Applying the National Professional Development Framework in Higher Education Institutions

A Case study insight from HECA's Academic Quality Enhancement Forum's Colloquium on Professional Development

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#HECAPD

Foreword

HECA's Academic Quality Enhancement Forum (HAQEF) is composed of representatives of HECA colleges who come from a variety of roles and backgrounds, across both Quality Assurance (QA) and teaching and learning specific roles. I have had the great privilege of chairing HAQEF since the beginning of 2019 and in that time have seen the incredible commitment to academic quality shared by all of its members, past and present.

Whether in QA or teaching and learning roles, members all share a common goal to work towards the maintenance and enhancement of high quality learning environments for staff and students. The blend of experience of HAQEF members brings diverse perspectives that ensures our conversations and planning are considered from both a regulatory and management perspective as well as the frontline experience of teaching and learning for staff and students.

It was clear from early brainstorming meetings in 2019 that HAQEF members wanted their contribution and involvement to have a positive and tangible impact on members of the HECA community and beyond into the wider education community. For this reason, we chose to focus on developing a professional development and sectoral engagement strategy that has led to HAQEF's steady provision of professional development opportunities and engagement in the sector more broadly throughout the last number of years.

HAQEF's professional development journey began with the seed of an idea to hold a professional development colloquium for HECA Colleges members that has ultimately led to the production of this resource. We hope that this resource will be useful to our peers across the education sector who wish to explore ways to apply to the National Professional Development Framework at an institutional level.

I would like to thank all HAQEF members, current and former, for their valuable contributions to this work and with particular thanks to Justin Smyth and Dr Áine O'Reilly who played a critical role in the curation of this resource. This work would not be possible without the HECA Board and Patricia O'Sullivan, Executive Director of HECA, whose continuous support drives us forward.

Finally, thank you to the National Forum for their support, the creation of the National Professional Development Framework and the development of resources that have become the bedrock of our work.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Ruth Ní Bheoláin
Chair, HAQEF; QA Officer Hibernia College

Staff Wellness and Professional Development
#HECAPD

1 Introduction

The Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) is a representative body of Ireland's independent higher education sector. **HECA's Academic Quality Enhancement Forum (HAQEF)** was established in 2016 as a demonstration and commitment by HECA to quality enhancement. This forum was formerly run under the auspices of the HECA Academic Quality Enhancement Council and changed its title in June 2018 to the HECA Academic Quality Enhancement Forum.

This case study outlines HAQEF's collaborative efforts to apply the National Forum's **National Professional Development Framework** (PD Framework) at institutional level across HECA Colleges through the development and facilitation of a Professional Development Colloquium in 2019.

The purpose of this resource is to provide background to the rationale for taking this approach to applying the PD Framework in institutions, and to provide a set of tools that can be used by both individuals and institutions to explore professional development through the lens of the PD Framework. Additionally, this resource provides guidance on planning and facilitating a Professional Development Colloquium.

In the following sections we provide an overview of the PD Framework, trace HAQEF's development in understanding the framework and its institutional implications, describe the planning process underpinning the Colloquium and provide templates in appendices that could be adapted for future use.

2 An overview of the PD framework

A central theme of the **National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education** is the contribution of teaching and learning to student success. Enhancing teaching capabilities through professional development is therefore key to quality enhancement in Higher Education[1]. The PD Framework provides a conceptual understanding of professional development for those who teach in HE, as well as a means by which professional development can be classified and recorded. The framework is not linear, instead allowing engagement across learning experiences and domains. In addition, the framework recognizes the contribution of diverse persons and structures to student teaching and learning. In line with this, the PD Framework is aimed at "All staff who teach". This is a purposefully flexible term, inclusive to all roles involved in the facilitation of student learning (National Forum, 2016).

The PD Framework provides a flexible means of engaging with professional development whereby learning can be considered in different stages i.e. new learning, consolidation of learning, mentoring and leading. Learning activities can be classified and considered in a broad range of contexts ranging from informal, nonformal to formal including unaccredited and accredited activities. Professional development overall is considered in the context of five domains;

- The Self;
- Professional Identity, Values and Development;
- Professional Communication and Dialogue;
- Professional Knowledge and Skills; and
- Personal and Professional Digital Capacity.

The values inclusivity, authenticity, scholarship, learner-centredness and collaboration underpin the PD Framework.

HAQEF's first task was to develop a shared understanding of the PD Framework, and its implications for institutions. We did this through:

- Facilitating HAQEF discussions on the interpretation, adaption and implementation of the National Forum's (2016) PD Framework
- Building on the HECA Library Group (O'Neill, 2018) and other members' engagement with the PD Framework following pilot report publication (National Forum, 2018)

The National Framework report on the pilot implementation of the PD Framework describes how participants engaged most with the Self domain, with 68% beginning their professional development and 26% engaging in this domain. This compared with the lowest engagement, which was with the Digital Capacity domain (14%). Preference for the Self domain of the PD Framework was considered by HAQEF in terms of what it suggested to us about achieving institutional priorities for upskilling staff. In particular, the group noted that individual choices about professional development will not necessarily fulfil institutional priorities for upskilling staff, and professional development choices based on institutional priorities will not necessarily meet individual priorities for upskilling themselves. Working with this potential conflict in ways that addressed both institutional and individual priorities became a guiding focus for the HAQEF seminar.

