



Advancing the quality and status of teaching in Australian higher education

Ideas for enhanced professional recognition for teaching and teachers

August 2015

The **Academic Workforce 2025 Project** was commissioned by the Office for Learning and Teaching to explore new conceptions of the professional practice of teaching in Australian higher education



MELBOURNE CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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For the Academic Workforce 2025 project, the team led by the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education consulted extensively with key stakeholders in the higher education sector through a series of roundtables across the country, a National Think Tank held at The University of Melbourne and a number of other fora and meetings.

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All members of the team contributed to the preparation of this discussion paper. Dr Carol Johnston, Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education, also wrote sections and we are grateful for her insights and contributions. We are also grateful to Professors Belinda Probert, Judyth Sachs and Royce Sadler for their advice early in the project, and to the Reference Group members Professors Shirley Alexander, Martin Brown, Sally Kift, Peter Lee and Margaret Mazzolini.

Inclusive terminology

The focus of this discussion paper is on higher education and the people who teach in higher education award programs. Generally then the terms 'university' and 'academic' are best avoided for the Australian higher education sector is broader and more diverse than these terms imply. It is difficult to avoid using them however, for occasionally reference must be made to universities and ideas of academic work, the academic workforce and the increasing differentiation of academic roles. When we do so in the paper it is not with the intention of being exclusive.

The term 'academic' is particularly problematic in the context of this paper, despite its common international usage. There are differing conceptions of which individuals and groups are members of the academy. Some people limit the use of academic label to staff who hold continuing or fixed-term appointments in research or teaching roles. Others use the label more widely to include sessional staff who teach in higher education. There are no hard and fast rules.

The view of the project team is that any discussion of the nurturing of professional practice of teaching in higher education should take into account the various categories and forms of employment of *all* people who teach students, who design and implement curricula for student learning and who have leadership responsibilities for higher education subjects and courses regardless of their specific terms of employment. This principle is important, for it places the emphasis squarely on all of the people who have professional responsibilities for student learning. In this sense the approach taken is one that is concerned with the collective educational professionalism as experienced by students and from which they are entitled to benefit.

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Executive Summary

This discussion paper argues for new steps to be taken to intensify the recognition and support for the professional practice of teaching in Australian higher education. The proposed creation of a new national institute in 2016, building on the contribution and achievements of the Office for Learning and Teaching and its predecessor agencies, will open up new opportunities that are worth exploring.

The professionalisation of university teaching has long been the subject of debate in Australia and elsewhere in the world. However, the changing character of Australian higher education provides a new imperative. An increasingly deregulated higher education sector and advances in technology, among other trends, are altering the modes of student participation, the structures of course delivery, the character of higher education providers and the higher education workforce. The relationships between students and teachers are changing.

Ultimately the quality of student learning and the quality of graduate outcomes are closely tied to the individual and collective professionalism of the people who teach in higher education. By professionalism the project team refers to the knowledge and skills in designing curricula, planning and implementing teaching and learning experiences, supporting students and assessing student progress and outcomes — in other words, knowledge and skills in teaching and learning.

In this paper we propose that Australian higher education will benefit from more explicit and robust approaches to the professionalisation of teaching in higher education. It is timely to consider the kind of strategies that might assist.

Why take steps now? Our proposal is not a reaction to a problem or a crisis. In many ways the Australian higher education sector is in robust shape. The sector is highly internationalised and enjoys a global reputation for quality and innovation. Many universities rank highly in international ranking schemes. National standards and regulatory mechanisms are being bedded down. The available evidence on the quality of teaching, albeit from limited indicators, is that it is good — and probably inching upwards if the Course Experience Questionnaire and University Experience Survey data are a reliable guide.

The professionalisation of higher education teaching is one element in ensuring the sector takes its quality and vitality to new levels. It is about future-proofing an evolving, high-stakes industry and an evolving profession. The higher education sector is of major importance to the Australian economy, with over 185 higher education providers enrolling over 1.2 million students and employing well over 50,000 academic staff and an estimated 50,000 sessional teaching staff. The quality of teaching and teachers and the quality of student learning and outcomes are not to be taken lightly.

This paper has been prepared against a backdrop of vigorous debate over the merit of fee deregulation for undergraduate education and the pros and cons of various potential approaches to deregulation. But fee deregulation, despite the understandable intensity of the debate, is only one contemporary policy issue amid wider social trends that will, or should, influence thinking on the best arrangements for Australian higher education as

Australia pushes deeply into an era of 'universal' higher education participation. These include the optimum architecture for the higher education system, provider differentiation and diversity, program diversity, quality and standards.

This discussion paper is not about the future structure of Australian higher education but it is concerned with one element of the maintenance of quality and standards through the future professionals who will teach, and lead teaching, in a more diverse, complex and competitive tertiary environment. Thus this paper is broadly about the ongoing challenge of continuous elevation of the quality of learning and teaching in higher education, which has been the subject of course of numerous projects and activities over many years. The paper looks at quality through the particular lens of individual professional practice: its nurturing, identification and recognition. It is acknowledged that this is only one dimension, or precursor or safeguard, for the quality of learning and teaching; individual professionalism is an important and necessary element in ensuring quality and standards in higher education, but clearly other important factors must come into play as well, including resourcing and infrastructure, both physical and virtual.

Higher education teaching is not deeply professionalised. In fact, when judged by the conventional characteristics of professions, higher education teaching rates poorly. If it is a profession then it is an unusual one. For example, unlike other professions there is no requirement for scholarly pre-service training and there are no registration requirements for practice. Similarly, there is no code of ethics or explicit, agreed set of professional standards. There are no requirements for continuing professional development to maintain one's fitness to practice.

There are imperatives for action. For example, Australian higher education has again been the subject of media scrutiny in 2015 for alleged soft-marking, management pressure to raise grades and correspondingly declining standards of graduates. Concerns such as these threaten public confidence in Australian higher education and the reputations of institutions. Bolstering the context for a truly professional practice of teaching in higher education, with the associated professional values around ethical practice standards that such professionalism, would be a small but helpful element in a wider, robust sectoral response.

Whether or not higher education teaching is dubbed a profession is probably hardly relevant. The use of the terms profession and professionalism simply capture the idea of work for which specialised knowledge and skills are required and which is carried out in the interests of and for the benefits of clients and stakeholders.

Models of professionalisation that may be appropriate for other professions may not be effective in higher education. What will not work in higher education are overly prescriptive, mandatory mechanisms. What will not work are approaches to professionalisation that are 'one-size-fits-all' and which ignore disciplinary differences and institutional contexts.

Ideas for professional recognition for advancing teaching and learning in Australian higher education

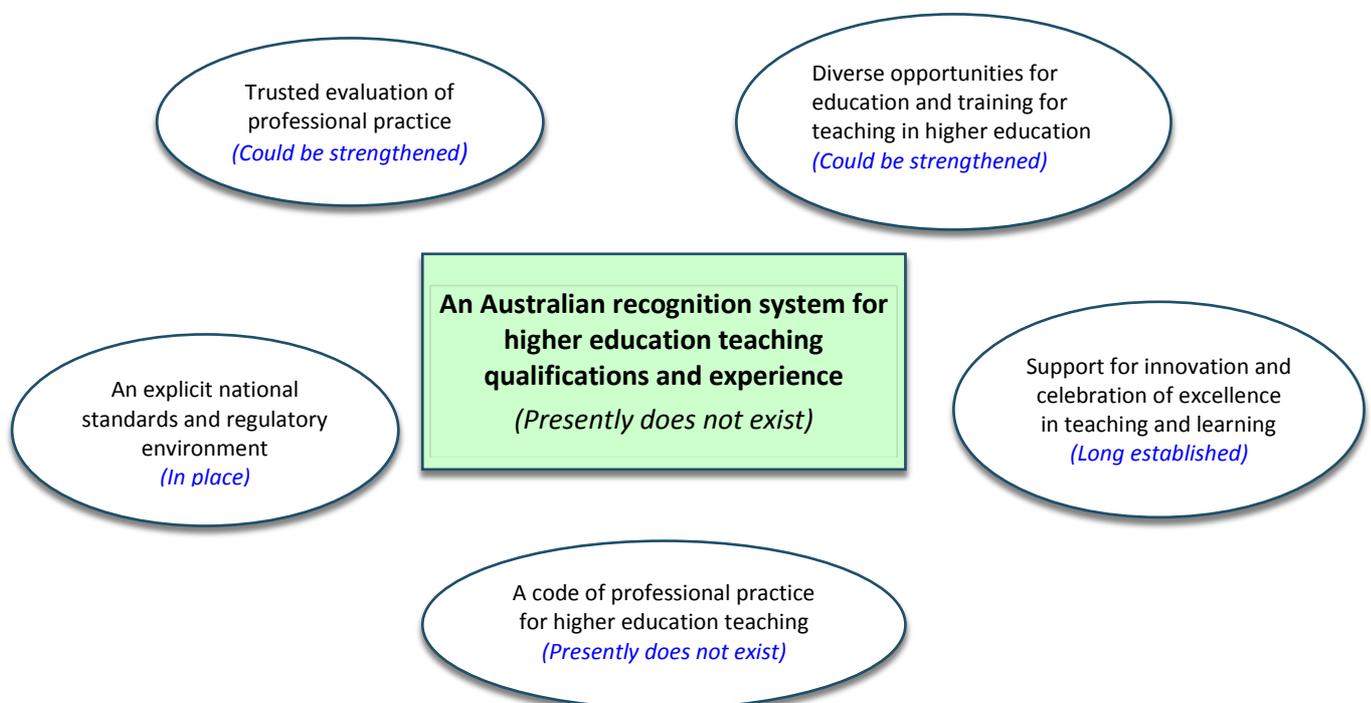
What *will* work in higher education, we believe, is a model for the professionalisation of teaching that:

- places student learning and the student experience at the heart of conceptions of professional higher education teaching;
- is 'grass roots', in the sense of drawing on, supporting and giving recognition to the personal commitment to high quality teaching and learning of the people who teach in higher education;
- recognises that diversity of roles, functions and employment types through which individuals contribute to the teaching experienced by students;
- is inclusive of the range of philosophies and approaches towards teaching and learning in higher education; and
- is voluntary and 'owned' by the collective higher education profession.

