# Staff: enhancing teaching Final project report

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enhancement themes

# Contents

# 1  Executive summary

1.      The Developing and Supporting the Curriculum Enhancement Theme commissioned this report on staff professional development and enhancement in Scotland. The research for the report was carried out between February and June 2013.

2.      Evidence was collected through a review of relevant literature, extended interviews with key staff from each Scottish higher education institution, a cross-sector workshop and a survey of staff. The findings represent a snapshot of the Scottish university sector at an important point of transition as the new UK Professional Standards Framework for learning and teaching is introduced.

3.      The report highlights the diversity of the Scottish sector. There is evidence of a high degree of commitment to enhancing teaching by both institutions and staff. Examples of effective and innovative practice are noted throughout the report.

4.      The report identifies common issues and challenges across the sector. Significantly, there is still a perception among staff that excellence in research is considered to be more important than teaching. In different degrees across the sector pressure from parts of the academic role other than teaching means that staff feel that time to develop professionally as teachers is limited.

5.      Formal support for professional development at the start of academic careers is well organised, typically through the provision of an accredited postgraduate certificate. There is a wide range of support for continuing professional development but this is less consistent and may only reach a minority of more experienced staff. The new UK Professional Standards Framework seems to be acting as a catalyst for new developments in initial professional development and in continuing development frameworks.

6.      Staff who begin their career with the postgraduate certificate form a growing community of higher education teachers with interest and expertise in the practice and scholarship of learning and teaching. There is support across the sector for further development of communities of practice and an ongoing debate about the most effective ways to achieve this.

7.      Teaching in universities is carried out in a wide range of roles and many institutions are considering how to improve support for staff who are not on full-time academic contracts.

8.      The report concludes in section 5 with a summary of key issues and challenges for the sector, and in section 6 with ideas for further research and suggestions for areas where there is potential to share good practice.

9.      Key priorities for staff included:

- engagement with colleagues - observation, peer assessment of teaching, opportunities for discussion, half-day themed discussions on specific issues

- time and space for reflection

- opportunities to learn about new techniques and new technologies at a level that goes beyond simply 'how to'

- opportunities to engage with learning and teaching issues in their own discipline

- moving beyond routine evaluation to more opportunities for pedagogical research - this perhaps links to a desire to be able to engage with more of the relevant research literature.

10. Top learning and teaching issues for institutional contacts included:

   - working with new technology to enhance teaching, keeping up to date with developments (particularly distance learning) and ensuring that changes keep pedagogy to the fore

   - approaches to assessment

   - internationalisation

   - Curriculum for Excellence and student diversity.

11. Policy and practice issues included:

   - adequate resources - building in time to staff workload planning

   - finding a stronger space for learning and teaching in light of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) (this is a big issue in research-intensive institutions)

   - understanding what constitutes good teaching and evidencing enhancement

   - developing systematic ways of supporting the career-long development of all staff, the hard to engage, part-time staff and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

   - working better with HR and finance to support professional development - finding a common language and understanding

   - support for engagement with new technology is sometimes seen as simply a question of developing new technical skills; there is evidence that, while in some circumstances staff may be reluctant to divulge deeper learning needs, technical training and pedagogical development are best considered together.

# 2   Introduction: enhancing teaching in 2013

Staff: enhancing teaching is one of three topics that were identified for special attention by the Steering Group of the Developing and Supporting Enhancement in 2012-13. The other two topics are Flexible Curriculum and the Curriculum for Excellence and its impact on higher education.

Writing almost two decades ago, Angela Brew (Brew, 1995) made a powerful case for the importance of professional development for teachers in higher education (HE). Brew described an HE sector that was being transformed in scale, in the possibilities of new technology and in the diversity of its participants (1995, p3). There can be no doubt that HE systems have responded to these changes. Across the UK there has been a growth in specialist roles designed to support the professional development of staff who teach in universities. Teaching staff have access to postgraduate qualifications in learning and teaching; increasingly, in many institutions achieving these awards is expected, if not compulsory, for members of staff new to teaching. Some institutions require their staff to achieve professional recognition, most recently through fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

Despite all that has changed since 1995 it can be argued that HE in Scotland is at another watershed. While student numbers have stabilised at a much higher level, other factors identified by Brew, notably internationalisation and technological change, have continued apace. However, there are other very significant changes taking place. There is of course diversity across the UK (Parsons et al, 2012, p6) but institutional and collaborative approaches to the development of learning and teaching practice in Scotland have been driven by a distinctive enhancement framework, within which the Enhancement Themes have acted as a catalyst (Nolan, 2013). The Scottish and English HE systems, while still connected together in a variety of complex ways, are now almost at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. In Scotland, education is treated as a public good while in England the system is now organised as a market within which individuals purchase provision. Significant numbers of English students paying high fees and with different expectations study in Scotland. School systems in the UK have also diverged in philosophy and approach, and in Scotland the first entrants who have been through Curriculum for Excellence will soon be enrolling at university, alongside peers from England who will have had a very different experience. Together with increased numbers of international students, and larger numbers articulating from Scotland's colleges, the diversity of expectation and experience will continue to grow.

At the same time, Web 2.0 and the ubiquity of social media are changing the ways that students work, interact and access learning materials, particularly as campus-based higher education institutions (HEIs) have developed online learning approaches and distance learning programmes. It can be argued that these trends are shifting, and perhaps breaking, the traditional boundaries between universities, educational content, learning and society (see for example Swearer (2013), McGreal et al (2013)). These challenges are recognised in a recent report (European Union, 2013). In the European context the report notes considerable diversity but suggests that across Europe:

> Institutions need to ensure there is manifest and actual parity of esteem for teaching and research in their core identity and culture and expressed in their systems of rewards, incentives, promotions and priorities. (European Union, 2013, p23)

In this rapidly changing landscape the new UK-wide Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) (Law, 2011; HEA, 2012) provides a stimulus and an opportunity for looking again at professional development in HE.

The research for this report on the state of play for professional development in Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) was carried out between February and June 2013. We were asked by the steering group for the Developing and Supporting the Curriculum Enhancement Theme (DSC) to consider five questions:

1. How are staff (academic, academic-related or support staff) in teaching roles supported, formally and informally, to develop their teaching?

2. How are staff supported at different stages in their careers?

3. What recognition and reward is there for teaching staff?

4. How is it known that staff are developing their teaching, and how is practice shared?

5. What are the challenges and opportunities in all of these?

To answer these questions we have relied heavily on the tremendous goodwill, encouragement and willingness to spend time with us of individuals in every Scottish HEI. The rest of this report summarises what we have found from this dialogue.

# 3 Methodology

The role and impact of teaching staff in learning and teaching enhancement is potentially a very large topic. In order to achieve a sharp focus, the project design was built around the five DSC questions in order to obtain evidence that could contribute to a longer-term engagement with the relationship between professional development and enhancement. We therefore adopted a simple scoping design that fell into four linked parts: first a review of literature that informs and provides context for a discussion of the five key questions; second extended interviews with a member of staff with strategic responsibility for professional development in each Scottish HEI; third a workshop which included some of those interviewed but also attracted a more diverse group of staff engaged with professional development across the Scottish sector (including module administrators, lecturers and PhD students); and finally a short online survey targeted at staff engaged in teaching in HE.