1 National Forum Report: Understanding and Enabling Student Success in Irish Higher Education **www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2019-Student-Success-report-web-ready.pdf**

3 Implementing the PD framework: Attending to staff and institute needs

HAQEF identified balancing staff and institute needs as key to implementing the PD Framework at institutional level. This led to HAQEF's second task: teasing out how institutional and individual priorities could be addressed in implementing the PD Framework. We did this through:

- Facilitating discussions on the implementation of the National Forum's (2016) PD Framework across our individual institutions in colloquium format
- Drawing on theoretical perspectives that facilitated our understanding of the interaction between individual and institutional needs.

The National Forum's pilot report suggested the tendency for staff to gravitate towards fulfilling the self-domain rather than other professional development domains. For HAQEF, this raised the question of how professional development can address both individual and institutional needs, and the potential for conflict between institutional and individual priorities in professional development. This is illustrated in figure 1 below.

HAQEF drew on a range of theories in order to understand the interaction between the individual and the institution in choosing priorities for professional development. Goal-framing theory contextualised how individual choices can be different to, and conflict with, institutional choices, while Systemic Theory focused on the relationship between the individual and the institution.

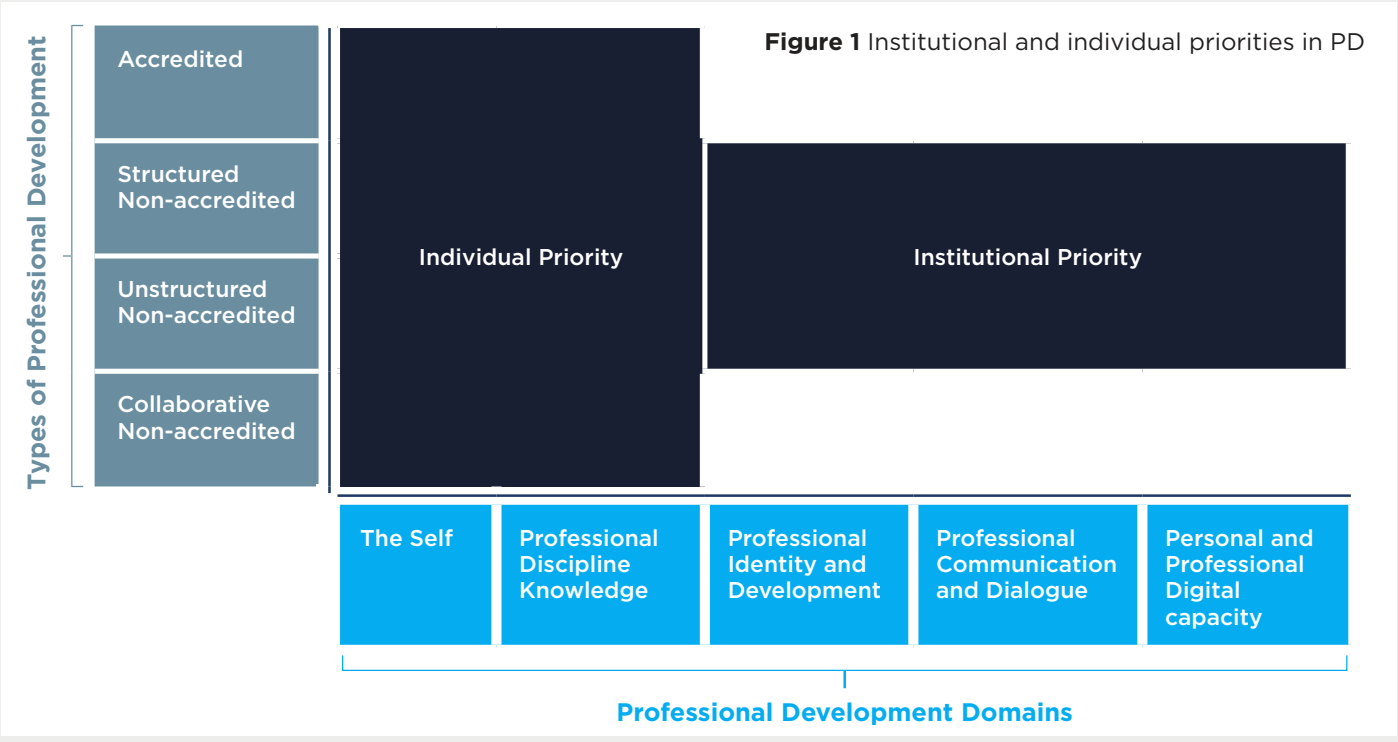


Figure 1 Institutional and individual priorities in PD

3.1 Goal-framing theory

Following Birkinshaw, Foss and Lindenberg, (2014) HAQEF sought to contextualise this potential incongruence within goal-framing theory, which hypothesises that we naturally seek to fulfil our own priorities at any given moment when left to our own devices. This suggests that staff will naturally gravitate towards fulfilling personal professional development needs in the absence of a consistently articulated institutional framework.