To initiate discussion, a preliminary framing of the concept of professional recognition is proposed below. This framework has six components, which in various ways are based on well-established conceptions of professionalism.

The framing of professionalisation focuses on how systemic, integrated mechanisms can be arranged to assist individuals who teach in higher education to develop, maintain and receive recognition for their higher education teaching knowledge, skills and experience. Some elements of the framework are in place and are quite effective. Others would benefit from building or strengthening.

Framing Professional Recognition



The centrepiece is the creation of an Australian recognition system for higher education teaching qualifications, skills and experience. This is a major missing element in the present architecture for the professionalisation of higher education teaching. This is therefore the central step that might be taken, for without an integrating mechanism that offers individuals independent peer recognition of their preparedness for the professional practice of higher education teaching it will be difficult to create a significant shift in the culture and practices of the higher education sector. We believe this is an achievable and highly necessary step to take at this point in the evolution of Australian higher education. That said, this is an idea that will require careful design and positioning. The paper concludes with some ideas on taking the broad framework to the sector for consultation and the steps required for its gradual, incremental development.

A possible new locus of leadership?

This paper coincides with the federal government's decision in the 2015 Budget papers to transfer functions of the Office for Learning and Teaching to a new institute to be created in 2016 within the sector and a reduction in the budget for programs such as awards, grants and fellowships. The changing character of strategic national support for the quality and status of teaching and learning in higher education provides both challenges and opportunities for the next steps in advancing the quality of higher education. The ideas contained in this paper for the development of an explicit approach to professional recognition might provide one focal point for an imaginative re-orientation of the mission and activities of the proposed new institute.

1. Nurturing the higher education workforce: A scenario for Australian higher education in 2025

This paper is a call for a sea-change in our thinking about the nature of academic work and the shape of the higher education workforce. In it, we argue for a reconsideration on the patterns of training, support and recognition for people who teach in higher education in readiness for a vastly different higher education system – one that is rapidly differentiating and in which there is an unbundling of traditional academic roles.

This paper is about advancing key elements in the professionalisation in the practice of teaching in higher education suited to a rapidly evolving Australian higher education system. We use the term professionalisation broadly to include the raft of expert skills necessary for effective course design, delivery and assessment of student learning. But the paper is not a simplistic cry for more professionalism, or a naïve agenda to replicate approaches adopted by other professions that might have little relevance to higher education teaching.

Doubtless there will be people who will disagree with the analysis presented here and who will argue that the key steps proposed by this project can't be done, or shouldn't be done. We accept this, and acknowledge that debate is an essential part of a productive national dialogue on new and potentially ambitious possibilities for the future shape of the Australian higher education workforce.

The rising prominence of teaching and learning in a rapidly transforming higher education sector

What will Australian higher education be like in the year 2025? Predictions are always risky, but we will take a gamble and offer a scenario that is largely focused on undergraduate education.

By 2025, there will be a wider range of providers, including many smaller private providers. The providers will be both vertically and horizontally differentiated. There will be numerous partnerships for mutual provider and student advantage across the provider spectrum.

Teaching and learning will be seen as *the* principal business of many parts of the higher education sector. A steadily growing proportion of students will be studying in institutions in which research does not underpin teaching and learning and will be taught by staff who are neither active researchers nor research trained. Research, and faith in the research-teaching nexus, will only be one element in making higher education 'higher'.

Domestic participation rates will still be growing and the domestic student market will be vigorously competitive on both quality and price. Students will contribute a higher proportion of the cost of their higher education than they do at moment. For some courses and some institutions, the tuition fees will be considerably higher than at present. Student expectations for service quality will be high as new fee arrangements create a more explicit transactional relationship based on providers and clients.

More people will commence higher education with lower levels of academic readiness than in past decades. As a result, attention will have swung dramatically to outcome standards and evidence to confirm that bachelors' graduates have demonstrated that their knowledge and skills meet the thresholds for 'graduateness' in their fields. Sector-wide regulation will increasingly focus on demonstrable evidence of learning outcomes.

By 2025 there will be a much wider range of options for course participation, including, of course, wholly online and blended options. Many students will be studying online with peers across the world. The calendar year will be used more intensively by some institutions and there will be 'fast-track' options for students wishing to graduate quickly. An increasing proportion of students will be undertaking a structured sandwiching of work and study.

Course design and the patterns of learning and teaching will be increasingly constructed around the needs and expectations of students and underpinned by a growing body of evidence drawn from learning analytics. Many students will study using sophisticated learning resources that have been developed outside of their own institutions and provided on a mass scale. Pathways into and through higher education will multiply and will be complex. Distinctions between higher education and other forms of tertiary education will break down further.

A differentiated higher education workforce adapted to new patterns of scholarly work

If such a scenario is plausible, what might the higher education workforce look like in 2025? What might be the patterns of scholarly work on a day-by-day basis? Will it be meaningful to talk in terms of 'the academy' and the 'academic profession'? What might be the underpinnings of the professional practice of those who teach in higher education?

These questions are difficult to answer, partly because the answers depend on strategic decisions that might be made now. Nonetheless, here is our best guess.

Teaching roles will be increasingly specialised, in some cases highly specialised. A dwindling proportion of the higher education workforce will be expected to work across the traditional academic spectrum of research, teaching, engagement and institutional service, and a smaller proportion will have continuing, full-time appointment. A growing proportion will have extensive professional, industry and business experience. A growing number of people will undertake 'freelance' teaching across a number of institutions.

Teaching will often be conducted by teams in which the quality of the student experience and student learning is highly dependent on the seamless integration of the professional skills and contributions of individuals. The boundary between the work of academic staff and professional staff will become fuzzier at the interface with students and their learning.

New underpinnings for the quality and standards of higher education

We do not believe the Australian higher education sector is presently fully prepared for the transformation we have sketched above. Further, we believe it is a critical time to consider the question of how the next generation of higher education teachers will be equipped for the professional practice of teaching in higher education.

Thus far we have largely avoided using the term 'professionalism'. When this project was commissioned by the Office for Learning and Teaching, the project brief was described in part in terms of the professionalisation of the academic workforce. We soon learned during our consultations that conceptions of professionalism and professionalisation draw mixed reactions with the academic community. In particular, the term professionalisation jars with

some, for it hints at an absence of individual professionalism – which of course is not intended in our use of the term.

In writing this paper we do not shy away from the idea of an academic profession or from the concept academic professionalism. For us, professionalism has a simple meaning: academic work, scholarly work, relies on a sophisticated knowledge base and the assumption that certain ethical commitments to students are a paramount consideration. The use of the expression ‘profession’ is justified.

Ironically, while universities are deeply involved in pre-service and in-service training for many professions and in professional standard setting, the same logic is rarely if ever applied to academic professionalism. The professionalisation of the academy – in a formal, explicit sense – has been a neglected issue as the Australian higher education system has grown through the elite and mass participation phases and now pushes into universal participation.

The formal cornerstone of academic professionalism has been the acquisition of a research higher degree, principally a PhD. An academic qualification in research demonstrates readiness to join the academy and by implication has proved fitness to teach in higher education. This situation may have been appropriate for the elite era of higher education when the academic workforce was much smaller and the students were themselves an educational elite and, more arguably, often self-starters. Clearly, research training is no longer the requisite background for the professionals who teach in higher education, should it ever have been, for many people teaching in higher education institutions do not hold PhDs, nor do they have formal qualifications in teaching of any kind ¹.

In this new context, it is reasonable to ask, what presently makes an individual fit for the professional practice of teaching in contemporary higher education? Equally, we might ask, what would identify an individual as less than fit for teaching in modern higher education? There are no clear answers to these questions, yet we expect that few would argue that ‘anything goes’ is appropriate for the practice of higher education.

The obvious point, of course, is that no new conception of academic professionalism has emerged to keep pace with the gradual transformation of the higher education industry. It is time to awaken sensibilities on this issue, for the preparation and maintenance of the higher education workforce is central to the kind of higher education quality we wish to sustain in Australia.

From the student learning point of view, quality and standards are not derived solely from the individual professionalism of the academic workforce of course, for quality and standards are also related to facilities, resources, course design, support services, and so on. But the knowledge and skills of individual practitioners are inescapably part of the entire quality system.

In this regard the stakes are quite high. The professionalism of higher education teaching and assessment has again been under a harsh spotlight in 2015, with wide-ranging allegations of soft-marking, management pressure to raise grades and overall declining

¹ Norton (2013)

assessment and grading standards. The breadth and depth of such problems, if those of all kinds do exist, are not known. This aside, concerns such as these threaten public confidence in Australian higher education and the reputations of institutions. A robust response is needed. One aspect of this should be a focus on bolstering the context for a truly professional practice of teaching in higher education with the personal values around ethical practice standards that such professionalism would require and would make more explicit.

The proposed new Higher Education Standards Framework might provide a broad national frame of reference for a new idea of professionalism in higher education teaching. Standards 3.2.2 and 3.2.4 in particular offer a high level specification for the knowledge and skills required of people who have academic oversight of or who teach in higher education courses or units.

