

Fellow of the Higher Education Academy



Guidance notes for referees, to support an application for Fellow

This guidance note answers the following:

1. Who is this guidance for?
2. What is the function of the reference?
3. What information do I need to provide?
4. Is there a standard reference format?

Thank you for agreeing to provide a reference.

1. Who is this guidance for?

The guidance below is designed to help you prepare your reference for a Fellow applicant. You should be a Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow of the HEA, or an appropriate experienced member of staff working for a higher education provider. All referees need to be familiar with the UKPSF.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the professional recognition team at the Higher Education Academy (HEA) on (+44) 01904 717500 or email recognition@heacademy.ac.uk

2. What is the function of the reference?

The function of the reference is to provide an informed peer review of the applicant's work using your knowledge of their practice and the context in which he/she teaches or supports learning in higher education. If possible, please comment on the applicant's most recent role and responsibilities. Please take time to read the applicant's Account of Professional Practice to enable you to write an appropriate reference. You may also wish to refer to our [website](#) for more information about the HEA and/or specifically about becoming a [Fellow](#).

3. What information do I need to provide?

You should be in a position to comment and substantiate the applicant's record of effectiveness in relation to teaching and/or the support of learning in higher education. This is particularly important for applicants working overseas for whom referees should confirm the applicant is working at a level equivalent to higher education. Your reference should primarily refer to the applicant's experience and achievements in learning and teaching and should refer to his/her research record only in so far as this directly informs their teaching.

Please comment directly on the content of the applicant's Account of Professional Practice and base your reference on how the applicant meets the dimensions of [the UK Professional Standards Framework](#) at Descriptor 2. These are listed overleaf.

Please provide practical examples to support your comments wherever possible. If you have been involved in peer observation of the applicant's teaching or support of learners, please draw on the evidence this provides. Similarly, please comment on any innovative practice and/or contribution to developments in teaching and learning within his/her discipline.

To achieve Fellowship, the HEA expects all the Dimensions – Areas of Activity, Core Knowledge and Professional Values – of the [UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in](#)

[higher education \(UKPSF\)](#) to underpin the practice of those making the claim. Please provide examples, where appropriate, of ways in which this underpinning is apparent in the applicant's account.

4. Is there a standard reference format?

There is no standard form for references but you may find it helpful to comment under the **Dimensions of the UKPSF** identified in the application (e.g. within the Areas of Activity). The Dimensions of the UKPSF are listed overleaf.

It is the applicant's responsibility to collect the reference from you. The HEA recognises that this is a different kind of reference from one that is normally required for promotion or a job appointment, as we are looking for confirmation of the applicant's commitment to effective practice in teaching and/or supporting learning, rather than general academic achievement. Please provide an electronic copy of your reference to the applicant and ensure that it includes verifiable information, i.e. it should be written on headed notepaper wherever possible, should include your name, job title, organisation (including department where applicable), email address and preferably your signature. We may contact you to clarify points in your reference.

The Higher Education Academy's Professional Recognition for Fellow aligns to the Dimensions of [*The UK Professional Standards Framework*](#) and focuses on Descriptor 2:

An individual working in this category demonstrates a broad understanding of effective approaches to learning and teaching as key contributions to high quality student learning. Individuals should be able to provide evidence of:

- successful engagement across all five Areas of Activity;
- appropriate knowledge and understanding across all aspects of Core Knowledge;
- a commitment to all the Professional Values;
- successful engagement in appropriate teaching practices related to the Areas of Activity;
- successful incorporation of subject and pedagogic research and/or scholarship within the above activities, as part of an integrated approach to academic practice;
- successful engagement in continuing professional development in relation to teaching, learning, assessment and, where appropriate, related professional practices.