

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

APPLICATION FOR SENIOR FELLOW

SECTION ONE:

NAME (as you would like it to appear on your certificate)	Sarah Boylan Jones
INSTITUTE/ DEPARTMENT/PROFESSIONAL UNIT	Library and Learning Resources
POSITION (E.g. Lecturer/Senior Lecturer/Principal Lecturer/Director of Discipline/Other (please specify))	Head of Academic Services
ROLE (E.g. Lecturer/Programme Manager/Admissions Tutor/Module Leader/Other (please specify))	Leader/Manager of a professional services area
Referees Please could you tick the box if you have sent in your referees' statements? (Please be aware if we do not receive your referees' statements at the time of the submission or a maximum of 2 days after the panel submission date then your application will be passed to the next Panel meeting). If your supporting statements are not included with your application, you must ensure your referees send their supporting statements to the Academic Office by the deadline. The Academic Office will not chase referees.	Yes ☒ No ☐
Date of Training	16/11/22
Mentor	Errietta Bissa

APPLICATION FOR SENIOR FELLOW

In your application for recognition as a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), you are required to demonstrate fully how your continuing professional development allows you to meet the requirements for **Descriptor 3**, Senior Fellow status, as outlined in the *Guidance Handbook*, relating to the Dimensions of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), that is, all **Areas of Activity**, all elements of **Core Knowledge** and all of the **Professional Values**.

You should aim to include examples of your use of/commitment to relevant elements of the Professional Values and Core Knowledge throughout your Reflective Account of Practice and through **two case studies**.

General Principles to consider in preparing your application

- You will find it very helpful to refer at all times to the relevant parts of the UKPSF.
- **The nature of Descriptor 3 is distinct from Descriptor 2 as it requires applicants to evidence a thorough understanding of effective approaches to teaching and learning and their personal influence/impact on the teaching and learning practices of others. Therefore applicants should fully address the holistic nature of Descriptor 3, by providing evidence of a sustained record of effectiveness in relation to both personal teaching and learning practices and positive influence on the practices of others.**
- Your application is centred round the processes of **continuing professional learning and development activity related to teaching, learning and assessment responsibilities**. This includes appropriate research and scholarly activity and the leadership, management and administration of academic provision and support. How you evidence this will be dependent on the context in which you are working and the nature of the subject, discipline or profession in which you teach.
- The standards are inclusive in nature so D3 incorporates D2.
- Ensure you **provide reasons for the choice of activities you describe**, and demonstrate that you reflect on your teaching practice and the students' learning experience.
- The Assessment Panel recognises that there will be considerable variation in applications, reflecting differences in individuals' experience, their job roles and contexts. **The quality of your reflection is far more important than quantity.**
- This application is a **personal account** so you should focus throughout on your own professional practice and decision-making.
- Whilst it is important that you address all of the dimensions of the Framework, given the complex and integrative nature of professional practice at this level you should avoid a mechanistic or tick-box mapping approach to ensure full coverage.
- **By applying to become a Senior Fellow you will have the opportunity to:**
 - Think deeply about and thereby enhance the quality and effectiveness of your work in the area of teaching and supporting learning in HE.
 - Model good practice for other staff and be better able to encourage and support them to seek recognition for their own work in this area.
 - Increase your influence and impact by gaining national recognition for your contribution to teaching and the support of learning within the HE context

SECTION TWO: Your reflective account of your Continuing Professional Development

The boxes below should be used to present your critically reflective (**not descriptive**) account of how your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has enabled you to meet the UK Professional Standards Framework **Areas of Activity**.

- The [Advance HE Fellowship Category tool](#) will help you to determine whether Senior Fellowship is the most appropriate category of HEA Fellowship for you at this point;
- The [UK Professional Standards Framework \(UKPSF\)](#) – the award of HEA Fellowship is based on the criteria of Descriptor 3 (UKPSF, 2011, p.6) being evidenced;
- [Guidance for Senior Fellow applicants](#) and [Dimensions of the Framework guidance](#) available on the Advance HE website.

Your application for Senior Fellowship takes the form of an Account of Professional Practice consisting of:

- Context Statement (maximum 500 words not included in overall word count)
- a Reflective Account of Practice;
- and two Case Studies.

The word limit is 6,000 words shared across all three elements, with an additional 500 words for citations (overall maximum of 6,500 words), along with supporting statements from two referees.

We suggest that you use 3000 words for the RAP, and 1500 words for each Case Study

You will need to continue to refer to the Advance HE guidance and the UKPSF as you draft your application to ensure that you are writing to meet the requirements of UKPSF Descriptor 3.

You will be able to use the relevant boxes below to complete your draft application. Once completed, all the guidance can be deleted and this template containing your application can be sent to your two referees so that they can write their supporting references.

When you have finalised your draft application, you will need to send this to your **two referees** so that they can write their supporting statements. Please direct them to the guidance notes for Senior Fellow applications.

