Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP)

Teaching Mentor Guidance
1 Introduction and background

Thank you for agreeing to mentor a colleague as part of their learning experience on the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP). The PGCAP is a programme for Lancaster university staff who teach and support student learning. This may include, for example, lecturers and teaching fellows who are new to HE teaching and/or to Lancaster, and those in professional roles who have close involvement in learning and teaching.

The programme comprises of three 20 credit modules, completed part-time over 18 months:

- OED.512: Developing Higher Education Practice (DHEP);
- OED.513: Curriculum Design and Development (CDD);
- OED.509: Scholarship of Practice: an Academic Curriculum Enquiry (SPACE).

The programme is accredited by Advance HE and successful completion of modules 1 and 2 results in the award of Fellow of the HEA (FHEA). This is professional recognition of participants’ practice to attest that it meets the requirements of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education.

The PGCAP will help participants explore a range of approaches to learning and teaching, and provides opportunities to reflect on and develop their own academic practice. The programme is delivered through online learning activities supplemented by synchronous online sessions, support from the programme team and your involvement as a teaching mentor. Peer learning is a key element of the programme, providing opportunities to share and learn from fellow participants.

The mentor is an essential role to help participants draw on their own experience to contextualise the learning. Mentors must also undertake observation of their mentees practice to authenticate that it meets the requirements of HEA Fellowship.

This mentor guidance should be read in conjunction with the programme and module handbooks to ensure you are clear of the requirements of the mentoring role.

We hope that your experience as a mentor is a positive and rewarding one. Please contact us should you have any queries or require any additional information.

The PGCAP team
2 Why be a PGCAP mentor?

The PGCAP mentor scheme aims to benefit mentors as well as mentees. As a mentor on the PGCAP, it is expected you will:

- Engage in discussion and support the development of the learning and teaching practice of your colleague;
- Have opportunity to engage in ongoing reflection on your own practice;
- Develop your own practice by helping contextualise your mentees learning and discussing shared challenges;
- Gain experience and evidence towards ‘good standing’ in relation to your current category of HEA Fellowship (as expected by Advance HE);
- Gather evidence for a future application for a different category of Fellowship (particularly D3 Senior Fellowship), by supporting and mentoring others in relation to learning and teaching.

3 Eligibility: who are PGCAP mentors?

PGCAP mentors are usually from the same department as the mentee. Mentors hold a variety of roles but must be involved in teaching and supporting learning, have a good understanding of the UKPSF and knowledge and understanding of the requirements of HEA Fellowship. Mentors are enthusiastic about teaching and curriculum development.

Usually mentors should hold a category of HEA Fellowship. PGCAP graduates often make very good mentors, as they are already familiar with the programme approach. Mentors need to share the mentees interests and concerns about teaching and understand the discipline context.

4 What does the role entail?

Mentors provide an essential role to help participants draw on their own experience to contextualise the learning from the programme. The mentor role is to act as a ‘critical friend’. You may wish to discuss ideas and approaches with your mentee, share and collaborate in practice and help them to gain access to alternative teaching possibilities and resources as appropriate. Your mentee may occasionally need to discuss emerging problems relating to subject specific teaching issues.

The mentor/mentee relationship will usually be quite an informal one, although both people may wish to set some parameters to establish an understanding about expectations and a sense of entitlement, as well as to safeguard limited time. The mentor is not intended to take on the role of a tutor, and many queries and dilemmas about teaching can be referred to the programme team. The mentors are not directly involved in assessment.
There are two main activities the mentor will undertake:

1. **Provide support and guidance for professional development**

   Provide an essential source of support and help mentees to contextualise learning, both in terms of the discipline and local practice as well as in relation to the UKPSF.

2. **Observation of practice**

   Undertake at least one observation of the mentees practice ideally during module 1 to authenticate their practice (a requirement for the award of HEA fellowship).

In brief, mentors should be:

- Aware of and sympathetic to the philosophy of PGCAP and its alignment to the UKPSF;
- A relatively experienced member of staff who knows their way around the administration of teaching in the department and the institution;
- Interested in teaching issues within their own discipline;
- Able to support and motivate you as their colleague.

