A STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

FOR TEACHING AND SUPPORTING

STUDENT LEARNING

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

SCOP

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Uwch Cymru

hefcw

Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales

Department for
**Employment
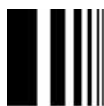and Learning**
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A Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Student Learning in Higher Education

1. Introduction

1.1   This paper presents a proposal for a standards framework for teaching and supporting student learning in higher education. The proposal is derived from existing research and practical evidence combined with the results of earlier consultations.

1.2   The paper proposes a broad definition of standards. This will provide an agreed reference point to enable higher education institutions to develop criteria appropriate to their own priorities. The framework builds on the existing programme accreditation system of the Higher Education Academy.

1.3   At the heart of this proposal is a commitment to acknowledging the distinctive nature of teaching in higher education, respecting the autonomy of higher education institutions, and recognising the maturity of the sector's understanding of quality enhancement for improving student learning. The proposal recognises that the scholarly nature of subject inquiry and knowledge creation, and a scholarly approach to pedagogy, together represent a uniquely embedded feature of support for student learning in universities and colleges. The standards are consistent with the QAA's Criterion C1 for Degree Awarding Powers and University Title[1] in that they embody a requirement to incorporate relevant research and scholarship into teaching.

1.4   The proposed framework has been developed by the Higher Education Academy on behalf of Universities UK and the Standing Conference of Principals. It seeks to maintain institutional ownership of the criteria by which the standards are met at the same time as providing a single overarching structure for the professional development of staff who support student learning.

1.5   We welcome your responses to this final consultation. In particular, we seek your views on whether the method we have proposed for applying the standards framework is practicable.

2. The Role of the Higher Education Academy

2.1   The purpose of The Higher Education Academy is to support the sector in enhancing the student learning experience. It seeks no role as a regulatory body and does not assure or maintain standards. The Academy works with institutions to provide an integrated and coherent focus on improving the quality of the undergraduate and postgraduate experience.

3. Background to the proposal

3.1   The Academy was approached in 2004 by the UK HE funding bodies, Universities UK and SCOP to undertake a consultation on how it might

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[1] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/dap/criteriaguidance.asp#append1

develop a standards framework for staff who teach and support learning. The idea of the framework was proposed in the White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (2003). The consultation began with the release of the paper *Towards a Framework of Professional Standards* (2004). This consultation was concerned with process and sought suggestions from the sector on how it might address the challenge.

3.2   All the UK higher education funding bodies have welcomed the proposal that the Higher Education Academy undertake the development work on a framework of professional standards for the sector and support the view that the Academy should incorporate the agreed framework in its UK-wide process of accreditation of HE programmes.

3.3   Respondents to the first consultation argued for a framework that:

– was inclusive, flexible and geared to the needs of a broad range of institutions and individuals who support student learning
– promoted both institutional engagement and included staff with a wide range of roles and responsibilities in support of student learning
– was not competency-based or excessively complex

3.4   Respondents agreed that accreditation through the Higher Education Academy could be used to underpin the portability of the standards across the sector. Respondents identified the following features of the Academy accreditation process as being key to its current success:

– peer-based external recognition
– working with institutional missions and strategies
– enabling creativity and innovation
– inclusive of all staff who support both undergraduate and postgraduate student learning
– over 90% of UK based HEIs currently offering at least one accredited programme for staff engaged in supporting student learning

3.5   Respondents wished that the standards should inform continued professional practice and development as well as accredited programmes for new staff. Appendix 2 provides an overview of this first consultation.

3.6   The majority of respondents asked the Academy to take forward the development of a standards framework by developing proposals and consulting on potential models. The Academy held a series of consultation seminars with accredited programme teams, individual discussions with heads of educational development units, and a discussion with Pro Vice-Chancellors/Deputy Vice-Chancellors whose portfolio included teaching and learning (during February – April 2005).

