

# The Career Framework for University Teaching

## Guidance note for university managers



[Full details of the Framework are provided at \[teachingframework.com\]\(https://teachingframework.com\)](https://teachingframework.com)

## Introduction

This guidance note describes the Career Framework for University Teaching: an open-access resource designed to support, evaluate and reward teaching achievement at each stage of the academic career. The Framework covers teaching and research (T&R) career pathways as well as education-focused pathways, and is designed for application across all disciplines within all types of university. The Framework is intended to support professional development and appraisal as well as the appointment and promotion process.

**This document provides a broad overview of the Framework and is aimed at university managers interested in adopting the approach within their institutions.** It addresses the following questions:

- 1. Why was the Framework developed?** The goals and focus of the Framework are outlined, along with a summary of the drivers underpinning its development;
- 2. How was the Framework developed?** An overview is provided of the four-year process through which the Framework was developed and tested. This process drew on educational research, good practice from across the world and feedback from a group of university partners which piloted and used the Framework in practice;
- 3. Who is the Framework aimed at?** It is noted that the Framework is designed to support the professional development and career progression of university staff that are engaged in any teaching and learning activities as part of their professional role;
- 4. What does the Framework provide?** The three major components of the Framework are described, which consider: (i) the sphere of influence of the academic; (ii) the promotion criteria for progression on the basis of teaching and learning; and (iii) guidance on how to identify and collect evidence of achievement and impact in university teaching and learning.
- 5. How can universities adopt the Framework?** Guidance is provided on how the Framework can be applied in practice within university processes for reward, recognition and career advancement, using case studies from universities across the world.

*It should be noted that the term 'teaching achievement' is used throughout the Framework to denote an individual's contribution to and impact in teaching and learning. This includes impact via educational research as well as impact on the quality of teaching and learning at an institutional, national and global level.*

## Why was the Framework developed?

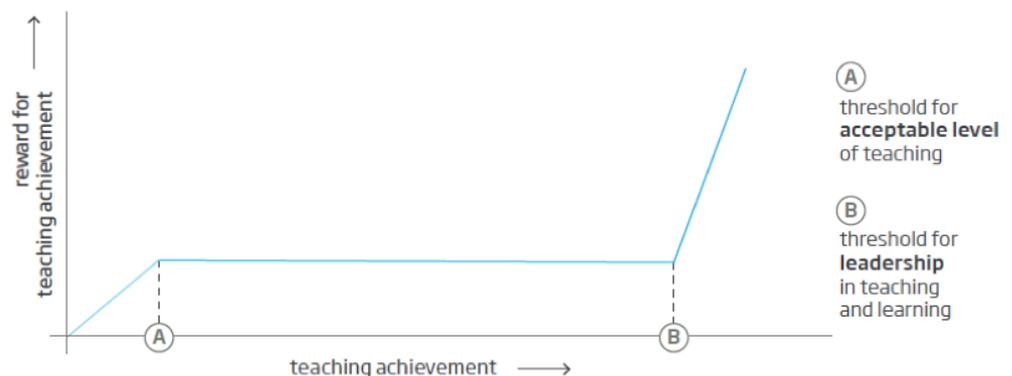
The mission of higher education includes the promotion of excellence in research and teaching. However, it is widely recognised that the systems by which academic staff are evaluated and rewarded focus primarily on their research performance. To date, teaching excellence has played a much less central role in career advancement. Universities have sought to give greater recognition to an academic's teaching contribution; however, these changes have affected only a very small section of the academic community.

As Figure 1 indicates, many universities set, either explicitly or implicitly, a minimum threshold for teaching quality. So an academic whose teaching contribution falls below an acceptable standard, marked Ⓐ in Figure 1, may find it difficult to progress up the career ladder. At the same time, many universities provide promotion pathways for those seen as outstanding with respect to teaching and learning, whose teaching achievement extends beyond point Ⓑ in Figure 1. The members of this small group are likely to be making high-profile and externally-recognised contributions to teaching and learning, often as part of an education-focused role, and find that these achievements add weight to their promotion cases.

