

RUNNING HEADER: [Open education and care in developing and enabling educators]

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Developing and enabling educators: an Open Education and Pedagogy of Care approach to design and delivery of a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP).

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ABSTRACT:

In this chapter, we present insights into the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP) at the University of Suffolk, designed to support new academics with professional backgrounds and those in professional contracts working with students. The programme aligns with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF 2011) set by Advance HE, ensuring participants develop evidence-based, reflective, and innovative teaching practices. Since its revalidation in 2021, the PgCAP has run five cohorts, embedding a pedagogy of care and open educational practices at its core. The structured, research-informed curriculum is designed to meet the evolving needs of modern higher education. The three modules introduce educational theories, policies, and curriculum design principles, develop participants' critical reflection, peer collaboration, and evidence-based teaching, and promote independent reflective research while fostering professional identities rooted in openness, care, and creativity. Assessment is based primarily on reflective practices and the design of practical educational activities, encouraging participants to critically engage with academic practices and develop confidence in their teaching roles. Through guided, negotiated, and independent learning, the programme enhances critical awareness, professional identity, and innovative teaching methods. By integrating inclusive, student-centred, and research-driven approaches, the PgCAP cultivates a community of practice, ensuring learning remains relevant, meaningful, and impactful in higher education. Currently, the course is undergoing revalidation to align with PSF 2023, prioritising deep engagement with critical reflection and evidence-based practices while streamlining content to ensure it remains practical, meaningful, and directly connected to the challenges of contemporary higher education.

KEYWORDS:

(Please supply 6-10 keywords for your Chapter to help with depository and online searches)

1. Higher Education
2. Academic development
3. Curriculum
4. Open Education
5. Pedagogy of Care
6. Reflective Practice

Introduction

As is the case with many contemporary, professionally and vocationally orientated universities, a large number of our academic staff are drawn from a strong professional background but without formal teaching experience, meaning that arrive with a wealth of professional experience and a strong grounding in professional practice and organisational cultures and experience of mentoring or training students in the workplace. However, their primary experience of education is typically their own, which may be outdated. Thus, to ensure a quality education for students, any programme seeking to develop academic practice needs to do three things. Firstly, it needs to respect and draw on the professional expertise and practice of staff. Secondly, it needs to stimulate and support opportunities for staff to reflect on their own educational experiences and develop their approach to teaching students into their profession. Thirdly, it needs to upskill staff in contemporary approaches to teaching in Higher Education (HE), stimulating an appetite to actively engage in educational research and scholarship of teaching and learning, whilst developing their confidence in using these approaches.

In this chapter we draw on our own experience of researching and developing a new Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP) at the University of Suffolk, which is mandatory for all staff new to HE, to argue for the particular principles and practices that have been useful and effective in realising these three things. This programme is validated, accredited and certified by Advance HE, a UK professional body for the HE Sector, which promotes the use of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF 2011) to develop curricula for academic development. The UKPSF 2011 which has been updated in 2023, is 'used in many parts of the world to support and recognise staff development and benchmark success in teaching and learning in higher education' (Advance HE, 2023a).

This UKPSF framework comprises 15 dimensions to 'inform and describe' Professional Values (PV), Core Knowledge (CK) and Areas of Activity (AA) that all academics should develop and evidence in their practice. These descriptions do indeed usefully describe and provide a benchmark. However, designing programmes where curricula and pedagogy both model and facilitate participants to understand, reflect on practice and demonstrate understanding of particular dimensions is more complex. For example, participants in the PgCAP need to demonstrate understanding from one's own practice for example, of 'V3: Use evidence informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development [V3]; 'how learners learn, generally and within specific subjects' [K1]; or Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study [A1]. (AdvanceHE, 2023b, p.5) beyond describing teaching or outcomes.