3.7   Responses indicated a desire to maintain the current accreditation framework (with minor modifications to bring it up to date) and preserve the Academy's accreditation approach. Appendix 3 provides an overview of the findings. The proposals presented in this paper are a result of this development work, prior consultation and evidence from research. The proposals are designed to enable HEIs to meet the White Paper commitment that national professional standards, designed and agreed by the sector itself, will be embedded in accredited programmes for all staff who teach in higher education. From

September 2006, the Academy will incorporate the agreed standards in its accreditation framework.

4.   Purpose of the proposed framework

4.1   The standards framework should act as:

- An enabling mechanism to support the professional development of staff engaged in supporting learning
- A means by which professional approaches to supporting student learning can be fostered through creativity, innovation and continuous development
- A means of demonstrating to students and other stakeholders the professionalism that staff bring to the support of the student learning experience
- A means to support consistency and quality of the student learning experience

5.   Rationale

5.1   Four broad approaches to defining standards in higher education teaching may be identified from the literature and existing standards models in other disciplines: norm referenced, competency based, criterion based, and descriptor based.

5.2   The first three of these have, in effect, been rejected in earlier consultations. The fourth approach is consistent with recent advances in defining standards in student assessment in higher education. The key distinction between the descriptor approach and the other three is that broad standards are defined first (usually as an inclusive hierarchical structure) followed by the development of specific criteria to fit individual circumstances. In this proposal, we use the descriptor approach to the definition of standards for teaching and supporting student learning.

5.3   Recent research on how new staff experience their teaching and how they develop as teachers indicates that their initial concerns are with their own performance as teachers – essentially, with their teaching skills. Only after they develop confidence in performance are they then able to focus on their students' learning experiences and outcomes in relation to their own performance. Subsequently, issues of promoting student learning through effective teaching emerge, in which an academic is recognised as an expert and leads a group of colleagues in improving students' learning experiences. We use this 'developing awareness' as the basis for the definition of standards in this paper.

6.   The standards framework

6.1   The standards framework has two components: the standards and the areas of activity. The areas of activity are underpinned by core knowledge and professional values. The standards are differentiated by range of activity and by increasing levels of responsibility. They reflect stages through which many

of those who support student learning in higher education move in their professional development which might be characterised as:

Scholarly performance – developing an in-depth understanding of the discipline and/or profession, an awareness of the student learning experience and of the need to engage in reflection to develop and improve individual performance as a teacher and supporter of learning

Student-focused teaching – directing teaching and learning to focus on the needs, perceptions and experiences of students and the relation between students and the subject matter; using reflective practice to enhance student learning

Leading and promoting learning and teaching – using knowledge, experience and awareness to lead and mentor individuals, teams and departments in the design, direction and development of teaching and learning

7. Standards

7.1 The standards have an inclusive structure: the second level incorporates the first and the third incorporates the second. Engagement with continuing professional development is integral to the attainment of each standard. The table below suggests how each standard might relate to particular staff groups and to the Academy's current accreditation framework (which is shown in section 9 below).

Standard	Examples of Staff Groups	Relationship to the Current Accreditation Framework
1. Scholarly performance. Demonstrates scholarly performance and a developing awareness of the student learning experience in the five areas of activity listed below, and incorporates the process and outcomes of relevant research and scholarship.	Postgraduate teaching assistants, staff new to HE teaching with no prior qualification or experience, staff whose professional role includes a small amount of teaching and learning support activity.	Successful completion of an accredited programme for *Associate Practitioner status.*
2. Student-focused teaching. Demonstrates a clear focus on the student learning experience through reflective practice in the five areas of activity, and incorporates the process or outcomes of relevant research and scholarship.	Staff who have successfully completed an accredited programme or other development activities that incorporate comparable practices, knowledge and experience.	Successful completion of an accredited programme to *Registered Practitioner status* (normally a Postgraduate Certificate programme or continuing professional development activities based on over 3 years experience).
3. Leading and promoting learning and teaching. Demonstrates leadership through mentoring individuals and support for teams and departments in all five areas of activity, helping to ensure that the process or outcomes of relevant research and scholarship are incorporated wherever appropriate.	Experienced staff who have an established track record in leadership and management of learning and teaching to improve the student learning experience.	Successful engagement with continuing professional learning and development activities.

8. Areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values

8.1 We propose that the learning outcomes developed by each HEI should relate to the following five *areas of activity, core knowledge* and *professional values* defined in the present accreditation framework.

8.2 *Areas of Activity*
- Design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study
- Teaching and supporting student learning
- Assessment and giving feedback to learners
- Developing effective environments and student guidance and support systems
- Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development

8.3 *Core Knowledge*
Knowledge and understanding of:
- The subject material
- Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- How students learn, both generally and in the subject
- The use of appropriate learning technologies
- Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching
- The implications of quality assurance and enhancement for professional practice

8.4 *Professional Values*
- Commitment to scholarship in teaching
- Respect for individual learners
- Commitment to development of learning communities
- Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity
- Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice

To provide consistency with the criteria for degree awarding powers, a sixth value, not currently in the Academy's accreditation framework, should be considered by institutions:
- Commitment to incorporating the process and outcomes of relevant research and scholarship

9. Aligning programmes with the standards framework

9.1 We will ask programme providers to map their learning outcomes against the proposed standards and areas of activity. This mapping will link the learning outcomes of accredited programmes, which are already based on the five areas of activity and the components of core knowledge and professional values, to the proposed standards. The process that institutions might follow is illustrated in Appendix 1.

10.   How institutions and individual staff will meet the standards

10.1   *For less experienced staff.* Staff who have successfully completed an accredited programme (either stage one or two of the standards framework, dependent upon experience and/or role) or have followed another accredited route that has been successfully mapped onto the above framework (including accreditation agreements with other professional bodies), will have met the national standards.

10.2   *For more experienced staff.* The Academy will work with institutions to provide an accreditation route based on an individual's prior experience and/or qualifications. In the longer term, we will work with HE institutions who wish to embed their own approaches to accrediting prior experience and continuing professional development in the context of their own institutional strategy and culture.

10.3   *Institutions that already have an accredited programme* will map their current programme learning outcomes against the standards using the areas of activity, core knowledge, and professional values. The Academy will provide support in undertaking this exercise as required. If the mapping cannot successfully be carried out in the case of a particular programme, the Academy will work with the institution which delivers it to accredit a suitably revised programme.

10.4   *Institutions that currently do not have an accredited programme.* The Academy will provide support to these institutions to develop programmes or continuing professional development activities which will meet the standards.

10.5   *Institutions wishing to develop continuing professional development approaches for all staff engaged in supporting student learning.* The Academy will work with these institutions to develop coherent frameworks which incorporate the national standards. During the academic year 05/06 the Academy will work with a small number of institutions to pilot CPD approaches and evaluate case studies for dissemination to all institutions. The pilot will include HEIs which currently do not have an accredited programme.

11.   The role of the Academy in accreditation

11.1   On publication of the agreed national standards, the Academy will incorporate these into its accreditation process for new and existing programmes across the UK. It will work with institutions to revise or develop programmes and continuing professional development to meet these standards.

11.2   We invite colleges and universities to work with the Academy to establish ownership of the standards framework. To help achieve this, we request your responses to the following questions.

12.   Questions for consultation

12.1   Is the purpose and rationale for the proposed framework acceptable to you and your institution/organisation?

12.2   Are the statements of standards and the related areas of activity acceptable and workable as a common reference point for all institutions? Do they enable your institution to add criteria to reflect your particular aims and learning outcomes?

12.3   We are working with a pilot group of institutions to introduce CPD accreditation for the range of activities HEIs provide to staff who support student learning. Could the proposed framework be implemented within your institution's CPD policies and practices?