The form will expand as you enter your information

Context Statement (300 words)

- ❖ Provide a brief summary of your teaching and/or support of learning experience, including the context in which you currently work, your current role and responsibilities in teaching and/or support of learning. Identify the type and location of institution(s) you work for, as this will help to set out the context for your work, but keep this brief and relevant to your role. Do not include details about the history and prestige of the institution(s), as your Account of Professional Practice is about you and your practice;
- ❖ Identify the students/colleagues that you work with; for example, student level of study (e.g. year of study, undergraduate, postgraduate, etc.), programme(s)/unit(s) of study, discipline/specialist area of work, number and types of learners, etc. For Senior Fellowship, your work with students may be more indirect, as you may work more closely with colleagues/teams/external organisations/professional bodies, etc.; in which case identify these aspects of your work;
- ❖ Outline your current and recent role(s)/experience related to coordination, support, supervision, management and/or mentoring of others related to teaching and learning (Descriptor 3.VII);
- ❖ Focus on your current or recent practice, which should be able to demonstrate your sustained impact at Descriptor 3 over the last 3-5 years;
- ❖ Please remember that your application for Senior Fellowship is based on your **higher education practice**; if you also work in other teaching or learning roles outside of higher education you should not include this in your application

I am a qualified librarian, with an MSc in Information studies from City University. I joined UWTSD in 2011 as subject librarian in Carmarthen. In 2014, I progressed to Deputy Head of Library and Learning Resources, managing the Lampeter campus library. In 2016, following a complete service restructure, which merged the legacy library services of UWTSD and Swansea Metropolitan, I was appointed Head of Academic Services across all six UWTSD campuses.

Academic Services, one of four library teams, provides direct academic support services to all staff and students. This includes developing and delivering skills programmes encompassing information literacy and research skills, reading list management, and library marketing. In 2021 I was asked to expand services to provide digital capabilities support for UWTSD.

Before UWTSD, I worked for various organisations. With a degree in Law, I completed a placement at the National Library of Wales and a graduate traineeship at Aberystwyth University library then moved to London to support barristers with legal reference enquiries at the Inns of Court libraries in 2006. In 2009 I joined the Welsh Government, supporting civil servants with information services.

At UWTSD I lead a diverse team of 20 professionals across physical and online environments, catering to around 20,000 students across Wales, London and Birmingham. Given our student demographic; often mature or returning to education, the services we offer are pivotal to their academic journey. As part of the Library's Leadership Team, I contribute to strategic planning and direction, alongside heads of Collections, Customer Services and Special Collections teams and the Executive Head of Libraries.

External to the University, I am a member of the SCONUL Organisational Development Strategy group and until recently was Chair of the WHELF Learning and Teaching group. These engagements amplify my contributions beyond UWTSD, fostering collaborations and advancing the field.



Reflective Account of Practice (RAP)

You may wish to reflect on:

❖ **Roles, responsibilities and experience** related to teaching and supporting learning;

❖ **Areas of research, scholarship and/or professional practice**

- relevant publications and/or presentations;
- incorporation of research, scholarship and/or professional practice into teaching and supporting learning;
- links with professional bodies or wider communities.
- Involvement in teaching and learning initiatives
- institutional/nationally funded projects;
- small-medium scale investigations or awards;
- work with professional bodies;
- development and/or adoption of learning and teaching themes, for example, internationalisation,
- employability, assessment and feedback, retention, flexible learning, education for sustainability;
- dissemination of teaching and learning related expertise;
- impact of your own ongoing professional learning on your practice.

❖ **Recognition and reward**

- teaching prizes, fellowships, institutional awards for innovation;
- professional body recognition.

❖ **Collaborating with others**

- advisory, support, co-ordination roles in teaching and supporting learning;
- leadership and management roles;
- working with colleagues to develop inclusive practice and ensure accessibility of learning for all students;
- contributing to academic collaborations with partner HEI(s);

❖ **Educational and staff development activity**

- providing advice or coaching to staff on different pedagogic practices or learning development and support practices
- mentor roles in professional development programmes for new and inexperienced staff;
- learning and teaching workshops/seminars;
- related publications/documents;
- supervising the development of teaching assistants and research students in their learning support or teaching roles;
- creating and sharing relevant CPD or learning resources and materials internally and externally;

❖ **Leadership, management and organisational roles within an institutional or wider higher education context**

- learning and teaching/quality enhancement committees;
- programme design, approval and review process;
- quality assurance roles and responsibilities;
- contributing to the development of strategy related to supporting learning and teaching;
- leading projects/initiatives which have contributed to enhanced student learning or support;

Introduction

My professional background is librarianship; I am an imaginative and capable leader and a mentor. My role is one of empowerment; both in terms of my underlying professional values to facilitate access to knowledge, and as a leader and mentor. Central to my core values is the belief that education is a privilege that not all have equal access to and those that do, do not start on equal footing. Developing the skills to locate, access, evaluate and manage information in all forms goes some way to provide the scaffolding needed to succeed in higher education, in employment and as a global citizen, regardless of background **(V2)**. It is for this reason that I embarked on a career in librarianship, first developing a specialist knowledge of legal research skills and then moving into posts in education where I was specifically designing services that support learners in developing the digital and information literacy skills needed to thrive in education and beyond **(V4)**. As a leader in this area, I am in a position to develop and co-ordinate student-centred support services that impact directly on teaching and learning. I have managed people for over a decade and in this time I have developed my skills in mentoring and supporting my team members; providing inspiration, vision and influencing their professional practice to better support teaching and learning **(K1)**.