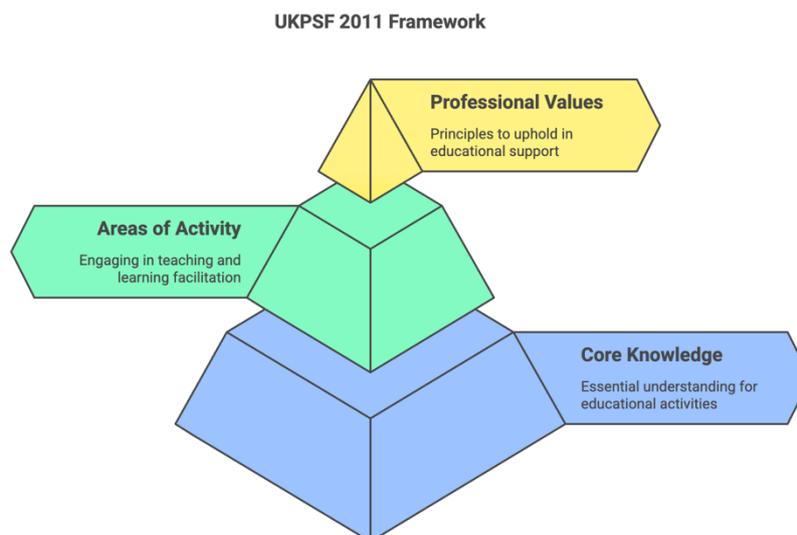


Figure 1: UKPSF2011

The programme fosters critical reflection, innovation, and professional development in teaching, research, and public engagement, aligning with the University's values of empowerment, creativity, inclusivity, and transformative education and since its revalidation in 2021, the PgCAP has welcomed five cohorts, with an average of 20 participants per intake from diverse professional and international backgrounds. Currently, with the introduction of the revised professional standards, named PSF2023 by Advance HE, the PgCAP is currently being redesigned to support participants in developing evidence-based practices, enhancing learning, teaching, and curriculum design, and gaining expertise in research supervision and communication, promoting self-directed action research and critical reflection, embedding sustainability and resilience in professional practice, adopts a collaborative learning model, encouraging peer review, group work, and knowledge exchange in both face-to-face and online environments.

Curriculum design and implementation

Based on research into over 80 PgCAP programmes in the UK, we have designed and developed our own programme following two key principles: Education' and secondly 'Pedagogies of Care'. The first promotes a culture of transparency, collaboration, creativity and the sharing of resources and knowledge; the second promotes one of importance of relationality and connection. Given the nature and experience of course participants, we see both of these as vital in setting the conditions for learner agency and growth, to help them make informed decisions in terms of curriculum and career progression. Allowing them to be partners in their own learning journey, co-creating learning together (Lessner Listiakova et al. 2023)

Participants undertaking a PgCAP typically do so alongside adjusting to a new role in the potentially unfamiliar territory of HE. Managing the study, assignments and achieving all UKPSF outcomes at an adequate level, across the numerous assignments and in this context is a challenge. As the course is accredited by Advance HE, under the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF 2011) standard, the PgCAP design explicitly aligns with its criteria ensuring that its learning outcomes support the development of inclusive and evidence-based teaching practices. Across its three modules, the program fosters a research-informed, theoretically grounded approach to student-focused learning, teaching, assessment, and curriculum design, addressing Dimensions of Practice (Core Knowledge K1-6), Professional Values V1-4, and Areas of Activity (A1-5).

Module 1, aligned with Descriptor 1, which lead to the obtention of Associate Fellowship by Advance HE, encourages the participants to focus on fundamental teaching practices, including the design and delivery of effective learning and assessment activities across multiple formats. This module also introduces principles of inclusivity and student engagement enabling participants to reflect critically on their practice while applying these foundational principles to real-world teaching scenarios.

Modules 2 and 3 address Descriptor 2 of UKPSF 2011, which leads to gaining fellowship of Advance HE by fostering deeper engagement with interdisciplinary and disciplinary research and scholarship. Module 2 promotes evidence-based teaching and learning, peer collaboration, and the integration of reflective practices to design inclusive curricula that enhance student outcomes. Module 3, encourages participants to innovate and lead in teaching and learning, promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity while aligning their practices with the University of Suffolk's strategic priorities and broader HE contexts at national and international levels. Through its focus on these UKPSF 2011 dimensions, the PgCAP ensures participants develop the professional competencies required to enhance their academic practice, creating impactful, inclusive, and research-informed learning experiences that benefit students and contribute to the wider HE community.

