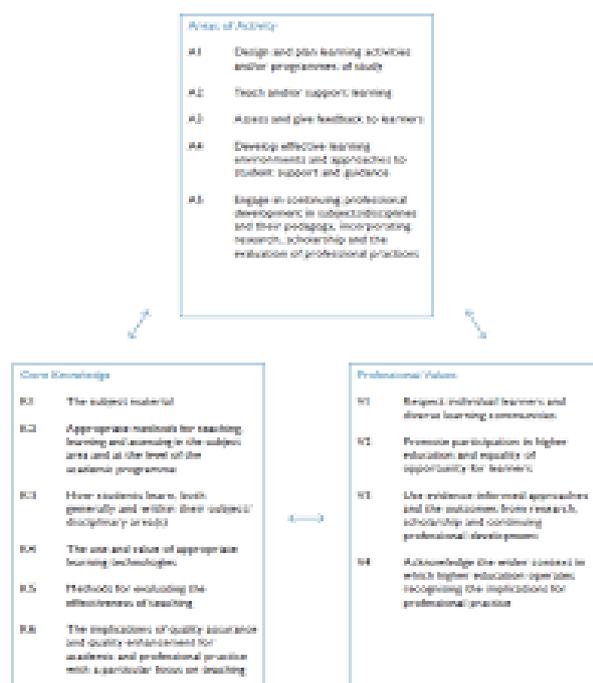

Gaining HEA Fellowship through teaching recognition

Gaining Fellowship of the [Higher Education Academy](#) (HEA) is becoming increasingly sought after, especially for early career academics looking to get academic positions. There are two main routes to gaining fellowship, and perhaps the most common is by completing an [accredited course](#), such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP). Universities offer these courses to their staff, and often also to postgraduate students, so they are easy to access and particularly great for those new to teaching who would like some directed pedagogy-specific study. But, there is another route for individuals who already have some teaching [experience](#), and can demonstrate a commitment to professional development, and engagement with the HEA's core values. You can apply by this route for all levels of Fellowship, directly to the HEA through [MyAcademy](#). Many universities also have internal programmes that facilitate applications via this route, and provide support for putting application forms together. I applied for Associate Fellowship through the programme offered by King's College London, so my experience is based on the process as it is undertaken at King's. By some very quick Googling, I found similar programmes in several other universities. In this short article I will first sketch out the actual process of applying, and then talk more generally about some resources that are useful in putting an application together. As the application process for Associate Fellowship and Fellowship is similar this article will focus on these two categories. There are some crossovers with Senior and Principal Fellowship, so some of the resources may also be useful for those categories.

The first port of call should be the equivalent of the Teaching and Learning Institute at your university, who will likely be the facilitators of HEA recognition programmes (both the accredited and experience-based versions). Here you should find guidance about what you will actually need to do, the forms you will need to fill out, and any other information for (for example) referees and teaching observers. At King's the process first requires lodging a pre-submission form and attendance at a half-day course that introduces the process, explains the levels of fellowship and how to decide which level is appropriate for you, and how to fill out the forms.

The application itself requires an 800-word personal statement, an inventory of professional development activities and how they map onto the HEA's Areas of Activity (A), Core Knowledge (K), and Professional Values (V), and an Account of Professional Practice (APP). The APP involves 500-word expositions of at least two (for Associate Fellowship) or all five (for other levels of Fellowship) of the HEA's Areas of Activity. All the details of the A, K, and V are outlined in the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in Higher Education (2011) ([PDF here](#)). It is expected that the application will engage with pedagogy research in both the Personal Statement and the APP, though this is very loose and you are able to consult as widely as you like.



I also needed to have my teaching formally observed, which required me to submit a pre-observation statement covering: the purpose and method of the session, the anticipated outcomes, how I would be assessing students and myself, and what professional, educational or ethical issues were raised and what the impact of the learning environment would be. I chose (partly strategically) a session that involved an activity I had run in a previous year of the same course, so I had an idea of how the activity would go – this helped immensely when writing the pre-observation statement, and allowed me to reflect on specific changes made between the years.

Finally, for both Associate Fellowship and Fellowship, two references are required. There is no set format for these, but the HEA guidance does note that referees need to respond directly to the Personal Statement and the APP – keep this in mind when putting your application together, as conceivably you'll need to be finished these at least two weeks before the deadline.

The two most useful documents are provided directly by the HEA. The first is the UKPSF, which I linked to above. This document very clearly lays out exactly what is expected of each level of fellowship. For instance, an Associate Fellow:

Demonstrates an understanding of specific aspects of effective teaching, learning support methods, and student learning. Individuals should be able to provide evidence of:

- I. Successful engagement with at least two of the five Areas of Activity
- II. Successful engagement in appropriate teaching and practices related to these Areas of Activity
- III. Appropriate core knowledge and understanding of at least K1 [the subject material] and K2 [appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme]
- IV. A commitment to appropriate Professional Values in facilitating others' learning

- V. Relevant professional practices, subject and pedagogic research and/or scholarship within the above activities
- VI. Successful engagement, where appropriate, in professional development activity related to teaching, learning, and assessment responsibilities. (UK Professional Standards Framework, p. 4)

This is what your application must clearly demonstrate in order to be successful. In applying through the experience route there is significant opportunity to tailor your application to your own discipline and sub-discipline.

The second useful document is the guidance notes. Again, these are available on the HEA website, and there is a separate guidance document for each level of Fellowship ([Associate Fellowship PDF](#), [Fellowship PDF](#)). This document not only explains what each step of the process is for, but most helpfully, gives prompt questions to start working on your APP. The application notes in this booklet are specifically for those applying directly to the HEA through MyAcademy, so if you're applying through your institution some of this will not be relevant, and so this should be read in conjunction with the guidelines of your university.

At King's there are a few different outcomes for applications. There is the straight success – where an applicant successfully obtains the applied-for level of Fellowship. There are two levels of 'corrections' – those that can just be quickly done and checked by a member of the awarding committee and those that require more extensive corrections and must be resubmitted to the next panel. Apparently, much like PhDs, most people are asked to make some minor adjustments and resubmit their application for checking. Mine was successful straight away, and I credit this to having spent time ensuring it covered all the points listed in the UKPSF.

I have posted my [Personal Statement and APP](#) online. For the most part I did this because I found frustratingly few examples of written APPs and even fewer Personal Statements. And, none that were specific to ancient history or classics.

I found this a very interesting process. It gave me an excuse to focus some time on thinking clearly and purposefully about my teaching. I enjoy teaching immensely, and I think I'm pretty good at it – but this gave me the chance to articulate my thoughts about my own teaching practice (I talk more about this process in this [vlog](#)). While it's nice to now have a recognition of my teaching ability, I think this was the most valuable outcome of the process of applying for Associate Fellowship of the HEA through teaching recognition.

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