

# Professional Standards Framework

for teaching and supporting  
learning in higher education

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2023

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Endorsements

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# Purpose of the Professional Standards Framework:

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- Provides a benchmark for Professional Values, Core Knowledge and Areas of Activity that constitute higher education in local and global contexts.
- Demonstrates to all stakeholders the professionalism that colleagues and institutions bring to facilitating and supporting learning.
- Recognises the variety and quality of practice that facilitates and supports learning.
- Fosters critically evaluative, reflective and evidence-informed approaches to teaching and supporting learning in diverse academic and/or professional settings.
- Enables individuals who undertake a wide variety of roles to review their practice in facilitating and supporting learning, as a focus for continuing professional development.
- Enables institutions to support enhancement of practice in teaching and supporting learning, and the initial and continuing professional development of all relevant colleagues.
- Provides a structure through which individuals and institutions may gain formal recognition for high quality approaches that facilitate and support learning.

Individuals wishing to use this Framework to apply for Fellowship will need to refer to Advance HE guidance for applicants.

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# Structure of the Professional Standards Framework:

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The Framework comprises three interrelated and integrated components:

- **Three Critical Strands**  
each represent fundamental aspects of practice which are entwined in all aspects of the framework: Inclusion, Context and Effectiveness.
- **Three sets of Dimensions\***  
define the fifteen Professional Values, Core Knowledge and Areas of Activity which are integral to practice that enables and supports learning.
- **Four sets of Descriptors\***  
each present a standard against which individuals evidence their practice in relation to the Dimensions, selecting the Descriptor that best reflects their professional practice and the scope of their influence.

\* Each set of Dimensions and Descriptors has its own introductory statement which is integral to that component of the Framework.

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# Critical Strands

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The following critical strands thread through every aspect of the Framework.

## **Inclusion**

In every aspect of practice, commitment and action to support equity of opportunities for all learners are essential. Although the context of learning and an individual's scope of responsibilities and influence may vary, opportunities to enhance inclusion remain essential.

## **Context**

The context of learning plays a critical role in each individual's practice. Higher education contexts are highly varied and diverse. It is important to acknowledge and consider how best to select and apply approaches to support learning in each context.

## **Effectiveness**

Critical evaluation of practice is fundamental to effectiveness. This supports: identification of successful approaches and those requiring development; positive learner outcomes and more widely, the identification, enhancement and dissemination of high quality practice.

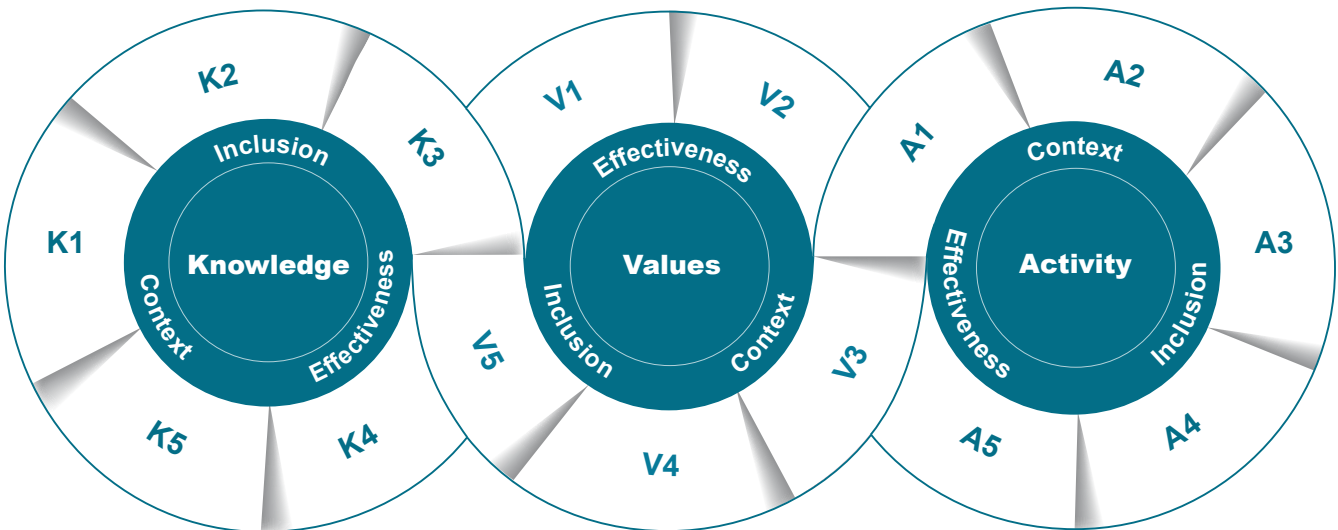
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# Dimensions