Leadership and management journey

My leadership journey began 10 years ago, progressing from managing operational services as Deputy Head of Libraries to leading a more specialist area as Head of Academic Services from 2016. Embracing a growth mindset, I continuously reflect on my leadership style and seek opportunities for personal development. I have attended several leadership programmes including the Advance HE Transition to Leadership programme and the Academi Wales Senior Leadership experience **(A5)**. Engaging in workshops on personality types, such as Myers-Briggs, has enhanced my adaptability as a leader **(A5)**. Recognizing my inclination towards logical thinking, I've tempered my feedback style **(A3)**. Building trust through honesty and openness has been pivotal in my relationships with my team and my natural enthusiasm has been beneficial. I have deliberately developed my active listening skills, encouraging a culture of feedback and taking a coaching approach to decision making and problem solving **(A4)**.

My current post emerged from the merger of UWTSD with Swansea Metropolitan University and the subsequent restructure of the whole library; almost every existing post disappeared, and a new structure implemented. Having successfully applied for this more senior post, my first challenge was to unify my new team of academic librarians, who had been doing similar roles, independently of each other and in vastly different ways for a long time **(K2)**. My view was that there was no parity of experience for students, and my team were missing key opportunities to raise the profile of their work and collaborate within the wider institution. Upon getting to know my team members, I discovered that although they had been working quite independently, they'd had no authority to make decisions beyond daily activities and lacked support for new ideas which meant there was little opportunity for innovation or even basic development of services. To address this, I provided opportunities for them to explore new initiatives and encouraged teamwork. The projects we've completed and the positive team culture reflect this success **(A4, V1)**.

My vision for what became the InfoSkills programme was a structured curriculum, broken down into clear parts and delivered by a various staff, in their own way, with shared learning outcomes **(A1)**. This initiative brought my team together and fostered a creative environment. By being open to my team's ideas and approaches, listening to their experiences and challenges and providing gentle guidance, I've been able to guide them towards a clearer understanding of their role in teaching and learning, shared goals and a culture of reflection and continuous improvement **(K3)**. This was confirmed by my team members when, in 2022, as part of one of my leadership courses, I undertook a 360 degree feedback exercise. Responses from my team highlighted that I am highly affiliative and have high organizational awareness and that this is instrumental in supporting my colleagues and facilitating effective collaboration. Understanding the intricacies of our organization allows me to navigate processes efficiently and align new ideas with long term strategy. This type of 360 exercise also reinforces a culture of feedback, from the top down, which can only add to the feeling of trust I have developed with my colleagues at all levels **(V1, A3, A2)**.



As a result, we launched the rebranded InfoSkills programme, offering a clearer and more defined service. Skills delivery has steadily increased across all academic areas since its introduction **(A1, A2)**.

Data-informed leadership

I recognise that I am a logical and strategic person by nature and I use a variety of sources of data to inform my team's work so that we can understand the environment we are working within. This includes digital capabilities and experience data from JISC, survey responses and student demographic data **(V4)**. I also collect data about my team's activities and all this supports me in planning and developing services and resultingly, on demonstrating the impact of my team's work on teaching and learning and the student experience **(A3, K5)**. Proving impact to senior stakeholders is always a challenge, however it is crucial to be able to influence upwards and advocate for the work we do both on behalf of those doing it and those we're doing it for i.e. our students, so that we can continue doing it. Therefore bringing a culture of measuring and reviewing performance has been a priority for me **(V3)**.

After the restructuring in 2016, one of my first commitments was to implement centralised recording of staff activities and this allowed me to quantify our teaching efforts across the merged institution comprehensively; identifying areas of high and low activity, and distribution of staff time. I then used this data with my team, adding their observations and helping them to identify some data-informed objectives, both individual and team, that would help us plan forward **(K5, A3)**. I have a strong interest in data manipulation and visualisation and have taught myself to use excel to an advanced level and more recently, PowerBI, a statistical package that helps you to transform and visualise data **(K2, K4, A5)**. By doing this, I have been able to continuously develop and streamline our data collation methods for the entire team as well as making the analysis more efficient and the data easier to share.

