Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Project

Higher Education Academy funded project

FINAL REPORT
Project Team – Members of Universities Scotland Educational Development Sub-Committee

Dr Lorraine Walsh, Project Director, University of Dundee
Dr Darren Comber, University of Aberdeen
Professor Ray Land, University of Strathclyde
Dr Colin Mason, University of St Andrews
Ms Ginny Saich, University of Stirling and ESCalate Coordinator (Stirling)

Project Advisor (Higher Education Academy)
Dr Alastair Robertson

Educational Development Advisor
Professor David Ross, University of Paisley
# Contents

Summary ................................................................. 2

1. Sector context ......................................................... 4
2. Methodology ......................................................... 7
3. Data analysis ......................................................... 11
4. Project findings ..................................................... 13
5. Conclusions ......................................................... 37
6. Suggestions for developing practice ............................... 41

References .................................................................... 44

## Appendices

i. Scoping exercise, March 2006 ........................................ 45
ii. Ethical approval ....................................................... 47
iii. Interview questions .................................................. 55
iv. Participant information sheet and consent form ............... 57
v. Transcript data analysis keywords ................................. 60
vi. Tables 1–4 from online survey (student) data ................. 61
vii. Focus group questions and data .................................. 63
viii. Subject Centre institutional contact remits ..................... 68
Summary

This project, funded by the Higher Education Academy as a pilot study, has aimed to identify a baseline of activities in the implementation of the quality enhancement framework (QEF) in Scotland at the subject level, with particular emphasis on the roles that Educational Development Units (EDUs) and Academy Subject Centres (SCs), with their respective institutional SC contacts, are playing both individually and collectively.

The project has been undertaken by members of Universities Scotland Educational Development Sub-Committee as a pilot study with the emphasis on building upon and further developing good practice in supporting the QEF at the discipline level. The project is thus distinct from the external evaluation of the Quality Enhancement Framework commissioned by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and undertaken by the Lancaster/Open University team (Saunders et al., 2006), and from the current evaluation of the Higher Education Academy and its constituent parts.

The focus of this pilot has been a series of five higher education institutions and five subject areas across Scotland, and the experience and perceptions of a range of issues pertinent to the QEF by staff and students within those institutions. The focus therefore has been on the institutional perspective, and not on the wider sector, although the findings of this research project have been situated within the activities of that sector in order to provide an appropriate context. The study is therefore a unique synopsis of attitudes and opinions of individuals at the interface between the QEF and learners.

The focus of the project has been to:

- interrogate the data produced in order to develop a clearer understanding of the ways in which the QEF is being supported by the work of educational developers and Academy Subject Centres through their institutional contacts at the discipline level within the five institutions that are part of the pilot project
- build on existing good practice, and suggest ways of developing practice, in order to effectively support the implementation of the QEF at the discipline level across all Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs).

Although this has been a pilot project limited to perceptions from staff and students from several HEIs and subject areas, it is clear that this is a shared agenda between students, staff, institutions and external support such as the Academy's Subject Centres that requires a partnership-type approach to take forward some of the challenges identified. The data from the pilot project suggest the following:
effective relationships exist currently between educational developers and Subject Centres on an individual basis, and there is significant potential and enthusiasm from educational developers and the Academy for enhanced partnership working, but an opportunity remains for both parties to develop more effective partnership working in support of the QEF at the discipline level.

- an indication of the baseline of activities in support of the QEF can be identified although attribution of the drivers for these activities is more challenging and complex.

- the specific roles that key institutional players have in supporting the QEF at the discipline level as part of each institution’s enhancement ‘landscape’, and the connections between them, appears to be unclear in many cases and this has the potential to affect the support of the QEF at the discipline level.

- there may be a need for institutions to formally recognise and support the role of Subject Centre institutional contacts within HEIs, potentially through the development of institutional networks of contacts, facilitated and supported by EDUs. There is evidence that this idea is already in development at several Scottish HEIs.

- there may be a greater ‘brokering’ or intermediary role for SC institutional contacts to play in working with educational developers within HEIs.

- through the Academy institutional contact (which tends to be the Vice-Principal of Learning & Teaching or EDU Director) and the Academy's Senior Advisor for Scotland working together in partnership with Subject Centre institutional contacts within the HEI, there are opportunities to strengthen working relations and provide more coherent joined-up approaches to implementing institutional strategies aimed at enhancing student learning.
1. Sector context

1.1 The Quality Enhancement Framework

The approach to quality in Scotland was developed in 2003 by the HE Quality Working Group (HEQWG) which at the time comprised: Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in Scotland, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (now the SFC), Universities Scotland and the student body. In 2005 the Higher Education Academy also became a full partner of the HEQWG. The result of this partnership approach was the Quality Enhancement Framework which employs five main elements:

- internally organised subject reviews
- enhancement-led institutional review
- public information set
- involvement of student representatives in institutional quality systems
- national programme of quality enhancement themes (QETs) aimed at developing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching in higher education.

This collaborative approach to quality is identified by QAA Scotland as being ‘unique in many respects - in its balance between quality assurance and enhancement; in the emphasis which it places on the student experience; in its focus on learning and not solely on teaching; and (perhaps most importantly) in the spirit of cooperation and partnership which has underpinned all these developments’. (www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/qualityframework/default.asp).

A key element of the QEF with regard to practitioner engagement is the Quality Enhancement Themes QETs. To date, seven themes1 have been introduced which have resulted in sector-wide discussions, project activity, dissemination events including an annual conference, and the creation of a number of hard copy and online resources, the latter available through the QET website: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk.

Recent themes, namely ‘The First Year Experience’ and ‘Research-Teaching Linkages: Graduate Attributes’, have introduced the role of institutional contact for each theme and allocated a modest amount of funding to each institution to instigate and support institutional discussions around that particular theme.

---

1 Responding to Student Needs; Assessment; Employability; Flexible Delivery; Integrative Assessment; The First Year; and Research-Teaching Linkages: Graduate Attributes.
The Joint Quality Review Group submitted their final report to the SFC in September 2007 and its recommendations highlight the continuing emphasis on the importance of the QEF and, most relevant to this project report, the suggestions for further development of the QETs including:

- the development of performance indicators for enhancement
- building on the current model and giving particular attention to, amongst other things, staff development for learning and teaching.

### 1.2 The Higher Education Academy

The Higher Education Academy was established in May 2004 following the 2003 Cooke report by merging the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE)\(^2\), the Learning & Teaching Support Network (LTSN)\(^3\) and the National Co-ordination Team (NCT).

Although the QAA and the Higher Education Academy are distinct and separate entities the two bodies are ‘working in collaboration and coordination’ in order to ‘provide support for institutions in their management and enhancement of quality and standards’ (www.qaa.ac.uk/education/hea/default.asp) and recent joint events (the ‘Working Together Conference’, May 2006 and the ‘Languages of Enhancement’ meeting, January 2007) indicate the collaborative direction of the two agencies with regard to the enhancement agenda in the UK-wide context.

Academy York fulfils a number of roles with regard to the wider UK context and at a number of levels e.g. work with senior managers through the PVC/VP network. While almost all colleagues in York have a UK-wide remit, there is also a specific Academy Scotland co-ordination team which undertakes a number of functions including project funding; includes a dedicated Senior Associate and Senior Advisor for Scotland; runs the Institutional Partnership Programme which facilitates liaison with individual institutions; provides support for individual and small groups of institutions on a demand-led basis through schemes such as the Scottish Learning & Teaching Strategies Support Group and Scottish eLearning Benchmarking Group; and support for all institutions across the Scottish sector through initiatives such as the Scottish Higher Education Employability Network (SHEEN), in conjunction with SFC and QAA Scotland.

---

\(^2\) Set up in response to recommendations of the Dearing Committee (NCIHE, 1997).

\(^3\) The LTSN comprised a generic centre plus subject-specific centres.
1.3 Academy Subject Centres
The Academy Subject Centres provide ‘subject-specific support for enhancing the student learning experience’ and this network is regarded by the Academy as one of the areas of its work in Scotland where it ‘can add value to the QEF’ (Robertson, 2006). One Subject Centre has its primary site in Scotland – History, Classics and Archaeology – while ESCalate, and Maths, Stats and Operational Research, have partner sites in Scotland. Connections are established and maintained between Subject Centres and the sector in a number of ways including institutional contacts – departmental staff within the disciplines – and an increasing number of country-wide consultants who have a national role in terms of brokerage and co-ordination with Scottish discipline communities and Subject Centres and provide Subject Centres with knowledge and feedback on priority topics in Scotland. With a clear focus on the discipline and engagement of practitioners, Subject Centre activity undertaken in Scotland includes project funding and small grants; institutional visits by Subject Centre representatives; and jointly run events between Subject Centres and institutional departments, reflecting the links that have developed in a number of discipline areas.

1.4 Educational development in Scotland
A strong network of educational developers exists in Scotland, facilitated and supported through Universities Scotland Educational Development Sub-committee which has representation from each Scottish HEI, and the wider SHED (Scottish Higher Education Developers) group. Educational development is situated within institutions in a variety of ways including centres for learning and teaching or academic practice which can include colleagues involved with academic skills and eLearning, independent units or single individuals, and within Human Resources. Educational developers play a central role in linking both the strategic and practitioner functions and activities within their institutions, and in communicating information from external agencies to their colleagues, in addition to facilitating ongoing development for a wide range of university staff.
2. Methodology

2.1 Background to the pilot project and methodological approach

The project was first mooted in 2005 as a pilot study involving a sample of Scottish HEIs and a sample of discipline areas within those institutions. An independent scoping exercise was carried out at one Scottish HEI and the findings presented at the Academy internal conference in March 2006 (see Appendix i) which aimed to identify some of the experiences of academic staff working with Academy Subject Centres and to develop suggestions to help reinforce evolving relationships in order to support quality enhancement in the Scottish context. Suggestions for future areas of development which emerged from the scoping exercise included ‘dovetailing’ Subject Centre activity with one of the five elements of the QEF, namely the QETs and with institutional learning and teaching strategies.

The project then lapsed for a period of time due to a number of unforeseen circumstances and re-commenced in October 2006 with the current team and under a new project director. Five institutions and five Subject Centres were identified to take part in the pilot study with the support of an Advisor (Educational Development) from a sixth institution. The universities selected for the study were all pre-92 HEIs representing both ancient and modern institutions and the Subject Centres were selected on the basis of a broad representation of their respective discipline areas in all five institutions. The pilot project proposal was formally drafted and agreed by all parties at the team meeting held with the Academy’s Senior Advisor in Dundee on 10 October 2006, followed by a second informal scoping exercise undertaken in November 2006.

The project methodology was outlined as -

1. semi-structured interviews with key staff at five institutions:
   - Vice-Principals (Learning & Teaching) (VPLT) or equivalent
   - individuals with responsibility for quality assurance/enhancement
   - individuals with responsibility for educational development/PG certificates in teaching in higher education
   - Subject Centre institutional contacts in the five discipline areas;

2. online survey questionnaires for both students and staff within the five discipline areas;

3. Focus group discussions with both students and staff within the five discipline areas.
2.2 Ethical approval
Part-way through the study it was established that ethical approval for the project would need to be sought in each of the five partner institutions. An example of the ethical approval documentation from one institution is provided in Appendix ii. This requirement caused a delay of approximately six weeks in the project timeline as interviews were delayed until approval had been gained.4

2.3 Semi-structured interviews
A total of 36 semi-structured interviews were carried out with key staff at the five institutions. Interviews were carried out by members of the project team plus a research assistant and deliberately undertaken outwith the home institution of individual project team members in order to avoid bias or unconscious leading questions exacerbated by the home context. This also reduced the tendency for the interview to run at tangents, and to become derailed by discussion of wider institutional issues.

Prior to the commencement of interviews, Heads of School or their equivalent in the five discipline areas and those individuals identified for interview in the five institutions, were contacted and informed about the project’s aims and invited to participate. Directors of the five Subject Centres involved were also contacted in writing in order to notify them of the re-commencement of the project.

All interviews followed a semi-structured protocol. A common series of question themes was agreed during a team meeting involving the project’s educational development advisor. Questions were divided into those common to all respondents irrespective of their position and role, and then questions designed to interrogate specialist knowledge were appended. This generated four question sets, covering VPsLT, Heads of QA/QE, Subject Centre institutional contacts and educational developers. Copies of the question sets for each group are included as Appendix iii.