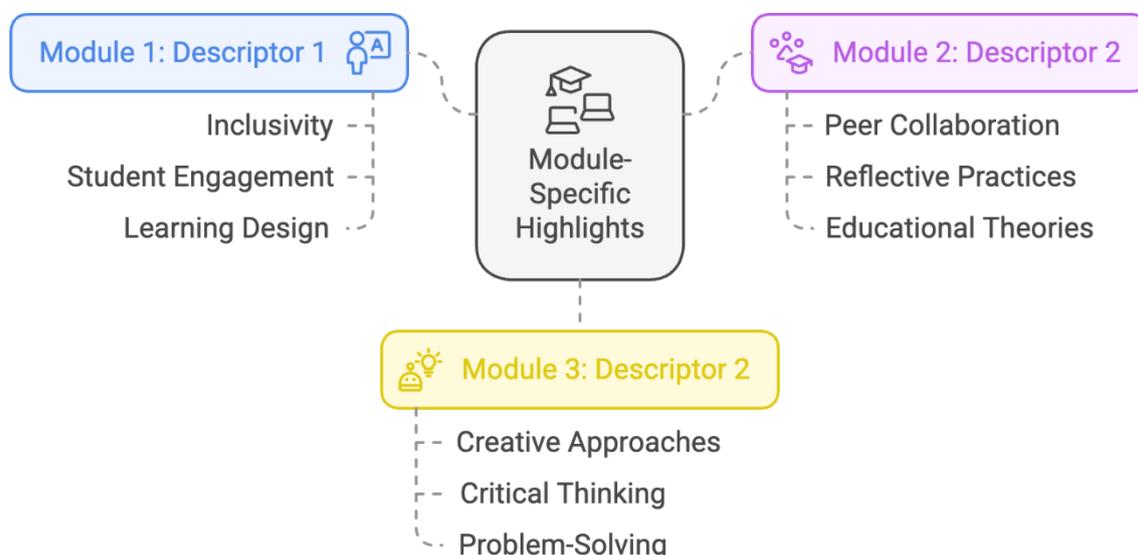


Figure 2: Key elements of each module against UKPSF2011 descriptors

Our observations and discussion with participants (we use the term ‘participants’ to describe the academics who are studying on the PgCAP programme. This enables us to distinguish between the students they teach and their wider academic identity beyond teaching), as well as the insights gained when reviewing their engagement with the course materials, showcases that exposing them to the UKPSF 2011 in practice makes these dimensions and principles significant for academics to develop as confident educators, attuned to the complex and changing landscape of HE. To help them in their journey, we adopted Open Education Practices (OEP) (Cronin & MacLaren, 2018; Cronin et al., 2023) and Pedagogies of Care (Noddings, 1984; hooks (1994), which are the ethos of the course.

We then explore how these are realised in the PgCAP, using some examples of key practices that we employ across the programme’s three modules, before discussing the issues and difficulties that we have experienced in developing the programme. The three modules that constitute the programme, are designed to enhance learning, teaching, and assessment in HE. Module 1 introduces participants to key theories, philosophies, policies, and legal frameworks underpinning teaching and learning. It aims at building foundational knowledge, understanding curriculum design, and engaging critically with diverse perspectives while appreciating the ethical and legal dimensions of teaching roles. The approach is guided learning, aimed at developing confidence and critical awareness in teaching and support roles.

Module 2 focuses on research and evidence-based practice, with activities like peer observations, collaborative projects, and reflective practice. Through negotiated learning,

participants enhance practical teaching skills, deepen their understanding of learning dynamics, and apply evidence-based knowledge to real-world scenarios. Module 3 is grounded on independent reflective research and creative, professional identity development. It promotes critical thinking, self-directed inquiry, and innovative approaches to teaching and assessment, aiming to improve learning experiences, foster participation, and build employability skills. Together, these modules prepare participants to navigate and contribute effectively to contemporary HE contexts. The different elements of the programme are described in Table 1.

Module	Key Content	Approaches	Foci
Module 1: Introduction to Learning, Teaching, Assessment Practices, and Curriculum Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to key theories, philosophies, policies, and legal frameworks - Exploration of educational theories and philosophies - Key elements of curriculum design - Effective design of assessment and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guided learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building a solid foundation of knowledge - Engaging critically with academic practices - Understanding diverse perspectives in teaching and learning - Appreciating legal and ethical dimensions of professional roles - Enhancing confidence and critical awareness in teaching and support roles
Module 2: Research and Evidence-Based Practice (REBP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement with educational theories and practices - Peer observations - Collaborative projects - Reflective practice - Evidence-based teaching in HE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negotiated learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing practical skills - Promoting deeper understanding of teaching and learning dynamics - Fostering a community of practice - Applying foundational knowledge to real-world scenarios - Developing relevant and evidence-based learning activities - Ensuring learning is relevant and meaningful
Module 3: Enhancing Learning and Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertaking independent reflective research grounded in data for making effective decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-directed inquiry - Innovating and leading

