

HEA Accreditation Policy 2016-17

1. Policy statement

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredits initial and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes delivered by higher education providers both within the UK and internationally. Accreditation provides external and independent confirmation that professional development is aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education (UKPSF) and provides participants with the opportunity to be professionally recognised through the Higher Education Academy's fellowship scheme.

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear position relating to the requirements of HEA accreditation. Further guidance available on the [HEA website](#) draws on this policy and sets out the information required to address the accreditation criteria within an institutional submission.

2. Terms of accreditation

Accreditation is only available to those subscribing institutions paying for accreditation services as part of their subscription package and is only valid while the institution continues to subscribe. Institutions can make one free accreditation submission consisting of up to five programmes in every four-year cycle. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the full Terms and Conditions related to HEA accreditation.

2.1 Accreditation start and end dates

Accreditation commences on either 1 September, 1 February or 1 May and runs for a period of four years. The following deadlines apply:

Accreditation submission deadline	Earliest programme start date
31 October 2016	1 February 2017
31 January 2017	1 May 2017
31 March 2017	1 September 2017

Institutions new to accreditation will be initially accredited for a 12 month period, during which time the HEA will monitor and review the quality of the provision. After successful completion of this period, accreditation will be extended for a further three years.

Accreditation must be confirmed prior to the programme start date. Backdating of the accreditation start date is not permissible.

2.2 Remit of accredited status

A range of programmes which are designed to meet the development needs of staff employed by the institution who teach and/or support learning are eligible for HEA accreditation. Many institutions

offer postgraduate certificates, continuing professional development (CPD) programmes and stand-alone modules, but other institution-led programmes may be eligible. Accredited programmes can be offered in any campus of the subscribing institution either in the UK or overseas, but this must be made explicit at the point of accreditation. Institutions are also entitled to offer accredited provision to staff employed by collaborative partner institutions and where this is the case then full details must be provided within the submission.

Accreditation does not cover programmes or resources that are developed for commercial sale. The HEA offers a separate Approvals service for programmes of this nature. Please see <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/recognition-accreditation/accreditation/approvals>

3. Accreditation criteria

Accreditation submissions are reviewed against the following criteria:

3.1 Criterion 1 – institutional commitment

The institution can evidence a commitment to the continuous professional development of staff that teach and support learning:

- a. there are clear institutional strategies to utilise the UKPSF as a tool for both initial and continuing professional development;
- b. there is clear rationale for the proposed accredited programme(s) consistent with the institution's approach to learning and teaching;
- c. quality assurance and enhancement of accredited programmes are monitored and managed at an institutional level;
- d. there are sufficient resources in place to ensure effective and sustainable operation of the programmes appropriate to institutional strategy.

3.2 Criterion 2 – programme design

The programme is designed to ensure participants utilise the UKPSF to both develop their practice and evidence their success:

- a. the design of the programme provides explicit opportunities for participants to make clear associations between the programme, their practice and the appropriate category of fellowship;
- b. the programme accurately reflects the relevant category of fellowship;
- c. the design of assessment ensures that participants will explicitly evidence effective practice to meet the requirements of the relevant category of fellowship;
- d. assessment includes a mechanism to authenticate practice.

3.3 Criterion 3 – support and guidance

The support and guidance provided will enable participants to utilise the UKPSF to develop and evidence their practice:

- a. participants are supported to make clear associations between their professional development opportunities, their practice and the appropriate category of fellowship;
- b. participants are supported to make clear associations between the assessment they undertake, their practice and the requirements of the appropriate category of fellowship;
- c. those with responsibility for the management and operation of the programme hold an appropriate category of HEA fellowship and can demonstrate continuing development in relation to professional recognition;
- d. those with responsibility for supporting participants can demonstrate current knowledge and understanding of the requirements for the relevant category of HEA fellowship.

3.4 Criterion 4 – fellowship judgements

The processes through which fellowship judgements are made are reliable, valid and robust:

- a. judgements are made against the appropriate Descriptor of the UKPSF;
- b. those with responsibility for making judgements are suitably trained, hold an appropriate category of HEA fellowship and can demonstrate current knowledge and understanding of the requirements for the relevant category of HEA fellowship;
- c. all judgement processes are supported by clear and transparent documentation;
- d. Fellowship judgements are appropriately quality assured.

4 Key requirements

While recognising the variety of institutions and the range of programmes for which HEA accreditation may be sought, the HEA has a responsibility to ensure the consistency and comparability of the fellowship judgements being made. To ensure this the following requirements must be evidenced within all programmes.