It seems to be well accepted that students who use the library outperform those who don't (Cox & Jantti, 2012), however for some reason there is less acceptance of the assertion that more time developing 'library' skills leads to better outcomes despite there being plenty of examples of research supporting these links (Streatfield & Markless, 2008). So as long as I have worked at UWTSD, I have wanted to demonstrate the link between skills development, student retention and academic success at our own institution in order to more clearly demonstrate that by increasing the quantity and quality of academic and digital skills development opportunities we offer to students as part of their programme of study, we are directly impacting on their ability to succeed in education. We are also reinforcing our students' sense of belonging to the University community by making support services more visible and available, ensuring students are more likely to stay on their programme (Pedler et al, 2021) **(V3)**. Over time, I have worked to improve the data we collect and I pioneered a more sophisticated method with a colleague which has allowed us to collect more individual level data and link it to the central student record system and HR system, taking us several steps closer to being look at tangible links. **(V2, V4, K6)**. However just by using the data we currently collect and comparing it to other institutional data sets, I have been able to highlight clear links to various survey results and student satisfaction levels and regularly feed this data into the academic committee structure with it being discussed and referred to at the highest levels of the institution, leading to greater recognition of the work and better academic engagement. I have also used it to identify areas of need and have co-ordinated new services and projects that are explicitly aimed at increasing the availability of key skills support **(K6, A3)**.

Developing Student Skills

One such example of this is our Online InfoSkills project. The shift to online learning, accelerated by the pandemic, necessitated another re-evaluation of our skills programme almost overnight, as was the case for most HE institutions (Turnbull et al, 2021). However long before the pandemic, I had recognised the limitations of traditional face-to-face delivery; feedback via the Committee structure was that academic staff were struggling to make time to give over whole sessions to us and we were also failing to offer the same to students who were not on campus regularly **(K5)**. My work to introduce the InfoSkills programme had also led to an increase in demand over a period of 5 years and my team were beginning to struggle to meet this. I was very certain that providing an alternative way to access our curriculum at any time of day or night, from anywhere, would provide a more



equitable experience for students who work, have caring responsibilities, live in another time zone, have additional learning needs or are neurodiverse. It would also increase capacity within the team in the longer term, without additional staffing resources. **(A3, V1, V2, K2).**

I had explored what was done in other organisations and the available technologies and this led to me being asked to lead on a project to set up an instructional design team for the institution at the beginning of the pandemic, including procuring an e-learning solution **(A5, V4)**. This experience gave me access to both the resources and skills I needed to champion the development of asynchronous content with my team **(K4)**. I was initially met with resistance; my team did not understand why we would want to do it and what the purpose would be. By this point, 2 years on, my team members are the biggest advocates of this work and have created almost all of the modules we jointly identified, with real commitment to the project. I recently asked one of my senior team members how this had happened and she said I had 'seen that it could be bigger and better' and had sold that vision to my team over time **(K3, A4)**.

This was not a small project and two years later we are on the final phases of the original plan. It encompasses 16 short courses containing 3 for 4 units each, completed using a full instructional design process including writing, review, evaluation and UX testing. I have worked closely with members of my team to help individual team members develop the skills needed to undertake this work and grow their confidence and in 2022, I was able to embed some of the content my team had created into the Institution's Welcome and Induction which was a great boost for team members **(A1, A2)**. A colleague and I also did a piece of work to compile a timeline for skills provision to support academic staff in knowing what needed to be done when and helping us give clarity over when this needed to be face to face and when the online modules could be used. I also involved my team in these decisions which helped them see where the new online modules would be able to help free up time and prioritise my team's expertise **(K2)**. An additional benefit is that I have access to full learning analytics that can be used to examine the learning experience and add to the data we already collect and we will also be undertaking a UX project to examine user experience later this academic year, adding crucial qualitative feedback from students about the learning experience **(V3)**. Although this project is still very much in progress, we have been nominated for an internal Teaching and Learning award for this project and have received positive feedback from academic staff. An example of feedback from one programme director is: "[Online] InfoSkills has supported changes being made in teaching practice on an academic skills module to make content and tasks more manageable for students by breaking them down into smaller steps than was previously the case. We have been able to select parts of InfoSkills that directly relate to a session's aims and direct students to them as an alternative way of receiving and processing content or for extension or revision." **(K5, A4)**.

Supporting a diverse workforce

I feel strongly about Librarianship as a profession and about the value it adds to education and to society as a whole and I have reflected at length on my role as a leader in safeguarding the future of my profession **(K1)**. One aspect of this is around supporting emerging talent and ensuring the profession is representative and accessible by influencing recruitment practices. There are several pieces of work that have been done by the profession, such as the CILIP Workforce Mapping Surveys (Reddington, 2023), the SCONUL Report on BAME staff experiences (Ishaq & Hussein, 2019) and the SCONUL EDI benchmarking data project (White & McLaren, 2022). What these have shown is that the profession is 96.7% white (SCONUL, 2022, p.9) which is not representative of society let alone our student populations; the educational requirements are a financial and socio-economic barrier and the profession is seen as being very middle class (CILIP, 2023) **(V1, V2)**. Crucially, if our workforce is not representative of our student body, we lack the experiences and perspectives within our teams to develop services and support that matter to our students and impact positively on their learning experience.

I am responsible for recruitment within my team so I decided I would reexamine our current practices through an EDI lens and did a significant amount of reading around this subject to learn more **(A5, V3)**. The initial outcome of this was that I started revising job descriptions completely; looking at the terminology, considering any unconscious bias in the way they were written and considering the educational requirements and the other ways a candidate might meet those requirements **(V1, V2)**. I then went on to consider the interview process.



