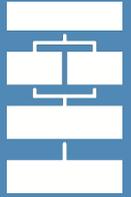


Improving University Reward for Teaching

A Roadmap for Change



Dr Ruth Graham

May 2019

This report was commissioned by

4TU. CENTRE FOR
ENGINEERING EDUCATION

We are particularly grateful to the academics and university leaders who contributed so generously to the study by giving their time and sharing their experiences, knowledge and expertise.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the Royal Academy of Engineering, in the UK, for their ongoing support of this work.

Introduction

Universities across the world are aware that their institutional support and reward systems do not adequately recognise academic contributions to teaching and learning. As a result, many are planning far-reaching changes to appointment, promotion and/or professional development systems. There is no doubt that systemic changes are challenging to design and deliver – and there is much to be learnt from universities that have already navigated the reform process.

Aimed at universities considering making changes to the way they recognise and reward teaching achievement, the Roadmap for Change is designed to help institutions avoid the pitfalls often associated with such reforms and to optimise the chances of a successful and sustainable change.

The Roadmap offers insight into **how** the process of reform might be planned and implemented. It draws on the experiences of universities that have engaged in changing institutional support and reward systems for teaching achievement, and is informed by in-depth interviews with individuals who played a key role in designing and delivering institutional reform at these universities. Based on these expert views, the Roadmap identifies strategies associated with successful changes to university systems for recognising and rewarding teaching.

As a resource for universities considering changes in how they reward teaching achievement, the Roadmap is designed to be used selectively and adapted to fit with the university's institutional vision and contexts. It builds on the *Career Framework for University Teaching*¹ project, which has developed a structured pathway for academic career progression on the basis of achievement in teaching and learning.

The Roadmap addresses three questions in turn:

What are the key steps in the process of change?

Section A: pages 3–10

What major challenges are faced?

Section B: pages 11–12

What strategies are associated with success?

Section C: pages 13–15

Terminology

It should be noted that the terminology used throughout this document is in line with that used by the partner *Career Framework for University Teaching*¹ project. As such:

faculty: a disciplinary-based, teaching-active member of academic staff;

teaching: all activities relating to teaching and learning at universities. For example, it includes: teaching students; curriculum development; pedagogical research in higher education; and the development of university educational policy/strategy;

framework: the career pathways, promotion criteria and/or methods for evaluating faculty performance (including teaching achievement) adopted by a university.

¹ Career Framework for University Teaching (<http://www.teachingframework.com>)

The evidence-base for the Roadmap

The global academic network associated with the *Career Framework for University Teaching*¹ project was used to identify institutions that had embarked on systemic change in how teaching achievement was recognised, evaluated and rewarded. The changes typically involved one or more of the following:

- reform to or introduction of a **dedicated education-focused career pathway**; for most institutions, this new pathway extended to the professorial level;
- a root-and-branch reform of **all university career pathways**, with new criteria developed for all academic activities (research, enterprise, university 'service', etc.) and not just for teaching;
- reform to **how teaching achievement is defined and evaluated** in all career pathways, such as raising the minimum 'threshold' of teaching achievement required for advancement.

Interviews were sought with individuals who had played a critical role in driving the change process at these institutions. Most were working-group leaders and/or university Vice-Presidents that were tasked with delivering the reform; a smaller number were 'champions' who played a key role in the design or delivery of the new framework. Although the views of these change leaders may not be representative of all university faculty, it was clear from the interviews that their perspectives were informed by wider engagement with the university community, including an appreciation of widely held concerns.

In all, 27 interviews were conducted at 17 universities from across 11 countries. Interviewees provided feedback in a personal capacity and on the basis of anonymity. Case studies from named institutions are also included in the Roadmap; these were each checked and agreed by the university in question.

Interviewees were first asked to describe the reasons why the university decided to make the change. The major drivers fell into one or more of three categories:

- **"a recognition that our policies were no longer in line with our priorities"**, often in response to a strategic institutional review: *"the [existing reward] systems did not sit easily with the new university strategy – to our vision for having a global reach – especially in the area of education"*;
- **the need to clarify appointment and promotion criteria with respect to teaching**, to clarify both what constitutes teaching achievement and how such achievement could best be evidenced;
- **the desire to improve the culture and status of teaching**, driven by a recognition that the existing institutional cultures and reward systems were *"heavily weighted towards research"*, with teaching activities and those in teaching-focused roles often accorded lower status.

Interviewees were then asked whether or not they considered the reform process to have been successful in meeting its core objects. Based on their assessment, the Roadmap refers to changes as 'successful changes' and 'unsuccessful changes'. In all cases, the interviewees provided evidence to support their assessment. Those identifying 'successful changes' at their university described numerous indicators of success. They noted, for example, that *"the types of people that we hoped are getting promoted"* and that new generations of faculty were starting to rise to leadership positions in the university on the basis of teaching achievement. In turn, all interviewees who considered the changes to be 'unsuccessful' described insurmountable problems, such as abandonment of the plans for change prior to their launch or a failure to implement the written policies in practice following their launch.

