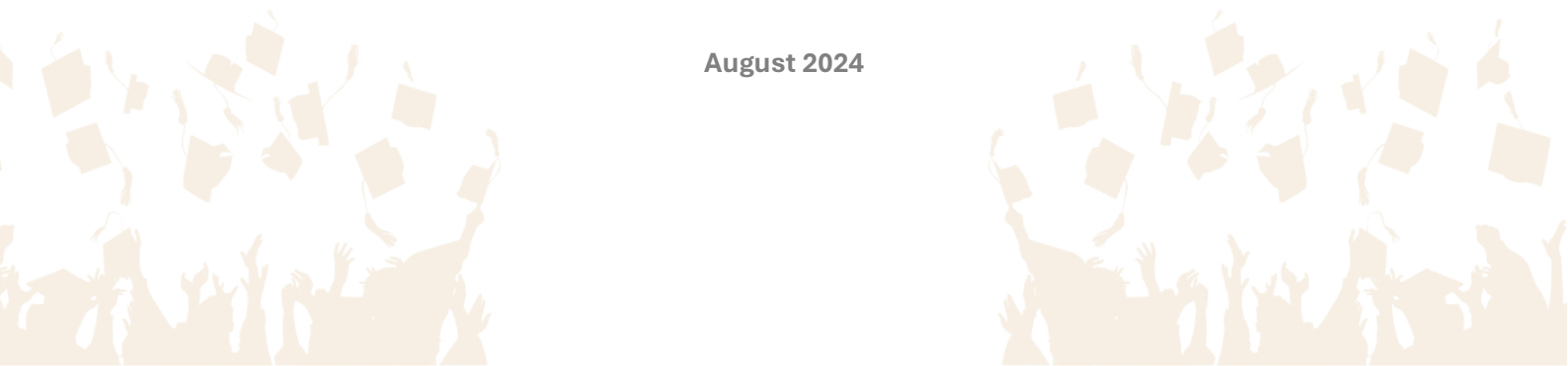# OER Africa

**OER Africa CPD Frameworks
Academics**

August 2024

What Is a Continuous Professional Development Framework and Why Should We Use One?

Continuous Professional Development

Continuous Professional Development[1] (CPD) is 'the term used to describe the learning activities professionals engage in to develop and enhance their abilities' (The CPD Certification Service, nd). In the context of CPD in higher education, we can use the following definition: 'professional learning that results in changes to knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes'. (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017).

CPD Framework

A CPD framework can be used across all disciplines but is commonly used in the context of education. It serves as a planning guide that supports the career development of higher education professionals. Although CPD can occur in an ad hoc and informal manner, having a structured framework ensures that professional development is more intentional and effective. Essentially, a framework will assist in the planning process.

The three key drivers that most commonly increase the demand for CPD in higher education globally are:
- The massification and marketisation of higher education;
- The digitalisation of higher education; and
- The value of professional success for individual academics
(Inamorato, Gausas, Mackeviciute, Jotatutyte, & Martinaitis, 2019)

The same researchers identify barriers that discourage higher education professionals from participating in CPD, such as:
- Reluctance to renounce (teaching) practices with which they are familiar;
- The absence of incentives for teaching development in higher education institutions;
- Lack of time; and
- A lack of pedagogical expertise and institutional capacity to develop effective CPD schemes.

Our experience over the past decade at OER Africa is that ad hoc CPD, which relies on individuals participating voluntarily, has seen limited adoption. To encourage academics to participate in CPD, a clear pathway that maps out the full spectrum of skills and competences required for different audiences within higher education institutions is a possible way forward to encourage participation in CPD and to make it more purposeful.

One of three CPD frameworks we have developed is for academics. The other two are for academic librarians and senior management.

---

[1] Here we refer to Continuous Professional Development. It is also known as Continuing Professional Development.

The CPD Framework for Academics

The framework consists of domains and capability descriptors. **Domains** are areas of capability that we consider highly valuable for academics[2] to develop to ensure quality teaching and learning. There are 11 domains, of which OER Africa is developing four in detail (initially): Course Design, Materials Development, Facilitating Learning, and Effective Assessment and Feedback. Each domain contains **capability descriptors** that break the domain down into smaller units.

