

## **Guest Editorial - Alastair Robertson**

Welcome to this special edition of PESTLHE, focussed on “Recognition and Reward for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education”. The quality of learning and teaching in UK higher education is already widely respected across the world and the Higher Education Academy, sponsors of this edition, wishes to ensure that enhancing the status of teaching as a scholarly activity continues to be a priority across the UK. Indeed, one of the Academy’s five strategic aims in its new strategic plan for 2008-13 is “Raise the status of teaching in higher education”, HEA (2009a) This aim has two associated strategic objectives:

**Objective 1:** Celebrate good teaching through national initiatives

**Objective 2:** Encourage the recognition and reward of teaching at institutional level

Given the links between scholarship, recognition and reward and raising the status of learning and teaching, and the Academy’s interest in these areas, I was delighted when PESTLHE’s editorial team agreed to this special edition last year. I am also very grateful to all of the contributors who have submitted articles to this edition. Collectively, the papers show that there is a wide range of practice and development in the Scottish sector in this time. Recognition and reward tends to occur at the institutional level as there are currently no national teaching awards such as the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme, NTFS, HEA (2009b) which exists for staff in England and Northern Ireland and which also aims to raise the status of teaching.

Although there is no national teaching award scheme in Scotland, the Academy operates a UK-wide Professional Recognition Scheme, HEA (2009c) which has been designed to support the implementation of the sector-owned UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and supporting Learning in Higher Education, UKPSF, HEA (2009d). There are three categories of professional recognition:

**Associate** of the Higher Education Academy (AHEA)

**Fellow** of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA)

**Senior Fellow** of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA).

For the vast majority of academic staff, fellowship of the Academy is the conferred recognition status and can be achieved through either successful completion of an Academy-accredited course or by an individual, portfolio, route.

In addition, the Academy’s network of 24 Subject Centres provide a range of opportunities for recognition of teaching for Scottish-based staff at the discipline level. All of the Subject Centres provide funding with the aim of developing learning and teaching in their discipline areas, and ten currently run teaching award-type schemes to provide recognition of outstanding teaching. Several Subject Centres have specifically targeted their award/grant at colleagues from Scotland and Wales, the two UK countries who are not eligible to apply for NTFS and these initiatives have been set up in recognition of the differing policy context and funding arrangements in the various parts of the UK.

Although there is evidence that teaching is recognised and rewarded in various forms by institutions and through various national initiatives, there is still a very significant gulf between the extent to which staff think good teaching should be recognised and

rewarded and the extent to which they think it is, as revealed by a recent extensive UK-wide survey of staff views by the Academy. Possibly the greatest tension is between research and teaching and the relative weighting between the two in criteria for reward, recognition and promotion of staff in our institutions.

At the Higher Education Academy's Scottish Subscribers Meeting in May last year, HEA (2009e), there was a debate where the motion was: : "*This house believes that teaching and research should be recognised equally as criteria for reward, recognition and promotion*". It would be fair to say that the audience were predominantly from learning and teaching-focussed roles in institutions (including Vice Principals, Educational Developers and academic staff). Perhaps it was unsurprising then that the motion was carried by a very large majority of 24 for and 5 against. I wonder if the result would have been the same if we had had more colleagues from research-focussed roles?

But then, from a moral perspective it is quite hard to argue against this motion, isn't it? Tomorrow's researchers are today's undergraduates; teaching provides the foundations and building blocks to allow the creation of new knowledge as well as supporting society and the economy, directly and indirectly. Research and teaching go hand in hand and are not mutually independent; however, the cultures of these two academic pursuits in our institutions are quite different. Perhaps mention at this point of the institutional findings reports from the Enhancement theme could be made. Learning and teaching innovation, particularly in Scotland, is founded on an inclusive, enhancement-led approach where there is an aspiration for uniformly high quality whereas research is characterised by competitive-type drivers, research income and outputs such as papers etc dominate the RAE and collaboration tends to occur only where it is mutually beneficial to all parties. Pedagogic research could be seen as bridging the gap but the reality is that it is seen by many academics and certainly deans/ heads of department as the 'poor cousin' and almost inferior to subject-based research.

There is plenty of debate to be had and a journey to be travelled by the sector in this area to resolve some of these tensions and issues. I hope that the papers in this special edition will provide you with plenty stimulus and provoke thought and reflection on what is undoubtedly an important, if not slightly contentious, area.

All authors were invited to submit papers to this special edition reviewed by the editorial board. We start with two papers, one from Bamber and the second from MacKenzie and Robertson that give us a broad over view of the area. Bamber considers whether generic continuing professional development (CPD) frameworks are appropriate for academic activities, and contributes to the debate on reward and recognition for teaching. MacKenzie and Robertson go on to explore the extent and nature of teaching excellence awards within the Scottish Higher Education sector. Following on from this there are three case-studies of practice. The first from Nimmo and Littlejohn looks at an approach to focusing on strategic change across a single institution when considering new approaches to transformational change in learning and teaching. In the Benzie's paper the development and achievements of the Edinburgh Napier Teaching Fellowship Scheme and its role in facilitating good outcomes for the university through the opportunities provided to its staff are described. Finally, Matthew explores the development of the University Teacher career route at the University of Glasgow.

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## **References**

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Higher Education Academy (2009d) UK professional Standards Framework, Retrieved 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009 from <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/professional/ProfessionalStandardsFramework.pdf>