What are the key steps in the process of change?

All interviewees were asked to identify the key steps taken by their university in the process of change. Although no two change processes were the same, a set of common steps emerged amongst the institutions that have driven a successful change.

The seven steps are summarised below and are described in more detail in the sub-sections that follow. The sub-sections also note the differences in approach typically taken by institutions which were understood to have implemented an unsuccessful change. Some universities – both those that delivered successful, and unsuccessful changes – piloted a version of their framework before its launch, typically connected with **Step 5** of the process: the community-wide consultation and iterative improvement to the framework. However, as no clear relationship was apparent between conducting such a pilot and the success of the change, this activity has not been included in the steps summarised below.

The time taken from initiation of the change process to the implementation of the new framework varied considerably, ranging from one year to four-and-a-half years. However, for almost all successful changes, the most time-consuming stage in the process was **Step 5**: the community-wide consultation and iterative improvement to the framework. It should also be noted that some steps were undertaken concurrently.

- 1 **Evidence gathering and diagnostic**
Universities engaged in early and extensive evidence-gathering to assess the status quo and identify the critical priorities for change.
- 2 **University statement of intent**
Universities sent a clear message to the academic community, signalling their commitment to reform, and emphasising the academic-led nature of the upcoming reform process.
- 3 **Consultation with governing bodies**
Where changes required approval from a governing or approval body – such as the academic council or university union – early conversations were opened with these groups.
- 4 **Developing a draft framework**
An initial ‘first draft’ of the new career guidelines and promotion criteria was often developed by a working group comprising a cross-section of the academic community.
- 5 **Consultation and iterative improvement**
Universities engaged in an extensive consultative process with major stakeholder groups affected by the reform, and used the feedback to iteratively improve the draft framework.
- 6 **Building engagement**
With an agreed framework in place, the next step was to strengthen community engagement with the new policies and the educational vision that underpinned them.
- 7 **Launching the framework**
In preparation for, and following its launch, universities sought to align institutional policies, processes and practices with the vision and expectations embedded in the new framework.

Step 1 Evidence gathering and diagnostic

Successful reform usually began with a far-reaching appraisal and review of the university's existing policies, perceptions and practices with respect to teaching and how these academic activities were rewarded at the institution. Interview feedback suggested that this early evidence-gathering both allowed the university to put forward an evidence-based case for change and facilitated robust *"data-driven decision making"* throughout the reform process. In the words of one change leader, these data allowed the university to *"understand what we were fixing, a sense of what staff wanted to change"*.

The evidence gathered varied considerably between institutions. However, it typically covered one or more of the following areas:

- **evaluating existing university policies:** unpicking the values and assumptions implicit in existing institutional systems of appointment, promotion and professional development, as well as identifying the conflicts, gaps and targets for change. Some institutions also reviewed the measures of faculty teaching achievement that were collected and supported by the university.
- **capturing perceptions of the academic community:** capturing views of the institutional culture and status of teaching, and how this is influenced by the university's existing reward and recognition processes. Feedback was typically gathered via online focus groups, although some universities also used online surveys (see **CASE STUDY 1**). Particular attention was often focused on groups that would be potential appointment/promotion candidates under the new or reformed career pathways, to ensure that the changes were appropriately informed by their experiences, concerns and aspirations. Some change leaders noted that they *"spent a lot of time distinguishing fact from mythology"* when evaluating academics' feedback: *"understanding the perceptions, but also seeing where there are misconceptions about what is happening and why"*.
- **reviewing faculty practices in teaching:** evaluating existing practices and achievements of faculty with respect to teaching. Examples described by change leaders included evaluations of: (i) the breadth and quality of teaching activities undertaken by university faculty, with a view to identifying potential candidates for education-focused career pathways (see **CASE STUDY 2** for an example); and (ii) the number and success rates of faculty applying for promotion at the university over the past five years where teaching achievement comprised a significant portion of their case.

It is interesting to note that the majority of reform efforts identified by interviewees as being unsuccessful did not include this initial evidence-gathering step in their reform process.

CASE STUDY 1: Teaching Cultures Survey

During the 2018/19 academic year, the *Career Framework for University Teaching*¹ project launched the Teaching Cultures Survey, a multi-year, cross-institutional survey to capture and track the culture and status of teaching amongst the academic community. Thirteen universities, from across eight countries, have already participated in the survey, most of which have implemented, or plan to

implement, new systems for the reward and recognition of teaching achievement. For participating universities, the survey outcomes will turn a spotlight on the strengths and weaknesses of their institutional teaching culture as compared to global peer institutions, and will allow them to track changes over time. Further details of this survey are available at www.teachingcultures.com.