Module	Key Content	Approaches	Foci
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applying learning in practical contexts - Developing a professional identity shaped by openness, care, and creativity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the field - Improving learning and teaching experiences - Promoting participation and opportunities for learners - Developing critical literacies and employability skills - Employing creative approaches to learning design, assessment, and feedback

Table 1: Key Content, Approaches, and Foci for Modules

Open Education and Pedagogies of Care as foundations

OEP is a ‘broad descriptor’ that reflects a democratising movement towards greater openness in education. The term open is used ‘variously to describe resources (the artefacts themselves as well as the access to and usage of them), learning and teaching practices, institutional practices, the use of educational technologies, and the values underlying educational endeavours’ (Cronin, 2017 p.2). Indeed, Open Education Resources, Open Pedagogies and Open Knowledge are connected elements of OEP. They are thus simultaneously resources, practices and behaviours aligned to an ethos, generating a culture of sharing, transparency and collaboration. We encourage PgCAP participants to co-create more accessible and participatory learning experiences and assessments, by for example sharing best practices, to develop Open Educational Resources (OER), as well as collaborate in creating activities with learners, co-develop research and evidence-based activities for learners, scenarios and creative activities towards breaking down barriers to education and fostering a culture of inclusivity (Tur, et al., 2020; Atenas, et al., 2024). Open Pedagogies also support the development of ‘communities of practice’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) among educators, where ideas and resources can be freely exchanged and built upon, supporting the drive for continuous improvement and innovation in teaching and learning (Nerantzi et al., 2021; Delgado, et al., 2021). As OEP can democratise education, making it more equitable and participatory (Cronin & MacLaren, 2018; Ahlf, McNeil & Nguyen, 2024).

Pedagogy of care focuses on creating a supportive and nurturing learning environment that attends to the emotional and intellectual needs of participants and students. In our programme we promote trust, personalised and culturally aware feedback, tailored support, recognition of students' extenuating circumstances, and well-being check-ins to ensure that

emotional and psychological needs are addressed (Sharma & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2022). Thus, the principle of care is central to the PgCAP design, aligning with its emphasis on fostering a supportive, inclusive, and dialogic educational culture. Theories of care, rooted in the work of Noddings (1984; 2012) and hooks (1994; 2003), emphasise empathy and understanding of learners' lived experiences as foundational to meaningful education. These pedagogies of care are especially pertinent in HE, where diverse student populations face unique challenges, including learning disabilities, financial constraints, care responsibilities, and sociocultural barriers. Drawing on Priestley et al.'s (2015) notion of ecological conditions for agency, the PgCAP highlights creating ecologies of care that prioritise empathy, foster confidence, and empower learners. In practical terms, this involves designing curricula and assessments that are accessible, culturally responsive, and grounded in evidence-based practices, enabling all students to thrive regardless of their circumstances.

Educators participating in the PgCAP are immersed in a culture of care themselves, which models the ethos they are expected to create for their students. Through guided, negotiated, and independent learning approaches, participants critically engage with inclusive curriculum design, collaborative projects, and reflective practices. The programme nurtures a professional identity shaped by openness, creativity, and empathy, equipping lecturers to apply the care principle to whole-class settings. For example, designing assessments that account for diverse needs or fostering peer learning communities helps build collective confidence and engagement. By experiencing this ethos in their own learning, educators can extend care to the average learner, cultivating a classroom environment that promotes agency, critical thinking, and shared responsibility for learning. This iterative process underscores the vital link between experiencing care as an educator and embedding it in the student community.

Realising the foundations

The design of our PgCAP programme provides both the structure and culture for open education and pedagogies of care to be practiced, as shown in table 1. Across three modules, staff develop knowledge and understanding of education as a field, reflective practices, and critical awareness, innovative teaching and learning methods. Each module is crafted to build these competencies, integrating critical theory to advance digital literacies and assess the impact of technologies and data on education. This is crucial for educators to understand the different drivers of HE and curriculum (Atenas, et al., 2022; Bergdahl, Nouri & Fors, 2020).

The PgCAP adopts a spiral curriculum approach (Bruner, 1966), where key practices are revisited and expanded in complexity across its modules. Reflective practice, for instance, begins with activities such as maintaining reflective journals and engaging in peer observations. These early tasks encourage participants to assess their teaching methods and student interactions critically. As the programme progresses, this practice deepens, with participants analysing their reflections using theoretical frameworks, such as Schön's (1983) reflective model, and incorporating peer feedback into their teaching strategies. By the final

module, participants undertake independent projects that require them to apply reflective practice in the design and evaluation of innovative pedagogical approaches.