We incorporate references to the literature, in context, throughout the report. It is perhaps worth noting that we found very little peer-reviewed research that engaged with the links between professional development and enhancement: thus it would be valuable in the context of the Scottish enhancement themes to develop this area of research.

We held interviews with staff from all but one of the 19 Scottish HEIs and we are extremely grateful for the time that colleagues devoted to these conversations. The recordings of the interviews provide a rich source of data on the current state of HE professional development in Scotland. The remainder of this report includes the outcomes of a thematic analysis of this data. In the course of the interviews we also picked up lots of leads on examples of innovative policy and practice, which require further investigation. These areas are summarised at the end of the report and we will work with institutions to produce detailed case studies during the autumn of 2013. These will be made available on the Enhancement Themes website.

Staff from a representative range of Scottish institutions attended the workshop, which was held at a mid-point of the project in April. We presented some early findings from analysis of the extended interviews and engaged those attending in a process of critique, refinement, and prioritisation, which we have fed back in to the final analysis.

Finally, we were concerned to hear the voice of 'rank and file' staff who engage with day-to-day teaching in HE but may not be involved in policy developments. The challenge was to design a concise survey instrument that could work across institutional and discipline boundaries. We also needed to obtain the support of institutions to distribute the survey within tight time constraints. Not all institutions were in a position to circulate the survey and those institutions that were able to engage with the survey did so in different ways, some targeting specific groups of staff while others released the survey URL to the whole institution. The survey opened on 22 April and closed on 31 May 2013. Responses were obtained from 281 teaching staff, although only 233 engaged with all the questions. Responses were obtained from 16 out of the 19 Scottish HEIs. Seven institutions provided 20 or more responses. Figure 1 shows the number of responses by institution type.

It is important to note that the aim of the survey was to obtain insight into the views of staff involved in teaching and not to make comparisons between institutions. The numbers involved are small and as a result of opportunistic sampling the distribution of responses across staff categories and institutions is not necessarily representative. Nevertheless, aggregated responses and responses grouped by institution type and by discipline do exhibit interesting variation. The survey instrument was effective at eliciting open responses and the teaching staff who completed the questionnaire engaged very positively and provided thoughtful and detailed responses. In this sense we feel that we were able to capture authentic voices from the sector and the summary of the survey data adds value to the report.
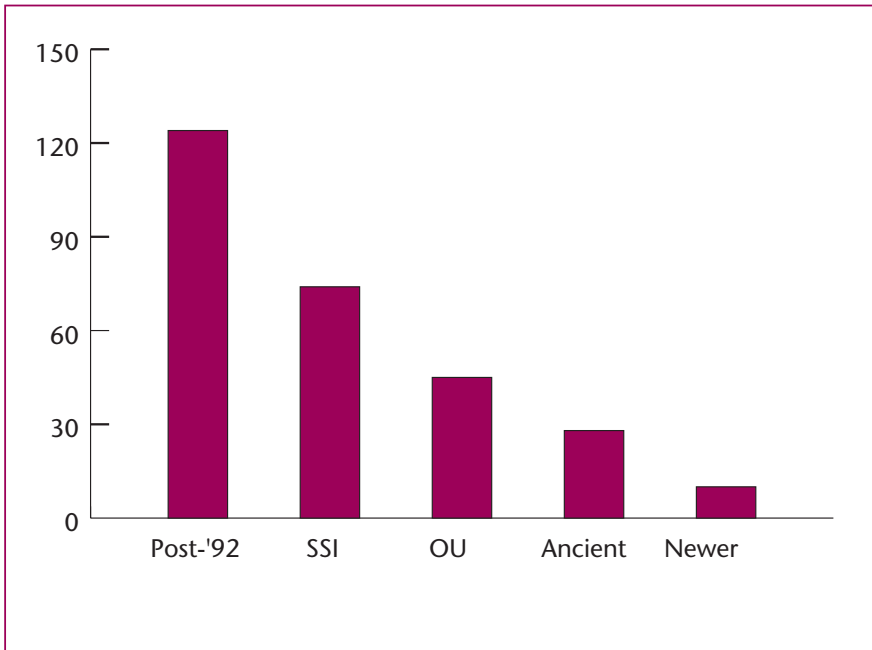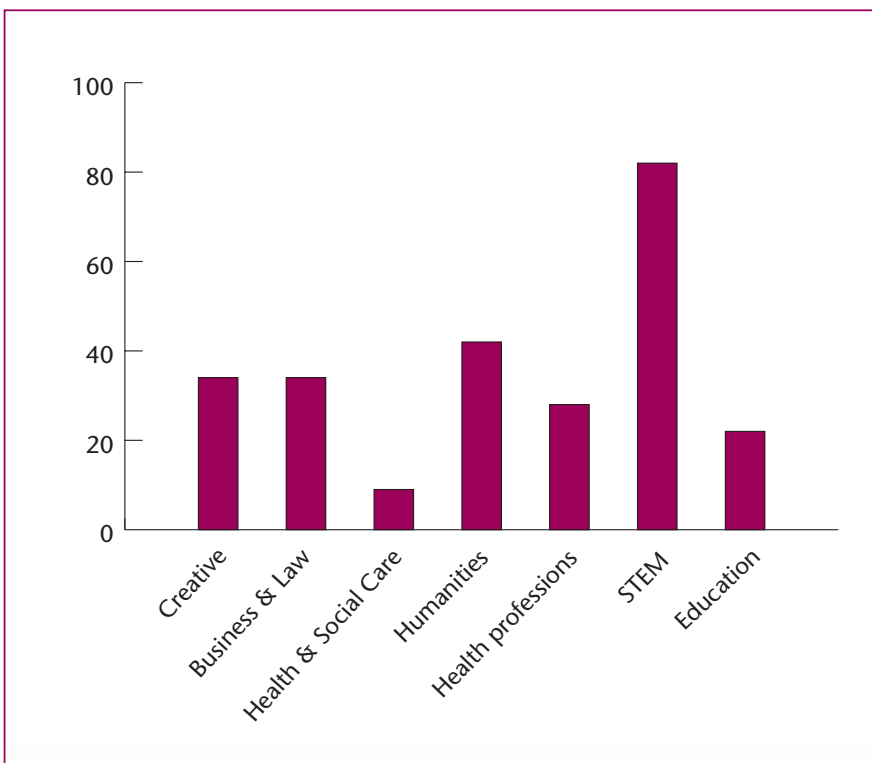
**Figure 1: number of survey responses by HEI type[1]**



**Figure 2: number of survey responses by broad subject grouping**

[1]  These HEI groups consist of the following: **Post-'92**: University of Abertay Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of the West of Scotland; **Small Specialist Institution (SSI)**: Glasgow School of Art, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College; **Open University in Scotland (OU); Ancient:** University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, University of St Andrews; **Newer:** University of Dundee, Heriot-Watt University, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde.