The intention of the project was to interview all of the key individuals identified in the methodology at all five participating institutions. This proved to be largely successful, although the team did encounter a number of individuals (three) who were unable to take part either due to existing commitments (e.g. research sabbaticals), or who were simply unavailable during the interview period. This, coupled with one individual who declined to be interviewed, meant that 36 out of a possible 40 interviewees were interviewed as part of the project. Table 1 provides a matrix of the institutions and the individuals

---

4 The issue of ethical approval for joint partner projects of this nature is now being clarified through the development of a set of protocols by Universities Scotland Learning & Teaching Committee.
who were actually interviewed from each of the key areas identified. One further institutional contact from an SC outwith the five discipline areas was also interviewed at one institution following some confusion over the identity of the institutional contact for that particular Subject Centre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>VPLT</th>
<th>QA/QE</th>
<th>EdDev</th>
<th>SC1</th>
<th>SC2</th>
<th>SC3</th>
<th>SC4</th>
<th>SC5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution 1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution 2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution 3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution 4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution 5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Matrix of key individuals interviewed as part of the SHEER project.

Interviews were carried out between January and May 2007. All interviews were recorded and recordings transcribed for analysis. One interview failed to be recorded successfully due to mechanical failure and the notes taken during the meeting were used as the record of the interview. Where possible professional transcription services were utilised, otherwise the transcription was undertaken by the interviewer’s institution. At all stages, the team has endeavoured to model good practice in data handling, storage and processing in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998).

In line with good practice, all data obtained as part of the research project has been anonymised and the interviewees will be provided with a transcript of their individual interview.

Individual interviews were designed to last for approximately one hour. Each interview was preceded by a verbal reiteration of the project aims, and the interviewee was asked to confirm that they had had the opportunity to read the participant information sheet (and if not, time was allowed for this prior to the commencement of the interview); ask questions; and to consent to the interview being recorded. Participants were then asked to give their written consent to having their transcript included as part of the project, subject to being checked for accuracy by themselves. Examples of the participant information sheet and participant consent form are provided in Appendix iv.
2.4 Online surveys
The online survey was developed and delivered using the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) tool (www.survey.bris.ac.uk) (with access to the tool provided by the Academy). The BOS tool provides a number of ways in which to analyse data including ‘word clouds’, as shown in Figure 1, associated with any particular question which provides an immediate feel for the regularity of usage of particular words as a basis for textual analysis.

![Example BOS word cloud (for question 18)](image)

Similar questions were developed for staff and students in order to maintain consistency and to allow a comparison to be drawn between the resulting data sets. Participants were required to provide their email address which was necessary in order to verify their status as a member of staff or a student from one of the five discipline areas. The incentive of a £250 prize, available for both the staff and the student surveys, for a participant generated at random at the end of the survey was promoted.

2.5 Focus groups
In addition to the use of interview transcripts, the project methodology included a series of focus groups, to be held at each institution. Two focus groups were planned in each institution, one for staff and one for students. The intention of the focus groups was to ‘drill down’ into the ideas behind the QEF at the practitioner and learner levels, and to establish to what extent the QEF appears to have penetrated within the five institutions.
3. Data analysis

Analysis of the raw interview transcript data provided the largest single pool of information. Data from the online student survey made up the majority of the remaining data collected. To recap at this point, the overall aim of the project was to identify a baseline of activities at the discipline level in support of the QEF and the roles that EDUs and Academy Subject Centres, individually and collectively, are playing in the implementation of the quality enhancement agenda at the subject level.

3.1 Direct analysis of the primary project questions
The primary project questions were as follows:

1. What is the current baseline of activities being undertaken to support the implementation of the QEF at the discipline level?

2. What is the role of Educational Development Units in implementing the Quality Enhancement Framework at the discipline level?

3. What is the role of Academy Subject Centres in implementing the Quality Enhancement Framework at the discipline level?

4. What is the combined role of Educational Development Units and Academy Subject Centres in implementing the Quality Enhancement Framework at the discipline level?

A fifth question was added following reflection by the project team, which although not directly related to the primary aims was deemed necessary in order to validate questions 3 and 4. We therefore also asked interviewees:

5. What is the role of the Subject Centre institutional contact?

3.2 Wider analysis of the transcript data
Analysis of the transcript data followed a standardised, two-phase procedure across all texts. Phase one involved searching for a series of keywords, defined by the project team, in each transcript. The list of keywords used is shown in Appendix v. Phase two thus acted as a low-pass filter, allowing the team to select and collate sentences and phrases used by the interviewees that referred to the QEF, both directly and indirectly. These were then collated.

Phase two proceeded in two further, simultaneous activities. Firstly a series of pre-defined questions were established by the project team and
the transcripts then analysed in order to investigate the extent to which interviewees’ responses supported or refuted the hypotheses proposed by the questions. Secondly, the transcripts were re-read and/or the recordings directly listened to in their entirety, and interesting viewpoints and comments on the QEF were selected for inclusion in this report, with a view to highlighting consistencies and differences both within and between the sample population. Below this level, the data were further stratified into respondent groups and common responses and differences highlighted.
4. Project findings

4.1 The enhancement-led approach

Saunders et al. (2006: 39) in their final report on the evaluation of the QEF indicate that:

... a useful starting point might be to agree on a definition of enhancement. This may seem like a statement of the obvious but a number of those we interviewed felt that there was no consensus of opinion on what was meant by this term.

The findings of this study are similar. Each interviewee was asked to provide their understanding of ‘enhancement’. For some it clearly meant ‘something more’ or a ‘value added’ aspect to what was already in evidence:

... for me enhancement is very much over and above what normally has to be; it’s enhancing something that already exists.

Yet for others it was a more elusive concept,

... how can we measure what is just normal improvement and what is actually genuine enhancement ... I think is quite difficult to pin down that could also be difficult to identify,

I know what it should mean, but what it actually looks like on the ground I’m not sure

or was seen as ‘old hat’,

... I’m not so sure that it’s new, in the sense that I think we’ve been doing enhancement ourselves for almost as long as I can remember

Some of these difficulties may also arise from the theory-practice gap:

I agree with it all in principle, it’s just that I think a lot of it doesn’t get down to the people who matter and I don’t think that the politics people at the top do other than pay lip service to it.

Ross et al. (2007) note that ‘[t]he definition of “quality enhancement” [Q E] adopted by the sector is that Q E is about taking “deliberate steps” to improving the quality of the student learning experience and that such steps will be managed strategically by institutions in an environment in which a risk-taking approach to innovation would be encouraged’ . It is debatable to what extent this is a discussion based simply on semantics or whether it
is an actual issue which requires to be addressed in order to achieve more effective working practices in supporting the QEF at the discipline level.

4.2 Online surveys
The response to the online survey from staff at the five institutions was very low with only 10 responses in total from individual members of staff. The low response rate could be indicative of a number of factors and is perhaps a reaction to the current information overload prevalent in the lives of academics. The very low return invalidated the data for the purposes of this project.

The response to the student survey was better in comparison with the staff survey with 67 students completing the questionnaire before the survey was closed. The resulting data were analysed using SPSS.

Personal Profile Characteristics
The online survey was completed by a total of 67 students and the cohort had the following profile:

- 21 (31%) male and 46 (69%) female;
- 50 (75%) British students of whom the majority 36 (54%) were Scottish and the rest were distributed in both EU countries (12) and Non-EU countries (5) - see also Table 1 Appendix vi;
- 60 (90%) identified themselves as White and 1 Black, 3 Asian and 3 mixed ethnic groups - see also Table 2, Appendix vi;
- 9 (13%) with a declared disability;
- 65 full time and 2 part time;
- 57 (85%) undergraduate with similar numbers for each year of study;
- 10 (15%) postgraduate – 5 of whom were in their first year of study - see also Table 4, Appendix vi.
Profile of Subject Centres with which students associated themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Centre associated with students’ graduating programme</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SC 1</td>
<td>14 (20.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC 2</td>
<td>22 (32.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC 3</td>
<td>11 (16.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC 4</td>
<td>5 (7.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC 5</td>
<td>15 (22.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Number of students associated with each Subject Centre

Student awareness of Quality Enhancement Themes

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of awareness of the QETs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year introduced</th>
<th>QET topic</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>47 (70.1%)</td>
<td>20 (29.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Responding to student needs</td>
<td>31 (46.3%)</td>
<td>34 (50.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Employability</td>
<td>33 (49.3%)</td>
<td>33 (49.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Flexible delivery</td>
<td>18 (26.9%)</td>
<td>48 (71.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Integrative assessment</td>
<td>27 (40.3%)</td>
<td>39 (58.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The first year</td>
<td>21 (31.3%)</td>
<td>45 (67.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Research and teaching linkages</td>
<td>31 (46.3%)</td>
<td>34 (50.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Distractor topics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective lecturing</td>
<td>36 (53.7%)</td>
<td>31 (46.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal development planning</td>
<td>43 (64.2%)</td>
<td>23 (34.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The learning environment</td>
<td>30 (44.8%)</td>
<td>36 (53.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Student awareness of Quality Enhancement Theme (QET) topics
The apparent level of awareness of QET topics was perhaps disappointing, the Assessment theme scoring the highest level of awareness: 47 students (70%) for this student cohort. The topic that scored lowest on student awareness was Flexible Delivery with 18 students (27%) only declaring their awareness. The Assessment theme has been in the public domain for longest which might have accounted for a greater student awareness of this topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year introduced</th>
<th>Genuine topics</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>47 (70.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Employability</td>
<td>33 (49.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Responding to student needs</td>
<td>31 (46.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Research and teaching linkages</td>
<td>31 (46.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Integrative assessment</td>
<td>27 (40.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The first year</td>
<td>21 (31.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Flexible delivery</td>
<td>18 (26.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Rank order of student awareness of QET topics

It may be that students have simply indicated that they are aware of these QET topics because of their familiarity (and importance allocated to them) with the substance of the terms. This may also explain the apparently discrepant findings that students had similar levels of awareness of the ‘distractor QET topics’ – Effective Lecturing, Personal Development Planning and The Learning Environment. The highest level of awareness (64% of students) of PDP may be misleading since it was a subset topic under the Employability QET, and has also been very high on the Scottish Higher Education agenda, through the work of the Effective Learning Framework (ELF) project for implementing PDP in Scottish HEIs.

Finally, on examination of some of the qualitative comments to other key questions – e.g. Survey question 18: In what ways is the University making it easier for you to undertake your studies? – it is clear that students are aware of some of the activities that constitute providing ‘flexible delivery’ of programmes and modules:

The university has prepared abundant resources including the library, e-journals and database for sample tests to help my study.

There’s a lot of student support, along with helpful staff, for example I can email my tutors for help!
Of course not all students agree that their institution is indeed ‘flexible’ at this stage:

I feel the University is fairly inflexible – lectures can be timetabled until 6pm in the evening, only one lecture sometimes per day, then others you have no study time. There is no gap to allow deep understanding of the work as the exams happen straight after teaching finishes.

Elements of practice which align with the QETs can be identified, for instance evidence of explicit links being made by staff between research and their teaching:

Lecturers integrate current field research into each and every course in a variety of ways, drawing students’ attention to current debates in tutorials and in the wording of essay questions.

The ways in which the links between research and teaching are described by respondents to the questionnaire indicate that there is a range of levels of sophistication in practice. This accords with, among others, Jenkins (2004: 17), whose analysis highlights not only differences between individual lecturers (sensu Brew, 2001) but also between disciplines in this matter.

4.3 Focus groups

Calls for participants for the focus groups were carried out in a number of ways although largely through email contact. The response from both academics and students to participate in a focus group was very low. As a result of time slippage on the project, due to the need for ethical approval in each of the five partner institutions, the timing of focus groups coincided with the summer examination period in all five participating HEIs, and as such staff and students were largely unavailable to take part. One institution did not have the call for participants circulated. Only one focus group for staff, facilitated by a Students’ Union sabbatical officer, and one focus group for students, facilitated by a project team member (as two separate lunchtime meetings), were held in only one institution. As the data set is so small it has not been included as part of the data analysis although the data from the staff focus group has been included in Appendix vii for information. The low response to the online questionnaire and subsequent follow-up focus groups has impacted on the ability to triangulate the project data as originally anticipated. Nonetheless, the richness of the interview data, and the response to the student survey, has provided a data set of significant depth and breadth. This has been supplemented by feedback from the two scoping surveys and three dissemination events in order to provide as full a triangulation of data as possible.
4.4 Baseline of activities in support of the QEF

To what extent can it be argued that the QEF influences the day-to-day work of front-line academic staff? This is a particularly important question to interrogate when considering the impact of the QEF on staff working at the discipline level who are engaged with teaching day-to-day. If the QEF is being discussed actively by university management, to what extent and in what ways is the QEF, or elements thereof, filtering down to staff who teach? These are the most important people in terms of delivery and change, interfacing with the learners who are the intended beneficiaries of QEF.

The responses to this question were generally positive - the responses analysed were purely from those staff who are themselves lecturing i.e. the Subject Centre contacts rather than from those in university management - with a small number of respondents acknowledging that the QEF had had a definite, direct impact on their work:

First Year Experience yes, because of my involvement ... I run two first year modules which means half of the first year core experience ...