CASE STUDY 2: (anon) Evaluating the profile of the academic community

For one university that successfully changed its recognition and reward systems, the decision to undertake systemic reform was triggered by a major drive to build its global reputation and impact. The first step in this process was a diagnostic evaluation of the university's academic staff community. Information was gathered on the performance of each faculty member with respect to both research and education in terms of quality and quantity. The data included citations and high-impact publications (in the research domain) and student evaluation scores and class sizes (in the education domain). For each faculty member, the outcomes were recorded in a three-by-three grid, showing research performance on one axis and educational performance on the other.

The data allowed the university to learn more about the profile and mix of its academic population and paved the way to defining differentiated career pathways that would allow faculty members, should they wish, to build upon their particular strengths. In the words of one university leader, the data *"helped to convince people that not all [faculty] were 'all-rounders', with good performance in both research and education ... we were able to prove that there*

were people right across the matrix". The evidence was also used to build a business case to demonstrate that allowing faculty, should they wish, to focus on their areas of strength would provide a net benefit to the university, both in financial terms and in terms of quality of outcomes. The university has since adopted a much more flexible career ladder, which, for example, supports specialisation in teaching, but also allows faculty to move between career pathways over the course of their career, in line with their changing interests and areas of expertise.



Step 2 University statement of intent

At an early stage in the reform process, universities instituting successful changes issued a clear statement of intent to their academic communities of their plans for change to institutional reward and recognition systems. This was designed to ensure that the change process was, in the words of one university leader, *"open and not hidden away"*. This widely-disseminated message from the university leadership typically emphasised three themes:

- **why the university wanted to make a change:** outlining the factors driving reform and the scope of the university's vision for change, often drawing upon the evidence gathered in [Step 1](#);
- **how the change would be designed and delivered:** defining the process by which the new reward and recognition systems would be designed and delivered, including details of when faculty would be given the opportunity to offer feedback;
- **who would be consulted in the development of the new framework:** emphasising the consultative nature of the change process, from initial design to implementation, which would be guided by the priorities, experiences and concerns of the university's academic community.

Interviewees noted that this early university statement of intent was a mechanism both to *"socialise the idea of change"* across the academic community, and to signal the university leadership's unequivocal commitment to and engagement with the reform process.



Step 3 Consultation with governing bodies

Where changes to institutional reward and recognition systems required approval from university governing and approval bodies – such as academic council, faculty senate, student liaison bodies, university staff associations/unions or external accreditation bodies – early conversations were held with these groups. These consultations sought views on the proposed changes, including concerns and suggested revisions, and explored the extent to which the plans for reform would be supported. The discussions continued throughout the reform process. As one change leader noted, “*there is no point starting doing this if it’s not going to be something that the faculty union can support*”. Where approval from such a governing/approval body was needed, particular care was taken to ensure that key milestones associated with **Step 4** and **Step 5** of the process – the development of the draft framework and cross-community consultation – were scheduled to coincide with the planned meeting dates for this approval body in order to minimise delays in the process.



Step 4 Developing a draft framework

Before embarking on wider consultation and co-design, universities undertaking successful reforms often assembled a working group to develop “*an initial first draft of what the new framework might look like*”. Bringing together a range of well-respected stakeholders from across the university, this group typically drew upon some or all of these evidence sources to inform the design of the draft framework:

- the outcomes from the diagnostic stage (**Step 1**) and an articulation of the major constraints imposed by the university’s existing reward and recognition systems;
- an evaluation of alternative approaches to rewarding teaching achievement proposed elsewhere: in the literature, by peer institutions and through broader university consortia (such as the *Universitas21* group² or the *Career Framework for University Teaching*¹ consortium);
- a review of “*what was expected of us by government*”, for example via national standards.

Informed by this review of evidence, many change leaders noted that the working group began to reframe how teaching achievement was viewed and defined: “*we moved from thinking about people’s ‘activities’ in teaching, to thinking about their ‘impact’ in teaching*”. Some also suggested that the group’s deliberations led them to conclude that the recognition and reward of teaching should not be changed in isolation: if the new institutional reward systems were to be consistent, transparent and reflective of the breadth of contributions made by faculty, the working group must “*look across the board at everything that we as academics do and what we should be doing*”. As a result, the scope of the change effort often widened from one concerned only with education-focused faculty or faculty teaching achievements, to one that considered all professional activities across the entire academic community.

The development of the draft framework was often undertaken rapidly, typically over a few months, to enable time to be preserved for **Step 5**: consultation and iterative improvement.

² Teaching Indicators Framework, Universitas21 (<https://universitas21.com/network/u21-open-resources-and-publications/teaching-indicators-framework>)



Step 5 Consultation and iterative improvement

Interviewees consistently pointed to the community-wide consultation and iterative improvement of the framework as the single most important step in the process of reform. As one noted, *“if you are to have any chance of getting the plane off the ground, you need to get out there ... talk to people one-to-one, listen to all voices, listen to the concerns that people have and address them”*.