For example, an educator might redesign an assessment to enhance inclusivity, using insights from their reflective analysis and student feedback. This progression not only strengthens the participants’ teaching but also equips them to model reflective practice for their students. Student-centred learning is another key practice woven through the PgCAP, focusing on creating inclusive and participatory environments. Early activities include facilitating collaborative projects and engaging students through interactive discussions. Participants are encouraged to experiment with diverse strategies, such as using case studies or problem-based learning, to meet the needs of varied learners. In later stages, they design personalised feedback systems and assessments that foster active engagement and autonomy in learning. For instance, a participant might implement group-based inquiry tasks where students collaboratively explore real-world problems, applying their learning in meaningful ways. These experiences allow participants to understand and address the needs of diverse learners effectively, while also fostering agency and motivation in their classrooms.

Professional development is embedded throughout the PgCAP, ensuring participants continuously enhance their teaching practices. Early opportunities include attending workshops on inclusive teaching or effective use of learning technologies. As participants progress, they engage in research-informed tasks, such as designing interventions to improve student engagement or conducting action research on their teaching practices. For example, a participant might pilot the use of digital storytelling tools to promote accessibility in their curriculum and evaluate its impact on learner outcomes. These experiences are complemented by peer feedback and support networks, fostering a community of practice among participants. This iterative, scaffolded approach not only models good pedagogical practices but also explicitly prepares academic staff to apply these strategies in their own teaching, creating a ripple effect of care, inclusivity, and innovation across the student community as showcased in Table 2.

Practices	Key Elements	Key Approaches	Foci
Reflective Practice	Continuous self-reflection on teaching methods and student interactions.	Use of reflective journals, peer observations, and feedback sessions.	Identifies strengths and areas for improvement, leading to personal and professional growth.
Student-Centred Learning	Creating an inclusive, participatory learning environment.	Collaborative projects, interactive discussions, and personalised feedback.	Enhances student motivation, participation, and learning outcomes.
Effective Communication	Maintaining open, clear, and consistent communication.	Using safe spaces in the lecture room to discuss sensitive issues and topics.	Ensures students are well-informed and supported, and able to provide feedback.

Peer Observation and Feedback	Observing colleagues' teaching sessions and providing feedback.	Structured observation sessions followed by feedback discussions.	Promotes collaborative learning and continuous improvement.
Assessment and Feedback	Diverse and fair assessment methods and timely, constructive feedback.	Mix of formative and summative assessments, such as essays, presentations, and portfolios, with regular feedback.	Supports student learning with clear goals and actionable feedback.
Professional Development	Ongoing learning and development for educators.	Participation in workshops, seminars, professional courses, and engaging with current educational research.	Ensures educators have the latest skills and knowledge to teach and support students effectively.
Use of Technology	Integrating digital tools and resources.	Leveraging learning management systems, online discussion forums, and multimedia resources.	Provides flexible, accessible, and innovative ways to engage students and deliver content.
Inclusion of Practice-Based Learning	Incorporating practical experiences and real-world applications into the curriculum.	Activities such as work-based learning, peer observations, and practical assignments simulating real-world challenges.	Bridges the gap between theory and practice, preparing students for professional environments.
Personal Development Planning	Guiding students in setting personal and academic goals.	Developing learning plans outlining goals, required resources, and timelines, supported by regular check-ins with mentors.	Helps students stay focused, motivated, and organised throughout their studies.
Support Services	Providing a range of academic, wellbeing, and career support services.	Offering academic advising, counselling, career workshops, and financial support through the university's support teams.	Ensures students have access to resources needed to succeed academically and personally.

Table 2: Core Practices Underpinning Open Education and Pedagogy of Care

Reflective practice

The first module presents an introduction to learning, teaching, assessment practices, and curriculum and, introduces participants to foundational knowledge, including key theories, philosophies, policies, and legal frameworks related to HE. It acknowledges the need for educators to be adaptable in the current post-pandemic educational landscape (Hickson, 2011; Larrivee, 2000), making it both knowledge-rich and potentially challenging. Open education principles are central to this module, fostering transparency and collaboration from the outset.