The ones [sic] that have impacted most here are the First Year Experience ...

We've certainly been engaging within employability themes over recent times and with assessment themes ... and I think they've been having [a] fairly substantial effect on the way we're delivering things.

However, two main approaches with regard to a baseline of activities in support of the QEF were identified from the interview data: proactive and serendipitous. In the proactive approach, some institutions are purposefully utilising new or existing vehicles to deliver development opportunities that are clearly linked with quality enhancement approaches. An example of this way of working is provided by one institution which links its annual educational development conference to a current Quality Enhancement Theme. Identification of a baseline of activities directly in support of the QEF at the discipline level has proved more challenging. This is not to say that such activities are not in place – there is widespread evidence that they are - however, the question of attribution is a more challenging one to address. The multiple ‘hats’ worn by many of the project interviewees (e.g. SC institutional contact, disciplinary Head of Learning & Teaching and QET institutional contact) made it difficult for some of the respondents to identify what may have been the original driver for a specific initiative. Some interviewees also reflected that while there may be significant Subject Centre activity within an institution it is not always promoted outwith the immediate discipline area, or clearly branded as such within the institution, again making it difficult to know whether or not Subject Centre activity has been the specific driver for change at any given time. As one educational developer noted:
... in terms of institutional impact I think it's limited because they [the Subject Centre] advertise this within the discipline area but not across the university. I suppose they think “why should we?” but they don't tell me or they don't tell the VP ... and it's really a matter of constantly asking them what's going on that you actually find out. In fact they were very surprised to find out that I wanted to know about it but really didn't see it as an institutional thing, which I thought was a shame because all the things they were talking about ... [were] of potential interest to others and it just informs that community of practice, or development to know that these things are there.

It would appear, however, that whilst the QEF, and in particular the QETs, are having some impact at the discipline level the fact that they are a current theme is seen as serendipitous in terms of work which was either planned or ongoing anyway:

I'm not certain that I'd like to say the themes have influenced current practice so much as we have looked at certain themes and seen the extent to which our practice matches examples of good practice and where we have perhaps seen discrepancies then it's caused us to question our own practices to see whether there are improvements required, which improvements are feasible within what timescales. So I think that ... there is an influence but it's not the driving force in terms of us particularly modifying an academic programme to match a theme, it's seen as one influence amongst a number of others which have guided that.

... so we were looking anyway to do something with the first year. But then also I think the enhancement initiative came along and because The First Year was one of the themes then that fed into it as well.

On Flexible Delivery, like Responding to Student Needs, they were things that we were moving ahead on anyway, for example the move to [institution's VLE]. You could say that these were related to those themes, but they probably would have gone on anyway.

This is an interesting side-effect of the QETs in particular. Along with the direct impact on reflection that is designed into the internal teaching review element of the QEF, respondents noted that the presence of the QETs has had a number of beneficial effects on their own professional teaching practice. These effects have ranged from the raising of awareness of the issues encapsulated in a particular theme...

... I think it's actually a very welcome thing to be able to take that step back and be encouraged to look to improve learning and teaching, to look at the student experience, and to try to think of things other than your own research profile, or just progression rates or just recruitment rates, but to be
able to, yes to have that encouragement from the centre to consider the sort of professional responsibilities as an academic, that's extremely welcome ...

I think it has made me think about what I do...

... to raising awareness that activity can be undertaken around these issues ...

Made things seem do-able ...

... through to actually seeing the QETs as enabling agents:

It's great to see, sometimes, an Enhancement Theme coming along, because it makes you do something, which you may have wanted to do anyway. And it can act like a lever and a reminder that something has to happen.

It is worth noting that although the latter is a very valuable point, it was not widely expressed. This suggests that, whilst some staff are both generally aware of the QEF and in particular the QETs, the utility of the QETs is mixed. They do promote discussion, but that discussion would appear to be around existing issues for individual staff and their department/schools, and this discussion does not touch everyone. As one interviewee pointed out,

So I think if you were to ask ordinary colleagues up and down the corridor about the themes, they wouldn’t know what they were, because it's too remote.

The point about apparent remoteness of the QETs was related by some respondents to the issue of institutional penetration:

... how far down is it going to get? Is it just something that is just going to be an institutional learning and teaching strategy that's there on paper but no-one has to do anything about it, so nobody will do anything about it?

I’m not quite sure how the Enhancement Themes are dealt with within [name of institution], but certainly, I mean, they probably happen at high level in terms of sitting at committees and so on and so forth. But in terms of that filtering down to faculty and then faculty to department and then department down to myself, then I’m certainly not seeing it at all.

These structural issues are further compounded by the willingness of staff to become engaged with the QETs, either due to logistical constraints...

... although I would like to participate there isn’t an obvious vehicle for me so to do except by attending the odd conference. We no longer have any money available for conferences, so I don’t.

... or avoiding becoming involved at all:
... there are those who aren’t interested in changing the way they teach, because they’ve been at this for twenty, how many years: they just aren’t interested.

However the issue of engagement with the QETs is not all one-sided. Staff indicated real concerns over how they could be enabled to engage more effectively with the quality enhancement approach:

Sometimes I feel that perhaps it’s overdone in that there is probably a half day or a one day seminar, it feels like every two to three weeks, which is a lot of people’s time … So maybe one theme a year, done well, might be more effective than six themes running concurrently.

Conflicting interests between one’s own discipline and those of the wider sector were also brought to the fore by another respondent:

We’re not interested in quality assurance. I mean, we have to assure quality, but it’s not something you can say, “Well, gosh, that really, really interests me. I’m looking forward to doing this today.”

The above quote also highlights the issue that remains; that the QEF can still be equated with a quality assurance role. As Ross et al. (2007) note, with 12 years of quality assurance in the form of audit behind the sector it is not feasible to expect staff to embrace a new enhancement philosophy immediately.

One of the unforeseen issues of the QEF that this study can demonstrate is the potentially negative one from a staff/curriculum perspective; that by highlighting areas for potential improvement, staff expertise and currency can be brought into the open and challenged.

They’re [students are] all technically aware as it is and it’s nothing for them to take the latest MP3 player and say, well, what we’d like to do is just improve that a wee bit and here’s how I want to improve it. The problem is that that’s a threat to the staff because I suspect that most of the staff are not as up to date in terms of their MP3 players and their iPods as the students are.

Other potential negatives include the push to highlight particular QETs at the expense of other, equally valuable areas for development (particularly at the local level):

... the danger then is there might be things of great virtue that don’t fall within a theme, that are very worthy to be resourced... so a national priority might drive out or crowd out good innovation in other areas.

A range of issues thus emerged by interrogating the issue of engagement by front-line staff with the QEF. This is not a simple series of responses. The
complexity of engagement is in itself something which should be viewed as valuable in its own right, indicating as it does that there is a cohort of front-line teaching staff to whom the QEF has penetrated, and who are in turn making decisions based on its presence. They are considering not only themselves in this, but also the actions of their colleagues, some of whom are more enthusiastic but many more are either unable or unwilling to respond to the implications of QEF. In order to consider the impact that the QEF has on its ultimate intended target group, the learners themselves, the following questions were developed.

- What evidence do we have to demonstrate that the QEF has impacted on the students at all?
- What evidence do we have to demonstrate that the QEF has impacted on the quality of the students’ learning experience?

**What evidence do we have to demonstrate that the QEF has impacted on the students at all?**

If there is to be an improvement in the quality of learning as a result of the QEF, it is first important to know whether the Framework is seen to be having any impact, positive or negative, at the level of the learners themselves. Three respondents were less than positive about the impact that the QEF is having on students:

- It doesn't work... you just end up doing one tiny thing different, and you're not really sure whether that's impacting or not.
- So the reviews, the five yearly reviews, as I say, tend to concentrate more on management issues and on research activity and so on, rather than on the teaching and learning things.
- I haven't seen... unless I'm missing something, I haven't seen the themes have a direct impact yet. I'm sure they will because the people involved in those I know well...

It is interesting to note that specific elements of the QEF are differentiated here in the latter two responses, although neither is seen as being positive towards the student experience. This does raise an important point, highlighted through the following statements, that the QEF can be seen through different lenses. Firstly, making the conceptual link between the QEF, role as a Subject Centre institutional contact, and student learning isn’t necessarily the first thing that comes into staff minds:

- I think I've noted when things have come across the email to me as a [Subject Centre] contact but beyond that I hadn't necessarily seen that as
being linked in to the students, maybe I should actually go back and have a look at that.

Secondly, that the discipline area in which staff are involved will also influence the way in which the QEF, and in particular the QETs, are viewed:

To some extent, for half our students employability is done. I mean [discipline] are very employable...

These issues have similarities with the issues raised in the previous section, where the topic of a QET may or may not resonate with staff, depending on whether they are currently involved, or are planning to become involved, in some aspect covered by that particular theme. Here we see how both the discipline, or the day-to-day job of the Subject Centre institutional contact as a practising academic, influences the way in which elements of the QEF are viewed.

To the majority of staff in this category, however, the QETs are seen as having a positive impact on the student experience:

... particularly the last one of these, the research-led teaching issue. We are in the process of making very major changes, particularly to our fourth year teaching at this moment.

... it's there and people are engaged quite well in their first year and so on. A lot of effort has been put into first year.

Perhaps most significantly, one respondent went further, suggesting that not only are changes being made, but that the students would be able to see and appreciate these changes:

I think they would be aware that we are striving to put in more appropriate assessments that actually assess the things that will be useful to them rather than the standard sort of write an essay, do a practical approach.

These data do suggest that the impact of QEF is being felt by students, and in this latter case the author suggests that the students might be able to appreciate these changes. However it remains the case that, using these data at least, tracking a change through to the student experience might be possible, whilst ascribing it specifically to a direct causal link remains elusive. It may be timely and apposite to reflect on a finding from the work of Saunders et al. (2006: 7):

There may be many indirect ways in which the QEF has influenced practice but there is [also] the issue of attribution. What may be important for the future is to be able to focus more on alignment i.e. the extent to which
daily practice is beginning to show the characteristics of an enhancement approach, rather than direct attribution.

**What evidence do we have to demonstrate that the QEF has impacted on the quality of the students’ learning experience?**

This is perhaps the most testing of the questions posed in this section. Whilst not asked directly, indications from staff that this question might be considered in their responses showed weak returns. Indeed, the language used in this response suggests that hard evaluation of such a concept is lacking:

You would like to hope that they would show better rates of progression because they had been taught better, but it might be that they enjoy it more, and if they enjoy the subject more then they probably will be better anyway, so I’m not sure which comes first. I’d like to think my students enjoy my courses

The following response does hint at a causal link between the QEF, changes made as a result and any kind of evaluation of their impact. Whilst not quantifiable, this perhaps sums up the impact that, if the spirit of QEF were to be followed, one would hope it could have:

I went and watched it in progress in the labs and it’s the first time I’ve seen first years with really sort of intense, furrowed, interested brows.

**Institutional communication regarding the QEF**

Responsibility and lines of communication and interaction with regard to implementing and supporting the QEF appear quite distinct in each of the five institutions. For some, the links are clear but for others this is not at all the case. In some institutions responsibility for the QEF is clearly focused on one area while in others that responsibility is more dispersed. As one Head of QA indicated, the approach taken at their institution is much more holistic, where the focus of responsibility is a shared one:

I suppose ... what we try to do I think is to look at these things as much as we can in a sort of holistic fashion right across the institution, which is why we try to involve academic staff development, students, and the strategic responsibility of the vice-principal and the operational aspects of it, and try to get that sort of general holistic focus rather than going down the route of saying that one particular area is responsible for one particular thing. There’s a great danger that you end up in these sort of silos ... the great difficulty I think with all of this and anything else in a complex organisation are there are problems of lack of communication and lack of understanding of what we’re trying to do institutionally. So we’ve tended to
take that sort of generalistic, holistic approach to things in the hope that if we’ve all got some idea about most of it, we might have a better impact than going down the specialist individual responsibility route.

A key finding of this project is the variety of enhancement ‘landscapes’ that exist across the five institutions. This conclusion is backed up by similar findings from dissemination events run at the SEDA (Staff and Educational Developers Association) conference in Glasgow (May 2007) and the Academy Scotland conference in Stirling (May 2007), where workshop participants were asked to outline the ‘landscape’ of the enhancement activities within their institution(s) identifying the strong links, the weak links and the gaps. Figure 2 demonstrates an example of an institutional enhancement ‘landscape’ with strong links (in bold), weak links (dotted line) and gaps in support of the QEF at the discipline level.