Continuing to draw from goal-framing theory, HAQEF recently purported (Ní Bheoláin & Murphy, 2020) that successful professional development needs to be in line with, and strive to achieve, the institution's strategic objectives. Finding and maintaining an equilibrium between staff and institution level goals is a key to the success of an institutional PD Framework. This means that it is important to find ways to ensure that staff feel that their personal professional development needs and priorities are fulfilled in tandem with institutional goals. This ethos subsequently underpinned all HAQEF activity in relation to professional development in line with the identified model illustrated in figure 2.

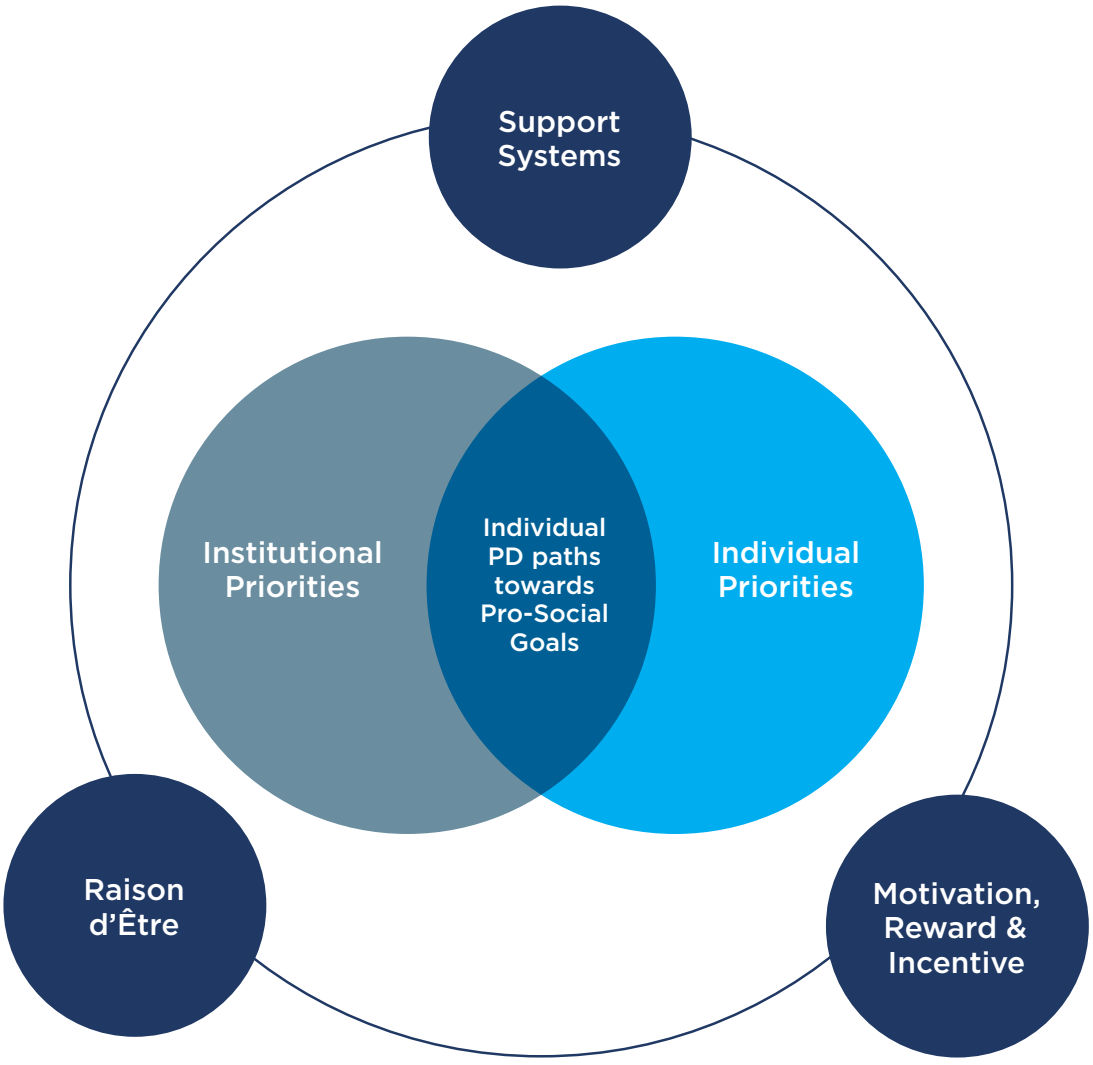


Figure 2 Goal-framing perspective

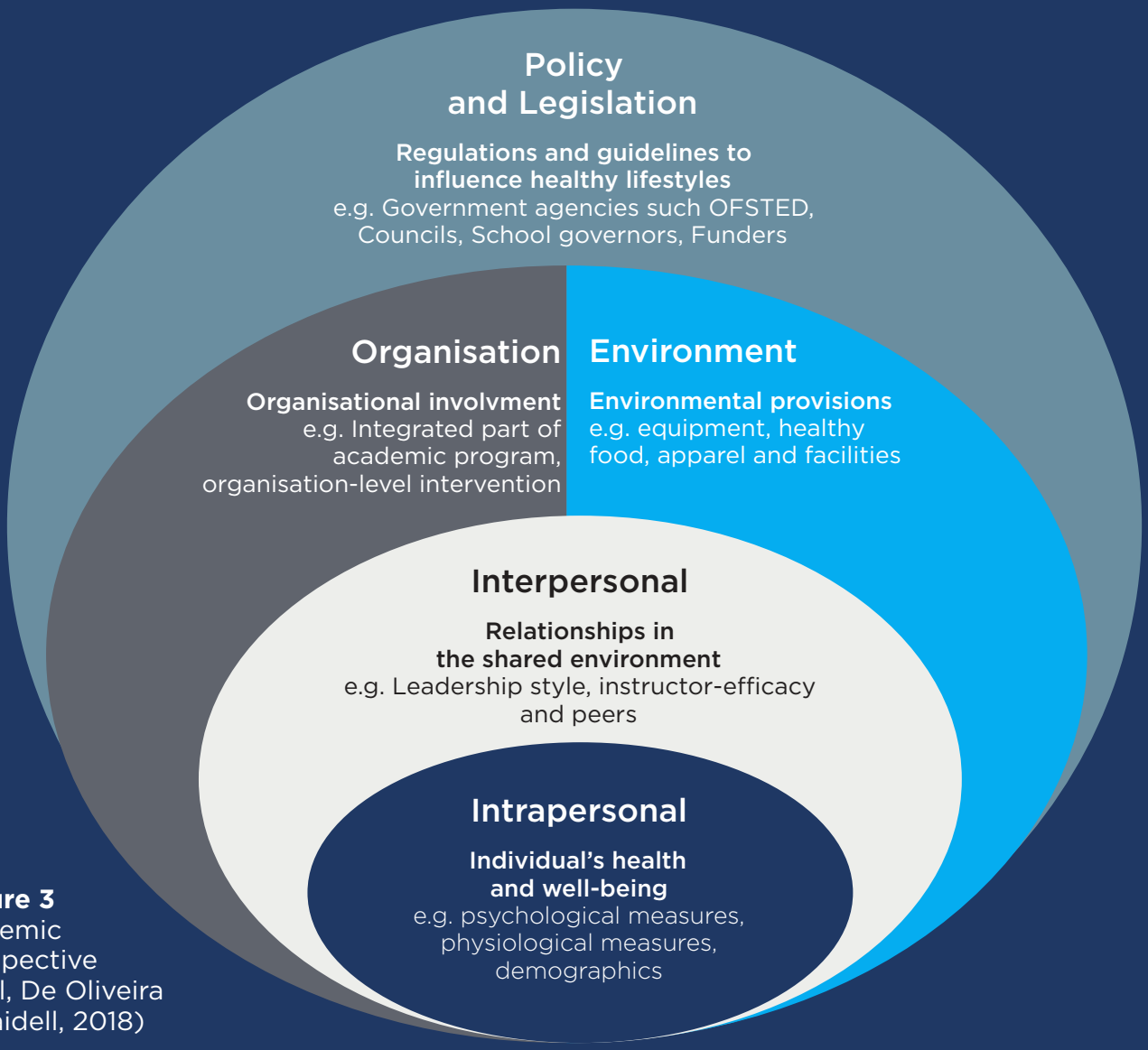


Figure 3
Systemic
Perspective
(Hull, De Oliveira
& Zaidell, 2018)

3.2 The individual and the institution – sharing aspirations

Similarly, HAQEF sought to contextualise the potential dilemma of conflicting individual and institutional needs for professional development drawing on systems theory. Systems can be defined as complex layers of interacting elements ranging from intra-personal, inter-personal, organization and external environment as illustrated in figure 3 (Von Bertalaffy, 1956; Hull & de Oliveira & Zaidell, 2018). From a systems perspective changes in one component of a system will affect other components as well as the overall system. This dynamic draws attention to interconnections and relationships between people and institutions rather than seeing them as separate components. Viewing providers through a systemic lens allowed us to identify key drivers, interactions, and dynamics that impact on choices about professional development, and to select points of intervention that shape how these choices could be made differently.

