The Reports of the 2010 National Teaching Fellows - A Synthesis

David Botterill
Contents

Section                                             Page

Executive summary                                   3

Introduction                                        4

Section one - Activities undertaken and the use of NTF grants 5
  1.1 Overview of the range of activities of NTFs      5
  1.2 Analysis of award expenditure                   5
  1.3 The impact of NTFs’ activities                  7
  1.4 The reach of NTFs’ activities                   7

Section two - Emergent themes in the sample of NTF reports 9
  2.1 Cross-cutting themes                            9
  2.2 Responding to changing roles in the learning and teaching environment 9
  2.3 Internationalisation of projects                9
  2.4 Personal and professional development          10
  2.5 Outreach and partnerships                       10
  2.6 Enhancing the curriculum and student learning   10

Section three - The personal value of a NTF award     10

Conclusion                                          11
Executive summary

A sample of 25 National Teaching Fellows (NTFs) final reports from the 2010 cohort are synthesised in a document containing an Introduction, and three sections: Activities undertaken and the use of NTF grants, Emergent themes in the sample of NTF reports, The personal value of a NTF award.

The 25 reports show that NTFs are engaging with a wide range of pressing concerns in higher education learning, teaching and assessment.

The self-assessment of the NTFs shows that their activities have had most impact in terms of raised awareness (RA - 38 percent) and increased understanding (IU - 44 percent).

In terms of the 'Reach' of impact, the proportions of activities considered by the NTFs to have impacted 'self' is highest at 30 percent, followed by roughly equal impact on colleagues (22 percent), students (20 percent), and institution (17 percent).

Five cross-cutting themes emerged from repeated detailed reading of the NTFs reports, they are:

- Responding to changing roles in the learning and teaching environment
- Internationalisation of projects
- Personal and professional development
- Outreach and partnership
- Enhancing the curriculum and student learning

Two categories of award spend, 'Travel, conference attendance, and subsistence' and 'ICT', accounted for just over half of grant expenditure.

A selection of unattributed quotes from the reports of the 2010 cohort of NTFs testify to the personal value of a NTF emphasising its contribution to career development, freedom and creativity, and long term influence.

Recommendations are made for improvements to the report format and on the targeted circulation of this report. A clear message in the reports, and one that should be taken up by institutional managers and learning and teaching developers, is that where management intervenes to create space around NTFs then they are very effective in delivering innovative projects.
Introduction

This report analyses the contents of a sample of 25 final reports submitted in December 2013 by the National Teaching Fellows of the 2010 NTFS cohort. The individual reports capture the activities of the NTFs over a three year period, and a self-evaluation of the impact their work has made. At the time of reporting NTFs within the sample held the following positions: Emeritus Professor, Professor, Director of Learning and Teaching, Head of Unit, Head of School, Programme Director, Senior Lecturer, and Learning Development Consultant.

Academic subjects represented by the sample NTFs included: Art and Design, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Dental Education, Education, English, Geography, Law, Management, Medical Education, Phonetics, Psychology, Sport and Exercise Science, and Veterinary Education. University executive staff within the sample held positions in Employability and Staff Development.

In Section Two of this report, the activities of the NTFs are reviewed. Each NTF was awarded £10,000 to support their fellowships and the reporting process requires evidence of the expenditure of the award. An analysis of expenditure is provided. Additionally, for each activity undertaken, the NTFs are asked to assess the:

1. Impact of the activity in terms of three categories of impact, raised awareness (RA), increased understanding (IU) or a change in practice and policy (CPP), and
2. Reach of the activity, assessed by whether the activity had an impact on yourself (1), your colleagues (2), your students (3), your institution (4), the HE sector (5).

Data are presented to show the overall distribution of grant expenditure and of the categories of Impact and Reach.

Section Three provides a thematic analysis of the activities of NTFs under five headings:

- Responding to changing roles in the learning and teaching environment
- Internationalisation of projects
- Personal and professional development
- Outreach and partnership
- Enhancing the curriculum and student learning

Section Four highlights the personal value of the NTF award through a selection of quotes taken from the NTFs’ reports. The individual reports communicate a collective sense that the awards create ‘space’ for experimentation in learning and teaching that would otherwise be crowded out by the everyday pressures of working in higher education.
Section one - Activities undertaken and the use of NTF grants

1.1 Overview of the range of activities of NTFs

The 25 reports show that NTFs are engaging with a wide range of pressing concerns in higher education learning, teaching and assessment. The responses to these challenges are inevitably shaped by the institutional roles and academic subject allegiances of the Fellows. Four NTF mini case studies, selected from the 2010 cohort, have been prepared to provide insight into the work of NTFs. The following selection of activities provides a taste of the wide range of topics and approaches in the sample of NTF reports:

