

## CALRG Conference

### Topic: Professional learning

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**Title:** Achieving professional learning and improving students experience at the OU through Applaud

#### Abstract

Increasingly universities and professional accredited bodies (e.g. in nursing) have adopted professional recognition such as the Fellowship of the Higher Education Academic (HEA) offered by the Advance HE. This is one of the strategies to offer professional development and recognition to staff in teaching and supporting learning roles. It is also the case for the Open University (OU). Applaud is The Open University's institutional scheme for Accrediting & Promoting Professional Learning & Academic Development. Applaud is a fully online scheme and offers individuals the opportunity to gain external recognition as an Associate Fellow, Fellow or Senior Fellow of the HEA. The fellowship category will depend on an applicant's role, experience and responsibilities in teaching and supporting learning. Every four years the scheme is re-accredited by the Advance HE (previously known as HEA). As we prepared for the accreditation of the next period, which started on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 (2020-2024), the research team has conducted an evaluation of the previous scheme through an online survey that was sent to over 450 participants who successfully gained their HEA fellowship through Applaud, with 108 valid responses.

Preliminary analysis of this data was used to inform both changes in the scheme and the second stage of data collection, which included online interviews with some of the survey participants who demonstrated interest in being interviewed. This second stage was funded by the Praxis Scholarship Centre in WELS. Fourteen interviews were conducted, audio recorded and transcribed. In this presentation we will share some of the key findings of the Applaud evaluation, including participants experiences in the scheme, the usefulness of the online support provided, and the impact of receiving HEA fellowship on their professional learning, teaching practices and students' experiences.