Ranging in duration from a few weeks to three-and-a-half years, the breadth and scale of the consultation and co-design stage varied considerably between institutions. The key factor appeared to be the type of change being undertaken: where the change was confined to the education-focused career pathway, this step was more rapid, with consultations predominantly involving faculty with existing interests in teaching and learning. Where all academic pathways and faculty members were affected by the planned reforms, the consultation process was much longer and incorporated multiple opportunities for stakeholder review and feedback.

Regardless of its scale and focus, however, this step typically brought together three components:

- **Identifying “who the change will affect and who needs to be consulted”:** groups included faculty (from a range of disciplines, levels of seniority, and levels of engagement with teaching), human resources, student leaders, trade unions and groups with remits related to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- **Community-wide consultations:** these involved a sequence of formal and informal opportunities for stakeholders to review and offer feedback on the draft framework. Feedback was used to iteratively refine the framework, adding detail and context to the documentation where needed. As one interviewee noted: *“it was repeated contact with people in the Faculties – a lot of talking ... It made us tighten our ideas – throw sticks and stones at the [draft framework] to see if we could break it”*. Many universities offered a range of different fora for such feedback, including one-to-one discussions, focus group sessions, public meetings and retreats, with all opportunities well-publicised across the community. Some structured these sessions around hypothetical ‘scenarios’ as a mechanism to capture faculty’s perspectives and priorities (see **CASE STUDY 3**).
- **Agreement and sign-off of the updated framework:** involving *“opening the updated framework up, for all to see”* as part of a public consultation, typically via an open meeting and/or online consultation. Particular emphasis was placed on the ways in which the framework had been altered in response to community feedback. With informal agreement to proceed, the updated framework was then submitted to university governing bodies (where required) for approval.

CASE STUDY 4 outlines key steps in the ‘consultation and iterative improvement’ step in the change process successfully delivered at University College London.

With an agreed framework in place, a number of universities sought to validate, or *“road-test”* the approach during the promotion round that preceded the framework’s launch. For example, some asked promotion candidates and/or members of the promotion board to *“give feedback on how well the new [framework] would have worked for them... to see if it is giving us the types of results we want”*. It should be noted that, even by the end of **Step 5**, most universities engaged in successful reforms did not consider the framework to be *“fixed in stone”*. Instead, most anticipated that it would continue to evolve throughout and beyond the implementation process. In the words of one university leader, *“even with the best amount of planning and consultation, you don’t build something perfectly from a theoretical perspective. You have to do it for a year or two to understand where the gaps and the pain points are”*.



Step 5 Case studies

A

SECTION A: What are the key steps in the process of change?

CASE STUDY 3: (Olin College of Engineering, US) – Faculty co-design process

In 2014, Olin College of Engineering, based in the US, rolled out a new framework for faculty reappointment and promotion. The College adopted a co-design model – drawing on contributions from across the faculty community – to develop this new framework, in a process that was described as “*working from the abstract to the concrete*”. Faculty were first asked to mark their priorities for the new framework against six sets of axes, with each axis offering a range of practices between two extremes, such as “*continuous faculty assessment*” at one end, and “*after-the-fact faculty assessment*” at the other. The

values and priorities identified by faculty were then used to develop “*three very different ideas of what the promotion and reappointment process might look like ... we said that we are not necessarily going to use any of these systems, but we wanted [faculty] to react to them ... The intent was to map out a decision space in a way that facilitates further iteration and refinement*”. Faculty and administration responses to these hypothetical models – and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each one – were used iteratively to build upon and agree the College’s new promotion and reappointment framework.

CASE STUDY 4: (University College London, UK) – Community-wide consultation

In 2018, University College London (UCL) launched a new career framework across all of its academic pathways. A major driver for change was to improve how teaching achievement was recognised and rewarded at the university. The change process started with a ‘diagnostic’ phase, which, drawing on survey and focus group evidence from across the academic community, examined the strengths and weaknesses of the existing career frameworks. Informed by this evidence and a snapshot review of alternative models under consideration at other universities, a small working group (comprising the university Vice Provost for Education and representatives from human resources and the academic population) developed “*a rough draft*” of a new academic career framework for UCL.

What followed was an iterative process of cross-community consultation and incremental co-design that spanned almost three years (from 2014 to 2017). Early discussions about the proposed plans for change were first held with the university regulatory body (the Academic Board), equalities groups and trade unions, to identify any specific concerns that might arise. The university then engaged in a far-reaching consultation process across its academic community. This included one-to-one conversations with department heads, a re-engagement with the focus groups consulted in the diagnostic phase, and town-hall

meetings where faculty were invited to submit comments under ‘track-changes’ to an online version of the draft framework. Through this process, it became clear that one academic group had particular concerns about the proposals for change: those who had attained the academic title of ‘Reader’ at UCL, based primarily on their contributions to research. As one change leader noted: “*they were concerned about us dropping our standards, that we would be watering down the research level ... we addressed their concerns by bringing them on board, having them participate in the process and helping us to revise the proposals*”. Throughout the consultation process, incremental revisions and clarifications were being made to the draft framework prior to its finalisation and approval by the Academic Board in early 2017.