Timetable for Consultation and Future Implementation

Activity	Timescale
Final consultation on proposed framework	Closes 20th October 2005
Final recommendations to the Academy	15th November 2005
Invitation to institutions to submit to the Academy a mapping of their programme(s) (and any future plans concerned with CPD) against the new framework	December 2005/January 2006
Mapping documents submitted to the Academy	By 1st May 2006
Academy reviews mapping documents to provide a national commentary on the interpretation of the new standards framework by institutions	June/July 2006
All programmes submitted for accreditation to the Academy will be accredited against the new standards, using the five areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values.	By 1st September 2006

Please forward your responses to:

Victoria Eaton
Director of Registration and Accreditation
The Higher Education Academy
York Science Park
Heslington
York, YO10 5BR

Email: standards@heacademy.ac.uk

Consultation closes: 20th October 2005

Please state at the beginning of your comments whether you are responding as an individual, on behalf of a higher education institution or on behalf of another organisation.

Appendix 1

Examples of how to map learning outcomes to the standards framework

The following examples are based on learning outcomes from two programmes.

The examples show how the learning outcomes can be linked to the proposed standards and the areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values. Only the standards at level 1 and level 2 are shown in these examples, but the same principles apply to level 3 and programmes which incorporate this level may be similarly treated.

The maps are produced by placing each learning outcome from each programme into the appropriate cell of each of the tables. It is acceptable for a single learning outcome to cover more than one area of activity, knowledge area or professional value.

For example, consider the following three learning outcomes:

'Appraise a range of teaching methods to actively engage students'
'In-depth knowledge and understanding of the way students experience teaching and learning, and how it applies to improving learning'
'Design session plans including learning outcomes, content and feedback for a range of teaching sessions at the university'

The first was judged to be an outcome representing level 1 (Scholarly performance) of the standards framework for the first area of activity (Teaching and supporting student learning). It was placed in the first column and row of the table.

The second was judged to be an outcome representing level 2 (Student-focused teaching) of the standards framework for the same area of activity. It was placed in the first column, row two.

The third was judged to be an outcome representing level 1 of the standards framework for areas of activity 2, 3, and 4. It was placed in the second, third and fourth columns of the table, row one.

Learning outcomes mapped to standards and areas of activity

	Areas of Activity				
	1 **Teaching and supporting student learning**	**2** **Design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study**	**3** **Assessment and giving feedback to learners**	**4** **Developing effective environments and student guidance and support systems**	**5** **Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development**
1. Scholarly performance	Appraise a range of teaching methods to actively engage students	Design session plans including learning outcomes, content and feedback for a range of teaching sessions at the university			Understand the importance of feedback from students and others to develop and enhance practice to promote student learning
2. Student-focused teaching	In-depth knowledge and understanding of the way student experience teaching and learning, and how it applies to improving learning	Ability to design programmes, activities and outcomes that are aligned to theories and practices that promote effective student learning	Understanding of how students experience assessment strategies and implications for providing effective feedback to promote learning	Knowledge and understanding of how students experience communication systems, relationship building and models of personal tutoring and supervision	Evaluate your own teaching practice in relation to pedagogic theory and research around the student learning experience

The *core knowledge areas* and *professional values* support the activities in the five areas given above. The following tables provide examples of how the learning outcomes can be mapped on to the six knowledge areas and the five professional values.

Learning outcomes mapped to standards and core knowledge areas

	Core Knowledge Areas					
	1 **The subject material**	**2** **Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme**	**3** **Use of appropriate learning technologies**	**4** **Models of how students learn**	**5** **Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching**	**6** **Implications of quality assurance and enhancement for professional practice**
1. Scholarly performance		Design session plans including learning outcomes, content and feedback for a range of teaching sessions at the University		Develop awareness of theoretical perspectives on how students learn, and understand how they may be applied to enhance student learning	Understand the importance of feedback from students and others to develop and enhance practice to promote student learning	Knowledge and understanding of the implications of quality assurance and enhancement to promote effective learning
2. Student-focused teaching	Ability to interpret own subject, practice and experience through evidenced application of theoretical models and frameworks that promote effective student learning	Knowledge of the depth and breadth of literature on academic practice at generic and discipline levels that informs the enhancement of the student learning experience	Ability to understand how students experience the use of technologies to enhance their learning	Evaluate your own teaching practice in relation to pedagogic theory and research around the student learning experience	Develop critical reflection and analytical skills, using appropriate theoretical frameworks, to understand student learning processes	Conduct an original piece of research into an aspect of university practice and make recommendations in relation to quality enhancement to promote student learning

