

Title: **Balancing development with assurance: opportunities and tensions in using the UK Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF) to recognise the quality of teaching and support of learning through an institutional professional standards framework**

Presenter: **Sue Mathieson**
Northumbria University

Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Have an understanding of how the UKPSF might be used systemically across a university to evaluate and enhance the quality of teaching and supporting learning
- Reflect on the opportunities and challenges inherent in using an institutional professional standards framework to achieve this
- Consider the tensions between the value of a professional standards framework in promoting CPD pathways for academics in teaching and supporting learning, and its use in evaluating and developing the quality of teaching and supporting learning across a university

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

In the current climate of intense competition for students and financial constraint, it is no longer feasible to pursue development objectives for teaching and supporting learning without also paying attention to the measurement of teaching quality. This creates a challenge for universities seeking to enhance the student learning experience, while also demonstrating to a range of stakeholders, in particular potential students, employers, and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), that they are achieving on a range of different targets and performance indicators. One of the areas that has remained fuzzy in the shift to measuring quality is what we mean by quality in professional standards of teaching and supporting learning, and how to measure its impact on enhancing the student learning experience. While the National Student Survey (NSS) and other indicators do provide some measures to demonstrate the quality of the student learning experience, the precise causal link between student learning and teaching quality is difficult to identify, measure and evidence. It thus becomes difficult to target the improvements in teaching that are needed to improve the student learning experience as measured by current performance indicators.

This paper explores the opportunities and challenges of adapting the UKPSF as a framework within a university to measure professional standards, to make judgements about the quality of teaching and the support of learning in higher education and through this to enable institution-wide interventions to enhance performance against a range of indicators. The session will investigate the role that such an institutional framework can and should play in a systemic approach to enhancing student learning, and how this can be balanced with the value of the UK PSF as a national framework to engage staff in their own development, and to promote and enable CPD opportunities and progression paths for academics.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Presentation: 15 minutes

Group discussion: 15 minutes

Indicative questions:

In what ways does the UKPSF contribute to a systemic approach to enhancing teaching and supporting learning in your university?

Do you think that the UKPSF should be used proactively at a systemic level to make judgements about the quality of teaching and supporting learning in universities?

What do you think are the opportunities and potential dangers in taking such an approach?

Plenary, including summing up of key points: 15 minutes

References

Stefani, L. (ed) (2011) *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Development: Principles and Practice*, Routledge.

Saunders, M., Trowler, P. and Bamber, V. (eds.) (2011) *Reconceptualising Evaluation in Higher Education: The Practice Turn*, SRHE and OUP.