4.1 Institutional commitment

As each category of HEA fellowship requires a commitment to continuing professional development, beyond the point of professional recognition the institution must provide ongoing developmental opportunities for all staff that teach and support learning. This institutional commitment is expected to be extended to collaborative partner institutions where opportunity to participate on accredited programmes is offered.

The institution is committed to ensuring staff with responsibility for accredited programmes undertake appropriate continuing professional development in relation to the UKPSF and HEA fellowships.

4.2 Programme design

To meet the requirements for HEA fellowship, the professional practice of participants must be authenticated. Therefore, all accredited programmes must be designed to include a means to authenticate practice. Formal observation of a participant’s professional practice may provide authentication. Where a formal observation of practice is not part of the programme/scheme, referee/advocate statements are required to authenticate practice as below:

Category of Fellowship judgement	Requirements to authenticate practice
Associate Fellow Fellow Senior Fellow	Minimum of two references which validate the evidence presented in the application and discuss the participant’s practice in line with the requirements of the relevant descriptor. Normally referees should hold a category of HEA fellowship.
Principal Fellow	Minimum of three advocate statements, with a minimum of one advocate external to their institution. Normally advocates should hold a category of fellowship. Advocate statements support and recommend the applicant for Principal Fellowship in line with the requirements of Descriptor 4. For this category, one of the advocates should be able to comment on how the applicant has influenced their practice.

4.3 Support and guidance

As the accreditation review process takes a participant-facing viewpoint, it is a requirement that full participant facing guidance is submitted for each programme. In addition, an accompanying institutional commentary is required within the submission template provided.

Institutions must ensure that participants are supported to identify the appropriate category of HEA fellowship to suit their practice and experience. When enrolling participants onto programmes, institutions must ensure that participants will be able to evidence sufficient successful teaching and/or supporting learning practice to meet the requirements of the UKPSF.

4.4 Fellowship judgements

Institutions may design the format of the assessment through which fellowship judgements are made but must demonstrate equivalence to the requirements for direct applications set by the HEA for each category of fellowship.

Institutional processes must result in reliable and robust HEA Fellow judgements being made. The minimum requirements for fellowship judgements are as follows:

Academic credit-bearing programmes	
Category of fellowship judgement	Reviewer requirements
Associate Fellow Fellow	If the quality assurance processes of an academic credit-bearing programme explicitly consider HEA fellowship judgements, one suitably trained and experienced assessor with a minimum requirement of FHEA is required. Where this is not the case, a minimum of two suitably trained and experienced assessors, each with FHEA as a minimum requirement, are required.
All other accredited programmes/schemes	
Category of fellowship judgement	Reviewer requirements
Associate Fellow Fellow	A minimum of two suitably trained and experienced reviewers, each with FHEA as a minimum requirement, are required.
Senior Fellow	A minimum of three suitably trained and experienced reviewers, each having FHEA status as a minimum, with at least two also having SFHEA. Where the award of SFHEA is new to the institution, it is a requirement that one of the reviewers is a suitably experienced External.
Principal Fellow	Minimum of three suitably trained and experienced reviewers, each recognised as minimum SFHEA, one of whom must be external to the institution and one of whom must be recognised as a PFHEA.

The fellowship judgement process must be free of any conflict of interest. For example, mentors/coaches must not be involved in the final fellowship judgements of individuals they have supported.

4.5 Accredited prior learning

Where accredited prior learning (e.g. APL/APEL/APCL/RPL, etc.) is enabled within an academic credit-bearing programme, mechanisms must ensure that sufficient evidence of effective practice is presented to fully meet the requirements of the relevant category of fellowship by the end of the programme. Accredited prior learning is not accepted within experiential routes to fellowship; i.e. a full claim for each distinctive category of fellowship is required.

4.6 Role of the External

To ensure reliable HEA fellowship judgements are made and to support the continuing development of programmes, the HEA requires that appropriate externality is embedded within all accredited programmes. An appropriate External (one or more individuals) is required to fulfil the following three functions as identified below:

Programmes at Descriptors 3 and 4 only:

- The **External is one of the three independent assessors** required to make fellowship judgements on applications for Principal Fellowship. This is also a requirement for applications for Senior Fellowship in new schemes until the HEA approve internal decision-making at Descriptor 3 through the HEA minor changes to accredited provision process;

All programmes Descriptors 1-4:

- Applications for fellowship/programme assessment leading to the award of HEA fellowship should be **moderated by the External** prior to the final fellowship judgement being made (i.e. during the active decision making process). Through sampling, the External moderator will focus on the appropriateness of internal decision-making to ensure that the criteria of the relevant descriptor are reliably met before fellowship is awarded;
- **The External will formally report on the quality assurance and quality enhancement processes** relating to the participant experience and appropriateness of fellowship judgements, in line with HEA requirements, for each accredited programme/scheme. External reporting will be via appropriate institutional mechanisms. For example, attendance at an appropriate internal Panel/board/committee or through written report to such a meeting.

