within an HE context and how they are applied. The assessment and feedback mechanisms you adopt may occur in a variety of ways and be summative and/or formative.

For example, you might carry out assessments such as questionnaires, surveys, interviews, observations, testing, projects (a culminating project that synthesises knowledge) and examinations. The assessment may be group based or individual, physical or online.

Ensure your evidence demonstrates an increasing awareness of different methods of, and approaches to, assessment and feedback, as well as a growing ability to choose the most appropriate approach for the achievement of your learning aims.

If you wish, use this space to draft Area of Activity 3 by reflecting on:

1. The main types of formative and/or summative assessment that you use with learners, whether formal or informal;
2. How and why you choose the particular approaches and methods you employ, in so far as this was your own decision;
3. How you ensure your assessments are valid indicators of what you want your learners to learn, that your marking is reliable and the standards you set are appropriate;
4. How you give feedback to learners and ensure it supports and improves their understanding of the subject, their performance and/or their development as learners;
5. How you incorporate other Dimensions of the Framework for example:
 - relevant Core Knowledge that you utilised and why;
 - relevant Professional Values that you utilised and why.

7. Evidencing Area of Activity 4: 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 often work beyond the local physical environment of the classroom in, for example, the laboratory, studio, workplace, via distance learning and using online learning environments. 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. Applicants should also take the range of environments available to learners into account as well as how they are enabled to access, understand and utilise them.

This Area of Activity is about how you make effective use of both the formal and informal learning environment to facilitate learning and how you meet the needs of your learners in terms of educational support and guidance. It includes how you:

- utilise and manage a range of physical or virtual learning environments so that they are appropriate to your learners' needs;
- work with learners and service providers to ensure that your learners can access and use a broad range of learning opportunities. Learner support might include such activities as personal and academic tutoring, one-to-one advice, counselling, developing practice to meet the learning implications of widening access and supporting learners with disabilities.

If you wish, use this space to draft Area of Activity 4 by reflecting on:

1. The main types of educational environment in which you work and/or what kinds of support and guidance you give to your learners, whether formal or informal;
2. Use examples from your practice where you have utilised the learning environment and/or provided support and guidance to your learners;
3. How you have contributed to making the learning environment more effective for learners;
4. The ways you have contributed to supporting and guiding your learners;
5. Why you chose those particular strategies and how well they worked;
6. How you incorporate other Dimensions of the Framework, for example:
 - Relevant Core Knowledge that you utilised and why;
 - Relevant Professional Values that you utilised and why.

8. Evidencing Area of Activity 5: Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.

The UKPSF provides a powerful means of articulating the varied aspects of your role and the potential for development in a range of areas in respect of teaching and/or supporting learning. This Area of Activity is about how you maintain and develop your capability to perform your teaching and learning support roles. It includes:

- how you incorporate subject and pedagogic research and/or scholarship within your professional practice as a teacher/supporter of learning;
- how you gather and utilise information from your own activities.

Activities you undertake as part of a group or team are valued as much as individual activities. You may carry out your own research or use others' research to inform your practice. Indicate how your teaching and learning support is influenced by different types of scholarly and/or professional activity. These activities are likely to be wide ranging, incorporating both formal and informal approaches to continuing professional development. Examples include:

- presenting or participating in conferences on higher education learning and teaching (often discipline-specific);
- attending workshops or training events related to higher education learning and teaching;
- engaging in peer observation or peer review of higher education teaching;
- regular departmental meetings where the discussion is about HE learning and teaching issues;
- effective dialogue about learning and teaching;
- bidding for and involvement in projects or research on higher education learning and teaching;
- implementing new approaches to higher education learning and teaching;
- subject and other network activities in higher education learning and teaching;
- reading and applying literature related to higher education learning and teaching;
- incorporating research and scholarship related to higher education learning and teaching into your own practice;
- visits to other institutions/organisations;
- evaluating one's own professional practices;
- undertaking accredited and non-accredited CPD that informs your professional practice.

How might you demonstrate that you have become a better teacher/practitioner through continuing professional development, research and the evaluation of your teaching and learning related practices?

If you wish, use this space to draft Area of Activity 5 by reflecting on:

1. Your main strategies for updating and developing your capability as a teacher and/or supporter of learning. Refer here to any activities you have undertaken to update yourself on aspects of teaching and learning, for example staff development activities, conferences on learning and teaching or participation in projects to develop learning methods;
2. How you used the outcomes from any continuing professional development strategies to improve learning experiences and your own professional practice;
3. How you incorporate other Dimensions of the Framework for example:
 - relevant Core Knowledge that you utilised and why;
 - relevant Professional Values that you utilised and why.