However, for the large majority of academic staff, particularly those on 'standard' T&R contracts, any teaching contributions beyond the minimum threshold are unlikely to have a major impact on their chances of promotion at any stage of their career. Despite what might be written in the university's promotion guidelines, the reality for most academics performing above the minimum threshold is that their teaching achievements make little difference to their career prospects.

**Figure 1:**

a model of how progressive teaching achievement is typically rewarded in current university promotion systems



While many universities are committed to improving the recognition of teaching throughout all stages of the academic career, two major structural barriers to change are apparent:

1. the **absence of a clear definition of teaching achievement** at each stage of the career ladder;
2. the **inadequacy of the forms of evidence** currently used to demonstrate and evaluate the teaching contribution of academics.

Without the tools to assess and compare the quality of an academic's educational contribution, the research-dominant culture within higher education is unlikely to change. **In other words, if recognition of teaching in higher education is to be improved, so must the ways in which we assess it.**

## How was the Framework developed?

The Framework was commissioned and funded by the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng) and authored by an independent consultant, Dr Ruth Graham. As outlined below, it was developed and tested through a phased process over the course of four years:

- Phase A:** during 2014–15, survey (n=604) and interview (n=52) **evidence was captured to distil perspectives from across the UK higher education community on how teaching achievement is recognised and rewarded in academic careers;**
- Phase B:** during 2015, a review was undertaken of **current practices and the global state of the art** in the evaluation and reward of university teaching achievement. The review was informed by a range of evidence, including interviews with global experts in university teaching and learning; a review of the promotion guidelines of top-ranked universities; and interviews with academics about their experiences of citing teaching achievement to support cases for career progression;
- Phase C:** based on the design principles established through the first two phases of work, Phase C of the study (undertaken during 2015–2016) was concerned with **building a draft framework to guide career advancement on the basis of university teaching and learning**. The draft was reviewed by a panel of global experts in university teaching and learning;
- Phase D:** conducted between 2016–2018, the final phase of the study brought together 15 partner universities from across the world (including the National University of Singapore, the University of New South Wales and University College London) to provide **feedback on the Framework**, thus allowing iterative improvements to be made.

**In April 2018, the Framework was launched** by the Royal Academy of Engineering

## Who is the Framework aimed at?

### What type of university is the Framework aimed at?

The Framework is designed for application across **all disciplinary and geographic contexts**, and for **any higher education institution** where teaching takes place.

### What type of academic is the Framework aimed at?

The Framework is designed for use by **all academics with any responsibility for teaching**, ranging from those whose career progression will be based predominantly on their educational achievements, to those for whom teaching will be a much less significant driver for career advancement.

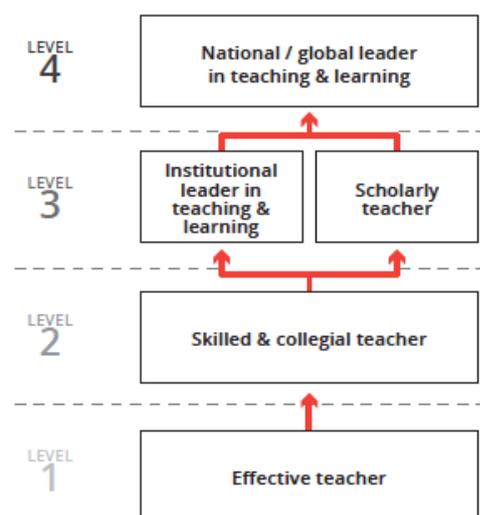
The Framework rests on the principle that all academics who teach – regardless of their role or professional priorities – should continue to strengthen the quality and impact of their teaching activities throughout their career.