In this module, the key elements of OEP include the promotion of shared reflection and collaborative engagement. One notable approach is the use of a highly visual and instinctive 'zine' exercise (Nerantzi, 2023), where participants articulate their professional identities through drawings prompted by themes such as "your field," "you as an academic," or "you as a teacher." This activity introduces participants to sociological concepts of identity as "in performance" (Goffman, 1959), while practically allowing them to explore and develop their reflective practices. Undertaking this activity alongside peers from diverse fields, such as health, social sciences, and computing, fosters a sense of shared learning and openness to different perspectives.

To further embed OEP, participants are introduced to electronic portfolios as multimedia repositories where they can document and reflect on their learning. These portfolios, combined with study buddies, support ongoing peer collaboration and reflection both within and beyond face-to-face sessions. Peer observations, initiated later in the module, offer participants the opportunity to observe and provide constructive feedback on each other's teaching sessions, promoting transparency and enabling new perspectives. These open practices establish a foundation for a reflective and collaborative teaching community, fostering continuous professional development (Atenas, Nerantzi & Bussu, 2023).

Care principles in this module are woven into its structure, focusing on creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. A central element of this ethos is the emphasis on reflective practice. Participants are encouraged to reflect on how and when they engage in reflective processes and how they record and implement their learning. By witnessing and learning from their peers, participants can adapt their reflective habits to deepen and formalise their practices, all within a supportive and non-judgmental context.

Building a sense of community is another core focus of care in the module. The establishment of study buddies and collaborative reflection creates a supportive network that enhances confidence and reduces isolation. This sense of community is critical as participants navigate foundational knowledge for HE teaching and student support. Care principles also underpin the emphasis on tailoring educational philosophies and practices to the specific needs of students, fostering empathy and responsiveness in teaching (Ashworth et al., 2004).

Student-centred learning

During the second module, which focuses in Research and Evidence-Based Practices, we develop a constructivist model by adopting a more negotiated learning approach. In this module, participants engage with a variety of educational theories and practices that enhance their understanding of teaching and learning in HE. This includes opportunities for peer observations, where participants learn from observing their colleagues' teaching approaches, providing valuable insights into different pedagogical techniques. Collaborative projects also play a crucial role in the module, encouraging students to work together in developing evidence-based teaching strategies and materials. Reflective practice is another key component, allowing students to assess their own teaching methods and make improvements based on critical self-reflection. This process is complemented by negotiated learning, where students identify their learning needs and interests, creating a personalised and more relevant educational experience.

The module also promotes the development of practical skills and deeper engagement with teaching dynamics. Students are encouraged to apply foundational knowledge to real-world scenarios, creating learning activities that are both meaningful and evidence-based. By fostering a community of practice, the module provides a space for educators to collaborate, share experiences, and learn from each other. This collective approach not only strengthens teaching techniques but also enhances the relevance of the learning activities being developed. Ultimately, the module ensures that students leave with a practical understanding of how to create and deliver learning experiences that are grounded in research and directly applicable to their teaching contexts.

This module, aims to develop participants' understanding of critical enquiry and innovative and creative approaches to learning design, assessment, and feedback (Agricola et al. 2020), giving the participants in a more active role in using research-based evidence to resource and shaping their learning experience. In this negotiated learning environment, participants are invited to consider how openness and care are fostered in peer observations where support and critique are necessary, where words and body language are focal. Role playing coaching conversations are a useful, co-creative practice here. Such activities are vital in operationalising shifts from traditional, teacher-led instruction to student-centred approaches that can enhance engagement, attainment and retention through active participation and collaboration (Valtonen et al., 2021).

Because creative pedagogies can catalyse and encourage innovative and flexible teaching methods, we ensure that our participants experience and share creative practice (Richardson & Mishra, 2018). Unexpected, often arts-based, resources and activities are effective in enabling participants to think outside the box as they require and facilitate meaning-making in new ways and thus can be generative in this regard (#CreativeHE, n.d.). For example, one session invited participants to select a number of natural and daily random resources offered to them, such as stones, bottle corks, cotton reel holders, feathers, ribbons and consider how some or all might be useful in enabling students to access a concept, perhaps ones that they were aware students often struggled with. The session plenary revealed the combined use of materials and dialogue about activity design as fertile in generating pedagogic practice attuned to subject and student needs. It was also valuable in affirming participants' capacity for generating and communicating effective

pedagogic practice. Many valued and adopted other's ideas as well as their own to develop active, student-centred learning in their own teaching.