Traditional recruitment processes are a particular problem for neurodiverse applicants (Palumbo, 2022) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Yougov, 2017) so I changed the interview format; moved away from asking for presentations towards more practical applications of knowledge, I also started giving the candidates the interview questions in advance to allow time for reflection **(K5, V1)**. This approach has been successful in that we appointed candidates that we may not have otherwise. Feedback from candidates has reinforced our commitment to this approach, for example we were told that: “it was really uplifting as someone with chronic illnesses/disabilities to see that not only are you aware of issues and barriers but are taking positive steps to create a more inclusive workplace.” As a result of this work, other teams within the library have now adopted some of these practices. There was a certain hesitancy to changing established practices that are seen as being the domain of HR, however upon seeing the positive outcomes we experienced, colleagues were reassured and have embraced this **(V2, V3, K6)**.

Beyond my immediate workplace, a colleague and I were invited to present the work we had done at two conferences; one for NHS professionals and another for a regional body for librarians. We were able to share the outcomes of this work also and it facilitated interesting discussion and commitments from colleagues to try similar exercises **(A4, A5)**. Empowered by this, I successfully applied to join the SCONUL Organisational Development group. SCONUL is the professional association for academic and research libraries in the UK and Ireland and library directors and CEOs are generally invited to join their sub-groups so this was a great honour to have my application accepted. As part of that group I am working on a stream for library higher level apprenticeships which will provide an alternative route into the profession for those without a degree. I am one of 5 people on this group, leading the work for the whole sector **(V4)**.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my librarianship and leadership journey reflects a deep commitment to fostering an inclusive, creative, and data-informed environment. My influence on my team has been transformative; I’ve empowered individuals to take ownership of their roles, encouraged their creativity, and fostered a culture of continuous improvement. My data-driven approach has allowed us to measure our impact and continuously adapt to better serve our students. Furthermore, my efforts to diversify the profession through inclusive recruitment practices and work with SCONUL demonstrate my commitment to making librarianship more representative and accessible so that we can continue to make an impact on teaching and learning in the future.

Guidance on Case Studies

Your case studies should clearly demonstrate an integrated and reflective approach to academic practice that incorporates research, scholarship and/or professional practice which:

- have had a significant impact upon the co-ordination, support, supervision, management and/or mentoring of others (whether individuals and/or teams), in relation to learning and teaching
- demonstrate your sustained effectiveness in relation to learning and teaching and that you meet the criteria for Senior Fellowship

In choosing your Case Study themes, you might choose to focus on particular aspects of your work. Some ideas to prompt thinking include:

❖ **Developing quality enhancement**

- ways you interact with others to ensure appropriate alignment of teaching, learning and assessment practices;
- how you ensure that student learning within the context of your responsibilities is enriched by disciplinary and pedagogic research, scholarship and professional practice (your own and that of others);
- ways you have fostered dynamic approaches to learning and teaching through creativity and innovation.

❖ **Supporting other colleagues**

- how you have supported other colleagues to enhance their practices;
- specific examples of how you have enhanced academic practice through coordinating/managing others;
- your roles in learning and teaching projects and initiatives at departmental, institutional or in the wider HE context;
- course and programme development, review and revalidation.

❖ **Sustained engagement with educational and staff development**

- staff development activities you have facilitated (informal and formal) that enhance your colleagues' abilities to meet the requirements of the UKPSF;
- how your contributions have promoted the student learning experience through professional development of staff under your influence and guidance e.g. through informal or formal mentoring arrangements;
- how you have disseminated your knowledge and skills in teaching and supporting learning to audiences both within and external to your institution.

❖ **Evaluation of academic practice**

- steps you have taken to develop your own practice and how you have used your own experience to enable others to reflect on and critique their own practice;
- how you support, encourage and implement evaluation processes designed to enhance the student learning experience.

Case Study One

Implementing an approach to developing the digital skills of staff and students.

Digital skills, an area I am passionate about, enhance employability (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2019), improve learning outcomes (JISC, 2015), enhance teaching (Bates, 2019), and increase efficiency (JISC, 2023). They are crucial in promoting participation in education and global citizenship **(V2)**. In 2021 I created a team to support the digital capabilities strand of the new Digital Strategy (UWTSD, 2021), with the aim of developing a digital skills centre supporting staff and students, a digital resources knowledgebase and promoting use of the JISC Digital Skills Framework to provide a benchmark for institutional skills levels **(A1)**. I was given one year to implement this and prove its impact.

Having led similar projects previously **(K1)**, this case study demonstrates my impact in implementing and leading this work. Digital Skills is a broad area, encompassing six key areas defined by JISC (2022b). Given the diverse learners we support, the project's scope was also broad. I had already researched what was provided elsewhere and felt that I could produce something that was better, and more focussed on the user and their journey **(A4)** so I had a clear idea of what I wanted to achieve and how. Although my leadership style is generally affiliative and coaching, I took a directive approach initially, breaking the project down into clear steps for my team. I created opportunities for my team members to identify and develop relationships with key stakeholders, structuring the new team so that individuals were aligned to specific academic and professional areas. I also leveraged my membership of UWTSD's Blended Learning Leadership group to undertake research into digital skills confidence amongst academic staff **(V1, V3)**. I designed a survey followed by some semi-structured interviews which I assigned to members of my team and coached them through the process of planning the interviews, encouraging them to apply empathy and open mindedness to the conversations **(A2, V2, K3)**.

