

# Guidance notes for the induction of a teacher new to HE

*'Colleges must recognise the different demands of HE in FE and organise and resource accordingly.'* (King et al, 2010; 19)

College higher education (HE) as a hybrid (Parry and Thompson, 2002; King and Widdowson, 2009; Rapley, 2012) culture means that the journey to HEness (Lea and Simmons, 2012) needs to start as soon as the teacher moves into HE either from FE or as a new member of staff.

A further education (FE) college usually inducts new teachers very well but because they tend to be on FE contracts, the induction process immediately fulfils performance-management systems which usually leaning towards FE rather than HE.

While a new member of staff is trying to acclimatise themselves to the timetabling, new environment, new faces, culture of the institution and FE induction, a staged process of induction to HE is recommended. Likewise, while the teacher moving from FE to HE would not have to undertake the FE processes, there is a need for adjustment if you consider the different type of students they will be teaching, assessment levels, different culture and the need to balance, in many cases, the FE demands alongside the needs of the HE department.

No one size fits all as each institute has its variables from the types of programmes they run, student demographics, providers, and staff qualifications and experience. Consequently, the guidance below needs adjusting to suit individual institutions.

This guidance will not be in the form of a tick-box exercise because each institution is different and consideration will need to be made of what is needed

for HE teacher induction. However, there are commonalities which are explored here.

### The mentor

A mentor who is already knowledgeable in the college HE context needs appointing prior to the arrival of the HE teacher. Each institution has a range of policies and procedures around mentoring and all should have the opportunity to engage with these. Too often the mentor is appointed after the teacher has started and the new member of staff is put at a disadvantage.

Don't assume that this is the role of a lead (Head, Programme Leader, Course Leader etc.). The role of a mentor provides the opportunity for the mentor to engage in scholarship and all who have settled into HE are qualified to support a new colleague. The mentor's first role is to provide that friendly but professional face of the department. Once introduced, their contact is invaluable and will save much worry and wasted time as the new member of staff settles in.

The next is to orientate the new teacher with the environment. Consider the sessional teacher who arrives, teaches, leaves and plans from home. There is an expectation that the teacher will orientate new students to the institution, so it is important they go through the process themselves.

Until the new member of staff settles in and needs less support, set up an agreed plan for contact.

### Expectations in the academic year

Too often a new member of staff finds themselves blitzed with requests to provide information or data. This is usually recurring, so, as a team activity, staff could develop a guide of what is expected at which time of year. This information could be set up on the email system calendar or in a hard copy. Any method of sharing HE activities needs to be monitored and updated periodically.

### Professional development and scholarship

Induction needs to include professional standards. The FE Professional Standards (ETF, 2014) has similar language to the HE UK Professional Standards Framework (HEA, 2011) but there are some considerable differences. For example, those working in HE are expected to undertake continuing professional development

and incorporate “research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.” (HEA, 2011; 3)

It is always good practice for HE departments to link what they do with the UKPSF but teachers need to do so as well. Mapping activities to the UKPSF is a “means to enhance the scholarship and effectiveness of teaching and learning in UK HE.” (Lea, 2015; X) and provides evidence for the application of Fellowship to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) or the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA).

Research can be a sticking point in college HE but engagement with Boyer’s four Models of Scholarship (1990) offers a broader understanding of scholarship in college HE and certainly undertaking an action research project with the staff team is a good starting point.

### **An example of how staff at East Surrey College identified the needs of the new HE teacher**

The staff induction workshops started with the question ‘I wish I knew this when I started teaching HE at East Surrey College...’

Organised as an action research project, the HE staff team contributed through a series of workshops and interviews to identify the needs of HE staff.

One outcome of this particular research is a generic document that provides an overview of the academic year that lists activities expected from staff in the HE department, including dates of enhancement activities, awarding bodies’ events and college data collection dates.

Also, over a managed period of time, new staff attended short workshops that shared development information; for example, finding the levels, the UKPSF and how to undertake a Fellowship.

## References

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