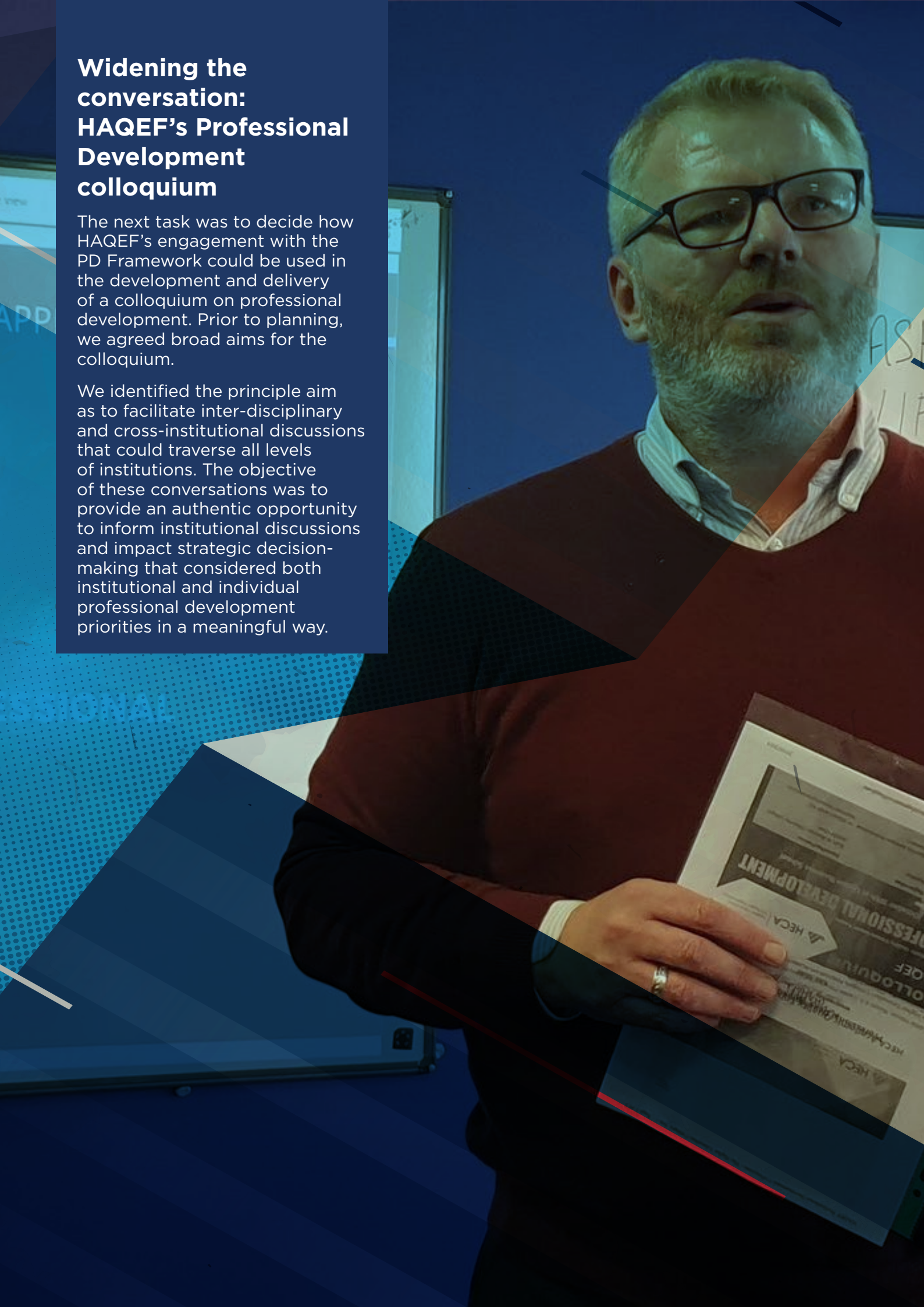
HAQEF looked at how organisational policies and practices could facilitate an individual's choice to engage or not to engage with professional development, and the domains of the PD Framework with which they might engage. The aim was not to find a right answer but to highlight the importance of making visible the contractual arrangements for professional development. Key arrangements that may require clarification were highlighted as:

- Whose responsibility is to drive individual staff member's professional development and what responsibility does an individual have to feedback to their organisation on their professional development?
- Is professional development carried out during work time or personal time?
- When and how is the professional development part of performance management and how is it rewarded?
- Who pays for professional development, the individual or the organisation?

Widening the conversation: HAQEF's Professional Development colloquium

The next task was to decide how HAQEF's engagement with the PD Framework could be used in the development and delivery of a colloquium on professional development. Prior to planning, we agreed broad aims for the colloquium.

We identified the principle aim as to facilitate inter-disciplinary and cross-institutional discussions that could traverse all levels of institutions. The objective of these conversations was to provide an authentic opportunity to inform institutional discussions and impact strategic decision-making that considered both institutional and individual professional development priorities in a meaningful way.



4 Planning a colloquium

In this section we outline the steps taken by HAQEF in planning the colloquium, and provide our planning tools which we hope will be useful guides to those who wish to hold PD Colloquiums. The next stage was to plan the colloquium. The overall aim had been identified as facilitating authentic conversations around professional development across all staff who teach in HECA colleges, thus allowing for diversity of perspectives and representation of different staff groups. This aim provided a guide to all our planning activities. We also decided that all staff in attendance were eligible to receive a certificate of attendance in recognition of the continued professional development hours they had acquired.