Underpinned by theoretical perspectives, our sessions involve role plays, scenario-based learning, gamification, storytelling or experiential learning, such approaches are important to create a nurturing environment that values diverse interests and strengths, acknowledging and supporting the individual journey of each participant. We see such approaches as not only creative and student-centred but also as important in promoting social justice, significant given the social and economic issues many students face (Manca, et al., 2017; McArthur, 2010). A pedagogy of care is also apparent here, as it is whenever participants have opportunities to voice their opinions, and way of being, feel valued and heard (Brooman, Darwent & Pimor, 2015).

By working closely with their peers, participants benefit from diverse perspectives and experiences as they apply the foundational knowledge gained in the first module to real-world teaching and learning scenarios. Participants are encouraged to identify specific areas of interest or professional challenges they wish to address, and work collaboratively with peers and facilitators to develop relevant and evidence-based learning activities and real-world assessments (Yorke & Knight, 2007). This approach fosters a sense of ownership and agency, as participants negotiate their learning goals and methods, ensuring that the learning is relevant and meaningful to their individual contexts.

We incorporate a series of open resources including open access readings encouraging participants to critically adopt open practices and to incorporate openly licensed materials into their courses. This reduces costs for students in terms of relying on textbooks as well as enabling staff to adapt these materials to meet diverse learning needs, enhancing collaborative learning and ensuring that all students have access to high-quality educational materials (Glassman, Tilak & Kang, 2023).

Professional Development

Whilst the whole programme of course constitutes professional development, the third module, 'Enhancing Learning and Teaching', participants undertake independent reflective research grounded in data to inform effective decision-making in their teaching practice. This research is closely tied to applying learning in practical contexts, ensuring that insights gained are directly relevant to real-world scenarios. The module supports the development of a professional identity shaped by openness, care, and creativity, encouraging participants to embrace innovative and empathetic approaches to teaching. Independent learning is a cornerstone of the module, promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-directed inquiry as essential skills for educators to innovate and lead within the field.

The module also focuses on improving learning and teaching experiences through creative approaches to learning design, assessment, and feedback. Participants are guided to create opportunities that foster learner participation and develop critical literacies and employability skills. By prioritising inclusivity and engagement, the module ensures teaching practices not only address the diverse needs of students but also empower them to

succeed. This approach allows educators to refine their methods and lead meaningful innovations, ultimately enhancing the teaching and learning landscape in HE.

In terms of skills development, we aim at consolidating and learning from the previous two modules promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-directed inquiry to innovate and lead in their field (Barron, et al., 1998). This module also focuses on improving the learning and teaching experience, promoting participation and opportunities for participants, innovation and developing effective learning environments, aiming to build participants' critical confidence in student engagement methods (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017), and good practice in innovation and development of critical literacies and employability skills as well creative approaches to learning design, real-world assessment, and feedback (Beckmann-Mendez, 2011; Archer, Morley & Soupez, 2021). Also, participants engage in open educational practices by creating publicly accessible course blogs, encouraging student interaction beyond traditional virtual learning environments.

Issues and Reflections

Designing a programme that participants value and enables them to succeed has required both research and a readiness to respond. Our core principles of Open Education and Pedagogy of Care have not just underpinned the design and delivery but also our approach to developing this programme. Respecting and drawing upon participants' prior experience requires constant evaluation: listening and recording suggestions during the programme, and consulting afterwards to ensure participants' voices are heard and their contributions are valued in the development of curriculum materials, resources and assessment methods (Dollinger, Lodge & Coates, 2018). As well as being respectful and recognising the expertise participants bring, such ongoing evaluation means that the curriculum remains relevant, effective and responsive to the needs of our diverse student populations (Bovill, 2019; Bovill & Woolmer, 2019).

Over the years, the development and enhancement of the PgCAP programme have been deeply informed by collaboration with key stakeholders, including current and prospective students, alumni, the External Examiner (EE), the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), and AdvanceHE experts. Internally, the School of Social Science and Humanities and the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) have played an integral role in shaping the programme's evolution. Feedback from students, gathered through formal processes such as Module evaluations and Student Voice Forums (SVFs) as well as in informal conversations, has driven significant changes to ensure the curriculum remains student-focused. Alumni insights, grounded in their professional progression, have further supported the team in redefine course content and assessment structures, ensuring alignment with real-world teaching challenges and opportunities. For example, in response to feedback, the number of assessments was reduced from eight to five in 2023, and new content was introduced on topics such as AI resilience, responsible use, classroom management, and career progression.