**Figure 2.** Example of an institutional enhancement landscape

This finding forms part of a wider ongoing discussion as to roles and responsibilities for the implementation and support of the QEF at the discipline level, which has already begun in a number of places including the ‘Languages of Enhancement’ (January 2007) event:
While enhancement is defined for the purposes of institutional audit as “deliberate steps at the institutional level”, enhancement can be initiated by individuals. This in turn raises the issue about who is responsible for enhancement: does responsibility rest with institutions or individuals; with academics or with managers?

With this in mind we now turn to the role of educational development within the five institutions.

4.5 The Role of Educational Development Units

Educational development units, or equivalent individuals, are employing a number of roles in working with the QEF. Some units have been encouraged and welcomed into the process by their institutions while for others the experience has been variable (Ross et al., 2007). A number of interviewees indicated that they saw educational development units as being directly involved in the implementation of the QEF, although these respondents tended to be at senior management level (VPLT and Head of QA/QE level).

Further investigation into this question, however, revealed a range of different ways in which educational development units are involved at a functional level. While not a point raised by all respondents, the leadership role that educational development might play in bringing together the ideas forthcoming from the QEF and keeping staff in the disciplines informed about them was highlighted:

So I think their role is almost a leadership role, a leadership-cum-facilitation role … to try and galvanise people to move.

Unpacking this notion of leadership further, the allied role of allowing staff the professional ‘space’ and opportunity to stand back from their everyday roles and reflect on the issues brought forward, particularly by the QETs, was highlighted as an important role that educational development units can play:

So I think what the educational development services have done is allowed us to, prompted us to step back, review, perhaps not in a sort of vertical way but more in a horizontal way, so I think when you’re looking at it from the subject point of view you have one particular perspective. What educational development has helped us to do is to step back and say well let’s look at this view from the point of view of, say, a first year student...

Yet, as indicated earlier, the level of involvement which educational development units have within this landscape varies enormously; and this is reflected by the respondents. For instance, one VPLT’s viewpoint...
... it was seen to be a strategic centre for the university... aligning itself quite closely with the institutional priorities for development.

... and from two Heads of QA/QE perspectives:

I know that [name of educational developer] does spend a lot of time bringing in stuff coming from the Enhancement Themes, but also working with [my colleagues] to tailor courses to the needs of their staff.

Enhancement Themes; we've had a lot of engagement, especially through specific individuals. [Name of educational developer]’s been involved in all of them, one way or another.

Whilst recognition for the role played by educational developers in supporting the QEF is recognised by some lecturing staff ...

I think the assumption “I can do that while staying in touch with technical and research developments” across a whole range of different other subjects would be unrealistic. So I need somebody to... to guide me on what’s developing best practice in all sorts of areas. And to push it and make it accessible for me just as I'm trying to make my subject accessible to students ...

... it is also acknowledged that, with regard to development and interest in such issues as QEF, there is an apparent divide between younger staff and those who have been in the profession for longer:

I think the problem with it is that the old farts don't get involved ... I find young people who have entered the university although there aren't that many nowadays, young people who come in are enthusiastic...

... you know, the PGCert’s nothing new, really, for us; and I think it generates a lot of enthusiasm, once people start to realise that the... other people out there you know, [are] interested in it...

There is also recognition, however, that educational development units are not solely responsible for implementing the QEF. Indeed, educational developers themselves displayed a varied response to the question of their own involvement in the process, from the positive... :

It's been great from my perspective. This university, I suspect like many other universities likes to be seen to tick the right boxes. I've got that at the back of me, supporting me and I can point upwards to it being part of a strategic approach on the part of the university, so my own local activity has been given a boost as a consequence.
... to the less positive:

They've [the QETs] undoubtedly had an impact within this institution, but it's been patchy ... and I have been somewhat disappointed that more people didn't engage in some of the assessment workshops.

Up until now I probably haven't [seen myself as having responsibility for the QEF], primarily because I don't think people would see it as my role, it's been the director of quality assurance's role...

It appears from the interview transcripts, and the institutional landscapes which can be drawn for these five institutions based on this data, that there is no consistent mechanism for implementing the QEF at the discipline level. It is certainly the case that educational development units have varied levels of responsibility, both actual and assumed, with regard to both the QEF and their role within it. This is compounded by the message from senior management regarding the overall level of 'buy-in', which transcends the limited resource available to educational development units and makes quality an issue for all staff:

... it's not just about preaching or being a missionary, it's about creating the conditions where people are listening, receptive, where people see they are being helped to do their job better and as I say not necessarily having a label on it.

Nonetheless, this is a message that is not necessarily shared by all staff:

I can just imagine what would happen if I said to people 'OK we're going to go off for a day and we're going to hear about things'. Because I'm also saying to them 'and I expect us to get a five in the RAE and I expect you to be doing your admin.' I suppose the single biggest block on all of this thing is finding time to do it.

The cross-disciplinary nature of some of the discussion inherent in notions of quality enhancement is clearly an issue for some staff:

I know [name of educational developer]'s run things to do with plagiarism and I'm pretty sure there has [sic] been quality ones, but I've just never gone. Because again, trying to talk about quality across the university, it's difficult when you're specific to [a particular] department.

The continued existence of such thinking, redolent of Becher (1989), helps to reinforce the stereotyping of the quality 'industry' as referred to by one of the respondents:

I think probably one of the fundamental issues is that I'm not so sure it's [quality enhancement] new in the sense that I think we've been doing
enhancement ourselves almost as long as I can remember, and what we seem now to have got is an industry that's attached to it, and a desperate attempt to create performance indicators, measurements and all the rest of it, the sort of things we've all been doing for donkey's years anyway.

You know, a stack of stuff [relating to quality] came through in the mail this morning ... I mean look at it, you lose the will to live, you know, I'm actually involved with it and I lose the will to live. Now your average academic would say “Bloody hell what is this all about, this is insane”.

The role of the educational development unit or educational developer in supporting the QEF is perhaps more challenging at the discipline level than at an institutional level. At the institutional level the EDU can be seen as part of a framework of agencies such as a Quality Enhancement Unit or Centre for Learning & Teaching through which QEF activities are channelled and handled. The QEF is part of the culture and language at this level. At the discipline level, however, the educational developer is attempting to make contact with academics whose focus is elsewhere and for whom the QEF can be a remote or even alien concept, only parts of which – perhaps internally organised subject review or some of the QETs – are known about or viewed as immediately relevant to their day-to-day practice.

4.6 The role of Academy Subject Centres

One of the more interesting ideas to attempt to break away from the perceptions of a ‘quality industry’ has been to investigate whether the Academy Subject Centres themselves might have a role to play in the implementation of the QEF. This was identified by Saunders et al. (2006: 39) as an area for development:

As we commented in previous reports, the limited penetration of the QEF to practitioner level has been voiced as a concern. One way to address this issue might be through a more disciplinary-based approach in which the Higher Education Academy through its Subject Centres, could play a valuable role in providing the necessary support at the practitioner-level.

This remains a worthy aim although this study suggests that there may be some way to go towards its realisation. One SC institutional contact did suggest that the Subject Centres might be a possible way forward in bringing the QEF down to the front-line staff:

I think the thing I would like to see is the themes integrate more with the Subject Centre bits. I think that is the missing link ... if there was a subject-specific element, it would be ... easier to take that bit and disseminate it down to ordinary staff.
This is an enlightened view but one which was in the minority in the study. A number of respondents didn’t understand the role that the Subject Centres might play in supporting the QEF, although as the following quote suggests this is not to imply that some development of the role in the future might not be possible:

To be absolutely honest I have to say I haven’t got a sense of what role they can play currently or are playing, but that’s partly because of what I said earlier of not having had the chance to engage with it as yet.

Senior management (VPLTs, Heads of Q A/Q E) tended not to provide a direct response to this question with the exception of one individual who suggested that the Subject Centres appear to operate within the relatively close confines of the discipline rather than working at the strategic level:

They tend to work in their own little subject sort of networks... we don’t tend to sort of co-ordinate, [name of educational developer] might well have the odd discussion in order to promote some of it, but again then I think that would be a more reactive type of thing.

The potential for Subject Centre involvement at some point in the future was recognised by some VPLTs, although as one of them noted:

[t]he Subject Centres traditionally haven’t seen themselves as supporting institutions anyway, so they’re not engaging directly ...

and Subject Centres are by their definition subject-focused and demand-led by the priorities of their discipline communities.

Further investigation of the data indicates that the perceived and actual role of the SC institutional contact impacts both directly and indirectly on the primary question of implementation of the QEF. Respondents were invited to give their views on what they considered to be the role of the Subject Centre institutional contact. The most frequent responses from all who responded were based around the notions of “conduit”, “postman/postbox” or “distribution of information”. Typical responses are shown below for illustration:

Key contact? A lot of it’s dissemination, passing on information about what’s going on ...

I would say one of the very first things that I regard myself being responsible for is as a conduit, as a communication channel...

Whether this is seen as a positive or a negative element to the role was
varied. Some respondents were clear that, if their role was to be effective, then their job of dissemination was an important one:

I think a postbox is good, because as director of the unit I just get a horrendous amount of emails and information. I know when that comes through and I’ll disseminate it out. But I wouldn’t like 50 staff to be sitting trying to go through all this information. What a waste of time.

Although hard copy information appears to pose more of an issue than electronic communication:

One thing that the Centre seems to expect me to do, which I don’t think I can actually do terribly well is the dissemination of hard copies of information...

Whilst most were neutral about this role, some participants appeared less enthusiastic about this aspect of the role being the dominant one:

I’m not really actively participating in this role terribly well. I mean, to some extent, it’s a glorified postman. I mean they send me stuff and I distribute it through the department.

But my role is fairly superficial, I’m a bit like a postman. Trying to think if I’m being unfair by saying that but I don’t think so...

Across the range of Subject Centre institutional contacts, however, it was clear that they recognised a range of activities beyond that of information distributor as being part of their role, although there was little consistency in the activities identified which included:

- knowing what the Subject Centre is doing
- targeting information towards individuals in departments who have a specific interest in an area
- organising an institutional contacts regional meeting
- giving a presentation on the work of the Subject Centre within the home department
- attending Academ[y] events
- disseminating information from Academ[y] events
- encouraging colleagues to contribute papers to the Academy journal [sic]
- encouraging colleagues to contribute to educational conferences.

These suggestions provide a range of activities that could potentially be built upon in terms of supporting and implementing the QEF at the discipline level.

The above list provides a synopsis of activity based on individuals’ responses to being asked what they do, rather than a comprehensive
list of the activities in which all Subject Centre institutional contacts are engaged or are expected to undertake, by their respective Subject Centre. It is important to emphasise the role of individuals in apparently taking the initiative in shaping the role of Subject Centre institutional contact, in addition to that played by the Subject Centres. The data suggest that information regarding this role and remit is not always penetrating to the level of the institutional contact and that an element of confusion does exist in some institutions over the identity, role and remit of the Subject Centre institutional contact:

I’m not sure if... there seemed to be two people, possibly... the person whose name was on the database hadn't actually done anything for the Centre for several years... Then there was another person that I think most of us thought was the Subject Centre contact, that person’s now retired.

Well I don’t think there’s a written down remit...

Mostly, well, I’m the person here, I forget what they call me now, it’s on my door (laughter).

O r in one case poor communication between an individual who believes they still are the institutional contact and their respective Subject Centre:

So my role... I’m not really doing anything. I used to get emails from them [the Subject Centre], I don’t think I do any more. I wonder if I’ve fallen off the list somewhere, and that’s an issue about currency isn’t it, and not checking to see if you’re still interested in doing this job. And I say job, is it a job, I don’t know? No-one ever told me what it should be.

It should be noted, however, that many of the Subject Centres do provide clear guidance on the role and remit of the institutional contact on their websites (see Appendix viii for the examples which can currently be found on the SC websites). The fact remains, however, that this guidance is not always penetrating to the level of the institutional contact and reasons for this needs to be reflected on, to aid communications at this level.

O utwith the group of institutional contacts interviewed, knowledge of the role of the contact amongst the other interviewees proved to be varied. There are those who have a reasonable but broad idea of what’s involved:

I assume it’s a conduit for information and a point of contact to the Higher Educatin Academy.

... it’s mainly about being a two way conduit for information.
W hile others are less clear:

I get the impression that they don’t know a lot about what their role is supposed to involve. They’ve been given, I think, different information depending on which Subject Centre they are related to...

Part of the difficulty here lies with the fact that information about institutional contacts cannot be shared as freely as might be anticipated due to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. W hile this is a frustrating state of affairs for all involved, once the relevant permissions have been sought and gained a list of contacts can be drawn up for each institution. The more challenging aspect of this situation is where individuals who are institutional contacts have not agreed for their identity to be shared with their institution. A recent communication (June 2007) from the Academy to Scottish HEIs has attempted to move this situation forward but the situation still remains that although for a certain discipline area an institutional contact may exist they have declined permission for their details to be shared with the institution (personal email communication to L.W alsh, 27 June).