More than four fifths of respondents (200) categorised themselves as academic with a further 42 being in other roles that involve some teaching.

The median length of time that respondents had spent in teaching in HE was seven to ten years, although the biggest single group (48 per cent) was formed of those who had been teaching for more than ten years. Only 15 respondents were in their first year of teaching HE.
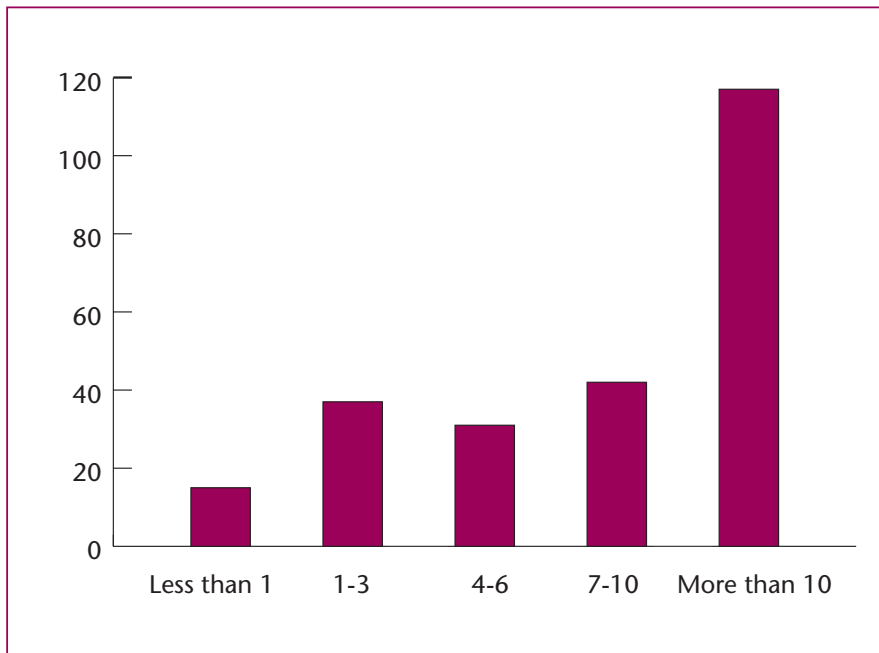


**Figure 3: years spent teaching in HE**

Well over a third of respondents had a postgraduate certificate in education and over 70 per cent of all respondents had a postgraduate qualification in learning and teaching of some description.
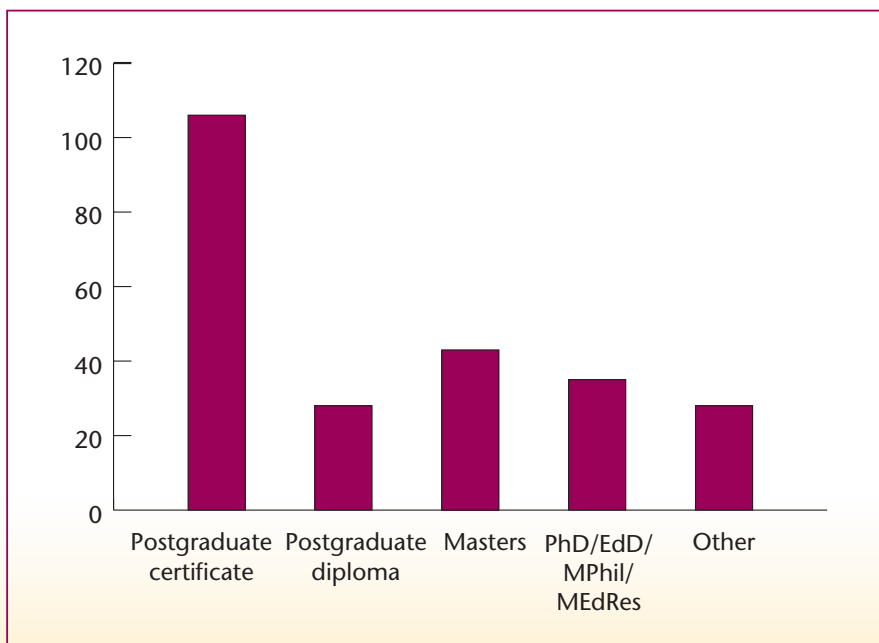


**Figure 4: number of respondents with qualifications in learning and teaching**
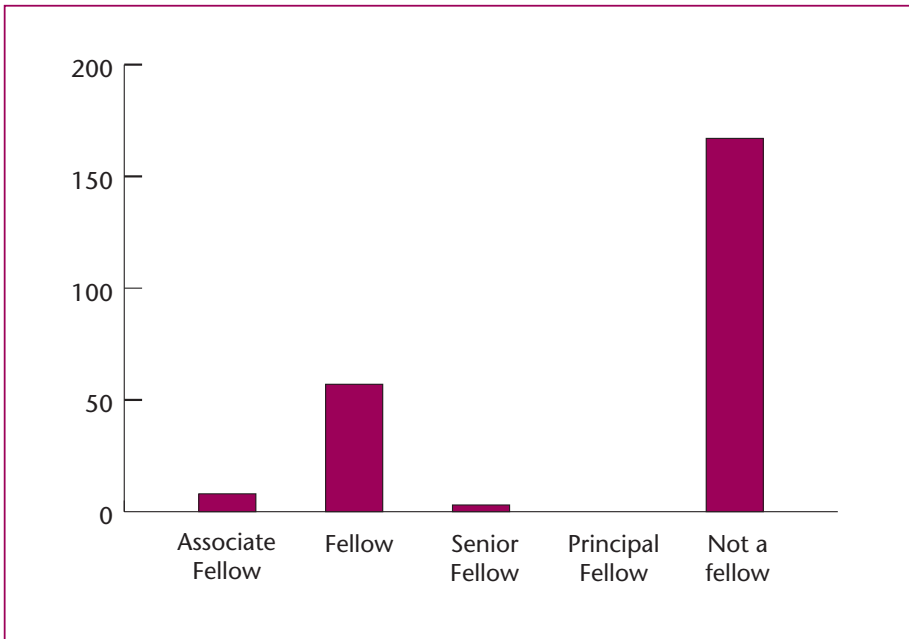
**Figure 5: number of HEA Fellowships**

Although most institutions were not able to supply reliable data on learning and teaching qualifications and the number of HEA Fellows, it seems likely that our respondents form a skewed sample with a higher rate of learning and teaching qualifications than the norm. We have kept this in mind when analysing the data. Sixty-eight respondents (29 per cent of those who replied to this question) had HEA accreditation with the majority, 57, being Fellows and small numbers being Associate Fellows and Senior Fellows.