Learning outcomes mapped to standards and professional values

	Professional Values*				
	1 Commitment to scholarship in teaching	**2** Respect for individual learners	**3** Commitment to development of learning communities	**4** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity	**5** Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice
1. Scholarly performance	Appraise a range of learning and teaching methods to begin to develop a student-focused approach	Review the legislation (national and University-wide) around an issue of equality, diversity, inclusivity and develop an action plan to inform your practice to promote student learning			Understand the importance of feedback from students and others to develop and enhance practice to promote student learning
2. Student-focused teaching	To apply evidence based approaches to supporting student learning within higher education through effective academic practice	Understanding of, and ability to manage appropriately, the student learning experience with ethical and professional frameworks	Knowledge and understanding of how to promote effective student learning support within appropriate contexts and purposes	Understanding of, and ability to manage appropriately, the student learning experience within ethical and professional frameworks	Evaluate your own teaching practice in relation to pedagogic theory and research around the student learning experience

* The sixth value is not included in this table since the programme accreditation process does not currently incorporate it.

Consultation Executive Summary & Recommendations

Towards A Framework Of Professional Teaching Standards (UUK, SCOP 2004)

Section 1: Executive Summary

The Consultation Paper

1.1   The consultation document *Towards a framework of professional teaching standards* was issued by Universities UK, the Standing Conference of Principals and the HE Funding Councils following preliminary discussions with the Higher Education Academy and an external stakeholder group. The group included representatives of the UK national HE stakeholder groups, professional bodies and associations, the higher education funding councils, the Quality Assurance Agency, the Lifelong Learning UK, Universities UK, the Standing Conference of Principals, Higher Education Wales, the Higher Education Academy and a number of individual members with a specific interest in or perspective on the development of standards. Responses to the consultation were requested by 19 July 2004.

1.2   The consultation invited 'comment, observations and suggestions on the proposal to commission work through the Higher Education Academy on the development of professional standards for academic practice and continuing professional development (CPD) that will support teaching and learning in higher education (HE)'. The origin of the consultation lay in the proposal in the White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003) that 'from 2006 all new teaching staff should obtain a teaching qualification that incorporates agreed professional teaching standards'. It was also the intention of the White Paper proposals that the professional teaching standards should be able to inform or support the teaching and career progression of staff as individuals and as members of institutions.

1.3   The consultation recognised that the development of professional standards would be building on substantial individual, institutional and HE organisational experience of curriculum development, accreditation, quality assurance, commitment to students and their learning, and commitment by staff to their own professional development. The consultation document was explicit in stating that the articulation of agreed common standards would take one step further the process of distilling 'expectations of what constitutes sound and excellent practice in teaching' and 'enable agreed expectations of practice to be communicated clearly and consistently across the HE sector and to the wider community'. The document made clear the intention of seeking a shared agreement about the aim of developing a framework of professional standards.

Approaches to Responding to the Consultation

1.4   Responses were received from pre and post 1992 universities, institutes and colleges of higher education and from a range of other organisations or individuals. The number of responses from each constituency was:

Pre 92 universities	50
Post 92 universities	31
Other HE institutions:	22
Other organisations/individuals	53
Total	156

Of the 103 responses received from higher education institutions, 2 were from Northern Ireland, 9 from Scotland, and 9 from Wales.

1.5   Some respondents did provide a clear indication of their agreement or disagreement with particular questions or issues raised in the text of the consultation. Many did not. Most of the questions asked for comments on how proposed objectives might be achieved and therefore were not constructed in such a way as to elicit directly a simple 'agree' or 'disagree'. Many respondents chose not to indicate the extent of their agreement, preferring to comment on the principles, raise issues or make suggestions. The full report does, however, indicate the weighting that could be attached to a response or set of related responses when this was feasible.