Evidence gleaned in the course of this study illuminates some of the possible reasons behind this decision.

A critical point has been made regarding the acknowledgement that staff receive for undertaking the role of Subject Centre contact and that there is often little or no formal recognition by the institution for the time and effort that staff put into carrying out the role:

My impression is that a lot of people are doing this out of the goodness of their hearts, they're getting no allowance for it, some say it's done essentially “on your own head be it. If you want to carry this out, it's in your own time essentially”.

Further reasons behind this decision can be the way in which individuals have been appointed to the role of Subject Centre institutional contact to date, which may have been somewhat ad hoc, or that individuals are anxious about disclosing their identity in case the demands made on them become unmanageable.

Nonetheless, evidence from the data supports the view that colleagues perceive the Subject Centres as a positive force within higher education ...

I mean I’m very much in favour of the Centre. I wouldn’t like to see them disappear. I think there’s a need for that sort of subject-focused area of a Centre that is interested in ... teaching
which has further potential in terms of a more joined-up approach in terms of supporting the QEF:

... I think the Subject Centre link is the way to do it. That's the way to get the job done.

However, the differences in approach between the discipline-focus of the Subject Centres and the institution-wide nature of the QEF does make for a certain tension with regard to integrating and embedding the work of SCs in support of the QEF at the discipline level. As one Head of QA/QE explained:

The relationship tends to be Subject Centre to individual academics, groups of academics, or via [named educational developer] and academic staff development. I have virtually nothing to do with the Subject Centres at all. I mean I read some of the stuff that comes in, usually the more generic stuff. My perception, through again relationships with key staff, is that quite a lot of the subject centres are quite useful in the sense of provision of a sort of national resource that relates ... specifically to the discipline rather than to the generic end of things. I tend to be obviously more interested in the generic end of things as opposed to the subject-specific, discipline-specific end of things. But there's been some good stuff come out of the [named SC] one, which I know our lot have been quite heavily involved in ...

Closer working with educational developers, and the use of the QETs as an appropriate vehicle, may help facilitate this process.

4.7 Collective Role of Educational Development Units and Academy Subject Centres

What evidence is there to suggest that Educational Development Units and Subject Centres should change their mode of interaction with HEIs? To what extent is it effective currently and in what ways could it be supported or facilitated in becoming more effective? This question builds on sections 4.3 and 4.4, which provide an overview of the roles that EDUs and the Subject Centres can play in support of the QEF. To begin this section, it is instructive to have the view of one Head of QA/QE on the whole issue of engagement:

... in the context of enhancement in reality it's entirely dependent upon academic staff and actually admin support staff driving these things and actually having ideas that actually fit into an existing climate.

So how can these individuals be best supported? How can the Academy Subject Centres assist in this? Most respondents were largely happy with the support that comes from the Subject Centres. This supports the findings of the March 2006 scoping exercise (Appendix i). Comments
around this issue included:

My experience with our Subject Centre has been nothing but good.

I think what they do is perfectly fine. I know they're doing good jobs. The problems lie elsewhere. I mean the problems lie in the individual departments. There has to be very good reasons for an academic or a group of academics to kind of do something different.

It is also evident that good connections do exist between some EDUs and some Subject Centres which have resulted in a number of successful events at the local level. As one educational developer commented:

... there is one area of the university where there is a lot of Subject Centre activity ... and I think that's because the contact there is quite active and he has a role as a Scottish Advisor I think for the Subject Centre. So they have had events [here] with quite good attendance from around Scotland, from around Britain ...

The idea of a more formalised network was supported by one VPLT:

We're trying to make colleagues more aware of the Subject Centres. A few Schools have engaged, and indeed received some funding from the Subject Centres, which we try to display to the others, but it's patchy ... so one of the things I'd like to see [is] a more formal structure of liaison through Directors of Teaching, someone who can act more widely. Others can obviously engage, but Directors will be aware of and co-ordinate activity

One of the educational developers had clear views on the idea of a network and how it might develop but was hesitant about how this might be received.

Well I would really like to see them as a network of individuals that I could use to get into their discipline areas in terms of development activities. But maybe Subject Centre contacts don't necessarily see themselves in terms of development, maybe they just see themselves in terms of learning more about their disciplines ... You look at some of the Subject Centre websites and they have a lot of information about developing as a university teacher or running workshops for new staff but others don't do that sort of thing so, and I'm not sure that the contacts... individuals see themselves doing that, but that's what I would like to see ...

The concerns advanced by this educational developer were echoed by at least one SC contact ...

I just see myself as a conduit for information. I don't see myself as a conduit for engagement at all. I don't think there are enough hours in the
... I put things out ... But I don't see myself as engaging. And I don't see myself as needing to engage.

... although this feeling was not shared across all the SC contacts. Indeed some SC contacts advocated the network approach:

There might be areas where it would be worth trying to push it across as a whole, institution wide thing; and I think that's where having a key contacts route would help; it would be the platform to raise it on. It's very difficult for me to reach any further than the school to try and influence the whole institution, but if we had a bit more power...

Scope remains, therefore, for much closer and perhaps more formalised working between these two groups in order to better support communication and awareness of the roles of EDUs and SCs in support of the QEF.
5. Conclusions

Triangulating the Data Sets
This pilot study has been successful in generating two substantial data sets: one from the semi-structured interviews and the second from the online student survey. It is clear from the results of the online survey that attempting to drill down to the student level in order to attempt to identify impacts of the QEF has not been possible. It is suggested that two issues can be highlighted here.

Firstly, the use of distractor QETs in the questionnaire. By using distractor topics alongside genuine QET titles it became clear that a large proportion of respondents were not aware of any difference between genuine QETs and the distractors. In itself this is not an issue. High level initiatives such as the QEF exist in a realm which, in theoretical terms, is divorced from the everyday student experience and as highlighted previously, it is the impact on the student learning experience as opposed to the nature of the driver that is of primary concern here.

Secondly, in light of these findings, reviewing the responses to the semi-structured interviews, it might be seen that the QEF, and in particular the QETs, are perceived by teaching staff as either:

a) a prompt that they use to consider or reflect on their work in these areas, or

b) a header under which existing ideas, suggestions and possible areas for improvement are given a ‘push’.

What the data do not appear to show is a wholesale move by large numbers of academic staff towards making sudden, radical change to their practice in response to the existence of the QETs. We suggest that, as this is the case, the effect on the student experience is likely to be mainly gradual, perhaps punctuated by more major changes which, even if they can be identified by students, may not be easily perceived as resulting from some external driver.

Baseline of activities to support the implementation of the QEF at the discipline level
Activities to support the implementation of the QEF at the discipline level are many and varied but often their correct attribution to either a specific educational development initiative or a QET initiative or a Subject Centre initiative can be challenging to establish. Clear lines of responsibility
and joined-up working with regard to implementation of the QEF at the
discipline level can also be unclear from one institution to another. In the
longer term this may not be an issue as it is the end result – the impact
on student learning – that is the most important aspect of these activities.
However, in the shorter term, there could be value in clarifying the lines
of communication, roles and remits of all parties involved with regard to
implementation of the QEF at the discipline level, at both an institutional
and practitioner level, in order that partnership working can be facilitated
and supported.

Role of educational development units in supporting the
QEF at the discipline level
The community of educational developers in Scotland is one of the key
aspects of the Scottish higher education infrastructure. Universities
Scotland Educational Development Sub-Committee, and the SHED group,
which comprises the wider community of educational development staff
in Scottish HEIs, has an overview of the work of the QEF and acts as a
bridge between the strategic and policy initiative levels and the work of
the discipline-based practitioners. As such it is exceptionally well placed
to support the implementation of the QEF at the discipline level but as
Saunders et al. (2006: 50) noted:

The network of educational developers is more engaged with the
framework now than it was three years ago [however] It is not clear
whether the best, collective use is yet being made of them. This suggests
a proactive stance on building this network, resourcing it and clearly
identifying its place in the armoury of support at national level.

Data from this study demonstrate that the roles played by, and the
expectations placed upon, educational developers and EDUs in support of
the QEF by senior management and practitioners varies on an institutional
basis. While the role of the EDU may be more clearly established at
the institutional level, work remains to explore the expectations of
practitioners and to clarify the aims of the educational developers
themselves in the ways in which the QEF can be most effectively supported
at the discipline level.

Role of Subject Centres in supporting the QEF at the
discipline level
The interview data indicate that there is a strongly individual and personal
element involved in shaping the role of the SC institutional contact. In
addition to this, some SCs offer institutions guidance with regard to who
is most appropriate for the role (e.g. someone in a particular position
such as Head of Department). As a result, fundamental differences exist in the conceptions and realities of the current role and how it should be developed, not least in support of the QEF. Three specific issues were highlighted by the interviews if the role of the Subject Centre contact is to be developed in the future. These will all entail the Academy working in partnership with institutions to address.

Firstly, with regard to the remit of the post; there was some lack of understanding of what the post is actually meant to entail, meaning that individuals are left to interpret the role for themselves in many cases. Secondly, some duplication of materials received was felt to make the job more time-consuming that it really needs to be. Thirdly, and in the context of this report most telling, some respondents saw the need to align Subject Centre materials and activities more closely with the QETs.

**Collective role of Educational Development Units and Subject Centres in supporting the QEF at the discipline level**

Information provided from the project interviews, in addition to anecdotal evidence, would suggest that a good deal of the most effective links and connections that educational developers have within their institutions are informal and the result of extensive and intensive networking. One VPLT described the role of the educational developer at their institution as:

"... [a] sort of juggling, networking type sort of role where [name] can influence but also responds, you know [name] can be effective because of the many different people [name] is in contact with."

Although a number of educational developers and individual Subject Centres work effectively at an individual level, this networking role has not been fully exploited by educational developers with regard to the Subject Centres or the SC institutional contacts.

"Formally I have absolutely no role whatsoever to play with them [SC institutional contacts], ... I think there's a lot of variability between disciplines and between departments in terms of how they use these [Subject] Centres ... I mean that's a bit of institutional research we... we need to do amongst others ... the jury's out a bit on that one yet, but we will get round to it."

A greater potential role exists for educational developers and Subject Centres in the work of the QETs. As one interviewee commented,

"I think the one thing I would like to see is the themes integrate more with the subject centre bits. I think that is the missing link."
As both educational developers and Subject Centres work closely with discipline-based practitioners they have a good deal to offer in terms of a greater involvement with the QETs. Such involvement could potentially include contributions to discussions with the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) over future themes, and participation by educational developers and Subject Centre representatives in the QET annual conference steering committee.

The educational developers who took part in this study were of the opinion that the Subject Centres provide a significant and only partially tapped resource for future effective partnership working. The Subject Centre institutional contacts provide a clear and obvious link between the two. It will be helpful in the future to explore ways in which greater partnership working between educational developers and Subject Centres and their institutional contacts can be facilitated and supported in order to support the effective implementation of the QEF at the discipline level. This will also require engagement and support of senior institutional managers, and the Academy, and some possible suggestions are outlined in the following section of the report.
6. Suggestions for developing practice

6.1 Development of an Intermediary or Brokering Role for Subject Centre Institutional Contacts

Suggestions for future areas of development which emerged from the initial project scoping exercise in 2006 included ‘dovetailing’ SC activity with one of the five elements of the QEF, namely the QETs, and with institutional learning and teaching strategies. It is evident from the following extract from an interview with an educational developer that the QETs are providing a useful vehicle for development work and activity.

Up ‘til now I think it’s just been on the sidelines. You get all the information on your desk, you go to events, you try to take people along, that sort of thing, but it’s been a sort of extra thing to do but now that I’ve got a more specific remit for it I want to make it a central plank. And I think... we can try and build enhancement themes into the framework for staff development, I think that’s definitely the way to go, because if we don’t embed that then staff will be even less likely to engage.... I’m not entirely sure yet how we’ll do it because, because the themes are...some of them are so large... I’m still working with that, but I really do see that as being a central focus, otherwise it just can’t work.

A closer partnership working between educational developers and the Subject Centres could provide the way into that ‘dovetailing’ in order to afford more effective support to the implementation of the QEF at the discipline level and institutional strategies for enhancing learning and teaching.

Academy York has clear links with senior management and EDUs within institutions, through e.g. the Institutional Partnership Programme, and various national learning and teaching fora, and the Subject Centres have clear links with practitioners at the discipline level. There are, however, opportunities for educational developers and Subject Centre institutional contacts to develop and build on existing links in order to enhance partnership working.

