BIRMINGHAM CITY University

BCU PSF Application form – Fellow (D2)

Submit this application as one file (including referee statements and any other evidence relevant to your application), by email to psf@bcu.ac.uk

Name		**Date**	
Role/job title			
Faculty/School			

The application is to be within the allocated word count - please state your word count here 290
As you add text to this document, select the word count number above, right click to select Update Field, to automatically update the word count; alternatively insert a word count for the whole document, which should not exceed 3790 words (3500 for D2 plus existing text on this document). Do use a good standard of English and ensure that you have permission to name any individual referred to, otherwise the Panel may return your application. If you have any questions on these requirements, please contact your Faculty Lead (Fellowship).

Account of Professional Practice (APP)

For each Area of Activity (A1, 2, 3 and 4) provide a reflective commentary, incorporating all the Dimensions of Core Knowledge and Professional Values. Use around 700 words for each Area.

A4: Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance

As teaching and learning is by distance learning, I encourage all students to develop the ability to manage their own learning environment. This involves encouraging them to develop a realistic study plan, consider how they will embed time-management practices around study into their everyday lives and form regular links with other students in the group and with myself as their tutor. I also urge students to inform others in their lives of a need for their support (Simpson, 1998), particularly when 'the going gets tough' and to explain the importance of time and space in which to study [V1]. I believe this can be evidenced by students keeping to the study calendar and submission of timely assignments. As well as supporting others in constructing their personal learning environment and offering one-to-one support via telephone tutorials, I support students by developing other learner environments, which they may or may not choose to participate in – the face-to-face classroom tutorials in small groups and the online Moodle space, through on-line forum (TGF) discussions and tutorials in teaching rooms (Collaborate) [K4].

I promote attendance at tutorials by suggesting the benefits of peer support and collaboration and encourage students to participate in online discussions to develop different perspectives on topics; for example, by emailing students and posting messages to actively seek input to the tutorial agenda, publishing a programme well in advance and offering to answer queries beforehand [V2].

In business studies, engaging with the TGF was central to the learning outcomes and assessment strategy, with some tasks linked to marks for the summative assessment [K2]; it was therefore essential to see a learner's presence in the TGF at an early stage in the module not only as a retention check (Tinto, 1987), but an early check on ability and willingness to contribute. I was aware that learners within the group may have differing online skills and participate in diverse ways [V1], so it was important to shepherd weaker learners to the TGF (by email or 'phone) and support initial participation, by setting up the environment in a clear, simple format and respond promptly to postings. Some threads would be set up to encourage socialisation (Salmon, 2008), which would build a community and encourage further participation [V3], as subsequent tasks would ask for responses and learning was intended to take place through sharing thoughts on a topic [K3]. I also encourage learners to start their own threads and share relevant resources they have come across, that link to the topic being discussed; this is not only inclusive, but increases the breadth of materials available [K1]; for example, recent news articles on migrants have been very relevant to sociology themes.

In creating an effective face-to-face environment, as venues are not hosted within OU buildings, includes setting up the classroom by arranging furniture that will be most suitable for the activities that are planned (Knowles, 1984) - generally small group-work that requires dialogue [K2] and reducing barriers such as removing the 'teacher's desk'. I feel this environment can also best address the need for professional feedback, through observations provided by line management or peers, and this supports my own professional development by contributing to my reflections on evaluating my practice [K6]; for example, informal peer feedback was used at recent sociology day schools.
Although I support and guide learners academically and at times pastorally, I'm also aware of the need for boundaries, and that some students will benefit from being referred to specialist support (Carnell, 2007). I have opportunities to work with prisoners and learners with disabilities and these have helped develop my practices in more specialist areas, and have been a focus for my professional development.

I particularly make use of opportunities in the face-to-face environment to encourage questions from learners, as they that they may feel unable to ask elsewhere, or may lack the confidence to do so; for example, around careers information and qualification choices [V4], where I can offer general advice but also provide sources of further information and signpost to specialists. I also use this environment to gather feedback directly from students on my teaching practice [K5], providing simple feedback sheets to ask what has helped and what was perhaps of less use; this is invaluable for evaluating my teaching sessions.