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Forum Insight for HR Managers

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Recommended Citation

The National Professional Development Framework
Initial Implementation

September 2017

This **Forum Insight** outlines a key strand of the workplan of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning - the formation and early implementation of the National Professional Development Framework (PDF) for all who teach in Irish higher education (HE).

Overview of the National Professional Development Framework

The PDF was published by the National Forum in mid-2016 to provide guidance for the professional development (PD) of individuals and gives direction to other stakeholders (e.g. institutions, HE networks, educational/academic developers, policy makers and student body representatives) for planning, developing and engaging in PD activities. The five domains (Figure 1 below) and their elements provide a framework to guide staff to review their current knowledge, skills and competencies, regardless of how, where or when these dimensions of professional learning have been developed. The development of an individual's engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning is an integral component of each domain.
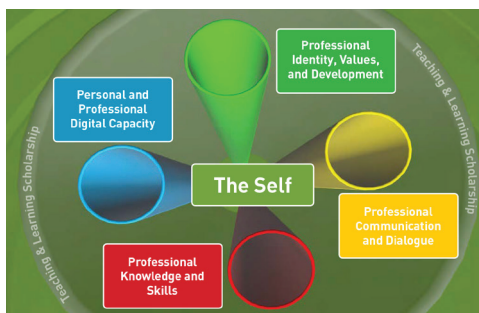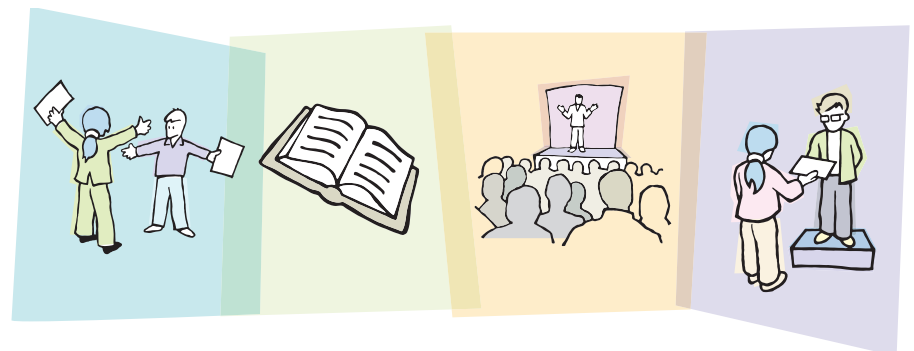

Figure 1 The domains underpinned by the PDF's values

Typology of Professional Development

Figure 2 shows the types of PD opportunities incorporated in the Framework, which include activities which are non-accredited (including collaborative, unstructured and structured) and those which are accredited

1. Collaborative Non-accredited	2. Unstructured Non-accredited	3. Structured Non-accredited	4. Accredited
Examples	Examples	Examples	Examples
Conversations with colleagues, peer networking, peer observations, online blogs/discussion forums, mentoring, informal dialogue with peers	Reading articles, following social media, self-study, watching video tutorials, keeping a reflective teaching journal/portfolio, preparing an article for publication	Workshops, seminars, MOOCs, conferences, summer schools, structured collaborative projects, research project on a topic of professional interest	Graduate Diploma, Masters, PhD, EdD in: Teaching & Learning, eLearning, Leadership in Education; Education Policy

Figure 2 Types and examples of PD identified in NF consultation

Staff who teach develop their knowledge, skills and competencies in their teaching through a range of learning activities. Each learning activity can be described by different types of learning, singly or in combination. The Framework identifies and recognises four types of learning associated with any PD learning activity ('new learning', 'consolidating learning', 'mentoring' and 'leading').

PDF Initial Implementation Across the HE Sector

The PDF was piloted in early 2017, with the pilot studies being designed to capture how individuals (from a range of individual professional identities) navigate the PDF with a view to informing the development of support material and resources to guide others using the Framework in the future. There were 22 pilot groups formed from universities, institutes of technology and the private colleges. The pilot groups included, among others, new and experienced academic staff from a wide range of disciplines, heads of department, part-time lecturers from industry, academic writing tutors, education developers, learning technologists, teacher educators, careers advisors, librarians and work placement co-ordinators. Those involved were encouraged to develop a PD portfolio, in any format, allowing them the space to undertake the continuing process of assessment, analysis, action, and review of their practice, at a time and pace that suits them.

National Digital Badge System Developed

A review of non-accredited PD completed by the National Forum in 2015 found that there was similarity in the range of ever-widening CPD opportunities in teaching and learning offered across HE institutions. In order to capture the potential of accreditation for these activities, the National Forum has undertaken, in collaboration with the HE sector, the development of a National Digital Badge System. Fifteen PD digital badge open access programmes (25 hours of learner effort), have been developed against nationally agreed criteria. Each programme was developed through collaboration by subject experts from across the sector. These programmes are available to download through the National Forum PD resource portal. The badges will be recognised across the sector to support staff mobility and transfer.

Two further PDF initiatives are supporting the implementation of the Framework across the sector:

- Institutions are being financed through the T&L Enhancement Fund 2016 to map their existing accredited PD provision onto the PDF.
- PD has been included as a funding stream in the 2017-18 funded National Seminar Series.

Emergence of a National PD Recognition Framework

Ultimately, our aim is to develop a PD Recognition Framework informed by the pilot implementation and other PD initiatives. Our current view is that the PD Recognition Framework should emerge and build from the ground up and wholly acknowledge an individual's commitment to continuous professional development. The incorporation of, for example, a peer triad support mechanism (October 2017) will allow teachers to work together in bringing their PD further into their practice. It is essential that the PD Recognition Framework nurture and accelerate good ideas, showcase innovative practice, and encourage collaborative networks and partnerships among HE teaching staff. Having the opportunity for input and discussion with colleagues as a support system for this can be hugely beneficial. It can enable a sector-wide learning community to form that will enrich the practice of all those who teach in HE.

Recommendations for the HE Sector

Implementing the PDF across the HE sector is undoubtedly challenging but can be supported by:

- Encouraging staff to engage with the Framework
- Ensuring senior management provide strong leadership
- Developing learning communities to support those engaged in their own PD

How can the National Forum and HR managers work together to support the implementation of the PDF?

- Can HR policies integrate the PDF?
- Can staff who engage in the PDF be recognised for their commitment?
- How might HR encourage schools/faculty to use the PDF as a route planner for all those who teach?
- How can the digital PD portfolio be used by HR departments to recognise an individual's commitment to their CPD?
- How can HR recognise the National PD Badges?
- How can a commitment to PD be recognised in the promotion of teachers in HE?
- What kind of PD Recognition Framework would support the adoption of the PDF across the sector?