The framework was launched in the 2017/18 academic year. Interviewees suggested that the framework opened up a range of new opportunities for faculty impact – both inside and outside the university – to be recognised. They noted, in particular, that the improved recognition of educational leadership had “*unblocked the glass ceiling for many female academics*”: the 2017/18 academic promotions round was the overwhelming reason for the proportion of female UCL professors increasing from 28% to 31%.

Step 6 Building engagement

With an approved framework in place, the next step in the process of successful change was to build community engagement around the new policies and the educational vision underpinning them. In this context, change leaders noted the importance of “*getting the conditions right for change*” through improving the institutional culture of celebrating and supporting teaching achievement before the implementation of any new policies. In many cases, the university mobilised carefully-selected ‘champions’ from amongst its most respected educational innovators and leaders to build confidence in the new framework and to nurture new communities with a commitment to innovation and excellence in teaching and learning. Activities typically focused on areas such as:

- **articulation of what the new framework means in practice to the individual:** engaging one-to-one with faculty members most likely to be affected by the new framework to articulate “*what impact the changes will have at the individual level – how this will affect people personally*”;
- **nurturing new communities of practice around teaching and learning:** establishing inclusive faculty communities across different disciplines and levels of seniority, united by a shared commitment to improving teaching and learning at the university and often empowered by new mechanisms to influence institutional policies and practice in this area;
- **clear statement of institutional commitment to change:** sending out repeated messages from university leadership that underlined their knowledge of the new framework, the factors that had shaped its design, and their unequivocal commitment to its successful implementation.

In many cases, such community engagement extended throughout and beyond the delivery of the new framework. One university that invested significantly in community engagement as part of the introduction of the new education-focused career pathway was UNSW Sydney (**CASE STUDY 5**).

Some interviewees also noted the benefit of collaborating with a wider group of universities embarking on similar changes. As one change leader noted, “*it is extremely helpful for us to say that others are doing these changes too. To say that we are not acting alone*”.

CASE STUDY 5: (UNSW Sydney) - Building new communities of practice

In preparation for the launch of its new education-focused (EF) academic career pathway, the University of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney) employed two major mechanisms to build community engagement.

Firstly, the university appointed a group of highly respected champions to engage with Heads of School and faculty on a one-to-one basis. These discussions focused on “*what the big picture means for the individual*” and “*what it would look like for me*”, exploring the opportunities for individuals to advance their careers under the EF pathway and the support that would be available for them to do so. The champions themselves were understood to embody the qualities of the next generation of educational leaders at the university, and to exemplify the accomplishments of a member of the UNSW community holding a senior EF post.

Secondly, the university established clearly defined routes into and out of the new EF roles. It called for an ‘expression of interest’ for UNSW faculty interested in joining the EF pathway, allowing faculty to nominate the time period for which they wished to join and “*offering a clear pathway to how they might move back*” should they wish. All UNSW faculty who were appointed as EF after the first EF round were then invited to a three-day off-campus retreat, where they were tasked with shaping future institutional policies and priorities in teaching and learning. As one UNSW change leader noted, “*these people had never met before. By the end of the three days, they had formed communities of practice that were genuinely cross-disciplinary*”.



Step 7 Launching the framework

In the months preceding and following the launch of the new framework, successful universities typically engaged in activities to aid its implementation and further its reach. Examples include:

- **offering new professional development opportunities:** rolling out one-off activities to support the first promotion round under the new framework (for example for line managers, prospective promotion candidates or members of the university promotion committee) and reforming existing professional development programmes to align with the new framework (such as orientation sessions for new faculty or workshops on how to evidence teaching achievement);
- **developing new support materials:** in recognition that the documentation describing the new framework was often “*overwhelmingly long*” and “*difficult to relate to the career of an ordinary academic*”, universities often devoted significant time and effort in creating concise and accessible guidance that described how the framework would be applied in practice;
- **aligning other institutional policies and practices with the new framework:** such as: (i) re-framing the annual appraisal process, to ensure that individual faculty development in teaching and learning supports advancement via the framework; (ii) revising selection criteria for external referees used in appointment/promotion cases, in order to include those who can speak to the candidate’s teaching contribution; and (iii) reviewing the composition of the university promotions committee and the expertise that it draws upon, to ensure that this group was equipped to critically review the teaching and learning components of cases for appointment and promotion (see **CASE STUDY 6**).