The tasks were identified as:

- Developing a planning schedule
- Identifying objectives and learning outcomes,
- Deciding on attendance
- Identifying a structure for the colloquium
- Deciding on activities.

4.1 Planning schedule

The colloquium was scheduled for the end of October 2019. Colloquium planning took place throughout March- October 2019. The sample agendas and session planning table below align closely with how the colloquium itself was organised.

See associated sections sample agenda and session planning appendices.

Core Activities and Planning Milestones	Key Tasks
Initial proposal	• Initial proposal discussed and finalised by relevant committee • Proposal submitted to an approval body e.g. HECA board in the context of HAQEF
First 2-hour planning meeting	• Determined format and venue • Identified themes • Brainstorming for speakers & activities
Second 2-hour planning meeting-	• Finalised agenda, scheduling, speaker invitations & topics • Identified activities and assigned to pairs for development • Identified professional groupings for targeted invitations • Housekeeping (social media, budget, materials)
One- two month before event	• Speakers and participants invited • Completion of delegated tasks
PD Colloquium took place end of October	

Table 1 HAQEF colloquium: Planning and activities

4.2 Objectives and learning outcomes

The overall aim of the colloquium was to facilitate conversations around professional development (PD) across all staff who teach in HECA colleges. The following learning outcomes were developed to identify what participants should gain from their attendance.

1. Understand PD at an individual level and in relation to their specific staff role in a community of practice
2. Understand the relationship between PD and staff wellness and identify strategies to promote wellness in PD planning.
3. Identify enabling factors and barriers that impact their individual participation in PD.
4. Identify enabling factors and barriers that impact institutional approaches to PD.
5. Discuss and apply learnings from the colloquium within their institution.

4.3 Inviting participants

The PD Framework is aimed at all staff who teach in higher education. 'Teach' includes all of those involved in the teaching and the facilitation of student learning, some of whom might not see themselves as teachers. Accordingly, we planned to target a broad range of invitees through both open calls to attend and also through targeted invitation to boost attendance from typically under-represented groups.

4.4 Structuring the colloquium

The day was divided into four workshops following a set structure that involved a lightning talk by a subject expert, table activities and discussion facilitated by a HAQEF member and finally a group discussion facilitated by the session leader. The nature of PD, including the PD framework, the role of staff wellness, enabling factors and barriers to participation in PD and institutional approaches to PD were identified as key themes and underpinned these workshops.

To facilitate dialogue that spanned individual, role-specific and institutional perspectives, participants were requested to sit with members of other institutions and with participants from diverse job-roles for the first half of the day. In the latter sessions, participants were invited to sit with colleagues from their own institution to combine their learnings and begin to discuss how they could apply them in their institution-specific context.

Four structured workshops following set themes with opportunities for inter-institutional and within-institution collaboration

Session/Theme	Table arrangements
1: What is Professional Development?	Inter-institutional
2: Staff Wellness and Professional Development	Inter-institutional
3: Enabling Factors & Barriers to Participating in PD	Within institution
4: Institutional Approaches to PD	Within institution

4.5 Activities

All the activities planned for the colloquium were oriented towards the goal of enabling discussion of the PD Framework among HECA staff involved in teaching and learning in a variety of capacities. The activities were shaped by reflections at both an individual and institutional level, encouraging further engagement by participants in their respective institutions, and to gain as rich a variety of responses as possible, it was recommended that as far as possible groups would be made up of participants from different institutions and representing different roles.

The PD Framework formed the basis of the first collaborative activity, in which participants were asked to reflect firstly on what they consider professional development to be, and then to map it to the framework's typologies and domains. The second activity used vignettes to explore professional development in the context of wellness, and allowed space for participants to write a reflective piece relating to their own experiences of wellness in this context. The colloquium was rounded out by two activities which were interconnected – groups were asked to identify enablers and barriers to professional development for the third session, and – regrouping where possible with colleagues from their own institutions – the discussion turned to institutional approaches to professional development for the fourth and final session.

5 Conclusion

This insight has aimed to provide a dual means of contextualising the challenges and implications of the PD Framework for institutions, and laying out a proposal for how this may be achieved by means of a colloquium. The HAQEF Professional Development Colloquium was a fruitful collaborative exercise which captured a range of insights, experiences and attitudes to professional development among staff who teach in HECA colleges. The PD Framework supplied an organising ethos which guided the contributions and reflections of participating staff. Its design allowed for a meaningful inquiry into the multi-faceted character of professional development, encouraging dialogue between staff at different levels of teaching engagement, and from different types of institutions.