Mentors will provide:

- A listening ear on teaching issues;
- Feedback on teaching;
- Access to your own teaching (observation of teaching sessions but also access to materials and the thinking behind particular teaching approaches).

### 5 Observation of professional practice

To meet the requirements for HEA Fellowship, the professional practice of participants must be authenticated. As a mentor you need to undertake an observation of your mentees practice at least once to provide this authentication. Reflection on this observation is an essential part of the summative assessment for the PGCAP.

This observation can be part of activity to meet the university policy for peer observation. A peer observation template is provided (appendix 3). The participant must submit a completed peer observation template as part of the assessment for modules 1 and 2.

This observation does not need to be constrained to in person teaching. The observation can be carried out on a participant’s online delivery, either a live synchronous session, an asynchronous activity or another element of the virtual learning environment (VLE). Participants will be given guidance on the activities they may wish to receive mentor feedback on as part of this process.

#### 5.1 Guidance for peer observation of professional practice

The PGCAP peer observation process is a vehicle for a mutually beneficial dialogue between colleagues. It is not about judging teaching performance. It provides an opportunity to reflect on what the observer/observee has seen and discuss the actual outcomes of a
session against the teacher’s planned aims and intentions. As well as gaining invited feedback, both observer and observee can also explore the emerging issues and ideas useful for future development, drawing on additional wider sources to inform thinking, such as the responses of students, your own classroom experiences and knowledge, reading about teaching approaches and so on.

Having said this, observation does inevitably feel exposing and makes us all feel self-conscious, like having a very large mirror at the back of the room. The process needs to be treated with sensitivity, for both parties and (as importantly) for the students for whom any session is being conducted.

The following process is suggested as a starting point, and can be used or adapted for observation as agreed by the parties involved:

1. Observee to plan/outline the session/activity using or adapting a planning and evaluation proforma (appendix 3). It is helpful for the observee to draft a brief outline to contextualise the session for the observer.

2. Observer and observee meet to discuss the plan/outline, make any modifications and identify any elements the observation should focus on in particular. At this meeting you should discuss ground rules, such as how and when you will engage in the chosen observation activity. If it is a synchronous activity you should agree your role in the session and how you will be introduced. It would be worth arranging follow up meeting at this point.

3. After the session/activity, both parties should take some time to reflect on the experience and meet as soon as is feasible (immediately afterwards is not necessarily the best time) to get feedback and to share and discuss emerging ideas.

4. The observer should provide a brief written evaluation to aid the observee to reflect on the outcomes of the whole process and feed into the summative assessment.

6 UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE (UKPSF)

The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) is a nationally-recognised framework for benchmarking success within HE teaching and learning support, managed by Advance HE.

The UKPSF provides a set of professional standards and guidelines for everyone involved in teaching and supporting learning in HE, it can be applied to personal development programmes at individual or institutional level to improve teaching quality.

The framework identifies the diverse range of teaching and support roles and environments. These are reflected and are expressed in the Dimensions of Professional Practice. The UKPSF clearly outlines the Dimensions of Professional Practice with HE teaching and learning support as:

- areas of activity undertaken by teachers and support staff;
- core knowledge needed to carry out those activities at the appropriate level;
- professional values that individuals performing these activities should exemplify.
The PGCAP has been designed to allow participants to demonstrate they meet the requirements of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) at Descriptor 2 (D2). By aligning the PGCAP to the UKPSF participants are able to demonstrate their commitment to improving the quality of their teaching and supporting of learning to enhance the learning experience of students.

As a mentor you need to have a good understanding of the UKPSF and help participants contextualise their developing practice in light of the appropriate descriptor.

The learning during the PGCAP is designed to explore the dimensions of the UKPSF and help participants evidence how their own developing practice aligns to the appropriate descriptor. The Module Learning Outcomes (MLOs) and assessment for modules 1 and 2 are mapped to the UKPSF (see the individual module handbooks) allowing participants to demonstrate how they meet the requirements of the UKPSF through successfully undertaking the modules. The learning activities during the modules are cross-referenced to the UKPSF, enabling links to be made between the theory presented, individual practice and the UKPSF.

