CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTAINING GOOD STANDING OF FELLOWS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY

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Abstract

Many staff in UK Higher Education institutions have been recognised as Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellows at one of the four categories available through continuing professional development (CPD) programmes that have been accredited by the HEA. This demonstrates meeting one of the four descriptors outlined in the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education (UKPSF) (5). One of the dimensions of the UKPSF is engaging in CPD, and the Fellowship Code of Practice (6) highlights the importance of good standing. All CPD accredited schemes within institutions are required to include reference to CPD opportunities and how good standing is monitored. There are however limited studies exploring the good standing activity although there are studies that have looked at institutional CPD schemes and gaining HEA Fellowship. Botham (1) states that the studies available to date provide mixed evidence of academics engaging in these schemes having a positive impact on teaching practice. Shaw (11) and van der Sluis et al's (12) found that staff who engaged with this tended to do this for recognition of their teaching practice to date and not regarding it as a vehicle to enhance and develop teaching practice.

The authors of this paper report on the good standing scheme that has been used in one UK University for the last two years and that there is demonstration of enhancements to teaching practice as well as championing the UKPSF to support the development of colleagues teaching practice. We will outline in this small-scale study the approach that has been used for good standing for both Principal (PF) and Senior Fellows (SF) from our programme. An analysis was undertaken of the reflective reports that are submitted by all PF and SFs. Positive impact is shown in such references to "*increased use of technology which led to the provision of online lectures"* (P6) and *"the development of resources to enhance personalisation through using these"* (P1) as well as *"sharing SOTL articles with colleagues through social media"* (P4). Many mentioned since gaining their Fellowship they had been able to *"champion the UKPSF with colleagues and mentor them to gain Fellowship"* (P2) and *"promote their colleagues development"* (P5). Additionally, feedback from those who have engaged in the annual activity have found writing the reflection and meeting with colleagues very valuable for sharing ideas and identifying what developments they had undertaken. This is important in terms of demonstrating this is not just a tick box activity but one that does change practice.

Keywords: Good standing, Continuing Professional Development, HEA Fellowship

1 INTRODUCTION [ARIAL, 12-POINT, BOLD, UPPER CASE AND LEFT ALIG.]

There have been significant changes to the professional standing of teaching and learning in higher education since the Dearing report (9). This report led to initiatives such as creation of the Centres for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CETL), organisations such as the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) and the Institute for Learning and Teaching in HE (ILTHE), which called for some form of accreditation of teaching, and numerous policy documents such as *the future of higher education* (3) which recommended that standards for teaching in higher education be developed. In 2006, the first version of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education (UKPSF) was published and the revised current standards were published in 2011 (5).

The UKPSF has underpinned the many postgraduate certificate programmes in learning and teaching or academic practice that higher education institutions provide for their staff. Alongside gaining a recognised teaching qualification these programmes also offer recognition as an HEA Associate Fellow

or Fellow through HEA accreditation. Additionally, many institutions also provide an HEA accredited professional development route which enables professional recognition at one of four categories of Fellowship (Associate Fellow AFHEA, Fellow FHEA, Senior Fellow SFHEA or Principal Fellow PFHEA). The professional development route enables those who may not have undertaken an accredited teaching programme to gain recognition. Additionally, participants can gain SFHEA or PFHEA which require sustained engagement in learning and teaching over a period of years beyond those required to complete a teaching qualification. They also require applicants to have influence on colleagues' development of high quality teaching and strategic impact on learning and teaching across an institution, nationally or internationally.

The authors' professional development scheme the RISES Programme like many others, mirrors the requirements of the HEA's direct application route. As such it requires individuals to provide a reflective account of their professional practice related to the requirements for the appropriate category of Fellowship. These reflective accounts are then reviewed by a small number of peers, which for SFHEA and PFHEA include both internal and external peers to assess if they have met the requirements. The use of reflective accounts to demonstrate whether individuals have met the requirements has been questioned by others who believe this may be ritualistic and similar to a tick box matching exercise (10; 8). The authors' experience of mentoring colleagues through this process however has not supported this view. We do, though, share an interest in how gaining Fellowship then continues to impact on the enhancement of teaching and learning and thus the student experience.

All SFHEAs and PFHEAs who gain recognition through our professional development scheme are required to engage in providing a reflective account of around 1,000 words which demonstrates their annual CPD related to teaching activity, to remain in good standing (6). This reflective account is provided using a template which asks what the CPD objectives for that year were, what CPD activity individuals have been engaged in and what they had learnt, what the impact on practice was and the CPD objectives for the next year. In addition, all who have submitted their reflective account are then allocated to a group of three or four peers to meet and discuss their CPD reflections. All are sent each other's accounts prior to the meeting. This process very much mirrors the one used by SEDA for their Fellowship scheme and was chosen because two of the authors engage in this practice annually and have found this valuable. Whilst the discussions that take place in the groups are confidential to those individuals, the authors were interested in the details included in their reflections. This paper therefore reports on a small-scale study which reviewed the annual written reflections for one year (2017/18) which were submitted by all SFHEA's and PFHEA's from one institutional scheme.