External partnerships with AdvanceHE, and institutional stakeholders have been pivotal in aligning the PgCAP with national and sector-wide developments. These collaborations have facilitated the exchange of best practices and provided opportunities for benchmarking against current academic standards. Educational developers in CELT, alongside Associate Deans for Learning, Teaching, and Student Experience, have ensured the programme aligns with institutional strategies, enhancing its relevance and impact. Practical changes, such as embedding the Brightspace platform to promote independent learning and increasing the focus on active engagement with theory and praxis, address stakeholder feedback that called for a better balance between theoretical content and practical application. These efforts have enriched the programme, preparing participants to meet contemporary challenges in HE.

Looking ahead, the transition from three 20-credit modules to two 30-credit modules is informed by extensive stakeholder feedback and aims to create a more cohesive learning experience while re-aligning the programme with the PSF 2023 standards. Planned enhancements include deeper engagement with stakeholders such as Associate Deans, alumni, external experts from AdvanceHE, and CELT developers, ensuring the programme remains relevant and forward-thinking. Greater involvement of these groups in activities like peer reviews, guest lectures, and curriculum design workshops will provide fresh perspectives and help refine delivery and assessment. These ongoing collaborations reinforce the programme's commitment to fostering excellence and inclusivity in teaching and learning, positioning it to meet the evolving needs of HE professionals and institutions.

The PgCAP programme has undergone significant evolution in its assessment structure and focus from 2021 to the current revalidation in 2025. In the 2021 re-accreditation, the programme included a total of eight assessments across three modules, featuring a variety of formats such as critical reflections, curriculum redesigns, reading list analyses, and peer-reviewed audio feedback. These assessments were weighted variably (e.g., 20%, 30%, 50%) and aimed to cover a broad range of competencies. However, this approach led to a fragmented experience, with participants required to juggle multiple tasks that sometimes-lacked cohesion.

In the 2023 course modifications, the assessment structure was streamlined to five tasks, consolidating activities and focusing on critical engagement with theory and practice. This revision reduced redundancy and emphasised the application of theory to real-world contexts, such as updating reading lists, creating action plans, and reflecting on teaching practices. The modifications ensured a more cohesive experience, balancing theoretical and practical elements while addressing feedback from stakeholders on assessment workload and relevance.

With the 2025 revalidation, the programme has further simplified its structure, reducing assessments to just two across the entire programme, with each module featuring a single task weighted at 100%. The updated assessments include a reflective portfolio focused on the development of sustainable and resilient curricula and an evidence-based report on strategies for enhancing participation and retention. This design prioritises deep engagement with critical reflection and evidence-based practice while aligning fully with the new PSF 2023 standards. The streamlined approach not only fosters a holistic understanding

of the course content but also ensures the assessments remain practical, meaningful, and directly connected to the challenges of contemporary HE.

The success of the PgCAP programme is demonstrated through multiple forms of evidence, which extend beyond standard module evaluations. While these evaluations provide quantitative and qualitative feedback, additional indicators highlight the programme's impact on participants' engagement, professional development, and contributions to the wider academic community. For instance, the high quality of engagement observed during sessions and plenary discussions reflects participants' active involvement and critical thinking. Furthermore, the nomination of the programme leader for an exemplary practice award underscores external recognition of the programme's excellence in fostering innovative and impactful teaching practices.

Participants' readiness to contribute to the programme's development is another key indicator of its effectiveness. This is evident in their willingness to provide feedback, suggest resources for their colleagues, and actively engage in institutional teaching, learning, and research activities. Their enthusiasm to participate in such initiatives signals that the PgCAP not only equips them with evidence-based teaching and assessment strategies but also instils a sense of community and shared responsibility for educational advancement. These behaviours demonstrate the programme's ability to cultivate academics who are confident, effective, and collaborative educators, deeply committed to continuous improvement. Perhaps most notably, the programme has fostered relational and collaborative outcomes among participants. Many participants report positive experiences that have encouraged ongoing partnerships with colleagues across the university. This is reflected in their participation in institutional events such as learning and teaching conferences, where some of the most compelling and persuasive accounts are shared by those currently engaged with or recently graduated from the PgCAP programme. These accounts highlight their integration of evidence-based educational research, their ability to design effective and inclusive teaching and assessments, and their enthusiasm for collaborative and interdisciplinary learning, further demonstrating the programme's transformative impact on both individuals and the institution as a whole.

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