The HEA requires that all External appointees are:

- Senior or Principal Fellows of the HEA;
- suitably experienced in making HEA fellowship judgements and current in their knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the relevant category(s) of fellowship;
- free from any reciprocal external relationships and perceived or actual conflict of interest.

5. HEA accreditation application procedure

Application for HEA accreditation is made via a documentary submission. This should be emailed to accreditation@heacademy.ac.uk

A complete submission must include:

- a fully completed accreditation submission template endorsed by the institutional signatory;
- participant facing guidance for each programme.

Incomplete submissions will be returned to the institution, which may result in a postponed start date as the submission will be reviewed by a later panel.

6. HEA accreditation panel composition

6.1 Panel composition

HEA accreditation panels review application submissions against the accreditation criteria. Accreditation decisions are made by a panel of independent accreditors chaired by a member of HEA staff. Accreditors undertake both initial training and continuing professional development with the HEA in relation to HEA fellowships and are required to demonstrate they remain in good standing.

6.2 Panel outcomes

The panel process will lead to one of three accreditation decisions being made for each programme presented:

- **Accredit** – accreditation can be awarded with no further action. Feedback may include recommendations for future development and identification of good practice.
- **Accredit subject to conditions** – the programme can be accredited subject to some minor clarifications and/or enhancements. Within the feedback, areas of good practice will be identified and an accreditation action plan will be provided.

The institution will then need to provide evidence that the conditions within the action plan have been met. The deadline for the resubmission of this evidence will normally be one month, at which point the revised submission will be considered by the original panel.

Should the revised submission not fully address the actions set, there will be one final opportunity for additional evidence to be considered. Again the deadline set for providing additional information will usually be a further month.

If the second revised submission does not fully address the actions, a full new submission will need to be made for which there will be an additional charge.

- **Returned for further development** – where it is judged that major development is required to meet the accreditation criteria the programme(s) is returned to the institution with explanatory guidance. A new accreditation panel will review the new submission.

If a new submission is made and the second panel cycle does not result in a successful outcome, any further submissions will be charged at the full additional submission rate.

In all cases, the feedback letter together with any accreditation action plan will be sent electronically to the institutional contact and named programme managers normally within fifteen working days of the accreditation panel meeting.

7. HEA review of accredited programmes

7.1 Annual review of accredited CPD schemes

The HEA requires institutions to complete an annual review of all accredited CPD schemes. At present the HEA does not require an annual review for accredited taught programmes.

A template for the annual review will be sent to institutions in early September each year. The completed template must be emailed to the HEA by 1 December via cpdreview@heacademy.ac.uk.

Failure to return a fully completed annual review may result in accreditation being suspended.

7.2 Annual institutional visits

Annually the HEA will visit a number of institutions to review their fellowship judgement processes. These institutions will be contacted in advance to arrange a visit, although the HEA reserves the right to request access to the operation of any accredited programmes.

7.3 Sampling of internal applications for quality assurance purposes

The HEA samples internal applications for quality assurance purposes. Institutions are required to maintain an archive of written applications, outcomes and feedback to applicants for a period of three years. Similarly, where oral forms of assessment are used, oral or video recording must be available for the same period. Participants should be informed about these requirements.

8. Making minor and/or major changes to accredited programmes

Institutions are responsible for ensuring that their programmes operate as explicitly accredited, however, to enable institutions to make a change to accredited programmes, the HEA offers a major/minor change process. Guidance about this process is available on the [HEA website](#).

Changes proposed by an institution must be considered and approved by the HEA in advance of the change being implemented. If approved, the 'change' can be implemented for the remainder of the current accreditation cycle.

Appendix 1 - Accreditation and professional recognition terms and conditions

(i) Accreditation of programmes and professional recognition schemes

Accreditation is only available to those subscribing institutions paying for accreditation services as part of their subscription package and is only valid while the institution continues to subscribe. Institutions can make one free accreditation submission consisting of up to five programmes in every four-year cycle. Institutions wishing to present additional programmes for accreditation within this period will be liable for a fee of £6000 per submission of up to five programmes. An institution's nominated HEA Partnership Manager can provide further information.