## What are Dimensions?

Dimensions are statements, arranged into three sets: **Professional Values**, **Core Knowledge** and **Areas of Activity**, which are integrated in practice.

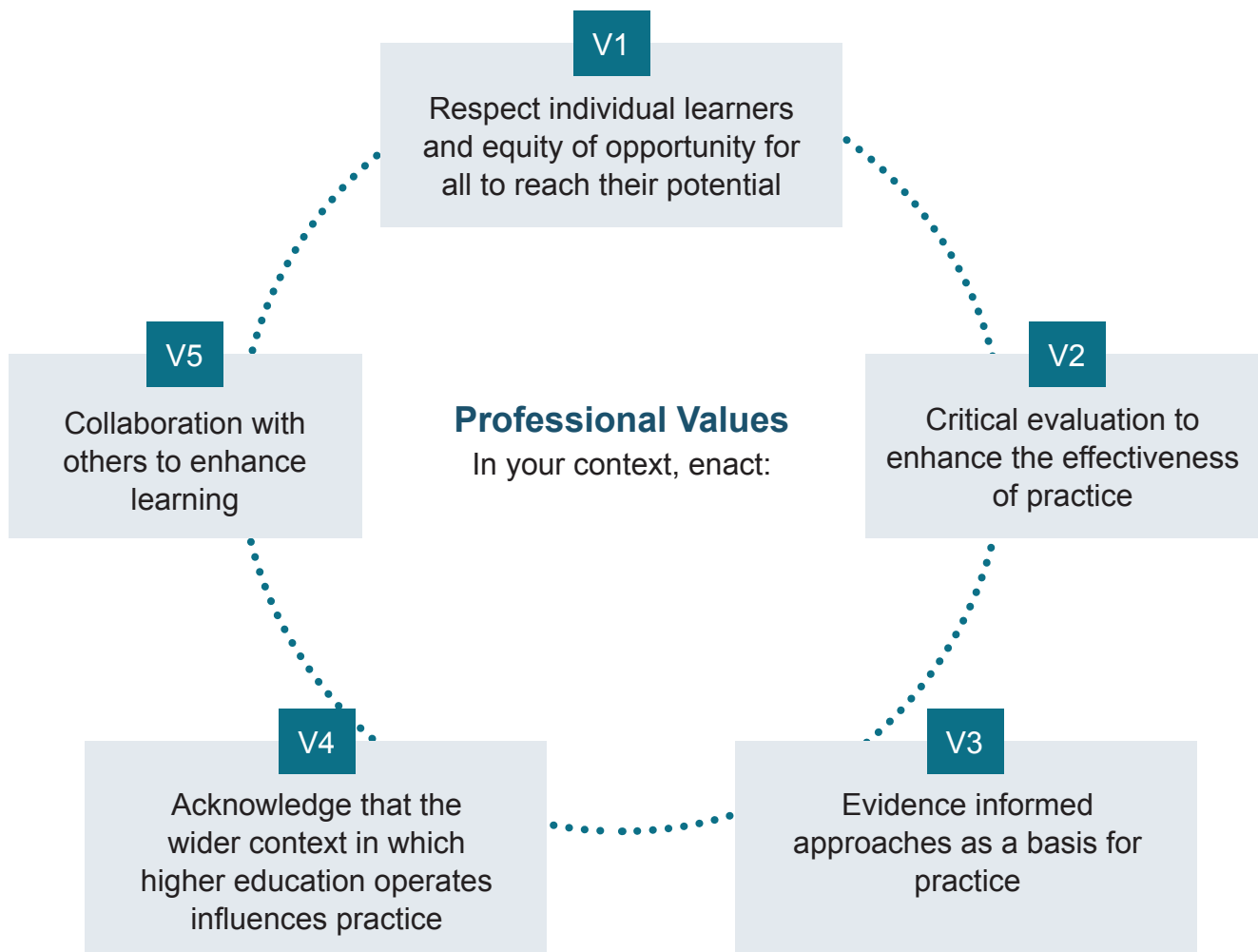
<p><b>Five Professional Values</b></p> <p>underpin all Core Knowledge and Areas of Activity. They act as the foundation for effective, inclusive practice to facilitate and support learning in higher education.</p>	<p><b>Five Core Knowledge</b></p> <p>informed by the Professional Values, represent the key areas of knowledge required to undertake the Areas of Activity, enabling effective facilitation and support of learning in higher education.</p>	<p><b>Five Areas of Activity</b></p> <p>informed by the Professional Values and Core Knowledge, show the critical activities that support delivery of effective and inclusive practice.</p>
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# Dimensions: Professional Values