Evidence-informed approaches were key to helping my team to focus on key priorities. I identified skills gaps and preferred training methods; for example academic staff indicated that they prefer asynchronous training routes in their own time and organised group training sessions **(V3, K3)**. Once I had led my team to this discovery, they were able to better understand what was needed and I guided them to use those gaps to structure a year-long staff development programme and set them on the path to designing and creating asynchronous learning routes using our VLE **(A1, A2, A4, K4)**.

I have always maintained a good level of professional knowledge and awareness via regular attendance at conferences and training events. I have also received excellent support from JISC which led me to join some new professional networks and communities of practice online **(A5)**. For this project, I sought out others in similar roles and so far, have built links with Aberystwyth University, University of Southampton, Leeds University and Abertay University **(V4, K1)**. To support the development of my team, I reflected on how they might benefit from this network and this has directly impacted on their practice **(A2)**. For example, I arranged for them to be invited to observe a student-facing session delivered by colleagues at another institution. They were overwhelmingly positive about the experience, adopting some of the teaching strategies that they had observed in order to improve **(A4, K5)**. I invited another external colleague from a large HE Institution to speak to them about her journey in doing similar work over the last few years and this also gave them further opportunity to discuss with someone who has done a similar role for much longer **(V4, A3, K3, K6)**. I have also ensured that each member of my team has some kind of externality in their role, and there are a number of internal and external groups that I identified and asked line managers to discuss with and assign staff to, dependent on the interests they had expressed **(V4)**.

For my own development, I attended the Academi Wales Senior leadership experience programme which helped me to further evaluate my leadership style **(A5, K6)**. For example, I am aware that I have a tendency to use a pacesetter style where results are expected and that although this gets things done, in the longer term this can burn people out **(K3)**. As part of the programme, I received some executive coaching and consequently I applied

coaching models like GROW to improve team performance **(K5, A5)**. This helped my senior team to find solutions to some of the performance issues they were experiencing with some team members. They found this approach so useful that they applied it to the wider digital skills team and this has become a longer-term change to the way we manage meetings where we theme the meetings to allow time to discuss, reflect on and explore different topics and issues **(A3, A4, K2, K3)**. One of the things that came out of those meetings were an informal peer observation process **(K5)**.

JISC were impressed with the work we did; particularly how we engaged with staff and students in creating our offer. As a result they asked us to be one their case studies so as to further share what we had done with the wider community, and this is now hosted on their website (JISC, 2022a) **(A5)**. I also presented at DigiFest 2023; a large UK-wide conference organised by JISC which is one of the key events for people working in the digital arena in higher education. This resulted in requests to share our work with other institutions, many of whom I met with subsequently. For example, a colleague in a similar role to mine said: 'Sarah's presentation at Digifest was about the rollout of the tool at UWTSD and both she and her colleague had some great insights into the process'; she asked if I would be willing to meet with her team to share approaches. The success of my DigiFest presentation also influenced my colleagues and led to one of my team also presenting on this work at a UCISA conference **(K1, V4)**.

The Open University (OU) included our work in their project on Supporting Hybrid Working and Digital Transformation in Wales, where I was interviewed on camera for inclusion. The project delivered a series of digital assets and resources and was made available via the Open University's learning platforms (OU, 2022) which are aimed at promoting participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners by making advice and resources available for free **(V2)**. The lead for the project at the OU said: "I love your DigiCentre, and tell most people I work with and afar about it." She has since been in touch to ask for advice on the OUs development of a digital skills platform **(K1, V4)**.

In terms of impact, I used UX exercises (Priestner, 2021) to observe and improve student interactions with our digital platforms, a technique I have used for previous projects **(K1)**. I arranged with the Student Union to find student volunteers from a broad demographic, developed UX exercises with my team which they then undertook with the volunteers. By observing how students interact with our online offer we were able to obtain feedback on their impact as well as identify where improvements were needed **(K6, A4, K5)**. Examples of student feedback included these: "The DigiCentre has all the answers to everything you can't do" and "It's been very helpful for my assignments. I will definitely recommend it". Feedback has enabled my team to compile a list of recommendations for suggested changes and improvements to our digital platforms which I am reviewing and will take forward with them at a later date **(A3, K4, V3)**.

I also use a variety of quantitative data to show impact and to identify areas for improvement **(K5)**. For example, in the last year we have achieved around 700 responses to the JISC Discovery tool from students alone. Prior to this, there were around 20 completed in the period between 2018 and 2022 so as a direct consequence of the strategic approach I implemented, we have access to data that tells us how confident students are in a variety of digital tasks. One of the most impactful aspects of this is that we can monitor improvement over time which in turn gives us some insight into the effectiveness of our teaching which we can then explore further using qualitative data **(K5)**. We also know that as a result, over 2500 staff and students have attended our training with more than 900 students making use of asynchronous content in the areas most needing improvement. Consequently, I can continue to take an evidence informed approach to developing my team and our strategic approach. One of the most gratifying outcomes of this work was that all the employment contracts for the staff we recruited to undertake this work were made permanent so have been able to embed digital skills support into areas such as the student induction process and are working towards doing the same with staff inductions **(A4, A1, K3, V1)**.