It is interesting to note that, when asked what they would do differently if they were to go through the process of change again, many change leaders suggested that they would devote significantly more time and thought to at least one of the above three activities. Some described how they sought to “*correct what we should have done earlier*” with respect to practices, professional development and supporting materials in the months and years after the launch of the new framework. In many cases, these changes were implemented alongside incremental adjustments to the framework. Such adjustments were typically informed by formal and informal evaluations of the efficacy and impact of the newly implemented framework, drawing on evidence such as: (i) feedback from the academic community, department heads and/or promotion committee members; and (ii) a review of the profile of successful and unsuccessful candidates for promotion. Implementation was also supported by continued clear statements from university leadership of their commitment to the change process.

CASE STUDY 6: (Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden)–Engaging external expertise

Since the mid-1990s, Chalmers University of Technology has engaged a ‘pedagogical expert’ from within the university’s academic community to provide an independent evaluation of the teaching portfolios of all candidates under consideration for promotion. Since 2005, as part of a wider shift to centralise the university’s appointment and promotion systems, this ‘pedagogical expert’ has been recruited from outside the university. As one university leader noted, “*the mere fact that we have this system of external review in place has had an impact*” on the approach

of candidates, by making them “*sharpen their case*”, and also on the promotion committee, by “*increasing the threshold level for [acceptable] teaching*”. The identification and selection of external pedagogical experts has been facilitated by a national scheme, organised by the Swedish Network for Educational Development in Higher Education since 2010, to train a network of academics and educational developers to offer external educational peer review at universities across the country.



What major challenges are faced?

All interviewees – including those who engaged in successful change – described a range of challenges faced by their university. Three types of challenges were most commonly faced:

- strongly voiced “push-back” from a core group of faculty;
- misalignment of the vision/policies and the practice;
- low participation in new career opportunities.

The scale and impact of the challenges varied considerably between universities, ranging from an unexpected issue *“that made us sit back and think”*, to a catastrophic problem that ultimately led to the abandonment of the new framework. The summaries below distil the experiences of universities that faced each of these challenges at some point during the design and implementation of a new framework.

1. Strongly-voiced “push-back” from a core group of faculty

Almost all interviewees – including those with experience of successful reforms – pointed to some degree of faculty resistance during the development and/or implementation of the new framework, particularly from faculty who *“felt that they and their concerns were being ignored”*. Resistance was often evident during *“the first public airing”* of the draft framework, when concerns were raised by members of the academic community about aspects of its design – such as faculty workload models – that had not yet been defined by the university.

Concerns were often triggered during one or both of the following circumstances:

1. during the introduction of **education-focused career opportunities**, concerns centred on a perception that *“the value of the promotion process was being diluted ... [that] education would become an easy [promotion] route that would devalue the professoriate”*. Concerns were often voiced most strongly by individuals who had secured promotion on the basis of their research achievements, and *“did not want to see people taking an easy way through”*.

2. during the introduction of **new systems for evaluating and/or recognising the teaching achievements** of all teaching-active academics. Concerns raised typically related to the objectivity of new assessment tools, the workload burden they would place on academics and/or the ways in which the data gathered might be used: *“this is just another level of compliance and it will be unmanageable”*. Some change leaders noted that such concerns were often exacerbated by sensitivities about *“other people passing judgement on your teaching, which can feel very personal”*. One recounted his experience of such a response: *“it became an emotional process, there was a lack of trust in the central administration ... There was a strong emotional dimension that was very close to the surface. People had been hurt a lot in the past through teaching evaluations and they felt they could be hurt even more by what was happening”*.

2. Misalignment of the vision/policies and the practice

Following the launch of a new framework, interviewees pointed to challenges relating to the translation of policies into practice. Three circumstances were repeatedly described, particularly by those with experience of unsuccessful changes:

1. **“nothing actually changed”**: the profile of candidates endorsed by department heads and/or granted appointment/promotion by promotion committees remained largely unchanged, despite the roll-out of fundamental reforms to the institutional reward system. So, for example, candidates who met the new criteria for promotion were not endorsed by department heads and/or found that their case for promotion was not supported by the promotion committee.
2. **misconceptions about the new framework**: line managers and/or promotion board members misinterpreted appointment/promotion criteria for new education-focused pathways, leading to “the wrong profile” of candidate being encouraged to apply for and/or be appointed to these career tracks. One change leader described the destructive impact of department heads signalling that the university’s underlying priority was to “clear poor researchers out of the research and teaching track and pile [new appointees to education-focused pathways] high with teaching”.
3. **candidates being ill-prepared to demonstrate teaching achievements**: faculty members struggled to provide clear and robust evidence of their teaching achievements within appointment/promotion cases, sometimes leading to the rejection of otherwise well-suited candidates. For example, one interviewee described some of the applications received to a recently reformed education-focused pathway: “candidates were including a long list of ‘all the things I have done’, but we were left asking ‘So what? What impact does this have on this institution?’”