- inter-professional communication in human and animal medicine
- the potential of digitised text and visual culture archives in learning and teaching in the humanities
- student engagement in the STEM subjects through novel approaches to teaching and learning, such as immersive (virtual) environments, and 'magic'
- promoting employability and sustainability across the higher education sector
- developing digitised support materials for complex learning in the physical and social sciences
- higher education outreach with minority groups and adult learners to engage civic society with complex and controversial contemporary philosophical and religious issues

Alongside these indicative, subject-bound, responses to pressing issues in the sector, NTFs in the sample have adopted a shared battery of research and dissemination mechanisms including: pedagogic research reviews, workshops on best practice, networking in academic subject communities, international study tours, publishing, conference attendance, international lecturing appointments, contributions to public policy, public debate, and exhibitions.

1.2 Analysis of award expenditure

Table 1 provides an overview of the use of the awards by the 25 NTFs in the sample. Financial data was reported in a variety of forms and in order to produce this table, allocations to one of nine expenditure categories was made by the author. Actual expenditure figures were rounded to the nearest £500 to simplify presentation.

As is to be expected the analysis of expenditure matches the activity analysis in section 1.1 above. Two categories of spend, 'travel, conference attendance, and subsistence' and 'information and communications technology (ICT)', accounted for just over half of the award expenditure. Twenty-two NTFs spent at least part of their award on 'Travel, conference attendance, and subsistence' with individual expenditure ranging from £1,500 to £8,000 with a mean spend of £3,500. Of the remaining three NTFs, two spent significant proportions of their award purchasing non-ICT equipment to support student learning. Dissemination activities in the form of internal departmental workshops and residential workshops accounted for approximately 20 percent of spend. Seven of the sample NTFs invested significant proportions of their awards on personal and professional development (PPD), ranging from £2,500 to £7,000, and this is further explored in the thematic analysis in Section 3 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NTF</th>
<th>Travel, conference and subsistence (£000's)</th>
<th>ICT (£000's)</th>
<th>PPD (£000's)</th>
<th>Workshops (£000's)</th>
<th>Research assistant (£000's)</th>
<th>Non-ICT materials (£000's)</th>
<th>Publications/exhibitions (£000's)</th>
<th>Research/Study residential (£000's)</th>
<th>Replacement teaching (£000's)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (000s)</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3 The impact of NTFs' activities

The proportions of activities considered by the NTFs to have Impact within the three defined categories are shown in Figure 1.

The self-assessment of the NTFs shows that their activities have had most impact in terms of raised awareness (RA - 38 percent) and increased understanding (IU - 44 percent).

1.4 The reach of NTFs' activities

In terms of the 'Reach' of impact, the proportions of activities considered by the NTFs to have impacted 'self' is highest at 30 percent, followed by roughly equal impact on colleagues (22 percent), students (20 percent), and institution (17 percent). The Y axis in Figure 2 represents the frequency of reach achieved by the NTFs' activities.
To gain a better understanding of how NTFs have reached their intended audiences, readers of this report are encouraged to look at the four NTF Case Studies that provide short accounts of individual NTFs’ experiences. For example, Alison Barton, University of Central Lancashire, reports that the activities she has undertaken in partnership with FE colleges have reached over 45 teacher educators and their many students. As one of her actions, Alison and her colleagues organised a conference on Action Research. Alison extended an invitation to first year students who, on returning to their colleges, were tasked to cascade what they had learnt to the next cohort of first year learners, thereby extending the reach and impact of her NTF.

In a similar vein, Dr Colin B Price, University of Worcester, emphasised how a direct impact on his own computing science students led to working in schools and colleges, thus extending the reach of his NTF. "As well as working on coding with my own undergraduates, I was fortunate to be able to work with students at schools. This became crucial following the government’s prioritization of “learning to code”. Thanks to two significant grants from the Google “Computing For High Schools” fund I was able to mount two “Google Symposia” and impact on the training of some forty or more regional teachers. In addition I worked with colleagues in the Institute of Education to establish a Subject Enhancement Course for the training of prospective teachers of Computer Science."

Dr Sharon Buckley, University of Birmingham, adopted a different strategy to achieve reach and impact in her work on Medical Education. For part of the NTFs, her starting point was an observation from clinical practice. "Recent high profile cases of serious harm to patients and the recognition that poor communication between members of the health care team is responsible for a significant proportion of untoward incidents has highlighted the contribution that IPE can make to enhancing the teaching of patient safety and to increased use in clinical practice of standardised forms of communication such as Situation Background Assessment and Recommendation (SBAR). I chose to undertake a BEME (Best Evidence Medical Education) review in order to address the many questions about the teaching of such tools to pre-registration health care students that remain to be answered".

