

GOLD D3 Senior Fellow -

Referee Guidance for writing a supporting statement

2026/2027

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1. Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to provide a supporting statement required to authenticate and endorse an application for Descriptor 3 Senior Fellowship through the Advance HE accredited Greenwich GOLD fellowship scheme. An application for Senior Fellowship requires **TWO** supporting statements; one of which must be provided by the Greenwich GOLD Mentor.

This guidance and the associated SFHEA PSF 2023 Supporting Statement Proforma (separate Word document) have been designed to help you structure your supporting statement to provide the information required by Advance HE, as explained below. The Supporting Statement Proforma is available on the GOLD website. Please read the proforma in conjunction with this referee guidance document before you complete your SFHEA supporting statement.

2. The function of the supporting statement

Please note that the referee statement supporting an application for Senior Fellowship is not the same as a job application or promotion reference. The award of Senior Fellowship is based on peer recognition of professional practice and as such you are being asked to verify and endorse this application as a valued peer who has expertise in teaching and learning in higher education (HE).

During the Senior Fellowship review process, both independent Supporting Statements will be used to confirm that the application presents a fair and accurate reflection of the applicant's higher education practice. Writing a supporting statement is to satisfy Advance HE requirements for all fellowship applications to authenticate the practice of the person submitting the application.

2.1 Requirements for referees

Two supporting statements are required for a D3 Senior Fellowship Application. To be eligible to provide a supporting statement you must:

- Have current experience of working in higher education
- Be familiar with the PSF 2023
- Have current first-hand knowledge of the candidate's professional practice

Having worked closely with the GOLD candidate, you should have first-hand knowledge of their HE professional practice and be in a position to verify and endorse their comprehensive understanding and effective practice. For Senior Fellow this needs to be in relation to their **leadership and/or influence of those who teach and/or support high-quality learning within their context.**

You should be able to confirm that the GOLD candidate has represented their practice

accurately and you will provide your opinion that they demonstrate the Descriptor 3 criteria of the Professional Standards Framework for teaching and/or supporting learning in higher education (PSF 2023).

The application for Senior Fellow is based on current and recent HE practice (usually within the last **3-5 years**). If you no longer work with the applicant, it is important that you are familiar with their recent practice. You are required in the Senior Fellow supporting statement proforma to indicate how long you have worked together.

Please note that the Supporting Statements for applications for Senior Fellowship should reflect professional relationships, i.e. not be from family members or based on personal friendships. The statement will be your independent and authentic account to authenticate and endorse the application.

First supporting statement

The first supporting statement must be provided by the approved GOLD mentor supporting the candidate. For further guidance about the GOLD mentor role, please read our GOLD D3 Senior Fellow – Mentor Handbook PSF 2023, which is available via our GOLD webpage.

Candidate requirements for D3 Senior Fellowship

The PSF 2023 sets out the **professional standards for higher education (HE)**. All the experience and evidence included in an application for Senior Fellowship **must** relate to leadership/influence of teaching and/or support for learning practice related to **higher education** provision, such as:

- Level 4 or above within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) England and Wales or equivalent;
- Level 7 or above within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) or equivalent;
- First cycle or above of the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA);
- Level 5 or above of the Australian Qualifications Framework or equivalent;
- Level 5 or above of the New Zealand Qualification Framework or equivalent;
- Other equivalent higher education frameworks;
- Activity focused on supporting learners within a Higher Education context, providing the learner(s) are enrolled on a Higher Education Qualification may also be considered as evidence equivalent to the higher education frameworks above;
- Delivery of some [non-accredited continuing professional development for](#) academic and learning support staff may also be considered as evidence equivalent to the higher education frameworks.

The PSF 2023 acknowledges the wide variety of local and global contexts in which higher education operates, and the diverse practices and roles that contribute to high-quality learning.

In defining what constitutes higher education teaching and learning within different national contexts in order to determine eligibility for fellowship, Advance HE uses **UK ENIC** (UK National Information Centre) for information about global education frameworks and qualifications. Programmes will be defined as HE for the purposes of staff teaching and supporting learning on the programme being eligible for fellowship if they are an integral part of a programme defined as higher education within the context of the country of study.

