

**AdvanceHE**



# Utilising the Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning for strategic transformation

Enhancing the quality of our learning and teaching:  
utilising the PSF as a driver for strategic change

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# 1 Situation

## 1.1 A brief profile of Bournemouth University

Bournemouth University is a UK university founded in 1992, with origins as a place of higher education (HE) dating back to the early 1900s. The population of the university exceeds 18,000 students studying across four faculties: Bournemouth University Business School, the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Media and Communication and the Faculty of Science and Technology. From 750 academic staff, approximately 67% (500) have Fellowship in an appropriate descriptor.

## 1.2 Institutional strategy

Bournemouth University's institutional strategy (BU2025) is based on the values of excellence, inclusivity, creativity and responsibility. Our vision is for Bournemouth to be recognised worldwide as leading inspiring learning, advancing knowledge and enriching society through our 'Fusion' learning, a pedagogic approach that integrates education, research and practice.

# 2 Task

## 2.1 Strategic actions for education

We incorporate our Fusion learning approach consistently into our entire educational portfolio. We seek to excel in measures of teaching quality, learning environment and student outcomes, and to improve attainment, retention and completion rates for all students.

To implement our BU2025 strategy, we need our staff who are involved in educating students to fully embrace Fusion learning to innovate and excel in the delivery of their learning and teaching activities. To do this, we established the Centre for Fusion Learning Innovation and Excellence (FLIE), which provides our Advance HE accredited provision aligned to our academic principles. This includes a taught Postgraduate Certificate in Education Practice (PGCert) which awards Fellow (D2), and a CPD Fellowship programme awarding Associate (D1), Fellow (D2) and Senior Fellowship (D3).

## 2.2 Using the PSF as a driver for education enhancement

We use the PSF as the foundation for defining good pedagogic practice and as a lever for continuous enhancement and professional growth. Within the first year of joining the university, new academic staff with little experience of teaching in HE are offered the opportunity to complete our Advance HE-accredited PGCert in Education Practice. Staff with prior teaching experience are encouraged to apply through our CPD route to Fellowship. Gaining Fellowship is monitored across the probationary period for new academic staff and discussed at annual appraisals for all academic staff. As the next step in developing their education practice, staff can also apply to our Doctorate in Education (fees waived).

We continue to support Associate Fellows, Fellows and Senior Fellows in the development of their academic practice, and to stay in good professional standing, through a range of internal development and educational enhancement opportunities delivered by FLIE, including sessions developing effective digital learning environments, leadership, assessing and providing feedback to students, appropriate teaching methods for different cohort sizes and equality of opportunities for learners.

Senior Fellows, who have gained Fellowship through our CPD pathway, are invited to submit an expression of interest to become mentors for colleagues applying, and/or assessors to reviewing applications received. Before they can be mentors or assessors, interested staff need to undertake training. In the case of assessors, they also need to attend an assessment panel meeting to ensure that they understand the assessment process.

### 2.3 Embedding the PSF in educational enhancement and teaching practice

FLIE uses academic staff who are Senior Fellows as educational enhancement theme leaders to address institutional strategic priorities. Activities undertaken are in the form of workshops, advice and guidance, and/or briefing updates at relevant committees. The work of the theme leaders ensures that the PSF is continuously embedded within the educational practice and considers all academic staff.

Based on their case studies, staff recently awarded Fellowship or Senior Fellowship are invited to contribute to FLIE's education enhancement workshops. This is a valuable mechanism to enable the sharing of best practice across the institution and elevate the standing of great educators at our institution.

### 2.4 Celebrating and rewarding Fellowship

The university's Academic Career Framework describes indicative outputs expected from staff at different stages in their careers. While not a condition of progression, there is explicit reference to Fellowship within this framework. The university encourages all academic staff to include applying for an appropriate Fellowship descriptor in their personal development plan (PDP), which is a record of their continuous achievement. Fellowship is recognised at the highest level as being an important progressive achievement. New Fellows (all descriptors) receive a personal congratulatory letter from the vice-chancellor and are invited by organisational development to an annual university-wide event celebrating staff qualifications, which is hosted by the vice-chancellor.

## 3 Result

### 3.1 Harnessing the PSF as a driver for change

Bournemouth University has a visible and tangible commitment to supporting educational enhancement, which is making a material difference to the staff and student experience. Informed by the PSF, we have consolidated our educational development offerings to staff through the development and provision of a digital pedagogies framework, and we have created a new platform to provide training, guidance and support materials. This is important in presenting staff with examples of different teaching practices and for their development of learning activities which respect students from diverse learning communities.

Staff are also helped to recognise methods for evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching, to understand the need for, and what constitutes, an effective learning environment, and how their subject material can be best presented. We have introduced an annual vice-chancellor's award, 'Inspiring Learning', to recognise staff excellence in this regard.

The university's commitment to reflect the PSF in its institutional BU2025 strategy ensures that it remains prominent and relevant across the university. As a result, the percentage of our staff with Fellowship – 67% (500 staff) – is significantly above the sector average (54%).

## 4 Reflection

### **Professor Tim McIntyre-Bhatty, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Bournemouth University**

High-quality learning and teaching is a priority for Bournemouth University and at the core of our BU2025 strategy. We invest heavily in supporting staff in the development of their education practice to ensure the provision of an excellent student learning experience.

Our Advance HE-accredited programmes have been invaluable in enabling us to create an ecosystem of educational enhancement for staff and for students.

Embedding the use of the Professional Standards Framework within our strategy and university policies ensures that it maintains a high profile, and staff gaining any Fellowship descriptor are rightly proud of their achievement.

## 5 Peer reflection

### 5.1 Professor Tashmin Khamis, PFHEA, Vice-Provost (Quality, Teaching and Learning), the Aga Khan University, Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and the UK

Bournemouth University is obviously committed to a high-quality learning experience and a student-centred approach. This is evident from the high percentage of faculty to have gained Fellowship and the acknowledgement of benchmarking to the PSF through avenues such as appraisals and sharing of best practices across departments.

The monitoring of Fellowship also indicates to academic staff the high expectations of the university and its alignment to the PSF. As the majority of faculty gain Fellowship, the institution may need to consider how it distinguishes and incentivises those demonstrating teaching excellence and educational leadership, such as those engaged with educational development through FLIE.

This is an approach we recognise as effective at the Aga Khan University, an intercontinental institution with campuses in East Africa, Pakistan and the UK. We do this through gaining membership of the prestigious Haile T Debas Teachers' Academy, where excellent pedagogues are recognised for their teaching mentorship of other faculty.



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