## What does the Framework offer teaching-active academics?

- a structured pathway of career progression on the basis of the academic's contribution to university teaching and learning;
- an evidence base through which to demonstrate the academic's teaching achievement during appointment, promotion, professional development and annual appraisal.

The Framework is structured around four progressive levels of university teaching achievement. Level 1 – 'the effective teacher' – represents a threshold of teaching achievement which all academics should attain. Level 4 – 'the national and global leader in teaching and learning' – is likely to be reserved for those progressing to full professorships solely or predominantly on the basis of their teaching achievements.

The Framework would be used in conjunction with evidence of achievement in other domains of the academic role, such as research or technology transfer.



**For each of the four levels, the Framework addresses the following three questions:**



### What is the academic's sphere of impact in their teaching and learning activities?

Progression through the Framework's four levels is underpinned by the academic's breadth and quality of impact. To progress beyond the lower levels of the Framework, an academic must widen their sphere of impact in teaching and learning beyond the students they teach and tutor. With progression, this *sphere of impact* expands to encompass (i) the environment for teaching and learning within and beyond their institution, and/or (ii) pedagogical scholarship that influences both educational knowledge and practice.



### What promotion criteria define the academic's achievements in teaching and learning?

The Framework provides promotion criteria that are conceptualised around the key capabilities that determine achievement at each level.



### What forms of evidence can be used to demonstrate the academic's teaching achievements?

The Framework presents a range of different forms of evidence that can be used to demonstrate an individual's teaching achievement. These forms of evidence have been grouped into four broad domains: self-assessment; professional activities; measures of student learning; and peer evaluation and recognition. The Framework offers guidance on how different evidence sources could be collected and presented.



 The Framework can be accessed at [teachingframework.com/adopting/](http://teachingframework.com/adopting/)

## How can universities use/adopt the Framework?

The Framework is designed to support excellence in university teaching and learning through application to a range of institutional evaluation and reward systems. The links below provide a series of case studies of how the Framework could be used to support institutional change. These case studies are taken from the group of partner universities that have adopted or used the Framework to guide institutional reform to their systems for evaluating and rewarding teaching achievement. The case studies include a wide variety of contexts for reform, including a range of different:

- **geographical contexts**, with case studies taken from seven different countries;
- **institution types**, where the case studies include both (i) research-led and teaching-focused institutions; and (ii) institutions specialising in particular disciplines and 'comprehensive' universities;
- **types of reform**, including the development/redesign of university processes of academic appointment, annual appraisal, professional development and promotion, as well as awards/fellowships in teaching and learning offered at an institutional or national level.

**The case studies are available through the hyperlinks listed below, taken from the project website.**

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- 1 The redesign of the university's three academic career pathways: case study from **University College London (UCL)** in the UK  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/UCL.pdf>

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  - 2 Improvements to the 'educator track', the teaching and learning career pathway at the **National University of Singapore (NUS)** in Singapore  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/NUS.pdf>

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  - 3 The design of the academic pathways at a new-start university at **University of Technology and Engineering (UTEC)** in Peru  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/UTEC.pdf>

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  - 4 The development of new academic career pathways, professional development systems and teaching qualifications at the **University of Twente** in the Netherlands  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/TWENTE.pdf>

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  - 5 The redesign of the academic career pathways at the **University of Technology Malaysia (UTM)** in Malaysia  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/UTM.pdf>

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  - 6 The introduction of a new education-focused career pathway at the **University of New South Wales Sydney (UNSW Sydney)** in Australia  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/UNSW.pdf>

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  - 7 The introduction of new teaching qualifications at **Chalmers University of Technology** in Sweden  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/CHALMERS.pdf>

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  - 8 The design of a new national bursary scheme to support innovation in university teaching, established by the **Dutch Ministry of Education**  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/COMENIUS.pdf>

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  - 9 The establishment of a career and professional development Framework at **NMiTE**, a new university under development in the UK  
<http://www.teachingframework.com/resources/NMiTE.pdf>