

September 2008

2005-2010 Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning programme

**Formative evaluation report to HEFCE by the
Centre for Study in Education and
Training/Institution of Educational Technology**

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Thanks, too, to those who took pictures of their Centres and posted them on the CETL national evaluation website, as well as to others who supplied us with podcasts.

Following our principle that no person would be identified without first consenting, these colleagues who have helped us so much remain anonymous.

The evaluation team would like to dedicate this report of its work to Peter Knight who died suddenly in April 2007. Peter was co-director of the evaluation. His contributions were immense and he will be hugely missed.

Executive summary

Introductory remarks

1. This is the Summary Report of the independent evaluation of the national CETL programme synthesising all evidence gathered during the period between March 2007 and January 2008. The Summary Report can be read in conjunction with the Extended Report which contains a detailed analysis of the complete data set. It provides a formative account of the CETL programme experience and effects at a three year point in its duration.

2. The CETL (Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) programme is an investment of some £315 million pounds over five years from 2005-2010 by HEFCE in the enhancement of learning, teaching and other aspects of curriculum. It established 74 Centres in England to reward and recognise excellent teaching in a variety of disciplines and cross-disciplinary practices. In England this investment is an intensification of the work undertaken under the teaching quality enhancement fund. According to HEFCE,

*The purpose of CETLs is to reward excellent teaching practice and to invest in that practice further in order **to increase and deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community**¹.*

The key phrase in this extract is emboldened to emphasise that the CETL programme was designed as a strategy to maximise the impact of excellent practice across the whole sector. The key metaphoric phrase 'deepen its impact' signals this intention clearly. There are other ways of accomplishing these effects so we can suggest that this particular intervention (the use of Centres for Excellence) had within it the embedded assumption, or theory, that creating and reinforcing existing good practice through CETLs would deepen impact. Guidance² on evaluation circulated by HEFCE on the evaluation approach adopted by HEFCE made similar claims.

3. This report provides analysis of evidence from the following sources:

Key informant interviews (22)

- Interviews with senior managers of higher education institutions (22)
- Interviews with partners of lead CETL institutions (10)
- Visits to CETLs undertaken since the beginning of the evaluation (36 CETL visits, 698 respondents)
- Survey of CETL Directors (86% response rate)
- The overview of the CETL self evaluation reports submitted at the end of July 2007 (74 reports).

Effects of reward and recognition

4. The various dimensions of this evaluation reveal an overall positive narrative for the development of the CETLs as 'nodes' of teaching- and learning-focused activities. Notwithstanding the tendency for newly formed entities like CETLs to have a strong sense of emerging identity, internal culture and excitement, the data points to a range of positive effects the existence of the CETL programme has enabled. As this report suggests, these effects tend to be circulating around the direct beneficiaries of CETL resources but there is growing evidence that effects are beginning to move out from the enclaves of practice within CETLs and, in some cases, are being used to strategic effect within institutions.

¹ http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2004/04_05/#exec

² <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tinits/cetl/evaluation/CETLguide.doc>

Overall, we can identify some supportable but provisional propositions concerning the effects of reward and recognition through the CETL programme:

- a) All CETLs have enriched and extended the expertise of teaching practitioners and fellows through reward and have experimented in an innovative way with aspects of teaching and learning such as course content, learning process and assessment. The longer-term influence and potential of this enrichment is difficult to estimate but may be important in developing a cadre of 'extended' professionals through which increased priority is given to teaching and learning
- b) A large proportion of CETLs have had effects in pockets where optimum 'deepening factors' (see below in point 7) are present
- c) There is a strong message from the senior managers and key informants that the relative autonomy and 'loosely coupled' nature of the programme, has some downsides. They talk of missed opportunities to coordinate, rather low visibility in terms of 'impression management' and a difficulty in capitalising on the collective outputs and learning of the programme as a whole
- d) The existence of a CETL in an institution and its associated injection of resources have enabled good practice to develop further. For example, pedagogic research opportunities, small-scale development projects, new curriculum designs, experiments with new methodologies, professional development and support for dissemination
- e) Capital spend has been a visible and iconic symbol of a shift in attention toward teaching and learning. Some senior managers were able to use the attraction of serious resources into the institution from a teaching rather than research imperative as a way of improving the status of teaching and learning within institutions. In this sense the 'recognition' dimension of the strategy is working subtly to reposition the status of teaching practitioners
- f) There are signs that the time-limited rewards associated with the programme may have prompted or supported some systemic changes in the way academic career paths and routes within higher education (HE) teaching are understood and designed
- g) The focus on pedagogic research within CETLs has highlighted the uneasy relationship between three dimensions of University practice:
 - i. active research within a discipline or cluster of disciplines (traditional research-based practice)
 - ii. how that research-based knowledge is reproduced through teaching and learning programmes (teaching and learning practices embedded in courses)
 - iii. the pedagogic knowledge (produced through research or experientially) which may or may not have a disciplinary boundary.
- h) Pedagogic research has an uncertain status in some quarters with its legitimacy and the legitimate position of its proponents, being questioned. The main critique is that separating out pedagogic research within a discipline from its disciplinary research base is unsound, i.e. the emergence of academic teachers who teach within a discipline and have pedagogic expertise, but are not active researchers within the discipline, is antithetical to the core purpose of HE
- i) These polar positions are probably not helpful, however. The dominant position held by most interviewees was more integrative with a view that any University academic should be supported in the development of their own pedagogic expertise which could involve pedagogic research (see point 25 below)
- j) As an embedded theory of change, the idea of a CETL programme does have its critics. The focus for the critique does not lie in whether or not CETLs have worked to produce further positive developments by those in receipt of new resources and attention (reward and recognition). The critique points to the sub-aim of the programme to '*deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community*'. Senior managers (Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors and key informants) pointed to the difficulties of using the CETL experience to deepen its effects within institutions and across the sector. They argue that there is no necessary connection between wonderful practice within a CETL and the chances it might