If the GOLD candidate is in a UK/TNE partner where they are leading/influencing/teaching UK levels 1 to 3 i.e. Further Education (FE), this is not appropriate in terms of applying for SFHEA. All evidence and experience mentioned in an application must relate to higher education (foundation degree/degree etc.) in the terms specified above by Advance HE.

3. The Professional Standards Framework 2023 (PSF 2023)

The Professional Standards Framework 2023 (PSF 2023) for teaching and supporting learning in higher education provides a comprehensive set of professional standards and guidelines for all those who are involved in teaching and supporting learning in higher education. The PSF 2023 can be used by individuals to plan their development and evidence their practice to achieve professional recognition, by institutions as a basis for initial and continuing professional development and recognition programmes, and at a national level to improve teaching quality and celebrate success.

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The Professional Standards Framework (PSF) 2023 consists of two components: **Descriptors** and **Dimensions**.

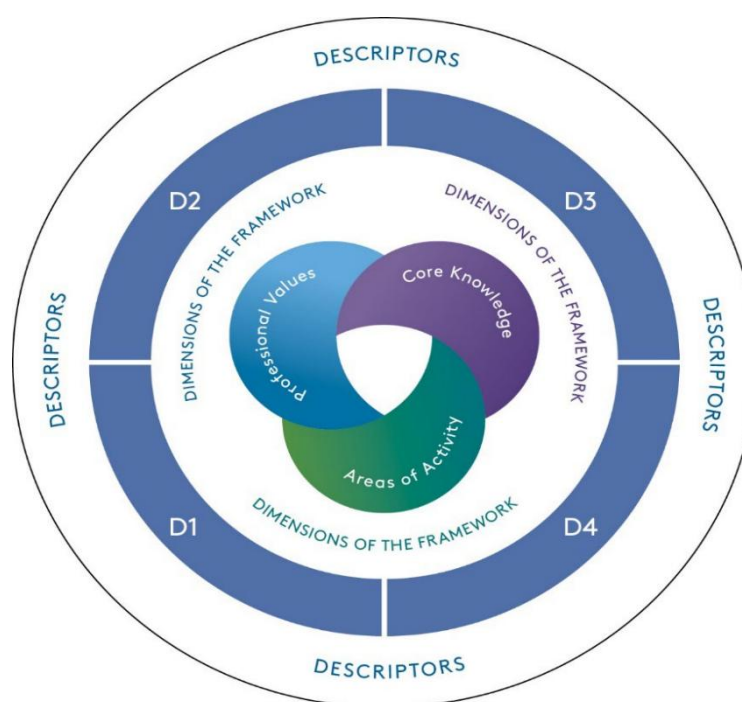


Figure 1: Professional Standards Framework (PSF) 2023

The GOLD D3 Senior Fellow - Mentor handbook PSF 2023 provides guidance related to **Descriptor 3** which is the basis for the award of **Senior Fellowship**.

Descriptor 3 (D3) is suitable for individuals whose practice enables them to evidence **all Dimensions**. Senior Fellowship is the appropriate category of fellowship to professionally recognise individuals from a wide variety of different contexts that influence and/ or lead the practices of others who teach and / or support higher education learning, providing approaches, such as direction, mentoring, management, encouragement and inspiration through knowledge, experience and expertise.

Effectiveness of practice is demonstrated through evidence to meet the **three Descriptor 3 criteria statements, D3.1, D3.2 and D3.3**, which are the basis for the award of Senior Fellowship. These criteria statements incorporate all 15 Dimensions as shown in Figure 2 below.

To be awarded Senior Fellowship, individuals must evidence that their effective and inclusive practice meets the following three Descriptor 3 criteria statements.

D3 is suitable for individuals whose comprehensive understanding and effective practice provides a basis from which they lead or influence those who teach and/or support high-quality learning. Individuals are able to evidence:



Figure 2: PSF 2023 Descriptor 3 showing the three Descriptor 3 criteria statements D3.1, D3.2 and D3.3

The **PSF 2023 Dimensions are 15 statements** which inform and describe practice. Essential to professional practice, these Dimensions identify what professionals do to enable high-quality

teaching and/or support of learning in higher education.

The Dimensions of the Framework (PSF 2023) are arranged as **three related sets** of five **Professional Values**, five forms of **Core Knowledge**, and five **Areas of Activity**.