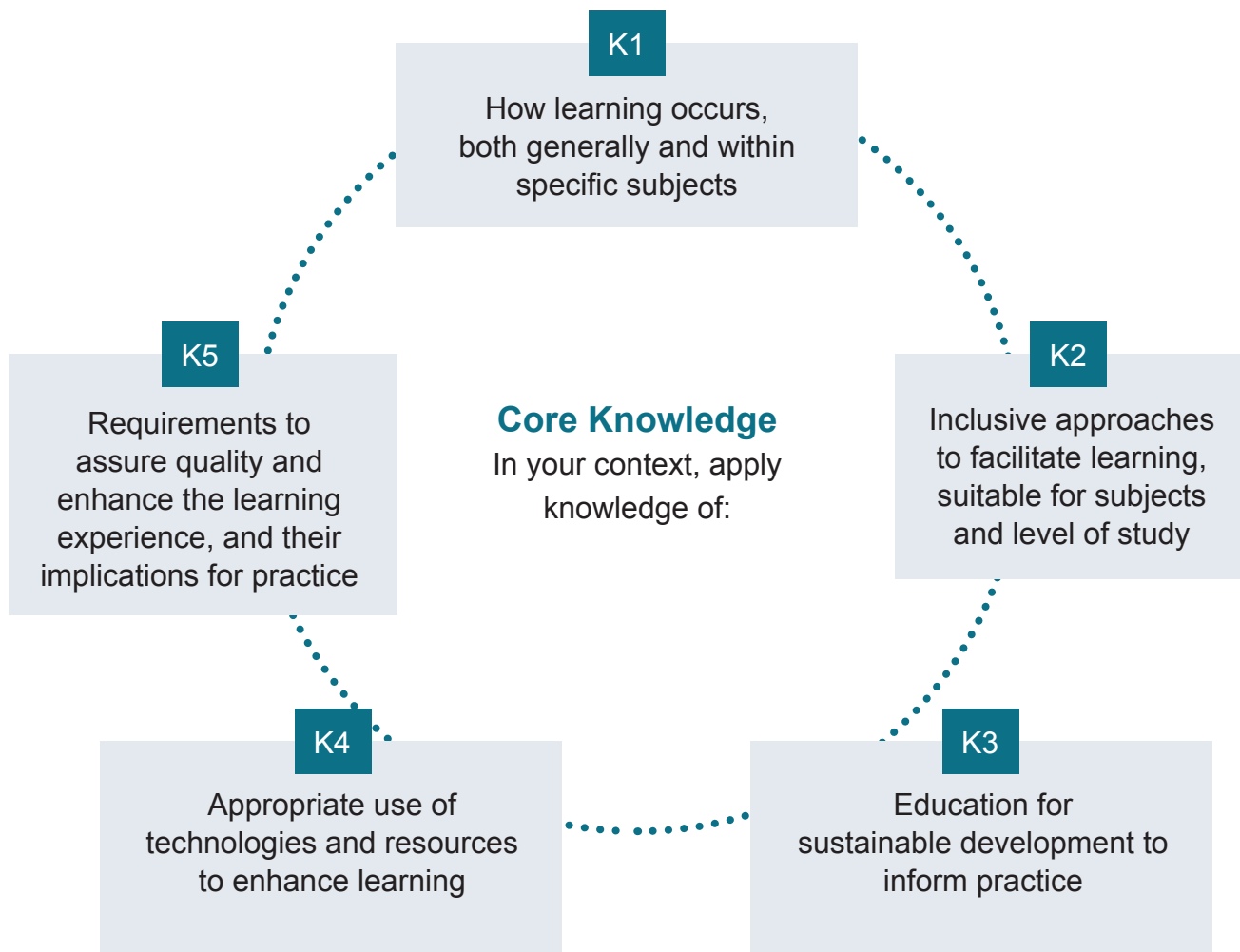
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# Dimensions: Core Knowledge