# 4 What we have learnt from the data

## 4.1 Learning, teaching and professional development: the Scottish sector 2013

### Diversity and organisation of professional development

The diversity of the 19 institutions that make up the Scottish university sector runs through all the data we collected in interviews and via the questionnaire. Many themes, however, straddle institutional boundaries. From all our institutional contacts, irrespective of institution type, we heard a strong message of engagement with dynamic change, with many respondents speaking about the opportunities that they currently see for innovation and enhancement. Most also spoke of the sense of collegiality and readiness to share between institutions, which was felt to be a strength of the Scottish sector. For those whose main role is in educational development, who made up the majority of the interviewees, the Scottish HE Development network (SHED) was seen as particularly useful for sharing practice. A typical comment from members of the network was that: 'working in Scotland people are really ready and willing to share ideas and share resources.' The same respondent highlighted the mutual support that the network provides: 'because we are a small group we are proactive in finding out if there are new people and there's a network of support there for them.'

Opportunities for change are driven through new curriculum developments and revisions to learning and teaching strategies, and these are strongly influenced by institutional responses to Enhancement Led Internal Review (ELIR).

The organisation of professional development varies across the sector in ways that do not necessarily map onto institutional type. Educational Development Units (EDUs), which have a variety of designations, seem to play the largest role, but the boundaries between Educational Development and Human Resources are not consistent. Perhaps the greatest variation, between and within institutions, is in discipline-focused areas, with some schools and departments having separate budgets for professional development that are more or less closely aligned with pan-institutional units. In the larger EDUs individual staff may have a particular faculty, school or discipline link. Some respondents described the organisation of professional development in terms of a matrix model in which the support experienced by an individual member of staff comprises intersecting and overlapping contributions from several sources.

We look more closely at the implications of diversity in subsequent sections. Responses vary on a number of dimensions, by sector type and by institution. A number of respondents talked about the academic role as comprising teaching, research and scholarship, administration, knowledge exchange, and service. The relative weight of each of these varies most widely between institutions but also within institutions and between the complex varieties of roles that involve teaching.

### Pressures on staff and perceived needs

Many of the institutional contacts referred to the competing demands on academic staff that make it more difficult to engage with professional development in their teaching role. In research-intensive institutions the Research Excellence Framework (REF) was seen as the major inhibiting factor and respondents noted that although workload planning recognises teaching commitments in principle, in reality they take second place to research. Staff in some institutions mentioned heavy teaching loads as an important issue. The final question in the survey asked respondents to think about the demands of their current teaching, learning and assessment role, and in what areas they would welcome most support for their professional development. Responses to this open question were thoughtful and in many cases developed in some detail. The overwhelming impression was of staff - nearly half of whom had been teaching in higher education for more than

ten years - who were deeply committed to enhancing teaching and learning but frustrated by the lack of time to reflect on practice and work on new developments. The Wordle in Figure 6 is drawn from the aggregated responses to this question and highlights how important time is to staff.



**Figure 6: Wordle of identified areas for professional development support**

Staff were asked how well supported they feel in their professional development and to respond on a 10 point scale, where one equals not at all supported and 10 equals very well supported (with five the neutral response). While the median response was just above neutral and 7 per cent of respondents felt themselves very well supported, an identical percentage felt not supported at all.
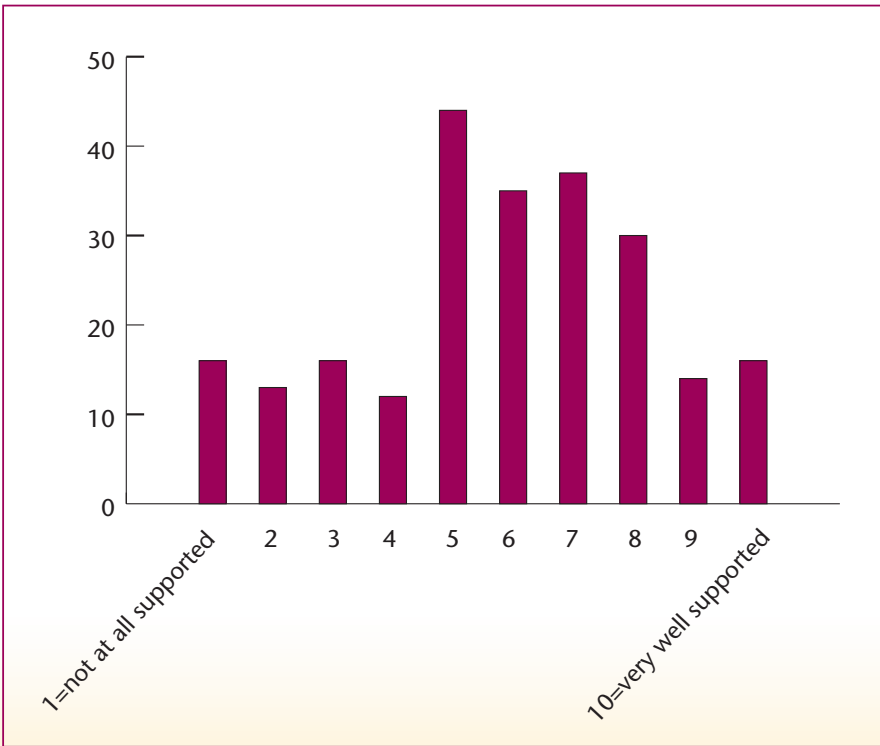


**Figure 7: staff perceptions of support for professional development**

**The new UKPSF**

Following consultation across the sector a revised version of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teachers in higher education was launched early in 2012 (HEA, 2012). The new framework aims to be useable across a diverse range of institutions and roles, and includes four levels of accreditation in order to engage more senior staff and provide a more integrated set of opportunities and encouragement at different stages of academic careers (Law, 2011). The four levels are: Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow. As with its predecessor, the new framework allows academic staff to pursue accreditation through an individual submission to the HEA or through an HEI route that has been accredited by the HEA.

The new framework has provided an impetus for institutions in Scotland to re-accredit established provision or to look at alternative ways of meeting HEA requirements. There is an added impetus from the fact that new requirements for public information through the Key Information Set (KIS) website will require institutions to record and publish the number of their staff who have achieved accreditation. Currently numbers vary across the Scottish sector, but several institutions have established ambitious targets for increasing the number of HEA-accredited staff.

The majority of institutions we spoke to have either already aligned their professional development provision with the new UKPSF or have plans to do so; with some institutions highlighting that certain aspects of professional development policy based on the previous UKPSF were now outdated. There seems to be evidence that the addition of a fourth level of accreditation is focusing attention on career-long Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and structured opportunities for staff to look for higher levels of recognition as their careers progress.
One respondent remarked that 'UKPSF has helped to give a common language to structure development in learning and teaching'. In one institution we were told that a consequence of the revision of the UKPSF is an increasing focus on CPD opportunities for more experienced staff and an interest in linking these to Senior and Principal Fellowships. There is recognition, however, that staff may struggle to demonstrate the ways in which they meet the different levels, as their skills are implicit, and therefore measures are being put in place to support scholarship that could be used for accreditation. Indeed, following on from this point, one institutional contact expressed the desire for more sharing of information or benchmarking on what a Principal Fellow looks like.