2 METHODOLOGY

The authors are engaged in several strands of research related to developing and enhancing the educational career of academics, and this is paper reports on one component of that research. The methodology being used for the research is naturalistic inquiry, which takes account of the environment where the research takes place but also acknowledges a range of tools may be needed (7). Twenty two SFHEAs (15) and PFHEAs (7) from the authors' institution participated in the peer review of CPD scheme in 2018 by contributing reflective accounts and engaging in a peer review meeting as described above. All those who had gained SFHEA and PFHEA had done so within the last three years except two of the authors who gained PFHEA four years ago. Our small-scale study of the peer review CPD scheme uses the reflective accounts provided by those engaging in the annual CPD reflective review process for SFHEAs and PFHEAs but did exclude the authors own accounts. The reflective accounts were used rather than interviews because the authors were aware that documents have the advantage of not being influenced by the researchers; they provide exact details as they were at the time they were provided (2). All reflective accounts were anonymized prior to the authors reviewing these. Due to the nature of the data reported here, coming from documents alone, Bowden's (2) work on documentary analysis was also drawn upon. Bowen (2) discussed the use of documentary analysis often complementing other data collection approaches, but also recognised that documents can be used as the only source of data.

Ethical approval for the research had already been granted by the appropriate institutional committee that oversees research related to learning and teaching. Excluding the authors from the study left nineteen participants in the CPD activity and these were all e-mailed by a programme administrator and provided with some initial information about the study, the participant information sheet, and a consent form. If participants consented to participate then they returned the form to the programme administrator

who then anonymized their reflective account and distributed this to the authors for analysis. Of the nineteen participants eleven (58%) submitted a consent form for their account to be analysed.

Documentary analysis is an iterative process of scanning, reading in detail and then interpretation and so each reflective account was then scanned, read through and then a thematic analysis was undertaken for each account (2). Themes from the accounts were identified for two key areas which were:

- the type of CPD activity individuals engaged in
- the impact this CPD had on an individual's practice

For the type of CPD activity that had been engaged in there were ten themes that arose from the reflective accounts and for the impact this CPD had on practice eight themes arose.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results from this study are provided below in relation to each of the two areas with a table for each with the themes that arose and discussion of the results for each area.

3.1 The type of CPD activity individuals engaged in

The range of CPD activities as expected was varied amongst the eleven participants although some did engage in similar activities as shown in table 1. Most of the participants engaged in more than one activity during the year.

Table 1. CPD Activities.

CPD Activity	Participant
Attended a workshop, module or online course	P6/ P7/ P8/ P 9/ P10/ P11
Presented at conferences with teaching focus or strand	P1/ P4/ P7/ P11
Networking and links with other educators outside the institution	P1/ P2
Networking with others in the institution	P6/ P11
Writing development opportunities	P2/ P3
Reviewing articles for journals	P4
Mentoring and Coaching Development	P5/ P6
Peer Review of colleagues' teaching	P4
Worked with colleagues redesigning modules/content/assessments	P10/ P11
Shadowing a colleague	P11

As can be seen from table 1 the most popular activity was attending a workshop, module or online course with six (54%) participants identifying this as one of their activities. Interestingly, in contrast to these results, van der Sluis et al (12) found that the majority (71%) of their participants reported their CPD as including reading more educational research. This discrepancy may be due to differences in the population of participants. van der Sluis et al focussed those engaged in *writing* their Fellowship applications, which required them to show engagement with the literature. It is possible that participants sometime after obtaining Fellowship either no longer read educational research, or undertake it so regularly that they do not consider it as CPD.

van der Sluis et al (12) also found that 58% of their participants disseminated their own innovative teaching and learning practice. Our participants also engaged in activities that would lead to sharing their practice with two (18%) identifying writing opportunities as one of their activities and a further four (36%) identified presenting at conferences, which is a similar percentage of staff. Some of our participants (4:36%) also valued networking with others, both within the institution and beyond and provided reasons for this as including collaboration on projects but also having the value of their work corroborated beyond the institution. The authors were surprised to see that only one participant (9%) cited peer review as a CPD activity but this might be because peer review is an institutional policy that all who teach are required to engage with annually, and thus participants did not see this as an activity they sought out. Further work to establish how participants decide what 'counts' as CPD would help to elucidate these differences in the literature. It would be interesting to see if results are different if participants are facilitated to keep an ongoing portfolio of CPD, rather than completing reflective accounts retrospectively.