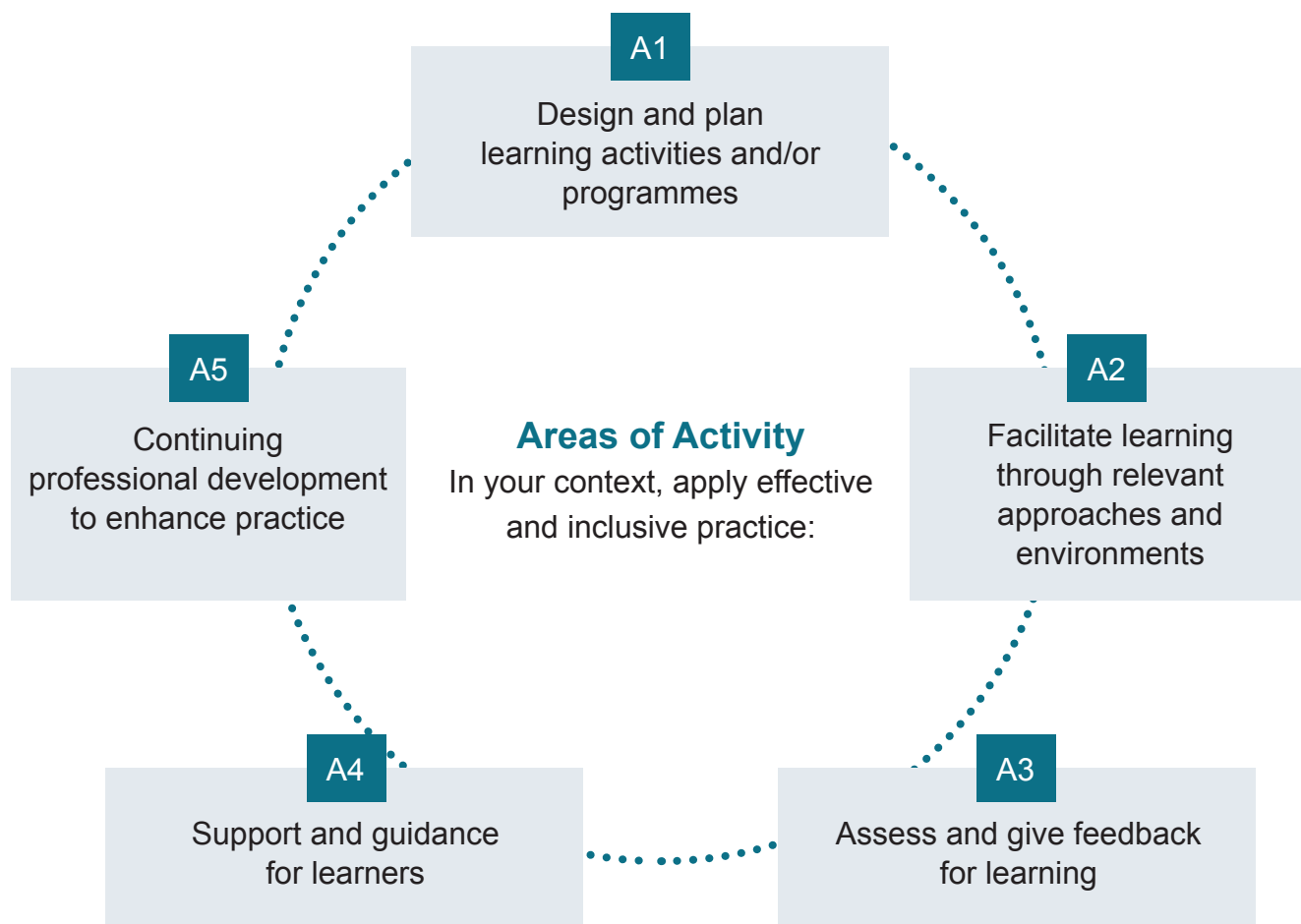
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# Dimensions: Areas of Activity