Appendix 1 shows the dimensions of the UKPSF and Appendix 2 shows the requirements of Descriptor 2 (D2) of the UKPSF, Fellowship of the HEA. The full UKPSF, document including the descriptors, which outline the criteria for award, can be found on the Advance HE website.

## 7 Support for mentors

A mentor induction session will be held for all new mentors. This will provide mentors with an overview of the PGCAP, a chance to explore the UKPSF and the requirements for HEA Fellowship and the role of the mentor. An online version of this will be provided for you to work through in your own time.

All mentors will be invited to an annual mentor development event. This will provide a forum for sharing good practice and for contributing to the evaluation and development of the PGCAP. This will also provide any updates about the programme, requirements for HEA Fellowship and provide opportunity to further explore the UKPSF.

Through these development opportunities, the aim is to develop a strong community of PGCAP mentors and provide opportunities for peer support for mentors.

If you cannot attend this induction session, individual meetings can be arranged for you to find out more about the programme. Mentors also have a valuable contribution to make in the development of the programme, and feedback from mentors is always welcomed.

If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact the programme director.

### Areas of Activity

| A1 | Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study |
| A2 | Teach and/or support learning |
| A3 | Assess and give feedback to learners |
| A4 | Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance |
| A5 | Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices |

### Core Knowledge

| K1  | The subject material |
| K2  | Appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme |
| K3  | How students learn, both generally and within their subject/disciplinary area(s) |
| K4  | The use and value of appropriate learning technologies |
| K5  | Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching |
| K6  | The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching |

### Professional Values

| V1  | Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities |
| V2  | Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners |
| V3  | Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development |
| V4  | Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice |
Appendix 2: UKPSF Descriptor 2 criteria

Descriptor 2 (D2) of the UKPSF requires successful evidence against the following criteria:

Demonstrates a broad understanding of effective approaches to teaching and learning support as key contributions to high quality student learning. Individuals should be able to provide evidence of:

I. Successful engagement across all five Areas of Activity
II. Appropriate knowledge and understanding across all aspects of Core Knowledge
III. A commitment to all the Professional Values
IV. Successful engagement in appropriate teaching practices related to the Areas of Activity
V. Successful incorporation of subject and pedagogic research and / or scholarship within the above activities, as part of an integrated approach to academic practice
Appendix 3: Peer observation session planning and template

A completed peer observation form must be submitted with the summative assessment.

Use this template to inform the peer observation your mentor will undertake as part of the PGCAP. This form is mapped to the UKPSF to help you identify how your practice aligns.

Please note, this is a substantial planning document and not all sections will be of relevance to all types of learning and teaching activities. You should utilise the form as is best for your own planning and reflections. Ensure section C is completed by your mentor, and you complete your reflections and action plan in section D which will feed into your summative assessment writing.

A. Pre-observation planning

To be completed in advance of the observation and used as part of the discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-observation planning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the session/activity face-to-face, online synchronous or asynchronous?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of session/activity (Recorded lecture, synchronous MS Teams session, asynchronous activity, Moodle discussion board, face to face small group session/practical etc.)</td>
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<td>Day / time / term / week</td>
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<td>Title / topic of session</td>
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<td>Number of learners</td>
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A completed copy of this form should be given to your observer in advance of the observation. Ideally, you should take time to meet the observer in advance to provide context to the session and discuss what the focus of the observation will be.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-observation planning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How does this session/activity fit into the context of the whole module? (A1) As part of a larger whole, how does this session/activity link with previous and future sessions, both in terms of subject matter and teaching approach?</td>
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</table>
### Pre-observation planning

2. **Who are my learners? (V1)** What do I know about the student group and profile? (experience, prior learning, background, diversity etc.)

3. **What are my aims for this session/activity? (A1)** What exactly do I want this to achieve?