Regional and Institutional Differences

1.6   There was little overall difference in the views expressed by pre and post 1992 universities, colleges, and other organisations such as professional associations. Small colleges asked that particular attention be given to their needs. Scotland recommended an enhancement-led approach based on their recent experience of enhancement-led review, and Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland asked that their particular policies, contexts and devolved responsibilities be taken into account.

Summary – Views from the HE Sector

1.7   In summary, respondents are looking for a framework which is inclusive, simple, flexible, meets the requirements of a range of institutions, organisations and individuals, and able to recognise the professionalism, however defined, of those engaged in supporting higher education.

Characteristics of a future framework

1.8   There was considerable and strongly expressed support for a single framework comprising a small number of high order principles applied, as deemed appropriate, by each institution. Conversely, there was considerable opposition to detailed competence-based frameworks.

1.9   A large number of respondents would like to see the proposed framework based on, or incorporating, professional values. An implication of this support for values and ethics, including calls for an alternative to the conventional, competence-based approach to standards, is that there needs to be further exploration of what an appropriate set of values or ethics might be and how these would influence or structure a framework of standards for supporting higher education.

Threshold and continuing professional development standards

1.10   The consultation paper suggested that an articulated series of standards represented as threshold standards with progression via specific role to continuing professional development could be explicitly related to reward and promotion. This was not well received. Firstly, it was considered to be the responsibility of institutions to set the criteria for these decisions, irrespective of whether reference to the standards was used as part of the process. Secondly, respondents challenged how one might 'define teaching excellence or general competence as opposed to the bare threshold'. Thirdly, and pragmatically, it was argued that 'any very prescriptive and formalistic blueprint would be likely to alienate significant sectors of the profession, and limit buy-in to the notion of CPD'.

1.11   The notion of a threshold was seen as ill-defined especially given the experience of many newly appointed staff. Respondents generally argued for one simple set of standards which would apply to all staff irrespective of length of service or seniority. The standards and related approaches to professional development should not over-emphasise the requirements of new staff at the expense of the more experienced. Where variation was suggested was with respect to subject disciplines. In part this was located within the general call for a framework which takes account of diversity in contexts, roles and responsibilities and allows for application to teams, departments and institutions as well as to individuals.

1.12   What constitutes teaching, being engaged in academic practice or supporting student learning and the notion of what it is to be professional or 'a professional' in these respects, occurred as themes throughout the responses. Professionalism was identified in part with the adoption of sets of values, ethics, and expectations about attitudes as well as behaviours. It was also associated with rights as well as responsibilities, with the right to a degree of autonomy, the ability to influence the criteria by which one might judge oneself or be judged, and access to arguments for a particular course of action or set of proposals.

Inclusiveness of the framework
1.13   There were strong recommendations for the standards framework to embrace the broader concept of academic practice rather than, more narrowly, learning and teaching. As one respondent put it, 'Is this about professional standards for teachers in HE (which as long as they had a teaching role would take into account all their activities including particularly research/knowledge transfer) OR professional standards of teaching (i.e. how HE practitioners perform their teaching role which may be informed and/or led by research)? *Academic practice* was valued through its inclusion of a wide range of roles concerned with supporting the student experience.

1.14   A considerable weight of opinion was against any artificial separation of teaching and research and in favour of research-led teaching. There was strong support for the consultation document's suggestion that teaching takes place in a complex environment where staff have a multiplicity of roles which integrate teaching, research, administration and various forms of service to the HE community. Similarly there was considerable support for the value of recognising the contribution of day-to-day experience as an input to professional development and to evidencing achievement of standards or 'good standing' without substantial additional burdens.

1.15   The concept of integration within institutional strategies and processes underpinned a substantial number of responses. Integration was seen as a means of minimising the burden on both individuals and institutions. It was also recommended not simply for pragmatic reasons but as a positive strategy for enabling and supporting professional development and quality enhancement. Three major areas for integration were suggested. Firstly, integration with existing institutional procedures such as those for staff development and performance review. Secondly, integration with institutional procedures for quality review and enhancement. Thirdly, integration of professional development with the day-to-day activities, responsibilities and development opportunities experienced or created by staff.