Dr Steve Gaskin, Head of Employability Services at the University of Exeter, invested part of his NTF in undertaking the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) practitioners’ qualification. "This certificate, which involved many whole day and residential workshops in London (alongside the completion of a reflective portfolio), enabled me to work closely with many blue-chip employers designing graduate recruitment, selection
and development campaigns. This course, and the networks and professional knowledge I have gained, shaped my practice in designing a major new flagship employability programme that I co-designed and delivered to all first year undergraduate students at the University of Exeter. The impact of the employability programme has been impressive, as this programme engages around 4000 students every year and continues to run with extremely high employer involvement and engagement and very strong student feedback."

Section two - Emergent themes in the sample of NTF reports

2.1 Cross-cutting themes

The range of roles, subjects and activities of the NTFs in the sample has produced a diverse array of pedagogic interventions and outcomes. In this section of the report, an attempt is made to present cross-cutting themes that weave across the projects and activities captured in the sample. The themes that emerged from repeated detailed reading of the NTFs reports are:

- Responding to changing roles in the learning and teaching environment
- Internationalisation of projects
- Personal and professional development
- Outreach and partnership
- Enhancing the curriculum and student learning

2.2 Responding to changing roles in the learning and teaching environment

Seven of the NTFs in the sample reported changes in employment roles and responsibilities during the three years of their award. For some of the NTFs the change resulted in promotion into leadership roles, but for others the outcome of institutional role changes were less positive, citing extended absence due to work-based stress. However, all NTFs experiencing change valued the NTF as a focus for responding to the implications of the changes. All of these NTFs used some of their award monies to fund PPD to provide space for new skill development. Some found they needed a 'space' to work out a strategy for responding to the changing environment and the award provided resources for reflection.

In some cases the award stimulated new opportunities to change role. In one case, a NTF became involved in teaching educational leadership as part of a university-wide certificate course. In others, the award aligned with broader developments in their institution and two NTFs assumed 'Director of' roles in the areas of employability and sustainability. The NTF awards also stimulated the creation of new networks and several NTFs have now formed a 'community of discovery' to support their individual activities.

2.3 Internationalisation of projects

The internationalisation of the activities of NTFs was a strong feature of many reports, and occurred in several ways. For example, NTFs in the sample conducted study tours to observe the teaching and learning practices of colleagues in other countries including: Australia, Canada, China, France, New Zealand, South Africa and Spain. Exposure to differences in pedagogic practice stimulated reflection and resulted in changes to practices in the home institution, and these NTFs reported on the value of such activities to their own understanding of teaching and learning in their subjects.
Often study visits were combined with attendance at international conferences, another way in which the projects of the NTFs obtained international exposure. These events often resulted in new, or reinvigorated, international collaboration. In one case the award was used to supply replacement teaching costs to enable the NTF to attend an important international gathering that he had previously been unable to attend as the dates always clashed with his teaching commitments.

2.4 Personal and professional development

Personal and professional development featured in several of the NTFs activities. Developing new ICT skills for better managing complex partnerships, learning new software applications, and adopting mobile technologies to support learners, all featured in the reports. Some NTFs undertook formal courses on leadership skills and career planning for example, while others embarked on more personal routes to achieving greater management and resilience skills in 1 to 1 sessions. Being 'coached' through particularly taxing situations led one NTF to learn how to be a coach mentor for others in her team. Another NTF recognised the need to improve his understanding of how other people think and in the process identified a link between the management ideas associated with 'Quiet Leadership' and excellence in teaching. PPD was also the route through which some NTFs continued to develop their subject skills as researchers and as creative practitioners.

2.5 Outreach and partnerships

Responding to the employability agenda drove several projects concerned with better preparing students for the workplace and placement. A project designed to improve the management of complex partnerships in teacher education and contributing to the formulation of national policy in this area was indicative of a more general commitment of NTFs to partnership working with schools and further education institutions. There was plenty of evidence of NTFs working on outreach. Projects such as the engagement of adult learners with complex social issues through the arts and literature, the creation of a sustainability conference with students working in collaboration with minority and community groups, and the promotion of debates on academic freedom all exemplified the willingness of NTFs to work beyond the walls of their institutions. One NTF worked extensively within adult and children's television programming to promote a better understanding of the role of scientists in society.

2.6 Enhancing the curriculum and student learning

A consistent theme in the NTF reports concerned interventions to enhance the curriculum and student learning. These ranged from; experimenting with "flipping" in phonetics, promoting a culture of action research in teacher education, exploring the value of inter-professional dialogue in healthcare, making teaching more research-led in studying the adaptation of literature into film, ensuring dissemination of best practice in designing on-line courses, introducing on-line materials to support clinical placements and developing student e-profiles, and exploiting the use of student-owned technology.

Section three - The personal value of a NTF award
NTFs hold their fellowships in high esteem, as the following unattributed quotes from their reports testify. For several NTFs, the award contributed directly to career progression.