9. Referees

Your application must be supported by statements from two referees. The function of your referees is to provide an informed peer review of your eligibility for Associate Fellowship using their knowledge of your work and the context in which you teach and/or support learning. The referees should be individuals who are in a position to comment and substantiate your record of effectiveness in relation to teaching, and the support of learning in higher education. Referees are expected to comment directly on the content of your APP and will need to view your application to enable them to provide an effective reference. They should be provided with a copy of the [Guidance Notes for Referees](#).

At least one of your references should either be a Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow of the HEA, or an appropriate experienced member of staff working for a higher education institution. All referees need to be familiar with the UKPSF.

When you have received your references save them so that they are ready for uploading in the recognition application system in [MyAcademy](#). The HEA reserves the right to contact your referees for clarification so please ensure they include verifiable contact details.

10. Applying for Associate Fellowship in MyAcademy

The online recognition application will guide you through each stage of the process. Your application will be saved as you progress and is structured around the APP. You can save drafts of your application and return to complete it at a later date.

Once you have completed your APP, uploaded your references, paid the appropriate fee and submitted your application, it will then be subject to review by a recognition panel made up of two accreditors

An application for Associate Fellow can be made at any time during the year. The length of time it will take to process your application is dependent on the dates of our review panels. The HEA holds regular review panels each month to accommodate demand and typically you will be notified within 10-12 weeks.

Upon the successful attainment of your Associate Fellowship you will be able to download your certificate from within [MyAcademy](#).

11. What do you need to do to apply?

In summary, to apply you need to:

1. Prepare and write your APP – your reflective commentary on two Areas of Activity which includes relevant Core Knowledge and Professional Values.
2. Obtain two referee statements.
3. Register your details with the HEA's MyAcademy and complete the online recognition application;
4. Upload your referee statements;
5. Pay the appropriate fee.

12. Paying for your application

Employees of subscribing institutions can apply for a subsidised rate. If you are from a subscribing institution the fee is £100. If you are from a non-subscribing institution or independent the fee is £200. If you are unsure of your status please see further details in our [Terms and Conditions](#) for professional recognition and a definition of employment.

Payment is required by debit or credit card when you submit your application in [MyAcademy](#). You can pay this yourself at the time you submit or, if you are receiving financial support from your institution, there is an option for someone else to pay on your behalf. In both instances you will be sent a reference code to be able to make the payment.

Institutions and bulk payments

If an institution is paying for a number of applicants, each applicant will be able to select at the payment stage that another is paying on their behalf. A reference code will be provided and the applicant should give this code to their institution. Whoever is responsible for making the payment from the institution can sign into MyAcademy and make a payment on an institutional credit/debit card using that reference code (or multiple codes if paying for more than one individual). An institution can enter reference numbers for multiple individuals but the number of payments may be restricted depending on the debit/credit card limit.

13. How will your application be reviewed?

Your application will be reviewed by a panel of two independent accreditors as part of a peer review process. Accreditors are selected for their experience of external review, their understanding of the UKPSF, as well as for their knowledge and experience of learning and teaching in higher education. The accreditor pool includes education specialists and practitioners from a range of disciplines across the higher education sector. The accreditors will be looking for evidence that your approach to teaching and/or supporting learning is grounded in an understanding of how learners develop knowledge and practice within your discipline or role. Your evidence should therefore be reflective, not just descriptive. Accreditors will also look for indications of how you evaluate your effectiveness and how you develop your approach in the light of your experience and continuing professional development. A holistic approach to reviewing your application will be adopted and accreditors will seek evidence from across your application.

Guidance notes and evaluation grids for our accreditors are provided, explaining how they are expected to make professional judgements on Associate Fellowship applications.

In rare instances, HEA staff will act as arbitrators, such as in cases where there is a discrepancy or conflict of interest.

Should your application be judged as providing insufficient evidence for meeting the criteria, it will be referred back to you with constructive advice on how to revise it effectively. You will be offered one opportunity to resubmit without further charge, after which, if your application is unsuccessful, you have the option of reapplying at further cost.

You can check the status of your application by logging into "My Recognition" in [MyAcademy](#).

The HEA's review, judgement and feedback policy for recognition applications explains the terms and conditions and will be available in due course.

14. Appeals and complaints

Appeals and complaints can be made in accordance with the *HEA Accreditation, Recognition and Reward Appeals Policy*.

15. What if I have other questions?

If you cannot find the information you need or require further assistance, please email recognition@heacademy.ac.uk and one of our team will be able to assist you. You can also call us on (+44) 01904717500.

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