Case Study Two

Introducing online reading lists

Reading lists had long been a problematic area for our institution, with no link between list creation and the library. Academic staff often did not order the resources on their reading lists for various reasons leading to negative student feedback about resource availability. As part of the Welsh Higher Education Libraries Forum (WHELF) the University jointly procured reading list software in 2018, adopting it during the 2019-20 academic year. This software streamlines list creation, enhances resource discovery, accessibility, and management, and provides tools to increase collaboration between library, academic staff and students. This case study outlines my influence on the decision to procure it and my approach as project lead towards introducing the new system; not as a technical endeavour but as a catalyst for cultural change, resulting in widespread enhancement of academic practice and the student experience **(K6)**.

I had advocated for better reading list management for as long as I have worked at UWTSD. As the software became more widely used and more affordable, I was able to add to the case for procuring it ourselves **(A5)**. We were one of the last HEIs in Wales to adopt it; our relative size and instability due to mergers delayed adoption. We were also the only institution adopting reading list software for the first time, rather than just moving over from a different system. Student feedback in the NSS and our internal surveys consistently included complaints about resource availability such as “The selection of books in the library need to be improved”; “Have more books that are on our reading lists”; “More essay specific books available”; “More range of books, and more of each copy” (UWTSD Learning Resources Survey, 2018). A few years previous to UWTSD adopting a reading list solution, I had pioneered a new service called ‘Need More’, bringing together our existing resource request services under one set of workflows to streamline staff processes and better monitor the requests. The service made it easier for students and staff to request resources and began to capture why the request were being made. It transpired that student requests for reading list items was one of the largest categories, at around 20%, and this, combined with the qualitative data provided key evidence to support the need for reading list software **(V3, A4)**.

In my experience, Academics often perceive reading lists as an administrative task rather than a central tool for teaching and learning. Research supports this noting that “reading lists are perceived as more important by students than by lecturers” (McGuinn et al, 2017). Research also shows that students find long lists overwhelming and off-putting (Brewerton, 2014), which is corroborated by own students’ feedback (UWTSD UX exercise, 2022). However, at their best, reading lists can be an important tool to students in starting to develop their information skills as they provide a starting point for exploring key literature and an example of best practice in presenting references (Siddall & Rose, 2014).

I was hopeful that with the right approach, reading list software could support this ideal. In preparation, I had spoken to people in similar roles at other Welsh HEIs for advice. A key piece of advice affirmed my instincts; we should avoid a fast roll-out measured purely by number of reading lists added, and concentrate instead on academic practice and quality. One Institution required 100% adoption within one academic year, but now struggles with outdated and unused lists due to lack of academic ownership. I set a target of 70% adoption within 3 years, which I felt would allow sufficient time for change to embed whilst also demonstrating progress, and I implemented measures to ensure and assess this **(K1, V3, A5, K3)**.

My project plan considered relationships and existing culture, included early communication such as presentations in 2018-19 on reading list best practice. I identified early adopters during this time who later worked with my team to develop a training approach, working with one area at a time to ensure sufficient support. Initial meetings with academic directors addressed cohort-specific factors **(K2,V1)**. One of the biggest challenges was that the Covid pandemic hit just after we began the rollout and I had to lead my team to adapt to this. Online reading lists became more important than ever in an online teaching environment so we adapted delivery methods but maintained the timeline and project ethos **(V4)**.



Although monitoring uptake and sharing this data, I emphasized academic staff responsibility for creating and updating lists, highlighting the benefits as I felt we would be able to ensure quality by making sure that academic staff had the relevant knowledge and skills. By January 2021, we had trained over 200 members of academic staff and 30% of the Institution's reading lists were online. By January 2022 we were up to 60% and by January 2023, 70%. Covering around 2000 modules, this represented significant work. My team offered additional support to address backlogs, and I listened to feedback to understand challenges **(A3, A4)**. One of the barriers we faced was a misconception that lecturers were not allowed to update reading lists without them going through the validation process again. It is likely that this had once been the case, but it hadn't been so for many years and there were groups of staff across the institution that were reluctant to take our word for it. One of the key benefits of an online reading list platform is that it allows lists to be dynamic; they can be updated and republished immediately and as often as the creator would like and they are immediately linked to the appropriate resources in the library catalogue. I did not want out of date lists coming over as they were or remaining in this state and wanted to persuade those reluctant academic staff that it was OK to embrace their reading lists as part of their teaching. I used my membership of the Academic Standards Committee to address this. Having raised the impact of current perceptions, I suggested some changes to the Academic Quality Handbook; explicitly stating that reading lists in validation documentation were indicative only and that the live lists should be created after validation and updated regularly outside of this process. These changes were made centrally and they continue to help us in encouraging good practice **(V6)**. By way of illustration, in the 21-22 academic year, 91 out of 1014 lists were updated (9%), however the following year 245 out of 1385 lists were updated (18%) and this academic year 251 out of 1619 lists have already been updated by mid-May (16%) and we predict this will overtake the previous year significantly by the end of the academic year.