Professional Values (V1-5): underpin all forms of Core Knowledge and Areas of Activity. They are the foundation of professional practice.

Core Knowledge (K1-5): informed by the Professional Values, representing key forms of knowledge required to undertake the Areas of Activity. There are multiple and diverse forms of knowledge which are connected to and shaped by communities and contexts.

Areas of Activity (A1-5): bring together the Professional Values and forms of Core Knowledge, showing the essential activities that support delivery of effective practice.

To achieve Senior Fellowship, candidates need to evidence that their teaching and/or support of learning practice demonstrates the requirements of the three Descriptor 3 (D3) criteria, which are as follows:

Descriptor 3 is suitable for individuals whose **comprehensive understanding** and **effective practice** provides a basis from which they **lead or influence** those who teach and/or support high-quality learning. Individuals are able to evidence:

- **D3.1:** a sustained record of leading or influencing the practice of those who teach and/or support high quality learning
- **D3.2:** practice that is effective, inclusive and integrates all Dimensions
- **D3.3:** practice that extends significantly beyond direct teaching and/or direct support for learning.

Professional Values

V1: respect individual learners and diverse groups of learners

V2: promote engagement in learning and equity of opportunity for all to reach their potential

V3: use scholarship, or research, or professional learning, or other evidence-informed approaches as a basis for effective practice

V4: respond to the wider context in which higher education operates, recognising implications for practice

V5: collaborate with others to enhance practice.

Core Knowledge

K1: how learners learn, generally and within specific subjects

K2: approaches to teaching and/or supporting learning, appropriate for subjects and level of study

K3: critical evaluation as a basis for effective practice

K4: appropriate use of digital and/or other technologies, and resources for learning

K5: requirements for quality assurance and enhancement, and their implications for practice.

Areas of Activity

A1: design and plan learning activities and/or programmes

A2: teach and/or support learning through appropriate approaches and environments

A3: assess and give feedback for learning

A4: support and guide learners

A5: enhance practice through own continuing professional development.

For the award of Senior Fellow, the GOLD candidate must demonstrate how their HE practices provide evidence for all Professional Values, Core Knowledge and Areas of Activity of the PSF 2023.

4. Preparing to write your supporting statement

The GOLD candidate needs to first provide you with their GOLD application form, which will include their Reflective Account of Leadership Practice (RALP) and TWO Leadership Case Studies. The word limit for a SFHEA application is 6,000-words (including all in-text citations). The word limit should be shared equally across; i) the RALP 2000-words ii) Leadership Case Study One 2000-words iii) Leadership Case Study Two 2000-words.

Please read this account **before** you begin to write your supporting statement to verify its accuracy.

4.1 Format of the supporting statement

The SFHEA Descriptor 3 GOLD PSF 2023 Supporting Statement Proforma is available on the GOLD website.

In association with the Descriptor 3 criteria of the PSF 2023, as a guide, you should comment on the following in your supporting statement:

- your own personal experience of the applicant's recent and effective HE practice;
- your perspective on the practical examples provided within the application to illustrate the requirements of Senior Fellow, focusing on the way(s) in which the applicant has **effectively influenced** or **led other colleagues' HE practice**;

5. After completing your supporting statement

Once you have completed the Supporting Statement Proforma, please return it to the GOLD candidate as a PDF. They will include both supporting statements in their application and submit it along with their SFHEA application form to the GOLD team for review.

6. Quality Assurance Processes

During the GOLD mentoring process candidates are reminded of their personal obligation to ensure that standards pertaining to academic integrity are upheld, and that any use of AI when creating their application (including citations and references) is ethical and responsible. If you have any concerns regarding the authenticity and veracity of the application, please contact the GOLD team before writing this Supporting Statement.

As part of assuring QA you will be asked to confirm that you have written the Supporting Statement yourself and that the information you have provided has been written specifically for this particular GOLD candidate. As part of GOLD's ongoing QA processes GOLD does reserve the right to check Supporting Statements for individual authenticity by means of textual review using plagiarism detection software. If there are any concerns regarding the professional integrity of the Supporting Statement, the statement will not be accepted.

7. Contacting our GOLD team

If you have any queries or questions relating to GOLD supporting statements, please email GOLD@greenwich.ac.uk and we will be happy to assist you.