Table 1: Excerpt from the proposed Higher Education Standards Framework

3.2 Staffing

1. The staffing complement for each course of study is sufficient to meet the educational, academic support and administrative needs of student cohorts undertaking the course.
2. The academic staffing profile for each course of study provides the level and extent of academic oversight and teaching capacity needed to lead students in intellectual inquiry suited to the nature and level of expected learning outcomes.
3. Staff with responsibilities for academic oversight and those with teaching and supervisory roles in courses or units of study are equipped for their roles, including having:
 - a. knowledge of contemporary developments in the discipline or field, which is informed by continuing scholarship or research or advances in practice
 - b. skills in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles relevant to the discipline, their role, modes of delivery and the needs of particular student cohorts, and
 - c. a qualification in a relevant discipline at least one level higher than is awarded for the course of study, or equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice based experience and expertise, except for staff supervising doctoral degrees having a doctoral degree or equivalent research experience.
4. Teachers who teach specialised components of a course of study, such as experienced practitioners and teachers undergoing training, who may not fully meet the standard for knowledge, skills and qualification or experience required for teaching or supervision (3.2.3) have their teaching guided and overseen by staff who meet the standard.

2. Twelve propositions on the changing character of higher education, higher education teaching and learning, and the higher education workforce

The terms and conditions of academic work are being changed to reflect the realities of mass higher education. These changes are perhaps inevitable, but they also create problems for the future of the university (Altbach, 2007).

1. Over time, social, economic and technological trends will create a vastly different higher education sector and challenge past assumptions about the nature of 'the academy'

Traditional beliefs and practices around the pathways into the academy, the nature of academic work and the relationship between teaching and research are being vigorously challenged by mass/universal participation, technological transformation and the changing relationship between the higher education sector and communities. Diversification of institutional missions, an ageing academic workforce, and increased participation by students have led to a fracturing of the traditional work roles of the academic². The changing environment of higher education means that it is no longer possible to consider that the academic workforce consists of tenured academics with teaching and research positions.

Additionally the roles undertaken by academics have changed. There is increasing participation in the professional disciplines and related to this, a greater focus on higher education as a practical preparation for the workplace. Academics are being required to demonstrate relevance both within their teaching and research. The assumption that research informs teaching and vice versa is being tested as universities increase their numbers of teaching-only and research-only positions. This change challenges beliefs about the ways in which research and teaching can be intertwined and mutually beneficial. Implicit hierarchies of status between roles still remain and human resource policies and institutional cultures often continue to reward research over teaching.

2. Australian higher education providers will become more diverse than ever before in their business models, design of educational programs and deployment of staff. In many institutions there will be greater emphasis on teaching as the primary function and a growing proportion of students will study in institutions in which research is not core business

Increasing demand has seen the expansion of the system through new institutions, the enlargement of existing ones, changing partnerships between tertiary vocational and higher education providers and in some areas increased private providers. While universities remain at the core of higher education provision Non-University Higher Education Providers (NUHEPs) provide greater access and diversity. The diversity and range of higher education institutions inevitably raises questions of quality. The purpose that the range of providers serves can be seen to be diversifying as they either retain their position as elite universities that attract top quality students or vie for students through promoting specialist studies, distinct curriculums or high demand areas.

² Bexley, James & Arkoudis (2011)

Curricula are continuing to diversify. Institutions are seeking market edge and honing distinctive educational philosophies that they hope will set them apart. Increasingly, degree programs are shoe-horning into their curricula an expanding set of knowledge and skills requirements for more sophisticated work and to equip graduates for unpredictable future workplaces and roles.

3. Student expectations for the quality of teaching and support will intensify as they contribute a growing proportion of the cost of their education

Significantly for students, one of the central realities of increased participation rates is the challenge of funding. As governments have dealt with the issue of financial pressures resulting from mass higher education new funding patterns have emerged. The notion of higher education as a public good has cooled while increasingly the benefits as a private good are being promoted seeing students taking on more responsibility for the cost of tuition.

Possibly linked to this shift in costs, students have become more likely to choose courses that they determine as relevant and that will lead to future employment. This has led to an increase in the popularity of professionally oriented programs.³ Clearly this trend has implications for both the type of courses that students seek and that, as a consequence, higher education providers offer.

4. Modes of participation will continue to change as students seek quality, relevance and flexibility, and as institutions marry pedagogical effectiveness and business efficiencies within competitive markets

As the student population has grown and diversified universities have had to evolve. Students are spending less time on campus combining study with work⁴, requiring universities to provide flexible formats.

eLearning is a significant factor in the reshaping of higher education. As higher education providers have dealt with the expansion of traditional students, distance education through technology has emerged as an option for delivery that is cost effective and flexible. Traditionally distance learning was seen as a way of providing country students with a means of access to education. However, as models of education have expanded and students are more frequently combining study with work, family and across their career, eLearning has emerged as an important option for higher education expansion and delivery.

One in four Australian students now take some part of their course by distance learning and a number of universities are moving to include large components of their courses online either as open access or to traditionally enrolled students. This is particularly the case for universities with multiple campuses as it provides a way to deliver content across campuses with a smaller number of teachers. Over 30 per cent of higher education students in the USA now take at least one component of their course online.⁵

³ Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley (2009)

⁴ Baik, Naylor & Arkoudis (2015)

⁵ Allen & Seaman (2013)

Consideration of the pedagogy behind technology in education is necessary particularly in the face of increasing take-up. Use of technology also comes with huge infrastructure and technical support costs and so consideration of its uses and benefits to student learning are important.

As technology becomes more sophisticated devices and software are likely to become more integrated and personalised resulting in a blurring of the lines between personal life and education and between formal and informal education. Data will become more readily available on the way that technology is being used, possibly impacting on accountability and effectiveness. The technological revolution in higher education is just beginning with more change on the way and the pathways that will open up and close are not yet clear.

5. New learner-centric models of higher education will need to be designed and built

As the student population increases, there is diversification of student expectations, needs and aspirations, exerting significant pressure at the institutional and system level. While once the system was dominated by middle class school leavers, now so-called 'non-traditional students' are seeking higher education credentials. Students are more varied in their academic ability and interests. Not all students are independent self-starters as many might have been in the elite era. While some institutions still tend to attract students from traditional backgrounds, other institutions are readily creating programs to attract student cohorts drawn from a wider range of backgrounds.

Two examples of learner-centric pedagogies that have increasingly been taken up by universities are Work integrated learning (WIL) and Service learning. Work-integrated learning experiences such as short-term placement of students in the workplace, allow students to engage with the profession for which they are studying, and optimise their chances of employment. Additionally employers consider this practice as beneficial in making students more work-ready while also providing a source of future employees.⁶

Service learning provides students with the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge, gaining new skills and practical knowledge while also developing increased social responsibility.⁷ Service learning, like WIL, however is resource intensive providing additional challenges to the higher education sector in maintaining the quality of the learning experience when adapting these new approaches.

6. Teaching is increasingly a team-based activity, dependent on the effective coordination and integration of the skills and contributions of individuals, and teaching roles will become increasingly specialised as fewer 'academics' work across the traditional spectrum of research, teaching, engagement and administration

As outlined above, the higher education context has become more demanding and the stakes are getting higher. Teaching is simply more complex these days, for the character of teaching, learning and assessment is being thoroughly transformed.

⁶ Patrick et al. (2008)

⁷ Hurd (2008)

Increasingly, teaching is being conducted by teams in which the quality of the student experience and student learning is highly dependent on the seamless integration of the different individuals – both academic and professional staff – who contribute specialised roles, from curriculum designers and ‘discipline experts’, to small-group facilitators, assessors, eLearning experts, academic skills specialists and library skills support staff, to name a few.

Two factors of particular importance are at play here: the trend towards specific academic appointees in roles dubbed ‘teaching specialist’ or similar, and the growth in highly specific teaching contributions from individuals within team-based delivery. To these trends might be added a rise in outsourcing of curriculum, teaching and assessment components though this trend is not well understood. In all, these developments and their effectiveness in terms of student learning and student outcomes place new demands on the quality of pedagogical leadership and coordination — educational leadership must be key.

7. An unplanned differentiation of academic work has been underway for some time, with some undesirable outcomes - the tenured research and teaching position is no longer the norm

The growth of casual and limited-term appointments and proportional decrease in tenured appointments is perhaps the most obvious example of how a relatively homogenous profession has become more diverse. Between 40 and 60% of teaching in higher education is carried out by sessional staff. Yet this is but one example of recent changes in professional practice. Other shifts at the institutional level include a growing divergence in appointment types and levels, with increases in both older, senior staff and younger, junior staff and fewer appointments at the middle levels.⁸

- Between 40-60% of teaching in higher education is carried out by sessional staff.
- Roughly 10% of contract and tenured academics are now employed in “teaching only” positions.⁹
- One half of the total Australian academic workforce will retire in the next 15 years.¹⁰

8. The PhD continues to serve as the de facto qualification for academic careers though its fitness for purpose must be under question

Traditionally, the PhD has been considered the entry-level qualification for most university academic positions, regardless of discipline field. The formal cornerstone of academic professionalism was the PhD. An academic qualification in research demonstrated one’s readiness to join the academy and by implication proved one’s fitness to teach in higher education. This is not necessarily the case anymore. Norton reports¹¹ that currently one third of academic staff do not hold a PhD, many do not have any formal teaching qualifications and many enter the academic profession laterally. A shrinking proportion of the people teaching in higher education will have any research training at all, at least those who are teaching in undergraduate education. A growing proportion will have extensive professional, industry and business experience.