have for wider engagement unless there is an explicit '*engagement strategy*'. The message is to concentrate on 'engagement' as well as increased activity

- k) CETLs are part of a general shift in the backdrop of priorities, emphases, seriousness and awareness within HE over the last 10 years or so associated with teaching and learning. The 'gamble' that reward and recognition would give teaching and learning a serious boost within the sector may have yielded a strategic dividend. This has also coincided with other important changes where the quality of teaching and learning have been foregrounded (for example, changes in fee structure sensitising students to good and bad quality of teaching and the National Student Survey being, as it is, a public estimation of teaching quality that can be broken down to individual courses and thus members of staff).
- l) However, a minority of CETLs have had profound effects on institutional policy and practice, particularly in cross-disciplinary areas e.g. work based learning, assessment, student learning processes and student support, and have begun to influence the wider teaching and learning community
- m) Where good links with the appropriate Higher Education Academy Subject Centres and other strong networks exist along with a strategic approach to engagement, CETLs have begun to enrich teaching in their discipline or their area of focus across the sector
- n) At this stage, many CETLs have had little or no effect on institutional practice outside the immediate CETL beneficiaries.

Deepening effects

5. The trajectory of the programme overall is complex. However, interviews with senior managers of institutions that host CETLs suggest a mixed, although overall optimistic, picture of CETLS' propensity to 'deepen' the effects of excellent practice. It is justifiable to say, on the basis of the evidence collected during this evaluation, that only a relatively small proportion of senior managers were able to point to their CETLs as embedded in or providing leadership to the strategic direction of the institution's teaching and learning strategy. Most commented on its relatively 'enclaved' (self-contained clusters of practices) state at present and saw a need for a more integrative approach going forward.

At institutional level, factors that enable the deepening effects of excellence enshrined in CETLs include:

- a. Active rather than rhetorical connections to, and support from, institutional policy makers and the strategic planning process
- b. Representation of CETL staff on institutional decision-making bodies
- c. CETL activities that have a cross-disciplinary rather than uni-disciplinary focus (although we heard a convincing argument that there was nothing intrinsically uni-disciplinary about creative and excellent teaching simply because it takes place in a single discipline. It is often a matter of creatively reconstructing some core dimensions such that they can 'travel' across the disciplinary landscape)
- d. CETLs that have a robust framework of systemic or networked connections to other institutions or partners
- e. The pre-existing framework for reward and status within the institution that acted favourably toward teaching excellence
- f. The strength and dominance of traditional incentives for reward within the institution (promotion based mainly on research output)
- g. The status, success, recognition and priority of existing practices and frameworks constructed to support, enhance and reward teaching (e.g. Centres for Teaching and Learning within institutions)
- h. A relatively sophisticated approach to strategies of external engagement with the work and outputs of the CETL on a continuum from information-giving to active engagement strategies

- i. The scope of pedagogic research as an authentic support for claims of 'better learning'. We offer the broad range of approaches to pedagogic research on a continuum of from relative informality to traditional 'scientific' designs

6. There is evidence from visits, interviews, survey and the self evaluation reports that the relationship between individual CETLs and their host institutions is a critical factor in moving from relative self-containment to wider effects. In some cases, CETLs could show that their connection to a wider disciplinary constituency was stronger than with their own institution. The survey data shows that 42% of CETL Directors considered they had only some or no support from senior managers and 39% discussed progress solely through steering groups or stated that senior managers had little knowledge of the activities of CETLs. Over three quarters (79%) of CETL Directors did not know or had nothing agreed or had been told there would be no resource support for the CETL after the funding period. Clearly this may change as the funding period enters this next phase. While not overwhelming, the evidence shows a mixed picture concerning support and strategic thinking with respect to CETLs' role and function (both potential and current) within institutions. Inevitably some institutions and their CETLs have an uneasy relationship when capital spending is considered in a longer term timeframe. The relative autonomy of CETL decision making (often based on teaching, learning and reward criteria) does not always sit easily with institutional or corporate approaches to course design and validation, budgeting, estate management and use of space.

