

# HECA Response to National Guidance for Professional Development of Staff who Teach in Higher Education (March 2016); and A Resource for Planning Personal Professional Development: Individual Staff (March 2016)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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This report was prepared by Dr Fiona O’Riordan on behalf of the HECA Teaching and Learning Committee. It represents the collective views of the Committee.

## 2 GENERAL FEEDBACK

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HECA Teaching and Learning Committee welcome an opportunity to respond to the approach for Professional Development of teaching staff in higher education. The general consensus is that the two consultation documents responded to in this report are very comprehensive. The approach is inclusive and offers the opportunity for a wide variety of development to be accommodated by individuals.

We look forward to receipt of document 3 ‘National Guidance for Enhancing Teaching and Learning’ as a resource for institutions and expect that this document will deal with issues of implementation. Although we support the flexible and fluid approach to professional development, this may pose difficulties regarding monitoring and implementing the approach within each institution. Senior management commitment is key to successful roll out of the approach to professional development for teachers in higher education. QQI state in a recent white paper for consultation<sup>1</sup> that providers are responsible for offering opportunities for, and promoting professional development of teaching staff (2016, p.24). Whilst this will scaffold senior management commitment, there is an anxiety regarding validation and authentication of evidence provided by teachers in terms of their development, in particular development activities within the unstructured and non-accredited typology. Issues regarding fairness and consistency both within the individual institutions and also across institutions are of concern to us.

We would welcome clarification regarding use of the professional development approach as a collective professional development evaluation for a programme team, school, faculty and college; where shared professional development creates a cohesive whole. But perhaps this discussion is best held until receipt of the final document for consultation.

We welcome the non-prescriptive approach to professional development and the support for institutional autonomy but suggest that it might be helpful to allocate funding to generate open access

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<sup>1</sup> Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines, White Paper for Consultation (February, 2016)

support tools and resources for each phase, in particular Tyro, a key phase where minimum level outcomes across all providers might be a useful starting point.

We recommend including the key characteristics/description for each of the different phases.

Finally, we suggest that *Underpinning Values* be included in Section 1 as they provide the base for all professional development programmes.

### 3 NATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF WHO TEACH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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#### 3.1 TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE 5 DOMAINS IDENTIFIED VALIDLY REPRESENT THE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE OF THOSE WHO TEACH IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

We recognise that the learning phases may not always be linear as stated in the documents, but wonder how documentation of non-linear development across the domains can be represented on the self-evaluation graph (figure 4).

In domain 4, there may be case for greater emphasis on both first year transition, and authentic assessment and learning opportunities.

#### 3.2 HAVE YOU ANY SUGGESTION FOR ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE CURRENT ELEMENTS (STATEMENTS)?

There are circumstances where part-time lecturers bring valuable teaching examples into the learning environment by virtue of their activity in industry. This is a pertinent element of domain 4 but is missing both in the statements and guiding questions. Perhaps 4.1 statement could be slightly expanded in the e.g. section to include 'relevant industry projects'

#### 3.3 WHAT OTHER QUESTIONS COULD BE INCLUDED IN EACH DOMAIN TO GUIDE AND DIFFERENTIATE THOSE IN DIFFERENT LEARNING PHASES AS THEY REFLECT?

We recognize and appreciate the need to keep the questions brief in order to allow for broad interpretation. However, we recommend inclusion of the following additional questions:

Domain 1: Tyro – What is your teaching philosophy?

Domain 2: Tyro – How do you apply the cycle of evidence-based reflection and planning?

Domain 3: Practitioner – What communities of practice are you engaging with?

### **3.4 ARE THERE ANY RESOURCES THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF, OR CURRENTLY USING, WHICH YOU WOULD RECOMMEND FOR INCLUSION AS A RESOURCE RELATING TO ELEMENTS OF THE DOMAINS?**

The ISSE Survey results report is a useful document to offer direction on a broad pedagogical approach that is reflective of national and international best practice – see [http://studentsurvey.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ISSE-Report\\_2015-final-tagged.pdf](http://studentsurvey.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ISSE-Report_2015-final-tagged.pdf)

### **3.5 PLEASE REVIEW APPENDIX 3. DO YOU THINK THIS VIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP CAPTURES THE BREADTH AND DIVERSITY OF SCHOLARSHIP IN TEACHING AND LEARNING? ARE THERE OTHER WAYS TO DO THIS? ARE THERE OTHER EXAMPLES THAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED?**

Teaching & Learning policy development outside of the institution i.e. informing national and European policy in higher education is not included. Additionally, there is virtually no emphasis on digital literacy as a Scholarship of Teaching & Learning competency included. Also collaborative international research projects are omitted.

## **4 A RESOURCE FOR PLANNING PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: INDIVIDUAL STAFF**

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### **4.1 CLARITY OF PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION**

The document is clear in most respects. It is accessible and welcoming, and certainly one that we believe all teachers in higher education can utilise effectively. An area that is understandably not clear in purpose and description, is that of evidence. In the current approach, it could be argued that evidence is a subjective matter. This relates to earlier discussions under section 2 above regarding consistent and fair authentication of evidence. This will require some work with educational developers who will be ultimately responsible for guiding and developing the professional development approach within their own institutions. This should form part of the Forum's agenda in terms of funded support for educational development, perhaps through EDIN.

### **4.2 ANTICIPATED USEFULNESS IN PRACTICE (PERHAPS A CUSTOMIZED ONLINE INTERFACE)**

A customised online interface might be useful and will contribute to consistency across institutions. Alternatively, institutions can identify and support a platform for recording same e.g. WordPress or Mahara for ePortfolios.

### **4.3 COMPREHENSIVENESS/COMPLETENESS FOR EVALUATING AND PLANNING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

We suggest that perhaps in Tables 4 & 5 *My Key Learning Aim* be replaced with *My key Learning Outcome*.

**4.4 ARE THERE ANY ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF NOT COVERED WITHIN THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT?**

Opportunities for including relevant and current industry projects as discussed above under 3.2

***HECA Teaching & Learning Committee  
5/04/2016***