⁸ Hugo (2005a, 2005b, 2008)

⁹ Norton (2013)

¹⁰ Hugo (2008)

¹¹ Norton (2013)

What the PhD does provide is disciplinary expertise, which is core to most academics' understanding of good teaching. Deep knowledge of the relevant discipline or field is critical Boyer argues, to the scholarship of teaching. Good teachers are those who are 'steeped in the knowledge of their fields'.¹² Despite the importance of deep disciplinary expertise for higher education teaching, it cannot be said that the Australian PhD in its current form, provides adequate preparation in pedagogical knowledge and skills for higher education teaching, although numerous institutions are now offering PhD enhancement programs on teaching.

In a recent discussion paper *The Changing PhD* prepared by the Group of Eight universities, only one of the proposed list of 39 attributes of PhD graduates relates to teaching.¹³ Given that PhD graduates are likely to continue to make up a substantial, although reduced, proportion of the future academic workforce, it is necessary to explore ways to enhance teaching skills in those PhD students who aim to work in the higher education sector. Indeed, earlier this year The Minister for Education and Training commissioned the Australian Council of Learned Academics (ACOLA) to undertake a review of Australia's research training system including to ensure that graduates are 'equipped for and achieve employment outcomes in a range of sectors including academic teaching'.¹⁴

9. New forms of 'academic' identity are being created

The academic identity is complex and dynamic, and the recent changes in higher education involving new forms of academic work with multiple domains, necessitate new forms of professional (academic) identity.

Research continues to be the single most powerful factor in shaping academic culture and identities, and the prestige of the academic profession rests heavily on a high level of disciplinary expertise and currency maintained through research. However, in a growing higher education system, with growing diversification in institutional missions, surely new cornerstones for academic identity need to be found. This is particularly relevant with the emergence of new forms of 'blended professionals' – involving both academic and professional roles, which Whitchurch refers to as "*Third space professionals*"¹⁵. These are leading to new forms of professional identity that combine professional roles with academic roles -- for example, educational or instructional designers, and staff working in teaching and learning development centres.

The changes in the nature and management of academic work is challenging the core aspects of what has traditionally shaped academic identities, particularly their sense of self-regulation and the level of autonomy academics can exercise in carrying out and managing their work¹⁶. There is a need to reconceptualise what it means to be an academic in the 21st century.

¹² Boyer (1990, p.23). See also Probert (2014a)

¹³ Group of Eight (2013)

¹⁴ Minister for Education and Training, Media Release, 20 May 2015

¹⁵ Whitchurch (2008)

¹⁶ Whitchurch & Gordon (2009)

10. There are genuine risks to quality and standards within the higher education industry if the higher education workforce is under-professionalised for the professional practice of teaching

While significant attention has been paid in recent years to learning outcomes the quality of teaching in higher education has not received the same degree of attention.

As the student population has grown and diversified universities have had to evolve and this diversity inevitably raises questions of quality. Australia's place in the competitive international contest for student recruitment will increasingly hinge on hard evidence of the quality of teaching and learning.

The measures of teaching quality are under consideration. Who defines these measures of teaching quality and how are they validated? An interesting dilemma to emerge in discussions on measurements of teaching quality is a discourse which compares research and teaching. Gunn and Fisk¹⁷ shift the focus to recognise that researching and teaching are 'equally important but different aspects' of the educational environment. This discourse calls into question a discussion on quantitative and qualitative measures of quality in both research and teaching. The challenge for higher education institutions is the development of support structures to identify and evidence teaching quality.

One example of the influence of quality assurance mechanisms can be seen through the pervasiveness of the writing and measurement of student outcomes across the sector and the move towards an attempt to make explicit the skills that students acquire through higher degree qualifications. The role of such measures and the question of whether we are moving towards a tendency to value what we measure rather than measuring what we value is a difficult one. As universities are serving a number of different stakeholders the issue of the value of higher education is a complex yet an important issue that needs confronting.

11. The future generation of academics and other higher education professionals are not being well nurtured, many sessional staff are marginalised and there is an absence of pathways towards professional identity

Increased capacity for the higher education sector to provide support for a future generation of academics and other higher education professionals is required.

A minority of academics undertake short training programs pre-service, while a larger proportion participate in workshops on teaching and learning once already established in a teaching role. But these formal training endeavours, which in the main part are of high quality, are arguably on the periphery of the bulk of the day-to-day knowledge and skill acquisition.

¹⁷ Gunn & Fisk (2013, p.15)

- Less than 15% of academic staff hold a degree in university teaching and less than 12% hold a general education qualification¹⁸
- More than 70% of the academic workforce has not undertaken any teaching preparation program, not even a short course.¹⁹

The signs point to this changing in the near future with increasing calls for mandatory training, and many institutions in Australia (and internationally) now requiring and providing such training for new academic staff. It is not far-fetched to foresee that in the longer term, there will be demands for teachers in Higher Education to not only be trained in teaching, but also certified/licensed in the same way as school teachers²⁰. However, there is (understandably) strong resistance to this idea within the academy, mainly because of the perceived variability in the usefulness and quality of existing award courses for teaching in higher education (namely, Graduate Certificates in Higher Education). Instead, most institutions offer a range of professional development programs targeting early-career academics directed at developing both teaching and research.

12. The discourse around what constitutes ‘scholarship’ in academic work has this far been inconclusive – ideas about ‘scholarship’ need to be newly framed

At its heart, higher education is about the growth of knowledge. Scholars are, as Royce Sadler puts it, “knowledge growers”²¹. The academic workforce of the future will have increasingly specialised roles for the creation and dissemination of knowledge. These roles require their own forms of scholarly knowledge and skills²². In research this is knowing how to explore the previously unknown, in teaching it is a process of both knowing how to select appropriate knowledge and how to assist students in acquiring that knowledge appropriately²³. A new conception of academic scholarship that elevates the various forms of *communication of scholarly knowledge* on an equal footing with the practice of original research needs to be devised.

¹⁸ Bexley et al. (2011)

¹⁹ Norton (2013)

²⁰ Canning (2007)

²¹ Sadler (2002, p. 1)

²² Probert (2014b)

²³ Sadler (2002)

3. Key steps in providing a foundation for the ongoing professionalisation of higher education teaching

To create a new kind of professor who understands both the discipline and how it might be learned, we must change the way we develop young scholars and support existing ones (Bain, 2011).

We believe there is a need to reconceptualise the nature of academic work and the descriptors and categories applied to those who comprise the higher education workforce. The challenge of professionalising the practice of teaching in higher education goes hand in glove with the need to adapt our conceptions of the Australian higher education workforce and associated work roles to reflect a more differentiated system for which traditional conceptions of “the university academic” are proving inadequate.

This section outlines core elements of a blueprint for engaging in a purposeful, sector-wide reconceptualisation of the nature of academic work and the higher education workforce in Australia. Such a reconceptualisation is underpinned by new approaches to professionalising the practice of teaching in higher education, but it goes beyond teaching to broader notions of academic work. The section concludes with seven guiding principles that might guide the inevitable changes that need to be made to policy, practice and discourse relating to a re-configured higher education workforce and, in particular, a reimagining of academic work.

Core considerations: A reconceptualisation of academic work and higher education teaching

Several issues must be taken into account if the sector is to engage in the sea-change required to reconceptualise academic work and the associated workforce reconfigurations. Following are seven considerations designed to guide a sector-wide approach to future deliberations.

1. Students at the centre

Students must lie at the heart of any blueprint to guide change in a deregulated higher education system. The rationale for and implications of reconceptualising academic work must account for what this means for students and their learning experience in higher education. In particular, the focus that we place on a new approach to professionalising teaching practice is underpinned by a primary concern for the quality of student learning how best to assure quality learning and teaching across the sector.

2. Reconceptualising academic work: avoiding the deficit approach

Importantly, this reconceptualisation is not about diminishing the more traditional conception of the academic role which seeks to integrate teaching, research and service and/or governance and/or community engagement dimensions. Equally, if this reconceptualisation process is to add value to the sector and be sustainable, it must challenge any tendency to perceive alternative academic role configurations as deficient or inferior.

In much of the literature on the changing nature of academic work, the discourse tends to be negative. References are made to the ‘fragmentation’ and ‘unbundling’ of academic work. To challenge and redirect this discourse requires proactive debates on the alternatives to a deficit approach to change. If the Australian higher education sector is to engage productively in a national dialogue about changes to notions of academic work and implications for the workforce, then priority must be given to developing a suite of academic work role configurations that are appropriately valued, recognised and rewarded. While ever the traditional teaching-research-service role is perceived as the preferred or privileged position, little progress will be made towards real transformation in this arena.

3. The future of higher education: differentiated sector, differentiated workforce

Increasingly the sector is coming to terms with the need for differentiated higher education provision within a highly competitive national and international market. While much has been said about the sources of institutional differentiation, particularly with respect to mission and the like, little attention has been given to the concomitant need for a differentiated higher education workforce. Typically, universities, for example, continue to adopt relatively static approaches to delineating academic work roles and the longstanding tripartite depiction of academic roles comprising teaching-research-service dimensions prevails.

There has been some traction in the creation of specialised teaching-focused roles, but in most cases, institutional promotion policies and career pathways have failed to keep pace with these changes, resulting in widespread uncertainty about the promotion prospects and portability of such roles, particularly in the university sector²⁴. This is not universally the case, however. There are certainly some examples of teaching-focused academics who have been promoted to full Professor level based on evidence of robust scholarly activity, combined with national and international peer recognition. However these cases are far from widespread and this gap points to the value of a sector-wide, holistic approach to debate on the future shape of the academic workforce and roles, along with implications for career paths and portability across the higher education sector.

As the sector works towards more differentiated higher education provision, there is a need to actively nurture and support a more differentiated workforce. This includes considering differentiated career paths within institutions and across the sector for a workforce that is tailored to the future character of the Australian higher education system.