Once awarded, accreditation will be in place for a four-year period, after which a new submission for accreditation will be required. Institutions new to accreditation will be initially accredited for a 12 month period, during which time the HEA will monitor and review the quality of the provision. After successful completion of this period, accreditation will be extended for a further three years.

Accredited programmes can be offered in any campus of the subscribing institution either in the UK or overseas. Accreditation also entitles staff employed at collaborative partner institutions (i.e. where the institution is validating degree programmes) to access an institution's provision, but this must be explicit and fully detailed at the point of accreditation. Where institutions wish to expand their delivery to offer provision to additional collaborative partner organisations, they should apply through the HEA major/minor change to accredited provision process.

Wherever offered, accredited programmes must be managed and quality assured by employees from the subscribing institution with appropriate knowledge and understanding of the UKPSF. Full information about the arrangements are required within the submission (please refer to the Guide to addressing the criteria for accreditation 2016-17 guidance document for further information).

Accreditation does not cover provision that is developed for commercial sale, i.e. provision is accredited to be accessed by the institution's employees and those employed by collaborative partner institutions only. An exception to this regulation is made with respect to individuals teaching and/or supporting HE learners within clinical/health profession settings, e.g. medical consultants, nurses, etc. As these individuals are likely to be employed by bodies other than HE Providers (e.g. NHS in UK), subscribing HEA institutions may offer accredited programmes to these individuals, who will then be liable for an additional fee for HEA fellowship when they successfully complete the programme (please see below).

The HEA offers a separate Approvals service for programmes intended for commercial sale. Please see <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/recognition-accreditation/accreditation/approvals>

(ii) The award of HEA fellowship through completion of an accredited programme

Programme Leaders must supply the HEA with accurate information about individuals who have successfully completed an accredited programme via the My Academy portal. HEA fellowship is then awarded by the HEA. There is no additional charge for the award of fellowship to participants who

complete an accredited programme and who are employed by an HEA subscribing institution as the subscription fee covers this cost.

The HEA charges an additional fee for fellowship to individuals who started their accredited programme after 1 August 2013 if they are not employed by an institution which subscribes to the HEA at the end of the programme. The additional fee charged for fellowship varies dependant on the category of fellowship sought but is 50% of the full direct application fee.

Individuals applying for fellowship through accredited programmes are only entitled to receive the category of fellowship applied for, i.e. a different category of fellowship may not be awarded where an application does not meet the requirements of the category applied for. For example, an unsuccessful application for Senior Fellowship (Descriptor 3) may not be awarded Fellowship (Descriptor 2). In this instance a new application must be made which presents evidence to meet the distinctive nature of the relevant category. The only exception permitted occurs if an application for Fellowship (Descriptor 2) fully addresses the requirements for Associate Fellowship (Descriptor 1) ; in this instance the applicant may be offered the choice of accepting Associate Fellowship instead of resubmitting for Fellowship.

(iii) Definition of employment for professional recognition purposes

The employment status of staff at an institution is important as the institution's HEA subscription package covers fellowship fees resulting from accredited programmes for all employees that teach and support learning. Subscription also subsidises the fees for direct application to the HEA (50% of the full direct application fees).

HE Providers may operate a range of different contracts of employment e.g. permanent, fixed term, part time, fractional, Associate Lecturer, etc.. Postgraduates may have a role in teaching and supporting learning as part of their PhD studentship/bursary; these individuals are deemed to be employed by the institution as they are contracted to deliver teaching but may not necessarily be paid for their work.

If you are unsure about the employment status of any staff/participants on HEA accredited provision within your institution, the HEA recommends that that the HR Department at your institution should be consulted before seeking further guidance from the HEA accreditation team (accreditation@heacademy.ac.uk)

(iv) Eligibility for professional recognition in relation to national credit transfer systems

Institutions must ensure that HEA fellowship is awarded to successful participants on accredited programmes on the basis of professional practice in teaching and/or support of learning at:

- level 4 or above within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) England and Wales;
- level 7 or above within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF);
- first cycle or above of the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA);

- level 6 or above of the Australian Qualifications Framework;
- level 5 or above of the New Zealand Qualification Framework;
- other equivalent higher education frameworks;
- delivery of non-accredited continuing professional development for academic and learning support staff may also be considered as evidence equivalent to the higher education academic frameworks.

Further information can be found at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2843#.VNI7SfNFDcs>