4. **What are the intended learning outcomes for the students from this particular session/activity? (A1)**
   - What do I specifically want the students to be able to do, know or understand differently as a result of this session/activity – both small short term outcomes and contributions to bigger, longer term outcomes for the module?

5. **What teaching and learning activities am I going to use to address these outcomes? (A2, A5, K1, K2, V3)**
   - How will the students go about achieving these outcomes – how will it happen?
   - What will the teaching and learning activities be taking place, e.g. reflecting, talking, listening, reading, writing, watching? What will I as a teacher be doing during this session? Have you drawn on scholarship and research in developing this session?

6. **How will I encourage all the students to be actively engaged in their learning in this session/activity? (A4, K3, K5, V2)**
   - What oral, written, practical activities will I use to try to ensure active participation by all the students? How will I make it challenging and interesting for all the students, given the diversity of the group?
### Pre-observation planning

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<td>7.</td>
<td><strong>How will I ensure an effective learning environment?</strong> <em>(A2, A4, K1, K2, K3)</em></td>
<td>How will I use presentation material, handouts, use of examples, questioning etc. to develop an effective learning environment?</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td><strong>What specific issues of inclusiveness or accessibility do I need plan for?</strong> <em>(A4, V1, V2)</em></td>
<td>Are there accessibility issues regarding the environment or the curriculum? Are there students with specific needs? Will any students require additional support?</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td><strong>How and when will I know how successful the session/activity has been in terms of achieving the intended learning outcomes?</strong> <em>(A3, K5, K6)</em></td>
<td>What methods and approaches you will use to evaluate the effectiveness of this session/activity? How will you use this information to develop your professional practice?</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td><strong>How and when will the students know what they have learned from this session/activity?</strong> <em>(A3, K5)</em></td>
<td>Will students be reflecting in the session/activity on what they have learned? What feedback will students get? From me? From each other? What can they do after this session/activity to check their learning/understanding?</td>
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Pre-observation planning

11. **What particular concerns have I got about this session/activity at this point? (A5, K5)**
   
   What feedback would I like to have?
### Anticipated running plan (A1)

Design the layout of this plan however you wish – it is a narrative of the intended ‘plot’ of the actual event thinking about what both teacher and students will be doing in the session or during the activity – a loose script to help you ‘rehearse’ the detail of the session in your head.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approx. times</th>
<th>What I will be doing</th>
<th>What the students will be doing</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>e.g. first 5 minutes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>e.g. last 5 minutes</em></td>
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B. **Self-Evaluation (A5, K5, K6)**

Complete this as soon as possible after the observation. This should be based on your own reflections of the observed session/activity, and to evaluate the session alongside the Pre-observation planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-evaluation form</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-evaluation of the session</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Capture your immediate thoughts on the session/activity, how it met the aims and outcomes, in light of what you had planned and anticipated, including consideration of learner needs, learning environment and learner interaction and feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<th>What went well in the session/activity?</th>
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<tr>
<th>What could have been improved?</th>
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<th>Action points and development considerations.</th>
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C. Peer Observation Teaching Session/Activity Evaluation by Observer

To be completed by the observer immediately after the observation/activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants name</th>
<th>Observer name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Length/type of observation</td>
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Reflect on the session/activity in the context of the planning – to what extent did the session/activity seem to match the plan in terms of any or all of the following, and where it diverged, what might be the reasons?

- the aims and objectives and intending learning outcomes (A1);
- teaching and learning activities, including student involvement (A2);
- pace, organisation and timing (A2, V1);
- subject content (K1);
- use of resources and tools to develop an effective learning environment (A4, K3, K4, V1);
- assessment of learning (A4);
- any specific concerns raised in the briefing discussion (A5).

Areas of good practice

Ideas for extending and enhancing practice: action planning (K5, K6)

Signed: Date:
D. Reflective commentary

To be completed after the post-observation meeting to record the discussion, reflection and conclusions drawn for future practice. (A5)

- What have I taken from this activity in relation to my teaching and/or student learning;
- What ideas has it given me for improving student learning in my classes;
- What ideas has it given me for my own teaching development;
- What might I explore further with colleagues/through the literature.