4. Work roles and identities in a differentiated system

In a differentiated system academics will undertake a range of specialised roles, and academic and professional staff will increasingly work together. Charting career paths for both groups is key. And within each staff group – many subgroups – the differentiated system needs to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate different workforce configurations, depending on institutional mission and priorities. This requires a more nimble approach to recruitment and career progression policies, to name just a few.

In reconceptualising the nature of academic work, it is important to acknowledge that the academic workforce is distinct in both the knowledge that it holds and its stakeholders, and

²⁴ Probert (2013)

therefore what might work for other professions will not be sufficient. Any approach needs to be tailored; and a one-size-fits all model must be avoided.

New conceptions of academic work also need to build a more explicit conception of the paraprofessionals – that is, those who ride the boundaries. These are highly qualified professional staff who support the teaching and research enterprise, but rarely have clearly articulated career trajectories, and have limited recognition in the form of award and grant opportunities. Industrially there is discomfort if these staff are involved in activities akin to ‘research’ yet they are critical to supporting academic work in the areas of teaching and research.

There is a need for a more sophisticated and nuanced conception of academic work that recognises the unique contribution of academic staff, together with those paraprofessionals or ‘blended professionals’ who are pivotal to supporting academic staff in such areas as course quality assurance, data analysis, integration of multimedia and application of learning technologies in innovative curriculum design and delivery. To illustrate this kind of thinking, among the large numbers of staff appointed on a sessional basis, Coates and Goedegebuure identify five types:

- Industry expert – People with substantive professional appointments who undertake teaching or research on a sessional basis.
- Faculty freelancer - Academics who sustain multiple appointments either to foster a critical mass of employment or for family or personal choice reasons
- Returning retiree – Retiring academics who shift to a more contingent form of participation in either teaching or research activities
- Treadmill Academic – People with research qualifications who aspire to secure a substantive academic appointment
- Academic apprentice – University students, predominately research postgraduate students, who participate in formal teaching and research activities.²⁵

5. The power of academic identities and disciplinary cultures

Academic identity is of central symbolic and instrumental significance both in the lives of individual academics and in the workings of the academic profession (Henkel, 2000, p.13).

Academic identity is a powerful source of motivation, commitment, work satisfaction and productivity. In many ways, it is constructed within a moral framework and tied up with values, what academics are committed to and strive for.²⁶ If any proposed changes to the profession are to be effective, they need to speak to the academic identities or influence the pathway to new academic identities. No new approaches will work without an understanding of the sources of academic identities and the processes around its formation.

Undoubtedly, the discipline community with its distinctive culture is the primary source of individual academics’ identity and expertise. Whereas the concept of a profession is a strong source of identity for many occupational groups; this is not the case for academic staff for whom the concept of “community” continues to be a normative ideal²⁷. Academic

²⁵ Coates and Goedegebuure 2010, p 20

²⁶ Fitzmaurice (2013)

²⁷ Henkel (2009)

identity in relation to both teaching and research activities is defined largely by discipline communities and cultures. Disciplinary cultures shape not only the assumptions about what should be known, but also “how tasks are to be performed, standards for effective performance, patterns of publication, professional interaction, and social and political status”²⁸.

The powerful influence of disciplinary cultures in academic identity formation has shown to be considerably resilient over the years. Despite recent changes in academic roles and the developments that have ‘undermined the status of the discipline as the primary unit of higher education institutions’, academics’ commitment to discipline communities remains powerful²⁹, and the influence of the disciplines remains significant for individuals.

The status of research also continues to be a defining characteristic of the academic profession. Research powerfully shapes academic cultures and individuals’ identities. Disciplinary expertise is exhibited through research activity and research record, and peer-assessed research performance continues to be privileged over teaching in terms of individual career opportunities and promotion — and the high status path among one’s peers. However, in a growing and diversifying higher education system, we need to ask whether research can continue to be such a centerpiece in academic identities.

As argued earlier, at its heart, higher education is about the growth of knowledge. Scholars are knowledge growers. The academic workforce of the future will have increasingly specialised roles for the creation and dissemination of knowledge. These roles require their own forms of scholarly knowledge and skills. In research this is knowing how to explore the previously unknown, in teaching it is a process of both knowing how to select appropriate knowledge and how to assist students in acquiring that knowledge appropriately³⁰. A new conception of academic scholarship that elevates the various forms of *communication of scholarly knowledge* on an equal footing with the practice of original research needs to be devised.

6. Recognising academic leadership roles

A reconceptualisation of academic work and higher education teaching must recognise that academic leadership around teaching and learning is key.

Leadership roles in learning and teaching are often depicted as ‘career killer’ roles. In a recent OLT study of program leaders in three multicampus universities, academic staff described leadership roles, such as academic program leader in the following ways:

‘these roles are the ‘penalty’ that must be paid until you can get back to your real academic work and research’.

‘they are career killers’

‘I was put in the role because I was the last man standing. I just didn’t get out of the room fast enough’.

²⁸ Clarke, Hyde & Drennan (2013, p.7)

²⁹ Henkel (2009, p11)

³⁰ Sadler (2002)

In the main part, institutions continue to expect staff to assume leadership roles and to continue their more 'traditional' tasks of teaching, research and service. It is important to acknowledge that these are credible career paths in themselves and to support purposeful planning of career trajectories in teaching and learning leadership. This includes equipping staff with the management and quality assurance skills required and providing administrative support, along with the career paths and recognition systems that are key to sustainability and succession planning.

4. The central elements of professional recognition

In this section of the paper we present a preliminary framing of the integrated elements, and steps, that we believe would be necessary to adopt a coherent approach to the professionalisation of higher education teaching. We have based our thinking on the seven principles in the box below.

Seven underpinning principles

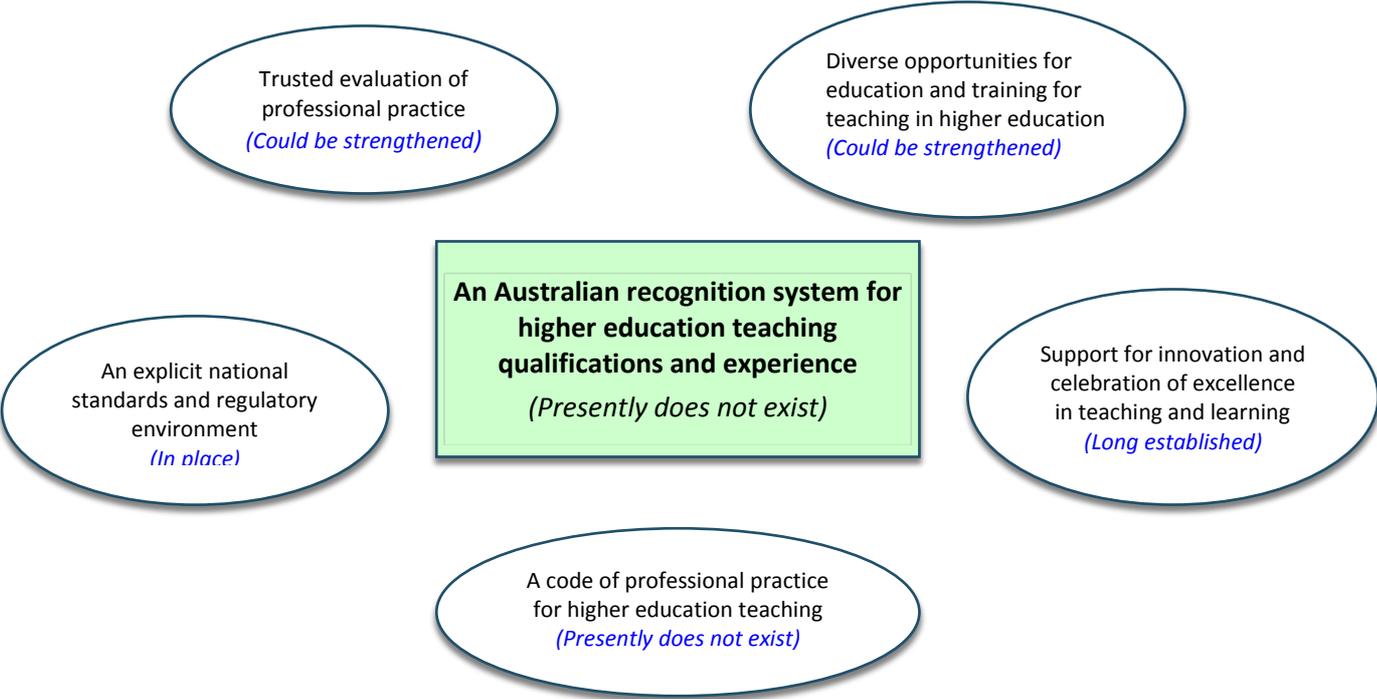
1. Disciplines are *key* to understanding the professional practice of teaching in higher education: disciplinary knowledge and the shared values of disciplinary communities are central to academic identities and academic professionalism, even within inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary environments.
2. 'Grass roots' are important: higher education staff and those in leadership and management roles must perceive genuine merit in any proposed initiatives. The conditions for individual autonomous professionalism outside of institutional policy settings should be fostered and facilitated.
3. Institutions are important too: new models of academic professionalism will not be successful unless they are reflected in institutional Human Resource policies and cultures.
4. Shared conceptions and beliefs are highly important across a diverse system, suggesting a nuanced conception of professionalism that may take into account, for example differences between teacher and teaching professionalism in universities compared with non-university higher education providers
5. Individuals are important as well: finding new ways for individuals to represent and be recognised for their teaching experience and effectiveness outside of institutionally-managed frameworks will be helpful.
6. A differentiated workforce model of academic professionals and para-professionals is likely to be the future for higher education: how the 'sub-professions' within a differentiating academy might be imagined and fostered is critical.
7. The nurturing of the next generation of comprehensively-skilled teaching and research academics who will lead the professional practice of teaching and effectively coordinate courses must be a high priority.