We improved the experience for academic staff and changed the way they engage with library resources. The new system automated book ordering and CLA digitisation requests, previously onerous manual tasks for academic staff. Feedback consistently evidenced these tasks were barriers to ordering reading list items due to time constraints. Now, orders for items on reading lists are generated automatically, increasing annual orders from 341 in 2018-19 to 1656 in 2022-23. Similarly, digitised material usage grew from 374 items in one academic area in 2018-19 to 620 items across the Institutes. Consequently, academic staff spend less time on admin and more time on the lists and I have observed active engagement with the lists over a prolonged period, from both list creators (staff) and list users (students). As well as increased orders and consistent staff logins, most lists added since 2019 have been updated within the last two years. One member of academic staff told us "I like that I can find past readings lists and update them with a new name for the new version of the module. I like that I can associate them to a module. I like that when i search for a book, it brings up a lot of similar options - it feels smart... I love them!".

Crucially, negative feedback from students about resource availability has almost stopped. The number of 'Need More' requests for reading list items reached zero in 2022-23 and our NSS score for learning resources has increased. Around the pandemic, our NSS score for learning resources suffered particularly, hitting a low of 63% in 2021 but increasing to 84.5% by 2023 as the online resource lists took effect. Even pre-pandemic, in 2019, our NSS score was at 80.5%.

Post-pandemic we've observed a change in student behaviour in relation to resources. Initial lack of access to print resources during lockdown caused dissatisfaction, but our NSS score recovered significantly while print loans remained low. In 2018-19 print loans were at 60k per year across all libraries, decreasing to 8K at the pandemic's peak in 20-21, and only reaching 20k but by 2022-23. Conversely, use of electronic resources has increased hugely. Ebook views have increased steadily from 42k annual views pre-pandemic to 62k in 20-21, and to 102k by 22-23, likely due to easier discovery of electronic items via the library.

To obtain qualitative feedback from student users, I initiated a UX exercise. Observations of students using the platform found that all consulted some form of online reading list and most used them as a springboard for further research. Accessibility received particularly positive feedback. The software allows adding various formats, not just books and journals, leading to lists with more audiovisual material and varied formats. Students appreciated



that lists were linked directly to the online catalog, making it easier to see available formats and choose based on personal preference **(A4, V2, K4)**.

This project revolutionised the way staff and students engage with learning resources, impacting on every single programme of study across the institution **(K6)**. My advocacy and leadership have heavily influenced its success and continue to do so.



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SECTION THREE: Referees

Your application must be accompanied by **two references** from persons who are in a position to comment on your teaching and learning practices and achievements.

The function of your Referees is to provide an informed peer review of your eligibility for Senior Fellow, using their knowledge of your work and the context in which you teach and/or support learning. Referees are expected to **authenticate your application** by commenting directly on the content of your application and to make additional, relevant comments, as they wish.

Referees should be experienced staff and be able to comment knowledgeably, and from first-hand experience, on your current role and any other relevant activities recently undertaken. **At least one of your Referees should either be a Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA)**, or an appropriate experienced member of staff working for a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI). All Referees need to be familiar with the UKPSF.

Referees should be provided with a copy of the Guidance Notes for Referees – please speak to your mentor regarding this document.

First Referee:	
Name	Alison Harding
Job Title	Executive Head of Library and Learning Resources
Fellowship Status	Working towards PFHEA
Institute/Centre/Discipline/Unit	Library and Learning Resources
Email address	a.harding@uwtsd.ac.uk
In what capacity can this individual comment on your professional practice?	
Alison has been my line manager for the last 13 years throughout all my time working at UWTSD. She has directly observed and guided me throughout all the projects detailed in this application.	

Second Referee:	
Name	John Dalling
Job Title	Head of Collections
Fellowship Status	None
Institute/Centre/Discipline/Unit	Library and Learning Resources
Email address	j.dalling@uwtsd.ac.uk
In what capacity can this individual comment on your professional practice?	
John and I have worked together as peers throughout my time working for UWTSD. We have worked collaboratively on a number of projects over the years and he has observed my professional practice closely over these years.	

SECTION FOUR: Declaration

Please sign and date in the box below to confirm that the application you are submitting is your own work.

Signature	
Date	24/7/24

GDPR on data sharing with ADVANCE HE

Following the implementation of GDPR you should be aware that following successful recognition at UWTSD, personal data including your name and email address will be supplied to Advance HE. This is in order to trigger your fellowship registration and certificate being recorded on their MyAdvanceHE database. <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/my-academy-manage-your-higher-education-academy-experience>

Advance HE will make use of this data in the course of providing their Accreditation Services to UWTSD, and potentially in any reviews they might carry out of our accredited provision.

By submitting your coursework and appendices you are confirming you agree to this data sharing.