6.2 Further Projects to Support Partnership Working between Subject Centres and Educational Developers

The Academy has indicated its intention to support further work in this area and has allocated funding, in academic session 2007-08, to support the development of evidence-based practice through several action research projects. Educational development units or individual developers, working in partnership with Academy Subject Centres and new members of staff, are encouraged to bid for funding with project outlines based on initiatives to support new academic staff.
The successful bids will be decided upon by a small committee from the Academy, led by the Senior Adviser for Scotland, Dr Alastair Robertson. The Management Group of Universities Scotland Educational Development sub-committee will have oversight and a co-ordinating role with regard to the projects. The Academy will also be able to provide a bridge to ongoing related development work in the rest of the UK, which projects may wish to link with and feed in to. While this work is targeted towards supporting the Scottish sector, it dovetails very well with one of the Academy Subject network’s three UK-wide priorities for 2007–08: Supporting New Academic Staff.

6.3 Development of Subject Centre institutional contact networks

Work remains to be done to explore the expectations of practitioners and to clarify the aims of the educational developers themselves in the ways in which the QEF can be most effectively supported at the discipline level, however, potential exists for closer partnership working between educational developers and Subject Centre institutional contacts through a development of the role of the SC contact (as indicated in 3.1) or through the development of a network of institutional contacts. One of the participating HEIs has already facilitated a meeting between all of its SC institutional contacts.

It is suggested that the relative lack of awareness and recognition of SC institutional contact activity, role and remit at this level creates challenges for the full participation of Subject Centres in the implementation of the Q EF:

... if we're having a network event we might engage with someone that we know about because of Subject Centres but it's not a strong institutional centre-driven activity.

Yet the perception, and it can be argued in many cases the reality, is that much of the work of the Q EF is instituted at a high level:

... and so I don’t have a lot of connection with the ‘top brass’ so to speak. And I think that’s where most of the enhancement discussions go on.

When this is coupled with the highly diverse picture that is drawn by the institutional enhancement landscapes, the ability to impact and influence the implementation of the QEF at the discipline level is made ever more challenging.

I think we don’t make enough of the Subject Centres, and perhaps if we did get them together more regularly as a consultative group or something, that might be a useful way and perhaps might raise the awareness of the Subject Centres a bit more. It’s the pressure of time, I guess.
There are benefits, therefore, for making the SC institutional contact role more visible at the institutional level. Awareness of the scope of the role and impact of the SC institutional contact is currently very limited at this level and an approach which ensured that the discipline focus was maintained but that allowed for a greater presence, potentially through a network of institutional contacts, could provide an opportunity to address this situation with a correspondingly beneficial impact on activity to support the QEF.

Interestingly, the lack of knowledge about SC institutional contacts, and desire for greater networking, also exists amongst the contacts themselves. I don’t even know who the other Subject Centre’s contacts are. We probably should be having more things within our university of all the key contacts … when we went back to our key contacts we could say ‘well, I know that we talked about this, but I also know that other subject areas have the same problems’, perhaps introduce some collaborative work with them, run some kind of workshop. It would also end with a network of people ... I don’t know quite why we’ve never done it.

It is evident from this interviewee that the focus is clearly on the discipline but with the purpose of creating a wider and more well-informed platform for action within the institution. Steps are already being taken by educational developers in several Scottish HEIs, supported by their VPLT, to enhance communication both with individual SC institutional contacts and amongst the contacts themselves by bringing them together to facilitate discussion and explore the possibilities of establishing contact networks. The Academy’s Senior Advisor for Scotland has also been supporting HEIs and SCs to enable this model of engagement.

This pilot project has indicated that further work in this area would be beneficial in order to build upon and strengthen effective practice in supporting the implementation of the QEF at the discipline level and helping institutions embed their strategies for enhancing learning and teaching.
References

All web links accessed on 24.9.07


Joint Quality Review Group (2007) Final Report to the Scottish Funding Council www.sfc.ac.uk/about/new_about_council_papers/about_papers_17aug07/SFC_07_113_A N N EX.pdf


www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/qualityframework/default.asp

www.qaa.ac.uk/education/hea/default.asp
Appendix i – scoping exercise, March 2006

Institutional Perspectives on Engagement with Academy Subject Centres (adapted from PowerPoint presentation)
Dr Darren Comber, Educational & Staff Development Unit, University of Aberdeen

1. Intended outcomes
- Describe some of the experiences of academic staff working with Academy Subject Centres
- Suggestions to help reinforce evolving relationships in order to support Scottish Q E

2. Data
- 18 disciplines represented at Aberdeen
- Contacts located and questioned

3. Activities
- SC contacts visited Aberdeen (c. 50%)
- Aberdeen staff attended seminars & workshops
- Aberdeen staff attended new lecturer programmes
- Regular communications by email
- Provision of information, reports, case studies, tools, software
- Applying for funding for teaching developments
- Contributing materials to SC websites

4. Experiences of staff - positive...
“ I find them very useful as a source of ideas and materials.”

“We had a very effective and encouraging visit from a senior member of our Subject Centre... ”

“... good at compiling lists of what grants / other funding is available... ”

(note N = a large number)
5. ...but not always...
“... if I were honest I cannot say we have implemented any innovations on the basis of their visit.”

“However, attempts to contact the Academy to arrange a follow-up visit were fruitless.”

“Not useful, I don’t think it has ever had an impact on the way we teach... ”

(note: N =3)

6. Specific feedback
• Focus on regions?
• Email contact frequently just lists
• Maximum funding of £5K “a little restrictive”
• Sheer volume of material produced

7. Feedback from Ed. Dev.
• Named institutional contacts
• Dovetailing approaches to new lecturer development for maximum effect?
• Bioscience dedicated area for educational developers
• What is the focus and the priority for SCs?

8. For the future
• Getting away from the silo mentality
  - Themed approaches involving multiple SCs
  - Dovetail with Scottish QE themes
  - Dovetail with institutional L&T strategies
• Not just preaching to the converted
• Using professional standards framework strategically
• Don’t overload

9. Finally
Overall perception is that nearly all disciplines at Aberdeen find their respective HE Subject Centres useful.
Appendix ii – Ethical approval

University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
Standard Operating Procedures for all researchers and completed ethics approval form for University of Dundee

University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
Standard Operating Procedures for all researchers

Constitution of the Committee
The Committee is based on the existing Psychology Ethics Committee, and comprises six members of staff from that School (from 1 October 2004: Professor Trevor Harley (Chair), Dr Ronni Greenwood, Professor Alan Kennedy, Dr Emese Nagy, Dr Astrid Schloerscheidt, Dr Roger van Gompel, and Dr Peter W illatts). The Committee comprises three additional representatives, one from the School of Education and Social Work (Dr Elaine Smith), one from the School of Nursing & Midwifery (Dr John Drummond), and one from the School of Computing (Dr Annalu Waller). The lay member is Mrs. Elizabeth Melville. The Committee reports annually to and is appointed by the University of Dundee Research Committee. The Committee operates a joint auditing process with the University of Abertay.

Remit of the Committee
The remit is to make recommendations and to provide feedback on the ethical appropriateness of research projects. Some aspects of design may be relevant to ethical considerations (e.g. research should not be so poorly designed as to guarantee meaningless results, thereby wasting participants’ time). Note that any research involving the collection of human biological samples or data from NHS patients who are included by virtue of their being patients, or their carers, must be approved by the Tayside University Hospitals Trust Ethics Local Research Ethics Committee (LREC).

Note also that ethical approval may not in itself be a sufficient precondition for carrying out the research (e.g. the research might need clearance from Disclosure Scotland, or approval of local education authorities, parents, and teachers, or some other body; contact Dr Peter W illatts in the School of Psychology, p.willatts@dundee.ac.uk, for advice); such conditions are outside the remit of the committee. You must also ensure that you carry out any necessary risk assessment, and you must abide by all appropriate safety regulations. (Contact the University Safety Officer for advice.) You are also responsible for ensuring that your research complies with the Data Protection regulations. If your data are stored in any way such that the data can be linked to an identifiable individual (e.g. by name or by code) then
the data must be registered by filling out the form at www.dundee.ac.uk/records-management/dataprotection/pro-forma.htm.

**Application procedure**

All research involving collecting data from humans must be approved by the Committee before data collection commences; “research” includes experimental work, questionnaires, and face-to-face, telephone, and Internet surveys. You must read and follow the University of Dundee Code of Practice for Research on Human Participants.

Research carried out by **undergraduate students and taught Masters** must have appropriate ethical approval. This approval will be dealt with by another mechanism, normally at the school or college level (details will be supplied by your college). **Academic staff, researchers and postgraduate (research) students** are responsible for producing their applications to the University Committee.

All applications for ethical approval from the UREC must be submitted to Mrs Liz Evans in the School of Psychology General Office (e.evans@dundee.ac.uk) using the attached form, both as a hard and an electronic copy. Incomplete applications will be returned. Note that in many cases it is possible to seek generic approval for a methodology, although any subsequent significant changes in methodology will necessitate fresh approval. Copies of sample informed consent and participant information sheet templates are also attached. An ethics application should consist of:

- the attached Ethical Approval Form, completed and signed
- the Informed Consent Form (or alternative means of establishing informed consent if written consent is not appropriate – e.g. if the participants have restricted literacy)
- the Participant Information Sheet (which must be distinct from the consent form)
- a debriefing Information Sheet to give participants [if necessary] after the research is complete (e.g. if the research involves any sort of deception).
- any supporting documentation required (e.g. grant applications, a copy of any questionnaire, any covering letters; see form below)

**Approval**

There are three routes to possible approval, depending on the responses on the form.
1. If any of the answers to Questions 10-12 is “Yes” then the proposal will be referred to the full Committee. Note that research involving any form of deception are particularly problematical, and a full explanation of why deceit is necessary, why there are no acceptable alternative approaches not involving deceit, and the scientific justification for deceit must be provided in a covering letter.

2. If any of the answers to Questions 1-9 is “No”, but the researcher still considers the research to be ethically non-problematical, the researcher must write a covering letter explaining the answers and explaining why there are no ethical difficulties. The Chair may then approve the proposal by Chair’s action, or may decide to refer it to the Committee.

3. If the answers to Questions 1-8 on the form are all “Yes” or “Not applicable”, and the answers to Questions 9-11 are all “No” or “Not applicable”, then the Chair of the Committee will usually approve the proposal on Chair’s Action.

At least three members of the Committee (including the Chair) will read any proposal referred to the full committee. The Committee provides written comments on the application. The Chair of the Committee makes the final decision based upon the Committee’s comments. The applicant is informed in writing or by email of the decision, and given any feedback. The decision is one of:

1. Accept without conditions
2. Accept with conditions
3. Recommend submission to another committee (e.g. Tayside NHS LREC)
4. Revise and resubmit (with conditions)
5. Reject (with reasons)

We aim to provide a decision in three weeks from submission during semester time. If the decision is accept with conditions, you must write to the Chair of the Committee explaining how those conditions will be met. You must notify the Chair of the Committee of any subsequent deviations from the agreed protocol. Note that the University may audit projects to ensure that ethical standards are being maintained. You should keep and file your email confirming Ethical Approval. When the research is complete you should provide a brief report noting any complaints or ethical issues that may have arisen while carrying out the research. (For taught students an electronic copy of the final project is acceptable.)

All researchers must abide by the University of Dundee’s Code of Practice for Research on Human Participants, as well as the guidelines of any other relevant body; for example that of the British Psychological Society (on
whose form ours is loosely based; see The BPS Ethical Guidelines: Guidelines for minimum standards of ethical approval in psychological research (July 2004).

Professor Trevor Harley
Chair, University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee
UREC v. 1.9, 1st five December 2006

Checklist of common errors
These are some of the most common reasons why we have to return ethics applications for resubmission. You will improve your chances of success if you check your application against this list. Please make sure:

- You have answered all questions on the form.
- You have appended your Participant Information Sheet(s), Informed Consent Form, and Debriefing Form, and that these are all clearly labelled.
- Any additional description or summary of the Project is clearly labelled and differentiated from the other forms.
- You have run the information sheet and consent form through a spell checker.
- The consent form should be separable from the information sheet so that the participants can retain the information sheet.
- If you are making audio or visual recordings that you have said where the tapes will be stored and how long they will be kept before they are destroyed.
- If making recordings you must make clear that you will inform the participants and obtain their consent beforehand.
- You have included a copy of your questionnaire, and the lead questions if you are using a structured interview.
- If your study involves deception this automatically raises an ethical concern, so you should tick box B on the form. You must show how your debriefing will explain the deception.
- If your experiment involves deception you must provide participants with an opportunity to withdraw their data after debriefing.
- You have provided an estimate of the planned sample size.
- You have specified your participant population and how you will recruit from them.
- You have said where testing will happen.
**University of Dundee Research Ethics Committee Approval Form**

Title of project: Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Project

Name of lead Investigator, School (or equivalent), Status (e.g. staff, student): Dr Lorraine Walsh, Academic Professional Development (Human Resources), Staff

Other Academic Staff involved (e.g. supervisor, co-researchers): Co-researchers at the Universities of Aberdeen (Dr Darren Comber), Stirling (Ms Ginny Saich), St Andrews (Dr Colin Mason) and Strathclyde (Professor Ray Land)

E-mail address: l.walsh@dundee.ac.uk

Date: 12 January 2007

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Will you describe the main procedures to participants in advance so that they are informed about what to expect in your study?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Will your participants be able to read and understand the participant information sheet?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Will you obtain written informed consent for participation?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty and for any reason?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Will you give participants a brief explanation of the purpose of the study at the end of their participation in it, and answer any questions?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort? If Yes, give details on a separate sheet and state what you will tell them to do if they should experience any problems (e.g. who they can contact for help).</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Do participants fall into any of the following special groups?</td>
<td>Children (under 18 years of age)</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Children under five years of age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pregnant women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People with disability (e.g. learning or communication difficulties)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People in custody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug-taking)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-human animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Patients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More than 5000 participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please tick either Box A or Box B below and provide any details required in support of your application. If you ticked NO to any of Q1-9 or YES to any of Q10-12 then you must tick Box B.
A. I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications to be brought before the University Research Ethics Committee. I am ticking this box - impossible to actually achieve online.