While much has been written on ways in which teaching practice can be enhanced this project is one of the few times that the issue has been explored from a systemic viewpoint. Through consultation, the project team has identified key elements that could be implemented, or strengthened, across the higher education system. These are summarised on the page to follow and then elaborated upon in more detail.

The integration of these items is essential, for they have less potency when they stand alone. An integrated approach has the potential to maximise interest and take-up across the sector. We view integration particularly in terms of encouraging all higher education institutions as well as individuals, whatever their employment arrangements, to embrace the process of professionalisation of teaching practice.

Individuals will not perceive any relevance in such a process unless their efforts are recognised and rewarded in the institutions in which they are employed. Individuals who are sessional, contract or tenured should all be able to access support and recognition of their teaching practice. Access to this support clearly should also be available to non-university higher education providers as well as universities. The professionalisation of teaching in the higher education sector should be an embedded part of the national quality assurance system and indicate that individual teaching staff as well as institutions value, and are actively engaged in, maintaining high quality teaching and learning practices.

Framing Professional Recognition for advancing the quality and status of teaching in Australian higher education



1. An Australian recognition system for higher education teaching qualifications and experience

There is presently only a loose national consensus on what determines a person to be fit to teach in higher education. The creation of a shared recognition system is an essential capstone element in the proposed framework.

The PhD is commonly assumed to be the proxy qualification for entry to the profession in universities while Non University Higher Education Providers (NUHEPs) commonly accept that extensive experience in the field is sufficient preparation for teaching. While this approach may have been adequate for some, it is clear that future generations of students require a more systematic approach so that good teaching practice is experienced across the board. Similarly, the next generation of teachers in the sector who will lead and coordinate courses and programs in the modern environment will need enhanced knowledge of how students learn and how teaching can best support their learning based on a body of evidence.

The move to professionalise teaching across the higher education sector requires institutional and cross-institutional recognition of formal qualifications and experience in teaching. A structure through which national recognition of teaching qualifications and experience can be facilitated could accomplish this and would work to elevate the status of teaching. One approach to the creation of such a structure would be the creation of a national body or virtual recognition system (simply for arguments sake, say, the 'Australian Academy for Higher Education'), to provide the structure and mechanism for such recognition.

The appetite within the Australian higher education sector for a structure that recognises and supports higher education teaching is apparent through the number of links already being made between Australian academics and institutions with the UK's Higher Education Academy (HEA). The Australian National University is a subscribing institution of the HEA and has the ability to award professional recognition as an HEA fellow (see Appendix 1). To date numbers of Australian higher education teachers from various institutions have been awarded fellowship status through the HEA. Perhaps the main appeal of the HEA's Professional Standards Framework to Australian higher education teachers is the absence of a bespoke Australian system.

While the HEA already offers a possible framework for supporting higher education teaching, it is an association that has been developed and adapted over the course of ten years in order to be most responsive to the UK higher education context. We believe the development of a professional recognition framework that takes into consideration Australia's unique cultural, institutional and policy context would better serve the needs of the Australian higher education sector.

The proposal for a national recognition body or system requires careful further consideration, not least to clearly differentiate its functions from those of other bodies and agencies. Major structural, governance and financial aspects would need to be resolved. Universities and NUHEPs would both have access to the academy. The issue of how to best serve both types of institutions and their staff requires input from a high level advisory group that brings together the Office for Learning and Teaching and its successor institute, Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP), Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA), NUHEPs, Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies in Australia (DDOGS), Vice Chancellors, National Tertiary Education Union among others. Nevertheless the experience in the UK indicates that such an academy can be effective.

2. Diverse opportunities for education and training

There are risks to quality, standards and, therefore, to public confidence in higher education if there is a perception that the higher education workforce is ill-equipped or not explicitly equipped for the professional practice of teaching. Meeting the educational needs and expectations of students in contemporary higher education requires a stronger base of pedagogical knowledge and expert skills in course design, delivery and assessment than in the past. Professional knowledge of teaching and learning must have some roots in 'formal' education and training – this principle underpins many professional courses in universities but oddly it is not applied to the higher education sector itself.

It is important that the next generation of academic teachers across the sector who will lead and coordinate learning and teaching are systematically nurtured through appropriate education and training. At present the range of support options provided by institutions for their teaching staff varies from none at all up to a requirement for teaching certification. Most institutions encourage new staff to engage in some professional activity related to teaching. In some cases this amounts to a few hours of workshops prior to commencing teaching or a program which includes a pre-teaching workshop followed by sessions designed to outline basic themes such as assessment. There is rarely any follow up after these workshops have been attended. Staff who have been teaching for a while are commonly assumed to be competent teachers and are largely left to their own devices. While the assumption of competence may be justified, opportunities for responding to new ideas in education are few.

The current ad hoc situation does not foster evidence-based approaches to teaching but embeds a static approach whereby teachers tend to teach in the manner in which they were themselves taught³¹. Given the rapid blossoming of communication technology and e-learning the sector appears slow to embrace innovative approaches that can enhance student learning. If the Australian higher education sector is to aspire to world best practice this situation needs to change. A wide-spread systematic approach is needed that acknowledges diversity in the sector and avoids a 'one size fits all' solution.

While teaching certification is one pathway to explore in relation to establishing that teachers are appropriately equipped to teach, given the diversity of the higher education sector, this should be viewed as only one of many approaches.

A newly styled PhD

Another approach we propose is that a new strand/subject be added to the requirements for PhD completion. Institutions primarily have responsibility for PhDs but DDOGS could have a role in guiding /influencing perceptions if they deemed this to be appropriate.

While the PhD provides disciplinary expertise, and deep knowledge of the relevant discipline or field is seen to be critical to the scholarship of teaching³² the Australian PhD in its current form does not provide adequate preparation in pedagogical knowledge and skills for higher education teaching. This question of whether the PhD adequately prepares graduates for the 21st century workplace in a range of sectors, including academic teaching,

³¹ Probert (2014a)

³² Boyer (1990, p.23)

will be examined by the Australian Council of Learned Academics (ACOLA) which has been commissioned to review of Australia's research training system.³³

It is important to acknowledge that some institutions offer excellent PhD enhancement programs in teaching, including internships, tailored certificate courses, and Teaching Assistant programs, to name a few. However, most of these programs appear to be small in scale, and are not widespread across the sector.

Mentoring programs

Mentoring is well established as a powerful tool to support teaching. A system whereby experienced effective teachers support those new to teaching could be encouraged perhaps through a series of case studies modeling excellence in mentoring practice to enhance teaching skills. Such models could include observation, practice and feedback provided in a department-based confidential manner. While supporting those new to teaching especially though mentoring is important and effective those who have taught for a while can also benefit from ongoing professional development in teaching. Guidance in relation to formal and systematic approaches to academic internships/mentoring at an institutional level is needed as is consideration of the incentives that are effective in encouraging participation in such programs for both the mentee and the mentor

National set of web-based professional development modules on teaching and learning

A national set of web-based modules on teaching and learning in higher education, perhaps in MOOC form would provide opportunities for individual training outside institutional contexts. This is a relatively easy area in which Australia could take the lead given that the OLT successor institute may be in a position to fund the development of such materials and host a suite of online MOOC modules.

³³ Media Release, Minister for Education and Training, 20 May 2014

3. Support for innovation and celebration of excellence in teaching and learning

The achievement of sustainable change requires that the right incentives need to be put in place. These incentives are not always, or indeed often, related to financial rewards but can be more subtle while still retaining cogency. There are few institutional imperatives for teaching quality that come anywhere near Excellence for Research in Australia (ERA). In part this is because it is harder to evaluate quality teaching in such an, apparently, subjective-less manner. Nevertheless recognition of exemplary professional performance is a key element in building a robust professionalisation model.

One element of exemplary teaching performance is the capacity to innovate. Innovation in teaching and learning ensures a high quality, flexible and personalised learning experience for a growing student population with higher expectations. It provides a learning environment that acknowledges the characteristics of the student cohort and the discipline knowledge as well as a scholarly approach to teaching that is based on evidence.

The OLT has assisted in this through its grant programs, award schemes and fellowships. These programs seem to have worked quite well, though they have been exclusive to the university sector. The NUHEPs have not been included and it is perhaps time to broaden the scope to include these institutions. It may be that the nature of the programs and awards suited to the NUHEPs will be different to those appropriate to universities but it is likely that exemplary teaching practice exhibits similar attributes across both areas of the sector. The recognition of the diversity within the sector however is important if the status of teaching and learning is to be improved across the board.

Building on the lead given by OLT many universities, faculties and departments have developed a range of programs and awards that identify and reward teaching excellence at the local level. The extent to which these awards stimulate innovation and best practice is debatable as it is unlikely that teachers are motivated to improve or to innovate by the prospect of an award. Nevertheless, they provide the important role of recognising and disseminating excellent practice that is so important in influencing the broader teaching culture in institutions.

Even the best recognition and reward programs will have little impact on teaching quality unless the department/faculty/institution environment is supportive. New innovative members of staff will quickly adapt to the context in which they find themselves. The role of educational leadership in creating and conveying a culture in which achievements in teaching are acknowledged is a significant element. A leader can help to transform the environment for academic work, promoting an excitement for fresh educational ideas and fostering cooperation in the search for better ways to teach and learn.