3. Low take-up of new career opportunities

A third challenge, and one that was closely related to the second challenge, was the low take-up of the career opportunities opened up by the new framework. For example, few academics applied for appointment to new education-focused pathways or chose to take advantage of more flexible promotion criteria that allowed greater emphasis to be placed on teaching achievement. Interview feedback suggested that potential candidates for such new career opportunities were well

aware of the low status often afforded to education-focused career pathways, both at peer institutions and, historically, at their own. As a result, they struggled to “trust that the university has really changed”, with deep-seated scepticism that the new pathway would have status in the eyes of colleagues and senior managers, and be secure, adequately supported by the university, and provide genuine opportunities for innovation, leadership and future career advancement.

Each of the three challenges appeared to result from features relating to the context and process of change; all have issues of institutional trust at their core:

- the process of developing the new framework was insufficiently inclusive, consultative and clear in its goals, leading to a lack of trust in and engagement with the outcomes;
- an institutional culture that did not align with the new policies, leading to a lack of trust amongst faculty that the university will “deliver on its promises” with respect to the new framework.

These two issues are explored further in Section C.



What strategies are associated with success?

The evidence from change leaders pointed to a set of factors common to successful changes that were either absent, or much less evident in the unsuccessful changes. Two factors stood out in particular.

Firstly, for universities engaged in successful change, their academic community appeared more likely to be convinced that:

- the university was genuinely committed, and would remain committed, to recognising and rewarding faculty teaching achievement;
- a sound, evidence-informed case had been made for change;
- any changes made would respect academic autonomy and be sensitive to the existing workloads and priorities of faculty.

Secondly, potential candidates for education-focused career opportunities introduced under the new framework appeared more likely to be confident that (irrespective of changes in university leadership):

- genuine opportunities for both professional development and career advancement on the basis of teaching and learning would continue to be available at their university;
- education-focused pathways or roles would not become a 'second rate' career route, synonymous with excessive teaching loads and limited institutional support;
- line managers, department heads and promotion board members would consistently recognise, endorse and reward teaching achievements during faculty appointment and promotion.

These two 'success factors' were, in turn, underpinned by two trust-related issues. Success appeared to turn on:

1. the extent to which the **management of the reform process** – and the design and delivery of the new framework – was inclusive, consultative and clear in its goals, and therefore trusted by faculty;

2. the **institutional culture** with respect to teaching and learning, and the extent to which faculty 'trusted' that plans to improve the reward of teaching would be delivered in practice. In the words of one change leader: *"don't expect that changing the promotion criteria alone will do it. You have to do more than change the rules, you have to change hearts and minds as well"*.

These two issues are discussed in more detail overleaf. Interestingly, these are the same two issues that underlay the challenges faced by universities when making change (as discussed in Section B).

1. The management of the reform process

Three components of the management of the change process were strongly linked to success, as outlined in turn below.

“you can’t let the whole thing start to drift”

Maintaining momentum throughout the change process appeared to be critical to success. Extended delays during the design and development of a new framework often led to key academic groups disengaging from the process, or allowed time for changes in university leadership where “a whole new set of people came in that just didn’t get what we were trying to do”. Interviewees pointed to a range of factors that could result in such

problematic delays; for example, the delegation of responsibility for the design/delivery of the change to an individual who is “too low down the university food-chain”, resulting in a “very stop-start” reform process with frequent delays while agreement was sought from the university leadership for each major decision. A further example – when an agreed framework was translated into ‘legal’ regulatory text – is outlined in **CASE STUDY 7**.

“show what the big picture means for the individual”

The quality and accessibility of the information, guidance and support offered to individual faculty members also appeared to be strongly associated with successful implementation of a new framework. Most change leaders spoke about the importance of clarifying the impact of the new framework “on the ground”, for the individual faculty member: “how does it affect me – show what the big picture means for the individual in different disciplines”. Many noted, in particular, that careful thought needed

to be given to guidance material for candidates: “it needs to look attractive, be user friendly. It doesn’t sound important, but how it looks and how people relate to it in practice matters”. This point was made by the majority of those engaged in both successful and unsuccessful changes, with interviewees identifying the quality and accessibility of guidance material for candidates as a key weakness of their change process.

“be open and explicit about what is happening”

An open and transparent approach to the process of change was strongly linked to the subsequent acceptance of new frameworks by the academic community. A consistent feature of successful changes – and one that distinguished them from unsuccessful changes – was the extent to which institutional leaders sent a clear

signal across the academic community that there was to be a step change in the way that teaching was valued and rewarded at the institution, and explicitly articulated the process by which the reform would be designed and delivered: “... there should be no surprises. People need to know where they stand, know what is coming”.