State the purpose of the research. Give a brief description of participants and procedure (including the planned sample size and methods and tests used). This description must make clear what participants are expected to do. You must also make clear how data (e.g. video tapes) will be kept confidential and secure. Note that this description will be read by non-specialists and must be readily comprehensible by a lay person.

You must attach intended information and consent forms and copies of any questionnaires you plan to use.

**Aim of the Project**

This pilot project aims to identify the roles that Educational Development Units, Higher Education Academy Subject Centres (SC), and relevant University-based School or Departmental Academy SC contacts are playing, both individually and collectively, in the implementation of the Quality Enhancement Framework.

The project will involve semi-structured interviews as well as an online survey and focus group discussions with comparable level key contacts, academic staff and students in each of five representative subject areas of five Scottish HEIs.

**Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with:**
- Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching), or equivalent to give a strategic perspective
- Head(s) of QA and/or QE or equivalent to give an operational perspective
- Head of Educational Development / PGCert Co-ordinator (institutional HEDG representative)
- A sample of Department or School-based Subject Centre Contacts

**An online survey and follow-up focus group will be employed with:**
- A sample of academics in each of the subject areas to be studied (sample dependent on volunteers but aimed to be between five to ten in each subject area).
- A sample of students in each of the subject areas to be studied (sample dependent on volunteers).

Only members of the project team will have access to the raw data. All data will be stored digitally (in transcribed wordprocessed files, database files and in summary form in final reports) in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998). Data may be transferred to other databases for analysis and summary statistics will be calculated to enable analysis of all responses. The data collected will be used to compile summary statistics and anonymised responses and quotations to illustrate the extent of knowledge about the enhancement theme approach and its effect upon teaching and learning in Scottish HEIs through project reports, research publications, conference presentations, Academy and University website entries etc. The data will be held for a period of 7 years in the first instance. Interviews will take place at the University of Dundee and at the other partner institutions.
B. I consider that this project may have ethical implications that should be brought before the Ethics Committee.

Please provide all the further information listed below in a separate attachment. Note that this description will be read by non-specialists and must be readily comprehensible by a lay person.

1. Title of project.
2. Purpose of project and its academic rationale.
3. Brief description of methods and measurements and how data will be stored.
4. Participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria.
5. Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing.
6. A clear statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them.
7. Estimated start date and duration of project.

I am familiar with the University of Dundee Code of Practice for Research on Human Participants, and have discussed them with the other researchers involved in the project. I confirm that my research abides by these guidelines.

Signed: Lorraine Walsh
Print Name: Lorraine Walsh
Date: 12 January 2007
(Lead Investigator)

There is an obligation on the lead researcher to bring to the attention of the Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not covered by the above checklist.

UREC v.1.9, 1five December 2006
Appendix iii – Interview questions

SHEER Project Interview Questions (General)

1. Generic Level Questions for Key Staff
   - What is your understanding of enhancement?
   - In a couple of sentences, can you describe how each element of the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) operates in your institution? (How much prompting of interviewee required at this stage?)
   - Thinking specifically of the Quality Enhancement Themes (QETs), which of these have influenced recent or current institutional thinking and practice?
   - How has this happened?
   - In your experience, how is Educational Development engaging or contributing to the support of the QEF in your institution? (What was the reaction of interviewee to the term Educational Development?)
   - What should Educational Development be doing?
   - What is your institutional level of engagement with Subject Centres (SCs)?
   - What is the role of SCs in supporting your Learning & Teaching Strategy (LTS)?
   - What is the role of your SC contacts?
   - What do you think the role of an SC contact should be?

SHEER Project Interview Questions (Specific)

2. Vice-Principal (VP) Specific
   Strategic perspective.

   - How is your LTS being influenced by the QEF?
   - Specific examples?
   - What are the things in your LTS that are not part of the QEF?
   - What are the other drivers in your LTS, other than QEF?
   - How do strategic level objectives get operationalised?
   - Who is responsible for implementing the LTS? (Committees, Departments, Ed Dev, Subject Groups, Practitioners, etc???)
   - What is the relationship between VP, Ed Dev, SC Contact and QE in your institution?

3. QA/QE Staff
   - In what ways has the QEF influenced changes and/or new practices as a result of a greater emphasis on enhancement?
   - Where is QE situated within your institution?
   - How does that impact on enhancement activities (at subject level)?
How do you KNOW that there is a link between QEF, the LTS and these changes?
How has the work of the QETs overlapped with existing priorities and development work in your institution?
What is the relationship between VP, Educational Development, SC Contact and QE in your institution?
How would you like to see these relationships develop?

4. Ed Dev Staff
What is your role with the SCs in your institution?
What is the relationship between VP, Educational Development, SC Contacts and QE in your institution?
How would you like to see these relationships develop?
How is the QEF and in particular the QETs influencing your work within your subject area at this institution?
How is the QEF and in particular the QETs influencing your work with the Subject Network in the Academy?
What other specific “agencies” have a role to play in enhancement activities? (SEDA, Careers, HR, SS, ICT, Student Learning Advisors etc.)
What impact do all of these relationships and links have on your role and the support and delivery of the QETs?

5. Subject Centre Contacts
What is your role with the SC in your institution?
How and why did you get this role?
(Does this link to other roles such as Director of Teaching/Programmes, etc.?)
What changes would make this role more effective?
How do you get your information about enhancement in learning and teaching? (eg SC, QEF, Education Development, elsewhere?)
What is the relationship between VP, Educational Development, SC Contact and QE in your institution?
How would you like to see these relationships develop?
How is the QEF and in particular the QETs influencing your work within your subject area at this institution?
How is the QEF and in particular the QETs influencing your work with the Subject Network in the Academy?)
Appendix iv – Participant information sheet and consent form

Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Project – Project Participant Information Sheet

Aim of the Project
This pilot project aims to identify the roles that Educational Development Units, Higher Education Academy Subject Centres (SC), and relevant University-based School or Departmental Academy SC contacts are playing, both individually and collectively, in the implementation of the Quality Enhancement Framework. The project will involve semi-structured interviews as well as an online survey and focus group discussions with comparable level key contacts, academic staff and students in each of five representative subject areas of five Scottish HEIs.

Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with:
• Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching), or equivalent to give a strategic perspective
• Head(s) of QA and/or QE or equivalent to give an operational perspective
• Head of Educational Development / PGCert Co-ordinator (institutional HEDG representative)
• a sample of Department or School-based Subject Centre Contacts

During the interview your response will be recorded both by the interviewer as written notes and on audio media using a digital/tape recorder. You will be required to give both verbal and written consent for use of the information gathered during the interview, by declared means.

However, you should also note that:
1. You may withdraw from the interview at any time and for any reason, without having to give an explanation
2. You may refuse consent to being audio-recorded
3. Your data will be treated with full confidentiality and will be completely anonymised
4. Only members of the project team will have access to the raw data. All data will be stored digitally (in transcribed wordprocessed files, database files and in summary form in final reports) in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998)
5. The data collected will be used to compile summary statistics and anonymised responses and quotations to illustrate the extent of knowledge about the enhancement theme approach and its effect upon teaching and
learning in Scottish HEIs through project reports, research publications, conference presentations, Academy and University website entries etc.

The SHEER project will be carried out in accordance with the British Educational Research Association (Revised) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) and in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). All participants will be informed of the nature of the project and are required to consent to their personal information being used. No living individuals will be identified from the results of the study, excepting cases where explicit permission for this has been obtained from the individuals concerned. Furthermore, no institutions, individual departments or individual Academy Subject Centres will be identified from the results of the study.

An online survey and follow-up focus group will be employed with:
- a sample of academics in each of the subject areas to be studied
- a sample of students in each of the subject areas to be studied
  (participants must be over the age of 18 years of age).

Your response to the online survey will be stored in an electronic database. Data may be transferred to other databases for analysis and summary statistics will be calculated to enable analysis of all responses. The surveys are designed so that responses to all questions are desirable. Certain data, in the form of a University email address, is required in order to authenticate or validate that a participant is a legitimate respondent. If you consent to participating in the project online survey you will be obliged to provide your email address. Email addresses will only be used to identify respondents as legitimate participants.

The names or email addresses of participants who take part in these aspects of the surveys will be entered in a prize draw and 2 winners (1 member of staff and 1 student) will receive a prize worth £250. Other incentives, such as complimentary refreshments and book tokens, will be offered to attract participants to participate in the focus group discussions.

Please remember that you are free to withdraw from the survey at any time. However, only participants who complete all questions in the survey are eligible for entry into the prize draw.

Do you have any questions?
Please contact: Dr Lorraine Walsh, Project Director
Email: l.walsh@dundee.ac.uk
Tel: 01382 385530
Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Research (SHEER) Project - Project Participant Consent Form

Aim of the Project
This project aims to identify the roles that Educational Development Units, Higher Education Academy Subject Centres (SC), and relevant University-based School or Departmental Academy SC contacts are playing, both individually and collectively, in the implementation of the Quality Enhancement Framework.

The project will involve semi-structured interviews as well as an online survey and focus group discussions with comparable level key contacts, academic staff and students in each of five representative subject areas of five Scottish HEIs.

The purpose of this form is to ensure that you are willing to take part in this study and to let you understand what it entails.

Signing this form does not commit you to anything you do not wish to do.

Have you read the Project Participant Information Sheet? YES/NO
Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the project? (If appropriate) YES/NO
Have you received satisfactory answers to your questions? YES/NO
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the project at any time without having to give a reason for withdrawing? YES/NO

If you agree to take part in the project please sign and date below and return the form in the enclosed SAE. Thank you.

Signature:
Date:
Name in block letters:
Appendix v – Transcript data analysis keywords

Support
Enhancement
Quality
Role(s)
QEF
Subject
Discipline
Impact
Drivers
Change
Students
Aware
Teaching
Learning
Theme
Assessment
Employability
Needs
Flexible
Engaging
Research
Disseminate
Colleagues
Response
Appendix vi - Tables 1–4 from online survey (student) data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British (England)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British (Northern Ireland)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British (Scotland)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British (other)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Nationality profile of student respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White (English)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Northern Irish)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Scottish)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (other)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black - African</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Chinese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Black African</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Mixed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Ethnicity profile of the student respondents
Table 3: Faculty (or department or school) profile of student respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Year of study of student respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergraduate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postgraduate</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix vii – Focus group questions and data

Focus groups: Students

1. Your learning experiences
Tell us a bit about your experience of being taught here at the University.

What are some of the more interesting ways in which this teaching helps you to learn?

What resources do your staff refer you to?

2. Specific examples of enhancement
Which elements of your courses have been useful in preparing you for the world of work?

How has IT been used in your courses? (Prompt: are they supported by a VLE?)

How is research used in your courses?

How are you provided you with feedback on your work?

How does assessment help you to learn?

What was the most useful aspect of your first year at the University?

What have been the most useful support services provided by the University?

What opportunities are available to you for engaging with enhancement? (Prompt: class reps., SSLC, dept. reviews, Univ. committees & working groups etc.)

3. What would improve your learning experience?
Thinking about all of the items mentioned thus far, what elements could be improved and how?
Focus groups: Staff

1. Your teaching enhancement practice
What interesting teaching activities have you been involved with that enhance student learning?

What sort of enhancement activities have you been involved with? (prompts: QE theme areas)

What sources of information have you used to help you with this? (eg Academy SC, Educational Development, discipline colleagues, other initiatives).

What other support might you have felt helpful?

How are you disseminating these activities to your department/school, University, wider academy.

How do you think your students have reacted to these activities - and how have you gathered this information?

2. Support for enhancement
Regarding Quality Enhancement in this institution, can you identify the different individuals and their roles who contribute to it?