The relationship of the individual and the institution formed the nexus of the colloquium – therefore just as subjectivity was mediated by the perceived interests of the institution, so the institution did not stand as a monolith eclipsing the individual. The resulting discussion, delimited but never constricted by the professional development types and domains intrinsic to the framework, provoked probing questions of both individual and institution in relation to professional development, and pointed the way forward to future enhancements and further discussion of professional development among all stakeholders. This insight will, it is to be hoped, itself provide a framework for exploring further the possibilities of the PD Framework for institutions for which teaching and learning is a central concern.

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6 Appendix

6.1 **Appendix 1** Sample Agenda

Time	Session
9:30- 10:00	Registration
10:00- 10:15	Welcome
10:15- 11:00	Introduction to Professional Development (Guest speaker)
11:00- 11:45	**Session 1** What is professional development?
11:45- 12:00	Comfort break
12:00- 13:00	**Session 2** Enabling factors and barriers to participating in professional development
13:00- 14:00	Lunch
14:00- 15:00	**Session 3** Staff wellness and professional development
15:00- 16:00	**Session 4** Institutional approach to professional development
16:00- 16:30	**Closing session/ summary session** e-certificate (Follow link to confirm attendance/ e-mail to receive e-certificate)
16:00- 16:30	Thank you

6.2 **Appendix 2** Session Planning Sample Resource

Session Theme	Table discussion Prompting Questions	Activity ideas
Session 1 What is professional development?	• What do you do to engage in PD? • What do you think about when you hear PD? • Do you keep a record of PD? If, so, how? • Is formal learning more important that informal learning? • PD for Teaching versus Discipline CPD what is the responsibility of the College, either or both?	'Pin the activity on the framework' - provide template grid for PD activities and write activity on post-it, pin it to the wall. Do this at beginning and then see if people want to move their activity or ADD activities after discussion Use a device to take pictures of work created
Session 2 Enabling factors and barriers to participating in professional development	• What encourages you to participate in PD? • What prevents you from participating in PD? • CPD attendance as part of performance review?	Role play of staff and manager discussing the expectations of engaging with PD and barriers
Session 3 Staff wellness and professional development	• Is there a relationship between PD and staff wellness?	Parallel discussion topic – switch topics half way through Topic 1. Experiences of CPD that contributed to my wellbeing: what worked? Topic 2. Experiences of CPD that did not contribute to my wellbeing: what did not work? Full group. How can this help me approach and plan CPD
Session 4 Institutional approach to professional development	• How important do you think PD is regarded in your institute? • Does PD have an impact on staff retention? • Mechanisms for measuring the impact of PD. Is it working?	Budget allocating exercise- what would you do if you had a limitless budget? What would you do if you had no budget?

6.3 **Appendix 3** Activities

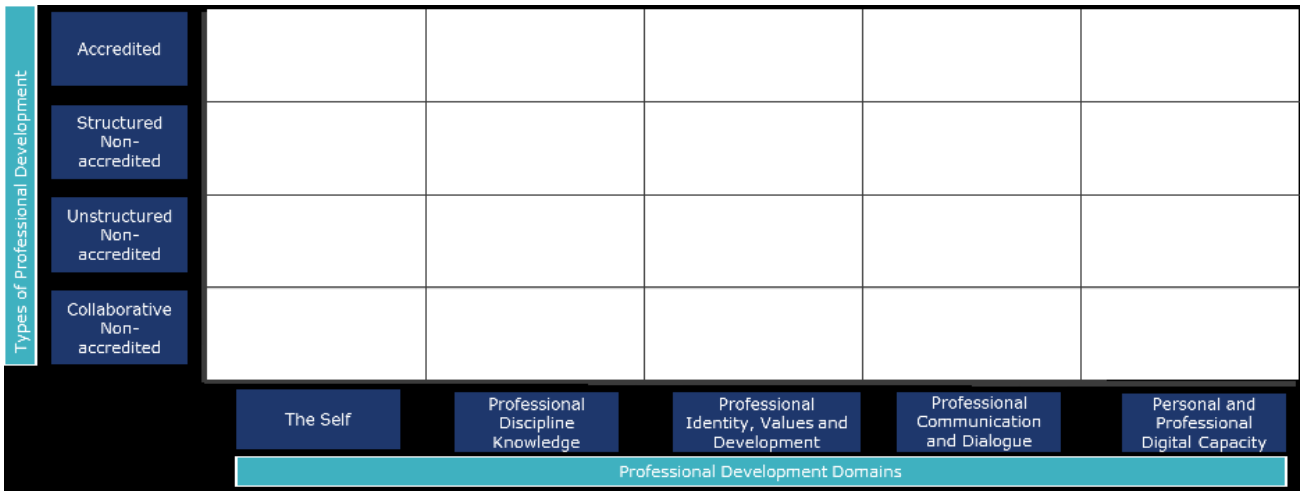
6.3.1 Session 1: What is Professional Development?

Activity: Matrix mapping activity based on National PD Framework

Guiding Questions

As an individual, thinking about your current practice, can you:

- Identify what PD activities you are currently engaging in?
- Relate your activities to specific PD domain?