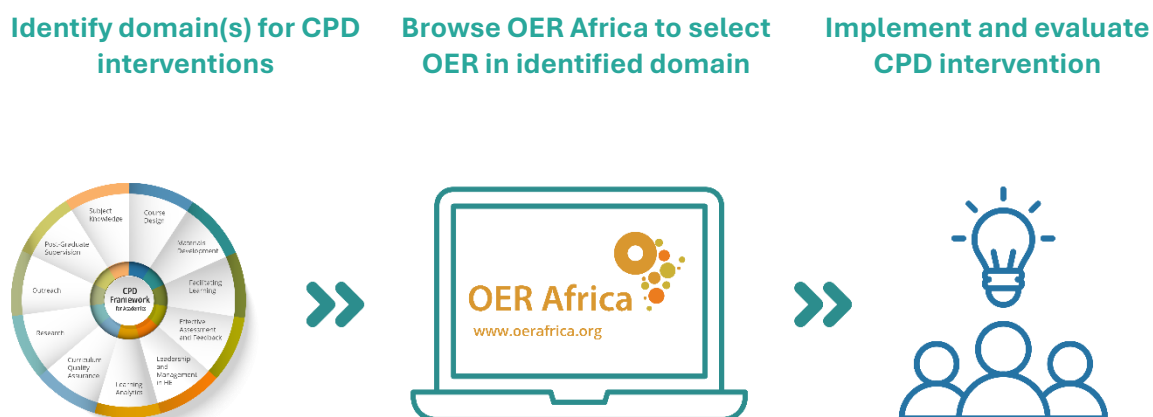*Figure 1   The CPD framework for academics*

Although we have identified 11 separate domains, they are interconnected and often overlap. For example, in the *Course Design* domain, there will be elements of *Assessment*, because one cannot design courses without considering assessment in the planning stage. Similarly, the pedagogical aspects of *Facilitating Learning* overlap with activity-based teaching and learning materials in the *Materials Development* domain.

---

[2] Academic is used here to mean an educationist presenting courses in a higher education institution, such as a lecturer

Framework Purpose

We envisage that the audience for the framework could include those responsible for managing CPD at the university, faculty, or departmental level; senior managers such as a Deputy Vice Chancellor or those within a Human Resources unit; and interested academics who wish to develop themselves professionally. The CPD framework is a valuable tool for those responsible for designing CPD strategies and activities for academics, developing CPD policies, and providing CPD resources to staff. The steps in using the framework are shown in Table 1 and summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2   Illustration of how an institution could use the CPD framework

Identify domain(s) for CPD interventions　　**Browse OER Africa to select OER in identified domain**　　**Implement and evaluate CPD intervention**

How to Use the Framework

We propose two ways for you or your institution to use the framework, but you are encouraged to adapt it to meet your specific needs.
- A university department may decide to conduct a workshop on assessment for its academic staff. It can narrow the focus by choosing one or more of the capability descriptors from the effective assessment and feedback domain in Table 2.
- An institution may wish to foreground some overarching themes for CPD based on their own context. For example, a university in southern Africa might focus on workplace skills, entrepreneurship, social justice, and inclusion. An institution could integrate the theme of workplace skills for example, into one or more of the domains in the framework.

In both cases, the organisers of the CPD could refer to Table 1 below *to plan* the professional development, then access resources from the OER Africa website to assist them *to implement* their intervention.

The following steps can be applied flexibly and do not need to be completed in sequence. You can adapt them based on the type of CPD interventions you plan to implement.