In general, staff in strategic and policy-making roles welcome the revisions to the UKPSF. There is a view from one research-intensive institution, however, that it might be more valuable if Fellowship recognised all aspects of the academic role and not just learning and teaching:

> There are topics like public engagement and knowledge exchange where there's quite an interesting interaction and overlap with what people try to do around their research and what people are trying to do around their teaching and there's also some very strong relationships between what people are doing in terms of…the centrality of their teaching and learning activities in terms of building a research profile.

**ELIR**

In the institutional interviews we looked at links between Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) and professional development. The responses suggested that connections are complex and strongly mediated through institutional learning and teaching strategies. In some institutions, staff are involved through workshop activity in shaping and critiquing the ELIR reflective analysis. There is certainly an interaction between the ELIR review cycle and the development of learning and teaching strategies, and in some institutions these strategies are explicit about the links to professional development.

**Enhancement Themes**

The small sums of money available to institutional teams to trigger activity linked to the current Enhancement Theme are felt to be valuable, although how wide the impact is on staff development is less clear. In the survey, teaching staff were asked to rank various forms of activity in support of professional development. Enhancement Theme events were seen as the most helpful by a small minority (4 per cent), while they were one of the top three priorities for 18 per cent. This compares with 56 per cent who highlighted support and discussion with colleagues in their top three choices. The relationship between sector-wide enhancement activity and the development of teaching staff merits further exploration.

## 4.3 Formal professional development

**Postgraduate certificates and new full-time staff**

Parsons et al note (2012, p7) that across the UK a qualification path for new and aspiring staff has become more common. In Scotland this approach is dominant although institutional approaches vary. Parson's study finds (2012, p7) that there is a more significant literature on the process and organisation of such programmes rather than on the impact.

From our interviews, narratives on the formal professional development of teaching staff in Scotland are dominated by discussion on variations of an accredited postgraduate certificate (PGCert) model. Most institutions support staff to study a PGCert whether that has been developed in-house, completed with another linked institution, entirely externally (including online), or is currently under development. There is a range of titles of postgraduate qualifications, but there seem to be similarities in approach in terms of encouraging cross-disciplinary pedagogical engagement, critical reflection on teaching practice, peer observation, and practice-based research.

PGCerts, comprising 60 credits at master's level, are normally targeted at staff new to a teaching role. In some institutions, the PGCert is mandatory for new appointments on full-time academic contracts and a condition of passing probation; in others successful completion of a subset of the PGCert modules is required, while in some it remains optional. Where the PGCert is mandatory, exemption or accreditation of prior learning can be available for staff with appropriate prior experience or a qualification from another institution. When the PGCert is not mandatory, there is still likely to be a strong expectation that staff should study for it, and one of our interviewees noted that:

> We say that we expect, rather than it's compulsory but really you know, it would be a strong case for them not to do it. It's expected to be part of the probationary period that you would…be moving towards, or if you're not enrolled, that you would be moving towards enrolling on the teaching qualification that's paid by us.

**Other staff who teach**

In most institutions, the certificate is typically available to other staff and it is common for academic-related and other staff whose roles include elements of teaching to be required or encouraged to take one module from the PGCert, leading to eligibility for Associate Fellowship of the HEA. Institutional plans across the sector seem likely to accelerate a trend across the Scottish sector to make study of the PGCert mandatory for new starts in academic roles. The number of institutions making HEA Associate status a requirement for new staff in academic-related teaching roles is also increasing but less quickly. An alternative approach is to provide a short non-accredited course for Graduate Teaching Assistants and part-time staff. In many institutions, participation in the 'short course' is mandatory before individuals can start to teach. We picked up concerns that PhD students could be overloaded if they were asked to undertake an additional professional qualification during the doctoral process.

## Organisation and structure

The priority ascribed to these processes for formal development is to some extent shaped by structure and resource and here we see a mixed picture. In larger institutions professional development tends to be led by Educational Development staff in dedicated centres, whereas for other institutions, small numbers, or single members, of staff are responsible for staff development quite broadly, perhaps with a mirrored colleague in Human Resources. It seems evident that for ambitious Fellowship targets to be met, funding and resources need to underpin a defined centre for such activity that can work across, and with, departments, schools and faculties to encourage a collegiate and joined-up approach to professional development.

## Developing communities

Respondents across a wide range of HEIs felt that the steady increase in the numbers of staff qualified in learning and teaching has an impact on their institution. One interviewee commented that the, 'PGCert has grown a community of people with a focus on learning and teaching.' Others echoed this view but we found no rigorous empirical evidence available to support it. However, this finding does align with evidence from Gibbs and Coffey (2004), cited in Parsons et al (2012), that there is potential for transfer to practice among new teachers once a critical mass of pedagogical knowledge has been acquired. In a small number of interviews, people made the comparison between university teachers and other professions where CPD is an expected component of work. In the view of many of our institutional respondents, one of the long-term impacts of new staff completing a PGCert is that they continue to engage actively with teaching and learning debates and with professional development widely: some institutions strongly encourage this. There is therefore the potential for universities to keep building on and adding to this core group of staff in a snowballing fashion.

PGCerts often include a module based on a practice-based study. These are felt to be really valuable to the member of staff who is researching into their own practice. Staff often get the opportunity to present to their peers, sometimes more widely in their department, or at learning and teaching conferences. Nevertheless there is a widely held view that a more systematic approach to sharing, disseminating and making this work readily accessible would be very useful.

Typically institutions provide new entrants with a mentor; normally a more experienced member of staff. Mentors play an important role in guiding and supporting new staff through induction and formal staff development. Many of our respondents commented that the mentor role is valuable CPD for the mentors themselves.

## Alternative approaches

In the wider UK context, participants at a roundtable discussion hosted by the Guardian newspaper in November 2012 (The Guardian, 2012) suggested that the quality of PGCerts was variable and that there might be some merit in reducing the number on offer, although it was recognised that support needs to be provided for a diverse sector and for diverse staff roles. During 2013 most PGCerts in Scotland are being reviewed and/or revalidated and the changes in the UKPSF are driving consideration of how the qualifications align with the lower levels of the HEA Fellowship structure. There is evidence in Scotland of cross-institution collaboration and cooperation (often under the auspices of the HEA) which may lead in the future in the direction proposed by the Guardian panel. Two Scottish institutions have also used the impetus of the revised UKPSF to take a radical look at formal routes to HEA accreditation. As a result they will implement a new scheme developed by one of the institutions that is accredited by the HEA for all four fellowship levels. Participants do not earn master's credits, but follow flexible pathways, supported by a mentor, through a rich network of appropriate material. When they are ready they then undertake a practice-based project that can be assessed against clear criteria at whichever

level of the UKPSF the candidate has chosen to work. Parallel to this development, the lead institution is setting up an interactive repository to make the outputs of this activity open and easily accessible. More widely there was support for the PGCert to be conceptualised within a broader CPD framework.