6.3.2 Session 2: Staff Wellness and Professional Development

Activity: Vignettes

Guiding Questions

When reading the vignettes provided, consider the following:

- Experiences of PD that contributed to wellbeing; what worked?
- Experiences of PD that did not contribute to wellbeing; what did not work?

Vignette 1- Reflecting on staff wellness and professional development:

Michelle is a busy programme administrator. Her inbox is never empty and she spends half her life in meetings! There never seems to be enough time to get everything done. At times, she can feel stressed and overwhelmed and has noticed her clothes are getting a little snugger! Often Michelle takes a very short lunch to catch up on important educational twitter posts.

Her department manager has offered her a range of opportunities for professional learning but she is too busy to take time out to avail of these opportunities.

A learn-at-lunch program was recently started in her workplace to supplement employee training for work and non-work-related topics.

Her workplace is also raising money for the Make a Wish Foundation as part of their corporate social responsibility. To aid fundraising some staff are completing the mini-marathon later this year and running training sessions at lunch and after work.

Vignette 2- Reflecting on staff wellness and professional development:

Brian has recently been appointed in a Staff Support unit in a busy institution. His primary project is to develop a professional development programme for all staff. Since starting, many staff have stopped Brian in the hallway or chatted in the kitchen about the difficulties they are experiencing. Administrators complain that academic staff don't follow processes and academics say there is too much red tape. Staff are worried that a professional development programme will mean more work on their desk and no individual benefit.

Senior management have a specific set of goals they want the professional development structure to achieve. There is a small budget for training but there is a willingness to allow staff to take time to participate in training within and outside the college, as long as it is relevant.

When Brian tries to get formal feedback, there is very little engagement. He is worried that there is no approach he can take that will motivate staff and achieve senior management's goals.

Vignette 3- Write a vignette of your own experience

6.3.3 Session 3: Enabling Factors & Barriers to Participating in PD

Activity: Identifying enablers and barriers worksheet

Guiding Questions

- As an individual, what encourages you to, or prevents you from, participating in PD?
- In the context of the workplace, what are barriers or enabling conditions for participating in PD?
- Can you describe some of the barriers or enabling conditions for facilitating all staff to participate in PD ?
- Should records of PD be used as part of performance review?

Table:	**Date: 30th October 2019 (Session 3)**

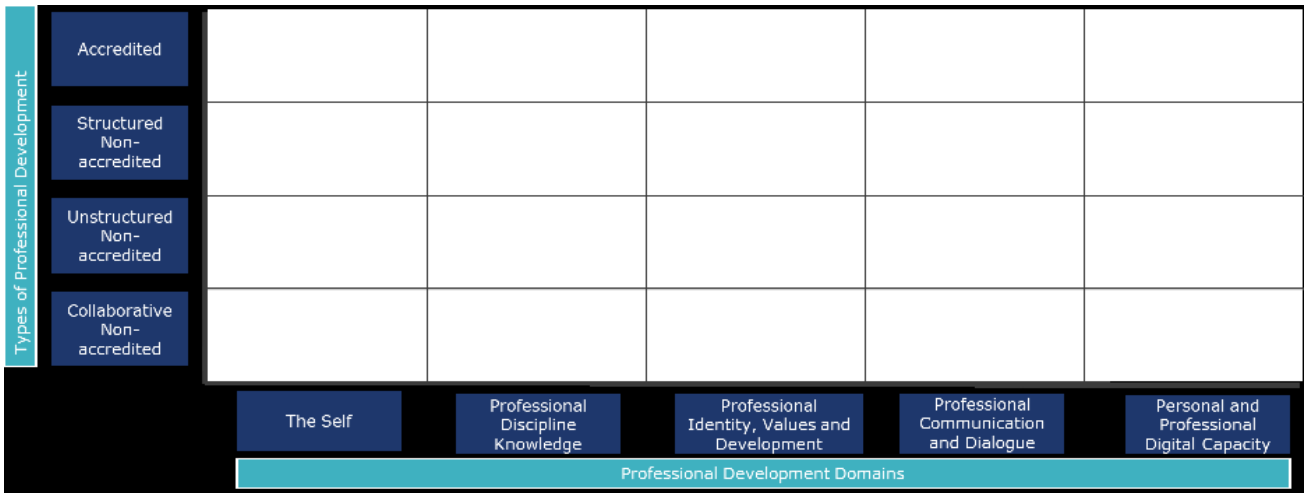
Enabling Factors *E.g. Institutional budget*	**Barriers** *E.g. Scheduling*
Could **Enable** and/or create a **Barrier:** *E.g. Line manager's attitude to CPD*	
Notes	

6.3.4 Session 4: Institutional Approaches to Professional Development

Guiding Questions

Thinking about your Higher Education Institution, can you:

- Identify PD activities that are available to staff in general?
- Identify areas of PD that should be provided to all staff?
- Consider how this can be achieved following discussions of staff wellness, barriers and enablers to PD in earlier sessions?



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National College of Ireland

OTC Open Training College

Setanta College The Online Sports College

SQT

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