Table 1   Steps in using the CPD framework by an institution

Step	Description	Using the CPD framework and OER Africa CPD resources site
Develop CPD policy	Develop or review your CPD policy with the aim of creating an enabling environment for CPD in the institution.	
Assess needs and outcomes	Conduct a needs assessment by identifying the specific skills, knowledge, and competences that academics already have and need to develop.	Examples can be drawn from the capability descriptors in Table 2.
Determine relevant professional development domain areas	Determine the key domains for your CPD interventions, which can be identified through a needs analysis involving stakeholder consultation, such as with senior and executive management, or by benchmarking professional development domains against those of other institutions.	Identify domains from the CPD framework provided in Figure 1.
Plan your CPD interventions	When planning your CPD interventions, consider the available resources, including finances, and the timeline during which you wish to execute your plan.	Refer to Table 2 for details on four domains from the framework.
Go to the OER Africa CPD collections website	Based on the CPD interventions you wish to implement, choose appropriate CPD OER on which to base your activities.	Search the OER Africa website for relevant resources to use for the interventions.
Market your CPD interventions and incentivise your staff	Marketing your CPD interventions will help increase staff buy-in. Encourage participation by offering incentives such as recognition, research support, time off from regular teaching duties, and incorporating CPD participation into promotion criteria.	
Execute your CPD interventions	After planning, marketing and incentivising your CPD interventions, the next step is to execute or roll out the interventions.	Adapt (if necessary) and use resources on the OER Africa website.
Monitor and evaluate your CPD interventions	Monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure the interventions are effective and achieving the desired outcomes. The ultimate goal of a successful CPD intervention for academics is to enhance the learning experience for students.	Review against the capability descriptors in Table 2 to see the extent to which academics have learnt new knowledge and skills.

Four Key Domains from the CPD Framework for Academics

The four key domains that OER Africa is currently developing are shown in Table 2 below. For each domain, there are several capability descriptors that describe what an academic should be able to do. OER Africa is finding and making available openly licensed resources on its website that can be accessed and used by institutions to form the basis of CPD interventions. For example, if a faculty, department, or individual wants to find out about understanding the 'relationship between outcomes, activities and assessment', they will search keywords on the OER Africa website and access the resource(s) to use for themselves or with their academic staff. Where possible, the resources will be categorised at one of three levels (Foundation, Intermediate, or Advanced) to enable the CPD to be offered at the appropriate level for the participants.

Table 2   Four key domains within the CPD framework for academics

Domain	Capability descriptor. Academics can….
Course Design Planning of outcomes, learning resources, and content for a course or unit.	- Create a schedule for the design of a course. - Understand student profiles and context(s). - Develop purpose, goals, and learning outcomes for the course. - Select appropriate content. - Structure the content along a supportive learning pathway[3] that enables student-centred learning. - Choose the mode of delivery based on available technology. - Review appropriate resources and tools, including OER, to support learning, and identify gaps where materials need to be developed. - Align outcomes, activities, and assessment. - Choose assessment strategies that align with learning outcomes and course activities. - Ensure that the course design is reflected in the materials.
Materials Development Planning, development, and preparation of learning activities, learning resources and materials, for a course or unit.	- Follow materials development processes to support the course design. - Design context-appropriate materials. - Use and adapt OER to develop materials. - Develop activity-based and/or authentic teaching and learning materials that support students' learning. - Effectively use technology and resources to enhance differentiated and inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment, ensuring the materials meet diverse learning needs. - Integrate the assessment strategy into the materials. - Incorporate feedback from colleagues and students into the course design.
Facilitating Learning Mediating and facilitating content and resources guided by sound pedagogical practices.	- Provide a learning environment that supports students' academic and contextual needs. - Provide ongoing feedback to support teaching, learning, and assessment. - Facilitate and motivate students to take ownership of their own learning. - Apply a range of pedagogies appropriate to the mode of delivery (distance/blended/online) and how students learn.

---

[3] A learning pathway offers a clear structure for course content, serving as a 'storyline' or a series of 'stepping stones' that guides students to logically and systematically explore concepts, helping them build their knowledge and understanding.

Domain	Capability descriptor. Academics can….
	- Facilitate teaching and learning appropriate to the mode of delivery and class size. - Evaluate and improve their own practice and share with the wider community.
Effective Assessment and Feedback Designing and implementing assessment tasks that are aligned with learning outcomes and the provision of appropriate and timely feedback.	- Align assessment strategies to learning outcomes and course activities. - Appropriately integrate diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tasks, incorporating assessment *for*, *of*, and *as* learning - Provide meaningful and effective learning feedback during student assessment. - Integrate appropriate technology tools for assessment and feedback. - Implement authentic assessment strategies.

Works Cited

- The CPD Certification Service. (nd). What is Continuing Professional Development (CPD)? Retrieved from https://cpduk.co.uk/explained
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.
- Inamorato, A., Gausas, S., Mackeviciute, R., Jotatutyte, A., & Martinaitis, Z. (2019). *Innovating Professional Development in Higher Education: An Analysis of Practices*.