There is a debate about the link between accreditation and professional development in learning and teaching. Relatively few staff who complete the PGCert go on to diploma or master's level, although this varies between institutions, with smaller numbers in the research intensive institutions. Some staff responsible for professional development are strongly committed to the accredited PGCert route as a pathway to future study. Others feel that greater flexibility combined with options to do more specialised pedagogic research through master's degrees or EdDs (the degree of doctor of education) is a better option.

### Change and development

From all of the interviews there was a real sense that we are currently in a period of change in relation to approaches to professional development and the progression of this area across the sector. A significant increase in the numbers completing PGCerts (albeit new staff) is seen to be a particular driver of this change. Furthermore, this is seen to be an issue that has merited growing attention and is shaped by strategic planning within institutions. Indeed, many of the HEIs we spoke to perceived staff HEA Fellowship as a critical indicator of performance and development, with one university aiming for ambitious levels of HEA Fellowship as a key objective and a mandatory outcome for new teaching staff.

### 4.4 Informal professional development

Whereas formal initial professional development for new academic entrants is well developed and recognisably similar across the sector, the extent and scope of continuing professional development for established staff is harder to capture. Few HEIs have formal frameworks for career-long CPD, although there is evidence that the revised UKPSF is encouraging moves in this direction. Most of our respondents reported both a rich tapestry of existing provision, but also challenges in engaging staff across their institutions and a desire to move to more systematic and holistic approaches linked to enhancement. Through the interviews, the workshop and the survey, we collected evidence on current practice and aspirations. It is important to note that our study provides a snapshot of a sector that is changing. Arguably, in the case of informal CPD, the direction of travel is more difficult to identify than it is for initial professional development. As a result of this, we have tried to systematically identify the issues and challenges raised by our respondents. In the interest of brevity we have had to omit a great deal of interesting detail. However, this material will be available for any future developments.

### Human resources, training and development

Many institutions have a policy that identifies a small number of days in the annual contracted workload for professional development. How this time is used may be left to the individual or discussed with the line manager through a system of annual appraisal. We noticed that in general there is a distinction between the development role played by Human Resources (HR) in institutions, which is typically directed towards training activity in areas such as health and safety. In all institutions, HR had key influence over annual review processes that incorporated reflection on professional development. Thus many interviewees stated the desire to influence this process to greater reflect professional development objectives, achievements and priorities. HR tends also to hold key responsibility for the management training of academic staff.

There were a range of views about staff needs and the challenges of identifying appropriate support. One respondent noted that:

> There's a tendency to think that if somebody's been teaching for 10, 15, 20 even 30 years then they know what they are doing but of course things are changing so much…we've been developing a lot of distance learning programmes just now so that's a big development activity for staff, some of whom are well established staff and are now having to learn all the new tools.

Another view was that, when asked about development needs through institutional structures, staff who teach often identify technical training needs but rarely mention pedagogical needs. One of the institutional respondents reflected that this type of response may be influenced by suspicion of managerialism, with the result that staff perceive identifying pedagogical development needs as exposing vulnerability, or as an admission that their teaching could be better. However, the same respondent had experience of quite different responses when staff felt they were in a more collegiate situation. Interestingly, staff responses to our survey, which was anonymous and clearly external to the institution, did identify broad areas of pedagogy as priorities for development. From the variety of activities discussed in the interviews it is apparent that it is necessary to make a distinction between training and development, with the latter interpreted as a deeper form of engagement with pedagogical/theoretical discussions.

## Towards communities of practice

Most universities have rolling programmes or calendars of events for new and existing staff. Smaller institutions, and those that have been formed out of mergers, highlighted the organisational difficulties raised in terms of varying approaches to staff development, as well as different levels of existing staff development and expectation. They also noted that when staff are split across different geographical sites, this can raise tricky, although not insurmountable, challenges in terms of organising staff development for both new and existing members of staff.

Generic learning and teaching workshops are common across the sector, but there is a consensus that attendance for this type of event is falling, and there is a move away from this approach. Both Educational Developers and staff in response to our survey felt that more targeted activity with groups of staff sharing a particular role, or with a particular disciplinary identity, was a more effective use of time. One Educational Developer noted that the 'most effective way of working is with groups of staff with shared interests - for example the programme leaders network.' A number of respondents talked about the importance of building communities of practice. A strong theme from the interviews was the importance of leadership at department or faculty level and the role at this level of 'champions' in influencing engagement. This view is emphasised by Gibbs (2012, p20), who notes the importance of departmental leadership and opportunities for teachers to talk to each other and participate in communities of practice. Several respondents noted, however, that a disciplinary focus risks creating silos and restricting opportunities for sharing practice across boundaries. Lisewski (2005) used communities of practice theory to look at how localised departmental communities of practice might provide a framework for professional development. However, he cautions that these localised communities need to maintain cross-sector learning through external links within and outside the institution. This approach resonates with many of the comments made by teaching staff in response to our survey, who were keen to have more opportunities to discuss and share experience with close colleagues, but also wanted opportunities to learn from colleagues in other disciplines in their own institution and from other institutions. Educational Developers had concerns that sharing could be more effective:

> My own view is that we need something more which would be case studies coming out of the programme or some means of electronic sharing. We do from time to time select some of the participants to present at the Annual Learning and Teaching Conference…they may share more within their own subject area. I'm not sure.

Annual learning and teaching conferences are a relatively recent development in many institutions. They were felt to be effective by our institutional contacts and ranked highly with the teaching staff that responded to our survey. For example, it is 'fantastic to get the chance to talk to colleagues'. It is common for students to attend these conferences as presenters and participants and several respondents commented that these are some of the best sessions. Conferences provide opportunities for networking, but the evidence from across the sector does suggest that they only reach a minority of staff and perhaps not the hardest to reach: 'You tend to find that there is a core group within that which is the same each year.' In a small number of universities interviewed there was the sense that they were on the cusp of change: 'moving beyond the usual suspects'.

Peer observation of teaching is usually part of the PGCert and is valued by participants who are near the start of their careers. Some institutions extend its use to all staff, and it is understood to be a powerful stimulus for sharing and reflection. However, its use is controversial, as quite often it is perceived by staff as part of a top-down approach to monitoring performance rather than bottom up collaborative development. There is real scope for learning from the best practice in the sector.

**Part-time staff**

The problem of insufficient time to engage with professional development came up repeatedly in our evidence gathering. This is exacerbated in the case of staff on smaller fractional contracts and part-time hourly paid or sessional staff. Gibbs (2012, p20) notes the importance of supporting these groups of staff. Across the sector, institutions are developing online resources that can be accessed by individuals, but there was also a strong sense that materials by themselves can only be part of the solution. There is some evidence of moves towards more structured environments that enable staff to engage with materials while interacting with colleagues and while using limited face-to-face opportunities in conjunction with other forms of social interaction. Writing in the context of support for part-time distance learning tutors, Cornelius and Macdonald (2008, p54) remark that 'there is much to be gained from involving interdisciplinary groups in professional development activities.'