3.2 The impact this CPD had on an individual's practice

Whilst there have been concerns raised about whether CPD activity related to teaching and learning has any impact on teaching practice (1) the authors anecdotally knew that colleagues did change practice as a result of CPD. This small-scale study has provided evidence of this.

Table 2 Impact on individual practice

Impact on Practice	Participant
Developed educational resources for students – Screen casts and videos Story telling site	 P1 /P10 / P5 /
Mentored colleagues and championed HEA Fellowship	P2 /P4 /P5 /P6
Changed content for sessions/ modules	P9 /P11
Revised assessment criteria to be clearer	P11
Collaborated with colleagues across disciplines	P3
Leading employability activities	P7
More actively engages with technology in teaching	P8

The impact on individual practice has included both changes to personal practice, and supporting others to change theirs. As with van der Sluis et al's (12) study where 33% had made changes to the design of learning activities and the use of technology in teaching, so too did 45% of those in this study. The participants in this study discussed developing screen casts and videos for students to be able to review content both prior to face to face sessions but also following sessions. Additionally, one had developed a story telling site for students which was a pertinent and important resource for her discipline. There was reference to content for sessions and modules being updated and amended as well as assessment criteria being revised to be clearer for students. Lastly one participant also recognised the need to be more actively engaged with technology in teaching and had used specific technology approaches in class. The authors were surprised that only 36% of the participants in this study referred to mentoring colleagues for teaching activity and championing HEA Fellowships, compared to 53% in van der Sluis et al (12). However, those that indicated they did this provided examples of supporting colleagues with using technology, some group work activities and in planning sessions. The championing of HEA Fellowship was often by mentoring colleagues to prepare their applications for fellowship and / or encouraging colleagues to attend the introductory workshop about the CPD programme and the categories of Fellowship. There was also one participant who indicated that they had been collaborating with colleagues across disciplines related to face to face teaching activity and simulation which applied to three different disciplines. They indicated how they had been

sharing practice through setting up an across institution special interest group. This has enabled those in the group to share practice and learn from colleagues about what worked and issues that might have arisen. This supported individual in the group continuing to develop their practice but also try new approaches.

One issue that arose in two of the participants' reflective accounts was the need to protect time to engage in CPD, in order to facilitate subsequent developments in teaching practice. Whereas having research time protected is understood by many, this is not the same for teaching development. Individuals are proactive at protecting time for research but feel they cannot do this for teaching which they believe is not seen by all as equally important despite the increased focus on teaching excellence through the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the reference to this matching research excellence (4). Shaw (11) notes that this would require a shift in the landscape and culture of higher education, but it is crucial if CPD is to lead to an impact on teaching practice.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The authors felt that the range of CPD staff had engaged in reflected activities that would enable staff to develop practice because they had learnt a new skill perhaps, or because they had been inspired by a colleague to try something new. Staff had also engaged in activities where they could disseminate practice to others. Whilst there have been clear examples of the impact on practice the authors believe that more information about specific changes could be provided, alongside clarity on which CPD activities really led to the changes in practice. There is also no mention of any evaluation of the changes in practice either through self-reflection, peer review, student feedback, or more formal research methods. The lack of information about evaluation may be due to the very broad headings used in the reflective account template, so as a result of this study, the template will be revised to include headings that ask specifically what was learnt through each CPD activity, and whether practice was changed by that specific activity. Additionally participants will be asked what evaluation has taken place so far and / or is planned to evaluate the change. Furthermore, encouraging staff to keep an ongoing portfolio of CPD activity may lead to a fuller range of activities, including peer-review and reading of educational research, being included. As numbers grow, it will be useful to compare the activities of SFs and PFs in order to establish similarities and differences, and thus provide additional opportunities to support the development of both groups. As noted above, more work is needed to understand what participants regard as CPD and consider providing a definition in the documentation. The authors believe that changing the template will lead to case study examples of changes in practice that can be used to share good practice with others.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This small-scale study is the first evaluation undertaken of the content of the CPD reflective accounts submitted by those who engage in the institution's CPD RISES programme. The authors anecdotally had been aware of some staff making changes to their practice but sought evidence of these changes specifically linked to CPD activity for those with SFHEA and PFHEA. Given that descriptor 3 outlines these individuals as having a key contribution to high quality student learning and descriptor 4 refers to individuals having strategic leadership that contributes to high quality student learning it is essential they are demonstrating the impact of their CPD on practice and, that they are influencing others to do so through sharing their good practice (5). Whilst this study did provide evidence of the CPD activity individuals engaged with, the actual link between CPD and changes in practice was not readily apparent. This finding has led to a plan to revise the reflective account template for next year so that participants are asked to indicate any link between CPD activity and a change in practice but also how the change in practice has been evaluated, as well as the authors considering researching what CPD means in this context.

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