Small changes in leadership as simple as well placed public praise can be effective in contributing respect for teaching excellence. However, isolated actions in the absence of substantive changes to promotion and appraisal processes are likely to prove less than effective. There is a need to routinely include consideration of teaching practice in the annual appraisal process that is employed in most higher education institutions. Staff should be assisted to reflect on their teaching practice and articulate goals for the forthcoming year. A framework that scaffolds key aspects of quality teaching and learning to guide appraisal

conversations would assist in stimulating the formulation of appropriate goals for individual staff in the context of their own institution.

Staff need to be confident that teaching is indeed an important element in career progression. In this regard promotion criteria that articulate pathways to promotion on the basis of teaching are important. While many universities and other institutions have such criteria there is a perception that, when applied, research criteria are paramount. Further work is required in order to dispel such perceptions. Capacity building in promotions committee members for evaluating teaching portfolios and evidence would provide a first step in dissipating erroneous perceptions. Similarly, the wider use and understanding of peer review of teaching practice in promotion applications could also improve the capacity of promotions committees and leaders in institutions to more accurately assess teaching excellence.

4. A code of professional practice for higher education teaching

The challenge of acknowledging the professionalism of teaching practice in higher education would be significantly advanced through the development of a Code of Professional Practice. Such a code would provide broad enough parameters to be useful across the range of higher education providers while specific enough to provide a cogent guide to individuals. The key to stimulating the active use of such a code is to avoid lengthy standards-like statements and micro-prescriptions of the elements of professional practice. A code would not be intended to be prescriptive but would be a simple, core statement of what is recognised by the profession as being appropriate for practice and what the profession 'stands' for.

A Code of Professional Practice is an important statement of the defining features of professional knowledge and professional practice. Such a statement gives expression to the belief that professional roles and corresponding skill-sets are identifiable and that individuals have responsibilities and accountabilities. A code of professional practice would provide a guiding statement to assist teaching staff to steer an appropriate and ethical path through their careers. At the same time it would signal to students and to the general public as a whole the sort of behaviours that can be anticipated from the profession. In addition it would assist institutions to develop their own institution and context based code of professional conduct based on the national code.

Such a code would encompass simple non-prescriptive guiding principles and expectations of teaching staff in relation to the values of higher education teaching, ethical behavior, a commitment to regular updating of teaching materials and practice in light of new developments in the discipline and in the pedagogy, a willingness to be responsive to feedback from peers and students and to build collegial relationships with other teachers within the institution and more broadly with a network of higher education providers.

A Code of Professional Practice would build on work developed under *3: Education and Training*. Promotion and appraisal criteria would be strongly related to the Code of Professional Conduct and it would provide the framework for career development. In turn such a code would be strongly informed by *6: Standards and Regulation* but would not be prescriptive. As indicated earlier an integrated approach encompassing each of the elements proposed is likely to have the biggest, most sustainable impact.

While presently there is no national higher education agreed code of practice there are many useful documents framed in institutional promotion policies and in the work of various projects supported by the Office for Learning and Teaching. The proposed new Higher Education Standards Framework can also provide a basis for the development of a code. There are examples of codes of professional practice in the UK and Ireland that could also usefully provide reference points for the development of an Australian code. The successor institute to the Office for Learning and Teaching may be in a position to lead the development of a national code. Drawing together these documents into a national code of professional practice in higher education teaching would not appear to be a large stretch in light of much work that has already completed.

5. Explicit national standards and regulation

Quality assurance standards and regulation are increasingly used worldwide as instruments to reshape the higher education landscape. The Australian higher education sector is no exception and is familiar with standards and regulation in relation to its activities. TEQSA registers and evaluates the performance of higher education providers against the standards devised in the Higher Education Standards Framework.

The standards or regulatory dimension is powerful in developing professionalisation of teaching. Formal standards on the required qualifications and experience of teaching staff and the appropriate regulation of these standards are key to the credibility and standing of the higher education industry as it increasingly becomes deregulated.

Standards and regulation can be compulsory as in the case of TEQSA or voluntary as in the case of guidelines and frameworks. Voluntary standards can be highly effective as they generate a common understanding and guide behavior in a relatively non-controversial and non-threatening manner. Compulsory regulation on the other hand needs to be carefully managed. Too many compulsory or overly prescriptive regulations can stymie diversity and innovation while too loose a system can lead to a loss in quality. Voluntary and compulsory standards and regulation that inform and are integrated with each of the elements discussed so far in this section provide a basis for action.

The nationally-recognised framework of standards provides the opportunity for effective national and international benchmarking at both an institutional and individual level. At the individual level teaching staff will readily be able to evaluate their own teaching performance and goals against the standards. A standards framework allows individual staff to plan a career development pathway when these standards are integrated into promotion criteria. At the institutional level such a standards framework provides the basis of comparison with similar institutions and also the basis from which to improve quality and to recognise excellence.

The proposed new Higher Education Standards Framework is planned to be in place by 2016. The Standards Framework, resulting of an extensive consultation process, is likely to be central to the professionalisation of teaching in higher education. Peer review, in some form, will help establish that standards for learning outcomes at course level are being met.

6. Trusted evaluation of professional practice

A 'mature' profession is one in which there are robust, agreed, peer-led ways of identifying the effectiveness of professional practice. The evaluation of teaching has been the focus of

much discussion over many years as it is a difficult but pivotal element in the process of improvement in higher education cultures. Consensus in relation to evaluation of research has largely been reached and is robust while consensus on the evaluation of teaching has proven to be elusive. Nevertheless, it is a key component in driving the achievement of a dynamic higher education teaching profession. Improved evaluation of the quality of teaching and student learning goes hand in hand with the elevation of the status of teaching in higher education policies and practice.

The Bradley Report on Higher Education pointed to a decline in some aspects of student satisfaction with their learning experiences and led to increased concern over how to measure and assure teaching quality in an era of higher fees and greater student assumption of self funding their education. As a result there is now a renewal of attention on individual performance reviews and promotion. Leading from this has been the expectation in many institutions that individuals provide evidence of the quality of their teaching and evidence of active engagement in teacher professional development programs.

While the 'science' of the evaluation of teaching and learning has seen considerable development in recent years there is concern that there is still too narrow a reliance on student evaluation of teaching via student experience surveys. The academy remains cynical about the validity and reliability of student evaluation given the range of inputs contributing to this form of evaluation. While the student voice is no doubt important in evaluating teaching quality it is also clear that using student evaluation as the only evaluation measure of teaching quality is insufficient.

Discussion around the identification of additional measures has included consideration of whether measures of input or measures of learning output or some combination of both is appropriate evidence of teaching. Output measures include student learning outcomes data. Outcomes data is based on what is assessed in student learning relative to the objectives of the course. This approach moves the emphasis away from input and processes and focuses on the results of the learning and teaching activity. Learning outcomes measures have been the subject of much development in recent years. In the US the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment has been established and much has been written in the higher education literature. It is argued that learning outcomes can be improved through institutional level change as well as changes at the individual level.

Peer review of teaching is also gathering strength as another way to provide useful data on teaching quality. Establishing enhanced peer review mechanisms and processes will reduce the present over-emphasis on student evaluation. Peer review processes, criteria and toolkits would assist in widening the basis on which evaluation of teaching could be accomplished and is essential to the appraisal and promotion process.

A variety of measures is most likely to achieve the desired result of providing a sound basis for evaluation of teaching quality. Streamlining and building the capacity to build portfolios of various types of evidence is one of the areas to be considered.

Framing Professional Recognition for advancing teaching and learning in Australian higher education

Framework element	Rationale	Current status	Possible initiatives?	Responsibilities and stakeholders?
<p>1. An Australian recognition system for qualifications and experience</p>	<p>Professionalising teaching across the higher education sector will require improved institutional and cross-institutional recognition of formal qualifications and experience in teaching.</p> <p>National recognition of teaching qualifications and experience will elevate the status of teaching across the sector, and influence the broader culture in institutions (of privileging research over teaching).</p>	<p>Much work is needed here for there are no existing policies/practices/cultures in this area. The proposed new standards framework will assist in providing impetus for this area.</p>	<p>The bold step of creating a national system/body a national body and approach to professional recognition to provide the mechanism for <i>peer recognition</i>?</p>	<p>Major structural, governance and financial aspects would need to be resolved. A high-level advisory group needs to be established with representation from, say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HESP TEQSA DDOGS VCs and/or DVCs(A) NUHEPs NTEU Other

Framework element	Rationale	Current status	Possible initiatives?	Responsibilities and stakeholders?
<p>2. Diverse opportunities for education and training for the teaching role</p> <p><i>Professional knowledge must have some roots in 'formal' education and training – this principle underpins many professional courses in universities but oddly, and awkwardly, it is not applied to the academy itself.</i></p>	<p>Meeting the educational needs and expectations of students in contemporary higher education requires a stronger base of pedagogical knowledge and expert skills in course design, delivery and assessment than in past eras.</p> <p>There are risks to quality and standards and public confidence in higher education if the teacher workforce is ill-equipped and not explicitly equipped for the professional practice of teaching.</p> <p>It is vitally important that the next generation of academics who will lead and coordinate learning and teaching are systematically nurtured through appropriate education and training.</p>	<p>Uneven and ad hoc</p> <p>Training is far from universal. A minority of people undertake short training programs pre-service, while a larger proportion participate in workshops on teaching once already established in a teaching role.</p>	<p>Newly styled PhD strand with national standing?</p> <p>National set of web-based modules on teaching & learning in higher education, perhaps in MOOC form for international access?</p> <p>More formal and systematic approaches to academic internships/mentoring at institutional level?</p>	<p>Institutions primarily have responsibility for PhDs, but what role/influence could DDOGS have to introduce a serious strand for future academics? What role might UA play?</p> <p>Could the OLT successor institute fund the development of and be custodian of a suite of web-based modules (MOOCS)?</p> <p>What would be required to stimulate stronger 'apprenticeship' models at institutional level?</p>