What use are you making of your Academy SC?

Do you refer your students to any Academy SC resources? Examples? (probe this – are they generic or subject-specific?)

3. Improving internal & external support for your teaching
Do you know who your Academy SC contact is?

Do you know who your Educational Development people are/is?

What use do you make of these people/person?

What role would you like these people/person to have? How could these contacts help you more/at all?

If you could make one change that would improve the quality of teaching across the University, what would it be?
Focus groups: Staff
15/5/07

Your teaching enhancement practice

What interesting teaching activities have you been involved with that enhance student learning?

- Self- and peer-assessment tool (HW prototype) used on 2nd and 3rd year students which gives students an appreciation of the marking system. Particularly useful for 2nd year students who do their first written exams in 2nd year because 1st year examinations are computer-based.
- Interactive lectures – asking students to deal with problems through discussion and team work. Very little old fashioned lecturing undertaken.
- Personal Response System – power point questions that include an interactive quiz (known as the “Who wants to be a millionaire” activity) – students are given an electronic pad to select the right answer which brings in a competitive element to the class. This tool is good for gauging student understanding of a topic. (Borrowed from other Universities)
- The summer time is used for reflection and staff spend time on making improvements to the course delivery (however not all staff engage in the reflective process – more traditional)
- Not all of the lecturers deliver lectures because they want to – many have a research priority and students pick up on their disinterest in lecturing (student surveys etc). Some of these members of staff make it difficult for students to access them and often ignore emails from students. (they don't engage in discussion boards or even school board where students are represented)

What sort of enhancement activities have you been involved with? (prompts: QE theme areas)

- LM involved in workshops for Integrative Assessment held at West Park (organised by GW)
- LM in contact with Queens (Belfast) Lecturer to do with Personalisation of the 1st Year

What sources of information have you used to help you with this? (eg Higher Education Academy SC, Educational Development, discipline colleagues, other initiatives).

- Higher Education Academy website
- QAA website

What other support might you have felt helpful?

- Both felt they were proactive about enhancement on an individual basis – seeking information themselves
How are you disseminating these activities to your department/school, University, wider academy?
• Life Sciences are holding a dissemination event soon at school level to discuss methods of teaching and course delivery (organised by LM, NB and two others)

How do you think your students have reacted to these activities - and how have you gathered this information?
• Some students engage with the enhancement themes and internal initiatives and it is never difficult to get volunteers to take part in focus groups etc
• Students are always willing to try new things

Support for enhancement
Regarding Quality Enhancement in this institution, can you identify the different individuals and their roles who contribute to it?
• LW & JW and G someone?

What use are you making of your Academy SC?
• Use the Physical Sciences and Biology subject centres
• Dip into for contact information and networking purposes

Do you refer your students to any Academy SC resources? Examples? (probe this - are they generic or subject-specific?)
• Web links are provided on the VLE
• Students are not given any formal talk about what the Academy does

Improving internal & external support for your teaching
Do you know who your Academy SC contact is?
• Not sure they didn't think AJ was the Physical Sciences contact

Do you know who your Educational Development people are/is?
• LW and JW

What use do you make of these people/person?
• LW keeps everyone informed and always responds

What role would you like these people/person to have? How could these contacts help you more/at all?
• We get really good support from both LW and JW

If you could make one change that would improve the quality of teaching across the University, what would it be?
• Give researchers who don't really like lecturing much more guidance
through staff development. They need to take teaching more seriously - not all of them are bad. Many of the researchers approach lecturing like it is a conference and are often scared of the students. (They do take core lectures so this is an important issue). Many of these researchers are invited to year group meetings and school board but they don't turn up. (They don't really interact with students until the PG level).

- More student feedback to make changes if needed. Lecturers assume that if there is silence everything is OK. I suggested they ask student reps to encourage student feedback when surveys are sent out.
Appendix viii – Subject Centre institutional contact remits

All websites accessed on 9 July 2007.

**EXTRACT FROM HEALTH SCIENCES & PRACTICE WEBSITE**
www.health.heacademy.ac.uk/aboutus/keycontact

The Key Contact role can include:

- receiving communications from Health Sciences and Practice and disseminating to all relevant staff within the department / school
- making yourself widely known as a representative in your own institution
- promoting the potential benefits of involvement with the Centre within their department/school e.g. professional development, access to a broader community and a UK-wide information network
- encouraging teaching staff to contribute reports, articles and papers to the range of our publications
- alerting Health Sciences & Practice to any learning, teaching or assessment issues arising from the work within their institution, also of relevant projects, publications etc.
- convening with other Key Contacts in your own institution or local area
- maximising opportunities to encourage staff to
  - a) consider their strategy for helping students learn
  - b) evaluate and disseminate good practices in learning and teaching including the use of communication and information technology.

We currently have over 210 Key Contacts throughout UK HE health sciences and practice departments. Is your department represented?

A list of Health Sciences and Practice’s institutional contacts is available online at: www.health.heacademy.ac.uk/aboutus/networkers/contactdb_sumkc

**EXTRACT FROM THE BIOSCIENCE WEBSITE**
www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/ltsnrep

Representative’s initial role is to promote the Centre for Bioscience and our activities within their department/school. This includes publicising workshops, conferences and grant availability. We also encourage representatives to keep us informed of the issues that matter to them, their colleagues and their students; current practice and developments in learning, teaching and assessment in their department/unit (whether funded or not); and to provide constructive feedback on Centre activities and suggest ways in which we might better support them and their fellow staff.
A list of BioScience's institutional contacts is available online at: www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/itsnrep/deptconabout.htm#list

EXTRACT FROM THE BMAF WEBSITE
www.business.heacademy.ac.uk/about/key

What do Key Contacts do for the Subject Centre?
The Key Contacts are important because they:

- distribute information on the Subject Centre to colleagues, old and new, and to part-time staff who may not hear about us through the usual channels
- facilitate Subject Centre-sponsored workshops held in their own institution
- identify local experts/potential contributors to Subject Centre events or publications
- highlight local issues of concern which could be topics for us to address
- provide feedback on local thinking about current national issues.

What does the Subject Centre do for Key Contacts?
- being identified nationally as Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance Subject Centre Key Contact confers some status on the individual
- interaction with the network contributes to the professional development of the academic involved
- The Subject Centre organises regional meetings for Key Contacts twice a year, for sharing experiences and discussing current issues.
- The Centre provides a reception for Key Contacts at its annual conference – an opportunity to meet Key Contacts from elsewhere.

A list of BMAF's institutional contacts is available online at: www.business.heacademy.ac.uk/about/key/keycontactsinstitutions.html

EXTRACT FROM ECONOMICS WEBSITE
www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk

The Economics Network Contacts' main responsibilities include:

- disseminating Economics Network Communications. This includes our termly paper newsletter and other paper communications.
- informing colleagues about Economics Network services and resources. For example, keeping colleagues updated at departmental meetings about relevant resources and services such as: the Economics Network web site which provides a comprehensive range of resources to support teaching and learning; our workshops which we can customise and deliver to departments free of charge.
- encouraging colleagues and students to participate in biennial surveys. Contacts will receive confidential department reports on each survey,
which also go to Heads of Departments. One suggestion from contacts is to use these reports as a basis for a department-wide discussion as part of an annual review.

- encouraging colleagues to contribute reports, articles and papers to Economics Network publications - for example, the peer-reviewed International Review of Economics Education (IREE) and Computers in Higher Education Economics Review (CHEER).
- attend annual Economics Network Contacts meetings free of charge where contacts can network with other colleagues, share ideas and practice, and learn more about the Economics Network.

A list of Economics's institutional contacts is available online at: www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/contact/keycontactslist.htm

EXTRACT FROM THE ESCALATE WEBSITE
http://escalate.ac.uk/2994

We consider the role of ESCalate ‘Contact’, to be an important role and one that we greatly value. ESCalate is one of the 24 subject centres of the Higher Education Academy, which receives part of its funding from UK universities. Our mission is to work with Education Departments in Universities and Colleges to enhance the HE and FE experience for students following education programmes throughout the UK. As the Subject Centre for Education we provide a range of services and resources to education staff in over 1500 departments across the UK. These include web and paper based resources, funding grants, conferences, workshop events and departmental visits. The two main areas of work we require help with are:

1. To disseminate information (usually via onward email) about ESCalate’s news, events, resources, funding opportunities etc. to colleagues in your department and
2. To act as your institution’s representative at ESCalate events (you may nominate someone else as your representative if you are unable to attend any particular event)

EXTRACT FROM THE ENGINEERING WEBSITE
www.engsc.ac.uk/an/contacts/index.asp

The role of an Engineering Subject Centre Departmental Contact is summarised as:

- to receive communications (e-Bulletin, translate) from the Centre, and subsequently to filter and disseminate this information to their departmental colleagues
- to promote the resources and support available from the Centre for the
benefit of the professional development of departmental colleagues – by access to a wider academic community that is supported by a UK-wide information network, including access to funding for initiatives in learning and teaching

- to be the point of contact for the Centre to a department; this could include invitations to Centre staff so that they might visit the department and meet with teaching staff, attend and present at departmental meetings on current and future issues in learning and teaching, and address issues and enquiries raised by teaching colleagues on matters of concern to them

- to facilitate the hosting of events (whether for their department, regionally, or nationally) that are organised and resourced by the Centre, where an event may be a seminar, a workshop or a forum for the discussion and dissemination of experiences, best practice, or resources in learning and teaching.

Readers of the website are asked to contact the Subject Centre to find out who is their institutional contact.

**EXTRACT FROM THE HLST WEBSITE**

[www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/about/dept_contacts.html](http://www.hlst.heacademy.ac.uk/about/dept_contacts.html)

The role of the departmental contact should not be one that takes up very much time at all. The idea is simply to have a nominated person to whom we can direct information, such as e-mails, newsletters etc. The contact hopefully, will then distribute this information amongst their colleagues to ensure as wide a coverage as possible. This provides a direct communication channel to academic and support staff in the subject areas. We also welcome feedback from our departmental contacts on anything about the Network and its activities, or on the issues that we should be addressing.

Readers of the website are asked to contact the Subject Centre to find out who is their institutional contact.

**EXTRACT FROM THE ICS WEBSITE**

[www.ics.heacademy.ac.uk/about-us/keycontacts.doc](http://www.ics.heacademy.ac.uk/about-us/keycontacts.doc)

The Key Contact role can include:

- receiving communications from the Subject Centre and disseminating it to all relevant staff within your Department/School;
- making themselves widely known as a representative in their own institution;
- promoting the potential benefits of involvement with the Centre within their Department/School e.g. opportunities for professional development, access to a broader community and a UK wide information network;
- encouraging teaching staff to engage with the Centre by contributing
reports, articles and papers and to avail of the many funding opportunities to undertake case studies;

• alerting the Centre to any learning, teaching or assessment issues arising from the work within their institution, also of relevant projects, publications etc;

• liaising with other Key Contacts in their own institution or local area;

• maximising opportunities to encourage colleagues to:
  a) consider their strategy for helping students learn
  b) evaluate and disseminate good practice in learning and teaching including the use of communication and information technology

A list of ICS's institutional contacts is available online at:
www.ics.heacademy.ac.uk/about-us/keycontacts.php

EXTRACT FROM THE MEDEV WEBSITE
www.medev.ac.uk/contact_us/institutional_contacts

Institutional Nominated Primary Contacts (NCPs)

Their role is to identify the needs of their schools and the constituency in relation to current learning and teaching support issues, and to help us to define the developing agenda for the subject centre. This network will also help maintain our links with the appropriate special interest groups and professional associations in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine. The subject centre keeps the NCPs informed of all contact that we have with their programme in their institution.

The list of NCPs is also available at:
www.medev.ac.uk/contact_us/institutional_contacts

EXTRACT FROM THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES WEBSITE
www.physsci.heacademy.ac.uk/Home/Index.aspx

The Centre has now identified representatives in HE Physical Sciences departments. Departmental Representatives provide a link between the Subject Centre and individual institutions. Through them, we are able to more effectively assess both the learning and teaching needs of the community and those of individual departments.

EXTRACT FROM THE C-SAP WEBSITE
www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk

C-SAP aims to have departmental contacts in all subject-related departments across the UK.

Readers of the website are asked to contact the Subject Centre to find out who is their institutional contact.
The Higher Education Academy

Our mission is to help institutions, discipline groups and all staff to provide the best possible learning experience for their students. We provide an authoritative and independent voice on policies that influence student learning experiences, support institutions, lead and support the professional development and recognition of staff in higher education, and lead the development of research and evaluation to improve the quality of the student learning experience.

The Higher Education Academy is an independent organisation funded by grants from the four UK higher education funding bodies, subscriptions from higher education institutions, and grant and contract income for specific initiatives.