CASE STUDY 7: (anon) Lack of momentum in the change process

One change leader with experience of unsuccessful reform pointed to the lack of sustained momentum as a critical factor that led to the ultimate abandonment of a new framework for evaluating and rewarding teaching achievement at the institution. Building upon a community-wide consultation process, and what was described as “good buy-in and backing for the change”, the text describing the new framework had been developed and agreed by representatives from across the academic community. The problems arose, however, following a six-month delay while the agreed text was translated into the formal university regulations by the in-house legal team. In the words of the interviewee:

“... then we had a six-month break, while we sent the proposal to the legal team to write the proposal into the regulations. When the regulations were published for

consultation, we were confident that this would be a walk in the park because we had consulted so thoroughly before. But when the consultation opened, all hell broke loose! ... [The problem appeared to be caused by the] six-month delay between the report [of the agreed framework] being finalised and the regulations coming. It made it very difficult for people to see the link between [the framework] we had written and the legal text. A single proposal might require multiple changes in the legal text, so people did not see the logic here ... People that had been part of the [development] process started to deny that they were part of the process, they forgot they were involved. They denied responsibility for the decisions, claiming that things had been ‘smuggled’ through ... So, we ended up going back to what we had before, back to the status quo”.

2. Alignment with the institutional culture

Interview feedback suggested that a set of interconnected institutional features played a critical role in nurturing an institutional culture of trust and support around teaching.

“executive sponsorship is critical”

The unequivocal support of university and disciplinary leaders was consistently identified as crucial to successful change: *“you need strong and clear support from the very top of the university and from the department-level where most of the faculty would pledge their allegiance to, if you like, where the ordinary faculty member would consider their home”*.

In particular, the close involvement of university leaders with the change process sent out a clear signal to faculty that they were listening and responding to the academic community concerns, instilling confidence that *“people at the top of the university would be aware if anything was not working as it should be [following the implementation of the framework] and they would do something about it”*.

“bring people with you and listen to everyone”

Open consultation was identified as integral to successful change. It was seen as essential that the *“community have a strong, active voice in the process, so that they feel that they own it, so it’s not perceived as something being done by the university to the staff”*. In the words of another interviewee, *“you can’t just impose a new system on people – it has to be an academic-led process”*. Many pointed, in particular, to the importance of building a dialogue *“across the whole academic community – not just those that are supportive but also those that have concerns. Respond to the concerns constructively – show them that you have listened and have taken their views on board”*. Three critical groups to be prioritised for consultation are:

- **potential candidates for new education-focused opportunities or pathways**, to explore the factors that would encourage or deter them from taking up the new opportunities;

- **groups that are likely to hold specific concerns about the reforms**, to identify and address their concerns. As one change leader from a university that abandoned its change effort noted, *“their voices will be heard eventually ... for us, it came at the end, in a very public way!”*;
- **department heads and Deans**, to ensure they are *“on board with what we are doing ... [as] they have a tremendous sway and influence on the tone and culture that is set in the departments ... if they do not understand the change, it matters, if they do not believe in the change, it matters”*.

“invest in the change”

Institutional investment was also associated with successful change: establishing systems and structures that nurture and support new cultures and opportunities in teaching and learning. Examples included:

- establishing new cross-institutional communities of practice in teaching and learning;
- establishing new seed-corn initiatives and grants to support innovation and research in teaching and learning;
- re-designing institutional processes (such as annual appraisals and professional development) to ensure they align with the vision and expectations embedded in the framework;
- ensuring that faculty can move between career pathways at different stages in their career.

The Career Framework for University Teaching



April 2018

Introduction

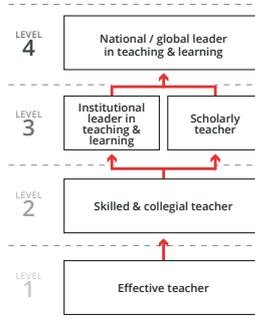


 This document is designed to be used in conjunction with www.teachingframework.com where full details of the Framework can be found

The Career Framework for University Teaching is designed to guide and support academic career progression on the basis of their contribution to teaching and learning. The Framework rests on the principle that all academics who teach – whether they be in an education-focused role or in a blended research/teaching role – should continue to strengthen the quality and impact of their teaching activities as they progress through their career. The Framework should be used alongside other mechanisms to evaluate and reward contributions academics make to their institution and discipline (such as research achievement) as appropriate to their role.

Offering both a structured pathway for academic career progression and an evidence base on which to demonstrate and evaluate teaching achievement, the Framework provides a template that universities can adapt to their career structures and progression points. It can be used to advance teaching achievement across the academic career, including appointment, professional development, appraisal and promotion.

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 achievement.



For each level of teaching achievement, the Framework addresses the following three questions:



what is the academic's **sphere of impact** in their teaching and learning activities?



what **promotion criteria** define the academic's achievements in teaching and learning?



what **forms of evidence** can be used to demonstrate the academic's teaching achievements?

Please note: the term 'teaching achievement' is used to denote an individual's contribution to and impact on teaching and learning at an institutional, national and global level, including contributions to educational research.

For more information about
the *Career Framework for University Teaching*, please see
www.teachingframework.com