Framework element	Rationale	Current status	Possible initiatives?	Responsibilities and stakeholders?
<p>3. Support for innovation and celebration of excellence</p> <p><i>Recognition of exemplary professional performance is one key element in building a robust professionalisation model.</i></p>	<p>Innovation in teaching and learning is much needed to ensure high quality, flexible and personalised learning experiences for a growing student population with higher expectations.</p> <p>Recognition of excellence in teaching is important to raise the status of teaching across the sector, and influence the broader culture in institutions.</p>	<p>This is an area of strength – the Office for Learning and Teaching grant programs and award/citation schemes are prominent and effective.</p> <p>Most institutions also have programs and award schemes to recognise excellence in teaching and support innovation, with the national programs supporting these.</p>	<p>Review and fine-tune the foci of the present suite of OLT programs for their renewal within a new institute located within the sector. Examine how a wider range of providers can be embraced.</p>	<p>OLT successor institute in collaboration with institutions.</p>

Framework element	Rationale	Current status	Possible initiatives?	Responsibilities and stakeholders?
<p>4. A code of professional practice for higher education teaching in Australia</p> <p><i>A 'mature' profession is prepared to make a simple, core statement on 'what it stands for'.</i></p>	<p>A Code of Professional Practice or similarly titled device is an important statement of the defining features of professional knowledge and professional practice. Such a statement gives expression to the belief that professional roles and corresponding skill-sets are identifiable and that individuals have responsibilities and accountabilities</p>	<p>There is presently no agreed code of practice or statement on the professional requirements of any kind. Where such statements exist they are framed in institutional promotion policies and in the national work of projects such as the recent UWA-led OLT project.</p>	<p>Development of a simple and non-prescriptive statement on the knowledge, skills and values of higher education teaching. The statement should launch from element 6 below and be the foundation for element 3.</p> <p>The key is to avoid a lengthy standards-like statement and micro-prescriptions of the elements of professional practice.</p>	<p>The successor institute to the Office for Learning and Teaching might take responsibility for leading the drafting of a Code of Professional Practice.</p>

Framework element	Rationale	Current status	Possible initiatives?	Responsibilities and stakeholders?
<p>5. An explicit standards and regulatory environment</p> <p><i>The standards or regulatory dimension is not the only way to develop more intensive professionalisation, however it is a potent mechanism.</i></p>	<p>Formal standards on the required qualifications and experience of teaching staff and staff teams, and the appropriate regulation of these standards are key to the credibility and standing of the higher education industry as it increasingly becomes deregulated.</p>	<p>The proposed new Higher Education Standards Framework remains under consideration.</p>	<p>The proposed new Higher Education Standards Framework might become the constant backdrop for other elements professional recognition.</p>	<p>Higher Education Standards Panel and TEQSA.</p>

Framework element	Rationale	Current status	Possible initiatives?	Responsibilities and stakeholders?
<p>6. Trusted evaluation of professional practice</p> <p><i>A 'mature' profession is also one in which there are robust, agreed, peer-led ways of identifying the effectiveness of professional practice.</i></p>	<p>Improved evaluation of the quality of teaching and student learning is needed to elevate the status of teaching in higher education policies and practice.</p> <p>This element of framing of professional recognition is pivotal to enhancing the status of teaching in university/higher education cultures.</p> <p>The future credibility of higher education will increasingly rest on this element professional recognition.</p>	<p>The 'science' of the evaluation of teaching and learning has developed over the past 20 years, however:</p> <p>1) there is a narrow reliance on student evaluation via surveys; and</p> <p>2) the academy itself remains cynical about the validity and reliability of student evaluation.</p>	<p>Admittedly this is perhaps the most difficult area in which to make progress. Establishing enhanced peer review mechanisms will reduce the present over-emphasis on student evaluation. There is good work underway and it needs to be widened over time.</p>	<p>Uncertain – there is much distributed responsibility here and challenges that are both conceptual, political and cultural.</p>

5. Is there the will for a shared strategy?: Discussing and developing possible next steps

The ideas and principles in this paper pose some challenges for the ways in which academic work and work roles are conceived and the place of teaching in higher education.

In considering a new approach to professionalisation of teaching in this context, we are not arguing for 'more' professionalism but rather a different, more holistic approach to recognising the range of stakeholders contributing to the practice of teaching in higher education and that the full gamut of roles and responsibilities in a differentiated higher education sector are reflected in a way that is responsive to contemporary needs and challenges of that sector.

We do not under-estimate the far-reaching implications of the ideas outlined here for national and institutional policies and arrangements; similarly we acknowledge the implications for the more tacit but equally significant changes to institutional cultures that such a reconceptualisation might require.

Notwithstanding such challenges we do not resile from the emphasis placed on the critical need for reconfiguring and supporting the higher education workforce if the sector is to succeed with major higher education transformations that are taking place both nationally and internationally.

There's no need to start from scratch, and new opportunities will emerge with creation of a new national institute within the sector

If a concerted approach to professionalisation of the practice of teaching in higher education is possible, there is much good practice and resources on which to build. Far from exhaustively, we note:

- Preparatory, early-career programs of various kinds are in place. Numerous institutions now offer internship and teaching preparation courses as part of the PhD program.
- There are mentoring programs (of various forms) for early career researchers in many institutions.
- Awards for teaching excellence and national support for innovation through the Office for Learning and Teaching and its predecessors have long been part of the landscape, both nationally and institutionally, and arguably this is one area where higher education teaching has well-established professional characteristics.
- There are well-articulated expectations of teaching performance and expectations across appointment levels to be found in the policies of many universities.

This paper coincides with the federal government's decision in the 2015 Budget papers to transfer functions of the Office for Learning and Teaching to a new institute to be created in 2016 within the sector and a reduction in the budget for programs such awards, grants and fellowships. The changing character of strategic national support for the quality and status of teaching and learning in higher education provides both challenges and opportunities for the next steps in advancing the quality of higher

education. The ideas contained in this paper for the development of more explicit approaches to professional recognition might provide one focal point for an imaginative re-orientation of the mission and activities of the proposed new institute.

Developing an engagement strategy

The project team proposes an extensive process of consultation and negotiation during the remainder of 2015 to develop more detailed substance around the ideas proposed. A detailed engagement strategy has not yet been articulated but clearly it should include these bodies and agencies:

- The Office for Learning and Teaching and its successor Institute within the higher education sector.
- TEQSA
- Higher Education Standards Panel
- DDoGS
- DVCs(A)
- DVCs(R)
- L&T representatives/DVC(As)
- Institutional peak bodies and institutional networks (UA< Go8, RUN, IRU etc.)
- ACPET and COPHE
- Councils of Deans
- NTEU
- International stakeholders (eg. HEA, Ako Aotearoa)

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Appendix 1: Developments in the professionalisation of higher education teaching in the UK

There has been a significant focus on the professionalisation of university teaching in the UK. The UK-based Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) was the first to develop a voluntary university teacher accreditation scheme in the early 1990s, which was utilised by 65 programs for new teachers in the UK and several other countries and resulted in the accreditation of approximately 3,100 university teachers³⁴. Following this work, the UK National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education recommended that all permanent staff with teaching responsibilities should be trained on accredited programs. This occurred through the UK Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, which accredited some 16,700 lecturers before being subsumed into the new Higher Education Academy (HEA) in 2004.

Around this time, the EU-funded Network of European Tertiary Level Educators (NETTLE) project (2005) aimed to develop European-wide academic frameworks to equip educators in HE with the competencies and skills necessary to provide effective support for learners. However, it was the UK's Department for Education and Skills' seminal White Paper *The Future of Higher Education*³⁵ which first proposed the development of a framework for professional standards for teaching and supporting learning in higher education.

The UK Professional Standards Framework

Following an extensive consultation process with the sector, the HEA launched the revised National Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF) in 2011. The objectives of the PSF are to:

- Support the initial and continuing professional development of staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning;
- Foster dynamic approaches to teaching and learning through creativity, innovation and continuous development in diverse academic and/or professional settings;
- Demonstrate to students and other stakeholders the professionalism that staff and institutions bring to teaching and support for student learning;
- Acknowledge the variety and quality of teaching, learning and assessment practices that support and underpin student learning, and;
- Facilitate individuals and institutions in gaining formal recognition for quality-enhanced approaches to teaching and supporting learning, often as part of wider responsibilities that may include research and/or management activities³⁶

The framework comprises a set of four broad descriptors³⁷ that characterise teaching and learner support roles in relation to three dimensions:

- Areas of activity in teaching and supporting learners
- Core knowledge to undertake these activities
- Professional values of those teaching in higher education

³⁴ Baume (2006)

³⁵ Clarke (2003)

³⁶ Higher Education Academy (2011)

³⁷ See: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/UKPSF_2011_English.pdf

Appendix 2: Characteristics identifying occupations considered to be professions

Characteristics	Source								
	Greenwood (1957)	Freidson (1970)	Burrage et al (1990)	ACCC (2008)	Cheetham and Chivers (2005)	Ingersoll and Perda (2008)	Brante (2011)	Saks (2012)	Siegrist (2001)
Scholarly training	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Advanced knowledge base	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Code of ethics	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Self-governing	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Entry requirements	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Prestigious	X				X	X	X		
Collegial	X			X	X		X		
Rewards dependent on professionalism	X		X		X				X
Client focused	X				X		X		
Professional association					X	X	X		
Monopoly control		X	X						X
Professional development	X					X			
Full time			X						X
Non manual			X						X
Positive working conditions						X			
Relatively high compensation						X			
Specialisation						X			