Flexibility of the framework
1.16   There was overwhelming support for a standards framework which permits flexibility for individuals and institutions. The weighting of this principle was

high in both frequency and strength. Flexibility was recommended in at least two major respects. Firstly, the standards themselves should be flexible enough to allow for differences in individual roles and responsibilities and the nature, mission, values etc of particular institutions and disciplines. The standards should be capable of articulation with institutional learning and teaching and human resource strategies. Secondly, there should be freedom in the way institutions apply the standards. Approximately 64% of respondents expressed direct support for a national accreditation approach based on the model developed by the ILTHE as a means of relating individual and institutional requirements with external requirements mediated through peer-based review.

The role of the Higher Education Academy

1.17   There was overwhelming support for the Higher Education Academy as the body to take forward the development of the standards framework through consultation and partnership with a broad range of staff and other organisations and stakeholders. The respondents noted the following benefits that the Academy would bring to the production of a standards framework which included:

❑   a clear understanding of the distinctiveness and needs of the HE sector;
❑   an ability to build on current approaches and relationships;
❑   a willingness to explore approaches based on ethics and values and to avoid competence-based approaches;
❑   a commitment to gaining ownership of the development through partnership with institutions.

In addition, respondents saw value in opportunities for the Academy to integrate the work of different stakeholders and to develop a structure that can realise and encourage the portability of experience and qualifications.

1.18   Fears that the proposed standards framework could move the sector away from an enhancement agenda to one of accountability, possibly through the compilation and publication of league tables, surfaced at various points in the consultation. This was mostly in relation to the suggestion in Section E of the consultation that ways should be explored of demonstrating the benefits of a standards framework to prospective students and other stakeholders. Demonstrating benefits might be a worthy aim but was seen as difficult to achieve and best left to institutions.

1.19   A number of respondents asked for a further series of consultations during the development phase and for a number of actual examples of possible frameworks on which they could comment. There was also some feeling that the timetable for the consultation and development work was far too short, especially if organisations and staff were to be properly and fully involved.

Section 2: Key Issues For Engagement And Development

Key issues concerning the nature and development of the framework of professional teaching standards

2.1   The Higher Education Academy should be the body to undertake the development of the framework working in partnership with institutions, staff and other stakeholders.

2.2   The framework should link closely with, but not be restricted to, institutions' human resource and learning and teaching strategies.

2.3   The framework should be simple, with a small number of high order statements.

2.4   The framework should incorporate professional values.

2.5   There should be a set of standards applicable to all staff regardless of level of experience, that does not suggest a deficit model with threshold standards

2.6   The framework should not seek to replicate the detailed competence-based approaches adopted by other sectors, most notably the FE sector.

2.7   The framework should allow for a broad and diverse range of disciplines, roles and responsibilities including student support, research and scholarly activity, and management and administration.

2.8   There should be a devolved approach to the application of the standards which respects institutional responsibilities and commitment to professional development and quality enhancement.

2.9   Accreditation through the Higher Education Academy should retain key features of the ILTHE accreditation process (a means of peer-based external recognition of the application of the standards to institutional mission, strategies and circumstances).

2.10   The framework should be used for professional development and qualification purposes to enable and ensure the equivalence and portability of qualifications and other forms of recorded and recognised experience.

2.11   The framework should be capable of articulation with the differing systems operated in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

2.12   Three principles of integration within institutions for the Framework should be adopted:

(a) Integration with existing institutional procedures such as those for staff development and performance review.
(b) Integration with institutional procedures for quality enhancement.
(c) Integration of professional development with the day-to-day activities, responsibilities and development opportunities experienced or created by staff.

2.13   The demonstration of any benefits of a standards framework should be left to institutions.

Summary of Feedback
'Proposals Towards a Framework of Professional Teaching Standards'

1.1   Following the first consultation, the Academy responded to the sector requests to develop 'alternative' models for comment. This process was assisted through holding six seminars between 23 February and 11 March 2005 across the UK. Around 150 individuals attended the seminars representing a wide range of HEIs. A further seven written responses were subsequently received by 30 April 2005.