**New challenges**

Many institutions report new developments in online and distance learning but very few of the institutional contacts felt there were significant unmet needs related to the use of new technologies. Here the perceptions of the teaching staff who responded to our survey were quite different, with many identifying pedagogical issues as well as technical training issues. One institutional contact described a gulf between those who feel the new digital world is too complex and fast moving and those who feel their institution lags behind in engaging with technological change. Possibly this, together with the reluctance to expose uncertainties to line managers identified earlier, may explain the different perceptions we have detected. The evidence from this survey suggests that training and pedagogical development should be seen as interconnected, each building on and supporting the other. This view is supported by Haynes et al (2004) who argue that effective support for HE staff in adapting to technological change is an issue of skills, competence and awareness, and pedagogy.

Finally, to return to the theme of a sector in transition, we gathered evidence from a minority of institutions of emerging approaches to developing overarching structures for more systematic approaches to professional development, and encouraging staff to engage in the scholarship of learning and teaching. These are typically at an early stage but we intend to use the early experience of these institutions as the basis of a case study.

## 4.5 Recognition and reward

A study of reward practice across the UK undertaken by HEA found that 'academics believe strongly in the importance of teaching in higher education and that they think it should be appropriately recognised and rewarded' (HEA, 2009, p52). In our conversations, institutional contacts concentrated on promotion criteria and teaching award schemes, locating both in the context of the changing cultures and status of learning and teaching in HE.

There is a variety of practice across the Scottish sector in the extent to which excellence in learning and teaching is formally considered as part of promotion cases. HEA recognition is incorporated in promotion frameworks and criteria in just a few institutions. However, in our interviews we heard that a number of institutions are currently looking at these issues and the direction of travel seems to be towards much more formal recognition. A number of our respondents noted a disconnect between staff perceptions and institutional policy and practice. So, for example, in a research-intensive institution teaching excellence is well established as part of the criteria for promotion but staff tend to believe that research is the main driver. In a post-'92 institution, where the evidence of recent promotions underlines the importance of teaching, nevertheless staff still think that research record dominates and, even where there are clear teaching promotion criteria, anecdotal evidence from staff seeking promotion suggests difficulty in this area. It seems that despite the prominence of the enhancement system in Scotland there is still a widespread belief that the status of teaching is low compared with research, even in teaching-intensive institutions. In part this must stem from history and culture, but in our interviews we heard that there can also be a misalignment between institutional rhetoric and policy frameworks. Gibbs' (2012, p20) reference to the importance of institutional leadership in creating an environment that values enhancement is apposite.

There has been a rapid growth in student-led teaching awards in Scottish HEIs. Research by Davies et al (2012, p16) found that these new schemes made a positive contribution to staff-student relationships, contributed valuable data on students' perceptions of best practice and enhanced the status and importance of teaching in HEIs. Some interviewees noted the prominence of PGCert graduates in these awards. In our interviews these very positive features were recognised but it is less clear that these schemes are having an impact on professional development, culture or practice. Gibbs (2012, p21) cautions that there seems to be a negative correlation between institutions that focus on individuals and 'star' practitioners, and enhancement. He argues (2012, p21, p30) that it is more effective to concentrate effort on programmes and departments.

Roughly half of the institutions we spoke to also mentioned university awards for excellence in learning and teaching. There was a consistent thread of comments on the importance of taking every opportunity to celebrate achievement in learning and teaching. In addition to award events most institutions also provided opportunities to celebrate and showcase the achievements of PGCert candidates.

# 5   Summary of key issues and challenges

We start with the staff voice as expressed in the survey (included as an appendix to this paper). Question 8 asked respondents to think about the demands of their current teaching, learning and assessment role and to indicate the areas where they would most welcome support for their professional development. Responses to this question were complex and nuanced. However, there were some strong messages in the data. The most frequently expressed priority for support was opportunities for discussion with colleagues, followed by opportunities for systematic reflection on practice as part of a module or department review. Attendance at a staff development workshop, seminar or conference at their institution was the next most highly ranked. HEA or Enhancement Theme events were given the highest priority by a small number in each case but their average ranking across the cohort of respondents was the lowest. Twenty-five respondents took the opportunity to expand on their priorities for professional development. These responses reflected both their priorities for development and the pressures that they felt impeded their ability to focus on professional development in learning and teaching. There were a number of very strong themes running through these responses:

•     a strong call for opportunities for sharing with colleagues within the institution - with this including opportunities for discussion and for observation of practice among colleagues

•     an interest in sharing experience with colleagues in other institutions through visits and meetings

•     a strong interest in issues connected with assessment and feedback.

Barriers to professional development were felt to be lack of time and a privileging of the research agenda over teaching with the latter receiving less institutional recognition.

The final question in the survey asked staff to reflect on their professional development priorities. We noted in section 4.1 that the dominant response was a sense of frustration over the lack of time to reflect and work on new developments. Analysis of the comments produced the following priorities:

•     engagement with colleagues - observation, peer observation of teaching, opportunities for discussion, half-day themed discussions on specific issues

•     time and space for reflection

•     opportunities to learn about new techniques and new technologies at a level that goes beyond simply 'how to'

•     opportunities to engage with learning and teaching issues in their own discipline

•     moving beyond routine evaluation to more opportunities for pedagogical research - this perhaps links to a desire to be able to engage with more of the relevant research literature.

The extended interviews and the workshop introduced issues and challenges from the perspective of staff with an interest in policy and organisation of professional development. As a result, the issues and challenges identified overlap and intersect with the survey responses but also introduce more strategic concerns. The top four pedagogical concerns were:

•     working with new technology to enhance teaching, keeping up to date with developments (particularly distance learning) and ensuring that changes keep pedagogy to the fore

•     approaches to assessment

•     internationalisation

•     Curriculum for Excellence and student diversity.

There were a larger number of strategic or policy issues:

- adequate resources - building time into staff workload planning

- finding a stronger space for learning and teaching in light of the REF (this is a big issue in research-intensive institutions)

- understanding what constitutes good teaching and evidencing enhancement

- developing systematic ways of supporting the career-long development of all staff, the hard to engage, part-time staff and GTAs

- working better with HR and finance to support professional development - finding a common language and understanding.

# 6 Overview and suggestions for further research

We have found strong evidence that new staff are well supported, but we also found a need for a more systematic and organised approach to supporting staff later in their careers; some institutions are currently developing this approach. In discussing the opportunities for professional development in the immediate future, a number of respondents remarked on the emergence of different attitudes, where there is a culture among new (early career) staff characterised by a greater willingness to, or indeed acceptance of the need to, engage with professional development, including with the pedagogy and practice of learning and teaching. There is a feeling that this may be partly as a result of changing undergraduate experiences; of raised expectations from the more systematic approach to supporting the development of research skills that is now the norm across the sector; of a much greater familiarity with the culture and affordances of an online digital environment and social media; and due to awareness of the demands of a highly competitive job market.

Eraut (1994) argues that there are three sources for professional learning - publication, practical experience and people - and that there are crucial links between the three. Teasing out what this might mean in the context of the Scottish HE sector in a period of change and challenge may be helpful.