"From a purely individual perspective, this has enabled me to research other opportunities in the UK and overseas and also to make a stronger case for promotion in my own institution."

"Without the NTF award I would not have been able to undertake much of the work I have done over the last three years – the culmination of which was the award of a Chair in 2012.

"In summary, the NTF award has had a huge impact on my career and on the wider University."

NTFs also appreciate the freedom and creativity afforded to them during their three year fellowships.

"The greatest benefit from the NTF Award was freedom to learn, to develop myself and to develop learning and teaching activities, without worrying too much about whether or not funds would be awarded from other sources. This has allowed me to innovate, trail-blaze and explore in ways that would not be permitted by most funding committees."

"The award money has enabled me to collaborate with other institutions and HE teachers. I have used it to undertake exploratory work, which is bearing fruit in all kinds of ways, but which could not have been funded precisely because of its exploratory nature."

"I would like to add that it has been wonderful to have the opportunity to support my development in such an open and flexible way. I have been able to go to conferences, visit faculties and meet international experts without having to be absolutely sure about what the outcomes would be in advance. That has led to some very creative and rewarding partnerships that are far from over."

There was also recognition that the fellowship would continue to hold personal value beyond the initial three year period.

"The award has been used to support various threads of thought and activity in my personal (but strategic) plan of research and teaching development. These threads have been grounded in my past teaching and research before the award was received. Not only has the award been significant to me during the award period, but it has enabled me to craft a sustainable plan of research and development for future years."

"In summary this fellowship has been a great privilege, which has revitalized my teaching in parallel with my understanding of the subject areas through my creative practice. It provides a number of strands, which can now be developed in the future. Thank you HEA."

Conclusion

The sample of NTFs' reports analysed for this synopsis represents roughly half of the 2010 NTFS cohort. Caution should therefore be exercised around the synopsis' representation of the experiences of the complete cohort. The NTF reports included in the sample were, however, unanimously positive and clearly demonstrate the value of the award to the recipients. The freedom afforded to the NTFs by the designation of the award enabled the demonstration of a commitment to excellent learning and teaching in a wide range of activities. Those activities generated both 'impact' and 'reach' in ingenious and creative ways as shown by the thematic analysis in Section Two of the report. The individual reports communicate a collective sense that the awards create 'space' for experimentation in learning and
teaching that would otherwise be crowded out by the everyday pressures of working in higher education. The overall worth of the award outstrips the direct financial investment made by the HEA by dint of the energy, enthusiasm and activities the award generates for the NTF, their students, colleagues, institutions and the higher education sector.

In future reporting cycles it is recommended that two improvements to the report format are made. A section on the report form should invite the NTFs to make recommendations for the future of the scheme. The recommendations of NTFs should address three target groups: potential NTFS applicants, the NTFs' own institution senior management team, and the HEA. Additionally, it would help with summarising the activities of future cohorts of NTFs if the returns on expenditure were to be standardised using the headings shown in Table 1 above.

In addition to making this report and case studies available on the HEA website, it is recommended that the report be circulated to all HEI directors of learning and teaching with the advice that potential NTFS should be provided with a copy as a part of the applications process. A clear message in the reports, and one that should be taken up by institutional managers and developers, is that where management intervenes to create space around NTFs then they are very effective in delivering innovative projects. Without the institutional support to relieve NTFs from everyday pressures their work is impeded and the value of the NTFS is diminished. Current NTFs should also receive a copy of the report with a reminder of the importance of completing their interim and final reports as a contribution to the continuous improvement of the scheme.
The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is a national body for learning and teaching in higher education. We work with universities and other higher education providers to bring about change in learning and teaching. We do this to improve the experience that students have while they are studying, and to support and develop those who teach them. Our activities focus on rewarding and recognising excellence in teaching, bringing together people and resources to research and share best practice, and by helping to influence, shape and implement policy - locally, nationally, and internationally.

The HEA supports staff in higher education throughout their careers, from those who are new to teaching through to senior management. We offer services at a generic learning and teaching level as well as in 28 different disciplines.

Through our partnership managers we work directly with HE providers to understand individual circumstances and priorities, and bring together resources to meet them.

The HEA has knowledge, experience and expertise in higher education. Our service and product range is broader than any other competitor.

www.heacademy.ac.uk | www.twitter.com/heacademy

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Higher Education Academy. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the Editor. Such permission will normally be granted for educational purposes provided that due acknowledgement is given.

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format, please contact the communications office at the Higher Education Academy: 01904 717500 or pressoffice@heacademy.ac.uk

The Higher Education Academy is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 04931031. Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 1101607. Registered as a charity in Scotland no. SC043946.

The Higher Education Academy and its logo are registered trademarks and should not be used without our permission.