1.2   The seminars provided an excellent opportunity for individuals to consider the proposed approaches and to discuss in detail two models presented in a discussion paper which was disseminated at the seminars. These were characterised as follows:

1.3   *Model A* – based upon an approach listing 9 core areas of activity, knowledge and values with suggested implementation by HEIs based upon determining their own standards statements.
Model B – a high order standards framework comprising 26 statements for HE institutions to demonstrate they have met through accredited programmes

2.   General feedback on the standards framework

2.1   Overall, individuals welcomed the overall approach the Academy is taking to the development of a standards framework. In particular they welcomed:

- The opportunity for participation and input to the framework by individuals, HEIs and other organisations
- The proposal for a single national overarching framework that would underpin the accreditation of programmes and CPD.
- The move towards 'professionalising' HE teaching and learning activities
- All support the Academy taking forward the development and implementation of the standards
- The idea of building on the criteria/framework currently used for the accreditation of programmes by the Academy. There was strong endorsement of the accreditation process and a plea not to deviate from the current accreditation framework
- The focus on the 'student learning experience' which would include a wider range of staff who support student learning (eg. librarians, learning technologists) than do some of the current accredited programmes
- There were strong views expressed that the current accreditation framework is helpful (even if it has been in place for six years) and could be developed further rather than developing something new

3.   A number of suggestions for improvement and further development were made, including:
- Keep in mind the CPD mechanisms and processes that already exist, both within HEIs and also for people who belong to professional bodies that require revalidation etc (eg. doctors, nurses, engineers). We must not impose another layer of bureaucracy on already busy individuals and organisations
- Acknowledge the differences across the UK in terms of funding for learning and teaching strategies, the Quality Enhancement framework in Scotland etc.
- Clarify how the standards framework articulates with the register of practitioners

- Clearly define which staff might be eligible to engage with the framework
- Define levels of RP to acknowledge the differences and progression between new/inexperienced staff and those who are more experienced/senior
- Defining levels would enable a more developmental approach so individuals could see clearly how they could progress and demonstrate achievements through an accredited programme and CPD eg. from being a new, relatively inexperienced lecturer to a more experienced, more senior staff member
- Some concerns were expressed that this might be the start of introducing a 'licence to practice', it has to be a light touch approach led by the sector. There should be no penalties for non-adherence to the framework (ie. not an inspectorial approach) but should be developed as something that enhances quality in teaching and learning, for individuals, for HEIs and for the student community
- The framework should look at outcomes rather than inputs
- HEIs welcomed the idea that they could develop the standards framework further rather than having something too prescriptive, but with the warning that this could lead to dilution of the <u>national</u> standard

4.   Specific comments on the models

4.1   There was general agreement that neither model was wholly appropriate and the consensus was that a model should be produced which is a hybrid of the two but based more on Model A than Model B. It should clearly reflect the current accreditation framework/criteria but with more detail as to how it would work in practice to support CPD as well as the accreditation of programmes.

4.2   Recommended key features of a new model:
- It should be simple but not simplistic
- It should be equally appropriate for accrediting programmes as well as for CPD
- Although the looser framework of Model A was liked by many people, concerns were expressed that if HEIs developed their own standards then there would be inconsistency across the sector and we would lose the idea of a national standard
- HEIs should be invited to identify the descriptors and/or 'evidence' that they would deem acceptable for individuals to demonstrate that they had fulfilled the CPD requirements and met the standards. The Academy would then develop a mechanism to accredit the HEI CPD framework along a similar model to that of the accreditation process for programmes. This would achieve a balance between national consistency and enabling HEIs to interpret the standards flexibly
- 'Professional values' should underpin all the activities, this should be developed from the current professional values statements in the accreditation framework.
- It should include 'areas of activity' (these might be termed 'areas of professional practice') which again should be developed from those in the current accreditation framework
- The areas of activity should include research/scholarship as it underpins learning and teaching and also leadership/management
- There should be a set of exemplars or interpretative guidance

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