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# Descriptors

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## What are Descriptors?

The PSF Descriptors offer a set of criteria statements. These define the key characteristics of four broad categories of practice. Incorporating the Dimensions of the Framework, each Descriptor defines the extent of practice required to meet it, recognising the variety of practice and roles undertaken by professionals who teach and support learning.

- **Individuals**  
use the Descriptors to plan their development and to evidence their practice to achieve professional recognition.
- **Institutions**  
use the Descriptors as a basis for their internal continuing professional development and recognition programmes, to inform career/progression pathways and to support talent development.
- **Professional organisations**  
use the Descriptors as a basis for activities and recognition frameworks that support the professional development of individuals and institutions.

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## Descriptor 1

is suitable for individuals whose scope of practice with learners occurs within a specific set of Dimensions. Effectiveness of practice to support high quality learning is demonstrated in learners' outcomes. They are able to evidence:

D1.1	D1.2	D1.3
Commitment to relevant Professional Values, including at least V1 and V2	Application of appropriate Core Knowledge, including at least K1 and K2	Effective and inclusive practice in at least two of the five Areas of Activity

Descriptor 1 aligns with Advance HE recognition as Associate Fellow

## Descriptor 2

is suitable for individuals whose scope of practice with learners is broad, substantive, and involves all Dimensions. Effectiveness of practice to support high quality learning is demonstrated in learners' outcomes. They are able to evidence:

D2.1	D2.2	D2.3
Commitment to all five Professional Values	Application of all five Core Knowledge	Effective and inclusive practice in all five Areas of Activity

Descriptor 2 aligns with Advance HE recognition as Fellow

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### Descriptor 3

is suitable for individuals whose own practice provides a basis from which they lead and influence colleagues' practice in facilitating and supporting learning. Their practice is comprehensive and shows a sustained record of effectiveness. Effectiveness is demonstrated through individual practice and that of others, in support of high quality learning. They are able to evidence:

D3.1	D3.2	D3.3
Sustained leadership or influence on colleagues' practices in facilitating and supporting learning across applicable Dimensions	Sustained record of effective and inclusive practice across all Dimensions	Application of an evidence based and analytical approach to leadership, academic and/or professional practices

Descriptor 3 aligns with Advance HE recognition as Senior Fellow

### Descriptor 4

is suitable for highly experienced individuals whose practice involves a sustained record of impact in strategic leadership of high quality learning. Their sphere of influence is extensive. Effectiveness and impact are demonstrated through:

D4.1	D4.2	D4.3	D4.4
Sustained record of effective strategic leadership of practice across a range of Dimensions, with extensive influence: within, across or beyond an institution; or across a discipline	Development and implementation of effective and inclusive policy, procedures, initiatives or strategies, that have significantly enhanced practice and the learning experience	Application of an evidence based and analytical approach to leadership, academic and/or professional practices	Commitment to, and application of continuing professional development of own leadership, academic and/or other professional practices

Descriptor 4 aligns with Advance HE recognition as Principal Fellow

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# Relationship to Advance HE Accreditation

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Advance HE recognises the importance and value of the Professional Standards Framework (PSF) and aligns Fellowship categories with the PSF Descriptors as indicated. Advance HE accreditation provides a professional benchmarking of provision that reflects the best practice in the sector. Guidance and support is offered through the work of Advance HE to higher education institutions wishing to be accredited for their application and use of the PSF.

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