There is a very strong sense of collegiality in the Scottish HE sector. This is apparent in the willingness to share and contribute to the broad enhancement process and is particularly marked in the willingness of staff across the sector to contribute to studies like this. The Scottish HE Development Network already makes a great deal of use of shared expertise and resources.

We noted that, from the interviews and supported by the survey, the scholarship and research base that links the Scottish Enhancement Theme approach to the professional development of the staff who teach across a diverse sector is relatively weak. Perhaps one way to tackle Eraut's publication strand is to strategically promote a collective effort across the sector in developing the scholarship of professional development and enhancement.

Tackling the cultural and resource barriers to enabling staff to have the time to reflect and develop is a complex challenge, which requires leadership in learning and teaching in all institutions. However, there may be practical actions that can support change identified in this study. All institutions identified areas of significant challenge and it would be valuable to develop and share worked-out case studies of best practice in a number of areas. These could include:

- examples of frameworks and structures for supporting career-long professional development

- supporting student diversity - linked to Curriculum for Excellence

- developing digital pedagogies - linked to Flexible Curriculum

- supporting part-time staff

- developing a comprehensive CPD structure aligned with UKPSF

- developing successful approaches to peer mentoring

- alternatives to the PGCert

- developing communities of practice

- links between professional development and enhancement

- cross-institutional mentoring

- good practice in CPD - sharing practice between more and less experienced staff

- engaging all staff in ongoing professional development

- developing effective ways of evidencing the links between staff development and enhancement

- building meaningful professional development targets into annual review and appraisal processes

- working with HR on professional development

- developing teaching promotion criteria

- building pedagogical evaluation into course or module evaluation.

However, as one respondent noted, case studies on their own are not sufficient: we also need to work on the networks and sharing mechanisms that could engage staff at many levels. In effect this focuses in on the 'people' in Eraut's three sources for professional development.

In developing these case studies, our sense is that there are lots of examples of excellent practice in the Scottish sector that could be used. However, it would be worthwhile engaging with international experience and perhaps building on some of the links and relationships made during the 2013 Enhancement Themes conference.

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# Staff: enhancing teaching survey

## Welcome:

Thank you for coming to answer this survey.

Alison Gilmour and Pete Cannell from the Open University in Scotland have been commissioned to produce a report that looks at the issues around professional development for staff involved with teaching in Scottish HEIs.

The project explores the way in which staff, in teaching roles, are supported, formally and informally, and the key opportunities and challenges.

## The purpose of this survey:

The 'Staff: enhancing teaching' project is using a range of different methods to gain insights into current practice in professional development for HE teachers in Scotland. This survey is aimed at anyone involved in teaching students and asks a small number of questions. Your comments will be anonymous. We may want to use quotes in the final report but they will not be linked to any institution. We will provide aggregate feedback to your institution but we will ensure that no individual response can be identified.

Many thanks for your help and support. The survey will be closed on Friday 31 May 2013.

Please click on the 'Next' button below to continue, and use the 'Back' button in the questionnaire to navigate back through the questionnaire.

If you have any technical difficulties completing this questionnaire, please email the Student Statistics and Survey Team: IET-Surveys@open.ac.uk or telephone them on +44 (0)1908 652422/652423.

**Please let us know your institution?**
(If you are employed by more than one Scottish HEI please select all that apply)

- ☐ University of the West of Scotland
- ☐ Heriot-Watt University
- ☐ University of Dundee
- ☐ Queen Margaret University
- ☐ University of Edinburgh
- ☐ SRUC
- ☐ University of the Highlands and Islands
- ☐ The Glasgow School of Art
- ☐ The University of Glasgow
- ☐ The Open University in Scotland
- ☐ The University of Strathclyde
- ☐ Royal Conservatoire
- ☐ The University of Abertay
- ☐ St Andrews University
- ☐ The University of Aberdeen
- ☐ Edinburgh Napier University
- ☐ Glasgow Caledonian University
- ☐ The University of Stirling
- ☐ The Robert Gordon University

**Please let us know which of the following best describes your broad discipline area**
(if none applies please select 'other' and specify)?
(Please select one only)

- ☐ Medicine and Dentistry
- ☐ Subjects allied to Medicine
- ☐ Biological Sciences
- ☐ Veterinary Sciences
- ☐ Agriculture and related subjects
- ☐ Physical Science
- ☐ Mathematical Science
- ☐ Computer Science
- ☐ Engineering and Technology
- ☐ Architecture, Building and Planning
- ☐ Social, Economic and Political Studies
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Business and Administrative Studies
- ☐ Librarianship and Information Science
- ☐ Languages

- ☐ Humanities
- ☐ Creative Arts and Design
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Other, please specify:

  ☐ _____

**Which of the following best describes your current role?**
(Please select one only)

- ☐ Academic
- ☐ Academic related
- ☐ Graduate Teaching Assistant
- ☐ Other, please specify:

  ☐ _____

**How many years have you had a teaching role in higher education?**
(Please select one only)

- ☐ Less than 1
- ☐ 1 - 3
- ☐ 4 - 6
- ☐ 7 - 10
- ☐ More than 10

**Apart from your subject qualifications, are you currently studying for, or do you have any formal qualifications in learning and teaching?**
(Please select all that apply)

- ☐ Postgraduate certificate
- ☐ Postgraduate diploma
- ☐ Master's
- ☐ PhD/EdD/MPhil/MEdRes
- ☐ Other, please specify:

  ☐ _____

**Are you currently in any category of membership of the Higher Education Academy?**
(Please select one only)

- ☐ Associate Fellow
- ☐ Fellow
- ☐ Senior Fellow
- ☐ Principal Fellow
- ☐ Not a Fellow

On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is not at all supported and 10 is very well supported) how well do you feel supported in your ongoing professional development as a teacher/lecturer?
(Please select one only)

- ☐ 1 - Not at all supported
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 - Neutral
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10 - Very well supported

Thinking about the demands of your current teaching, learning and assessment role, in what areas would you most welcome support for your professional development?
(Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 their order of importance to you)

Please rank those that apply in order of their importance with 1 being the Most important, and 10 being the Least important. Leave blank if not applicable to you.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Support and discussion with colleagues | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Formal study as part of a teaching qualification | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Engagement with learning and teaching literature | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Attendance at an HEA event | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Attendance at an Enhancement Themes event | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Systematic reflection on practice as part of a module or department review | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Attendance at a staff development workshop/seminar/conference at my institution | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Action research or other practice based project | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Pedagogical research | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

Other, please specify:

_____ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**FINALLY**

Thinking about the demands of your current teaching, learning and assessment role what, in areas would you most welcome support for your professional development?

**The End**

Many thanks again for taking the time to provide us with your feedback, it is very valuable to us.

Please click on the 'Next' button below to record your responses.

You will then be redirected to the Staff: enhancing teaching webpage where you can either just close the browser window, or continue using the website.

If you wish to contact the project team please email: a.gilmour@open.ac.uk

**www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk**

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