7. Uncertainty about futures, lack of integration and a degree of hesitation about longer-term strategic value characterises a significant minority of CETLs. Clearly there is a challenge in seeking cross-institutional relevance from a CETL with a strong disciplinary focus. However, many of the experiences of CETLs do have more generic teaching and learning relevance (e.g. assessment processes, student support practice, reflective learning, employability themes and engagement with the wider community). The strategic implication of these findings is that if CETLs are to have lasting effects, a concerted effort may be required to discuss with host institutions the way in which the work of the CETL might be institutionalised so that they may play a more robust role within institutions. In terms of the model of an innovation trajectory we are using to depict CETLs as a change strategy, we can depict the current state of affairs in the following way.

Figure 1: CETLs in relation to a national change strategy

Awareness

Initial stages of development involve wider emerging institutional awareness and interest in knowing more, thinking of implications for the institution or for other networks, such as subject or regional ones, and initial awareness of innovative practice embodied in the CETL and engagement strategies that begin to establish new bridgeheads

Exploring wider effects

Some CETLs are beginning to move forward by involving wider emerging awareness and interest in knowing more. They are thinking of implications for the institution or for other networks, such as subject or regional ones, more attention on the impact on students, staff, departments and whole institution of new practices and processes, relevance, evaluation and implied changes. At this stage, attention is on difficulties in the processes and tasks involved in developing new practices, processes and systems

Adaptation and extension

We might expect, toward the final period of funding for the CETLs, that they begin to experience activity at what we understand as adaptive extension where attention is now on adaptation, major changes, alternatives to original ideas and creativity. This opens up the possibility of increased coordinating and cooperating with other stakeholders in using new practices, systems and processes

8. Issues associated with the capital spend and the appointments of appropriate staff have been the most frequently cited problems as CETLs have started up. Delays with both have resulted in some false dawns, or as one respondent put it, "a phoney war creating a bit of a hiatus". As we note above, the evidence from the CETLs suggests the next period might focus more explicitly on wider dissemination and engagement (nationally and internationally, within and without the CETL network) of its successes and contributions to thinking on teaching and learning.

Stakeholder perspectives

9. Practitioners tend to see the reward dimension of the CETLs in comparatively modest terms of providing opportunities not normally available to them in the context of their routine practice. For example: being able to carry out research in a more systematic and less ad hoc way; having the funds to allow them to go to conferences; being able to network and build up contacts. Interestingly, in an initiative designed to enhance the status of teaching, practitioners involved in CETL activity refer to the reward of being able to undertake research (albeit pedagogic research) as a way to possibly advance their careers – research still being regarded by them as the main route to career advancement and promotion.

10. Another group of 'practitioners' whose roles have become increasingly important for many of the CETLs are support staff and, in particular, learning technologists. The latter are taking on key roles in those CETLs where new forms of technologies are being exploited for teaching and learning. It may be that CETLs, or their institutions, might wish to consider how their contribution to the CETLs can be appropriately rewarded.

11. It may be the case that the focus on the enhancement of teaching and learning, and the reward component of involvement with a CETL, is different in the more research-intensive universities, moving more toward a focus on teaching whilst post-'92 institutions are more likely to be rewarded by being given opportunities to carry out research. For practitioners, the CETLs may be more about reward (opportunities to take part in new activities or to develop areas of interest) rather than recognition (in the form of promotion for teaching excellence). It should also be noted that for a number of practitioners, the reward aspect of CETL involvement is slightly diminished by the fact that it entails extra work for them because not all teaching staff are being given adequate time by their departments from their 'core' practice to enable them to meet the extra commitments of CETL activities.

12. CETL team members are more likely to see CETLs in terms of both reward (for example, funding to develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning) and recognition. The rewards include being able to develop existing activities or to try out innovative pedagogical approaches. Also, being awarded a CETL has tangible status and carries the sense that it is a reward for being 'special' in terms of teaching excellence (this notion, as one of the Vice-Chancellors pointed out, is diminished in those institutions where wholesale appointments from outside the institution were prompted on receipt of CETL funding). This stakeholder group are more aware of the potential of the CETLs to raise the status of teaching as a career path in its own right. As we note above, CETLs are seen as key strategic players in the development of policies, in many universities, for more structured career pathways for those who excel at teaching

13. Middle and senior managers tend to see the CETLs as providing reward both in terms of wider opportunities to those involved (research, conferences etc) and, possibly, the reward of boosting career prospects. The latter depended very much on institutions' own human resources policies (there were dislocations in some universities) but there seems to be a where the development of clearer promotion and career pathways for teaching within many institutions is taking place. CETLs are seen by senior managers as contributing effectively to this agenda.

14. The accumulative effect of the strategies of government (since 1997) is creating a sea-change as a greater focus on teaching and learning has been prompted by the Dearing Committee Report³. The cultural positioning of teaching and learning within Universities has shifted and the landscape is very different to that of the early 1990s. As part of this shifting backdrop, CETLs are playing a role. This strategy, for even those Vice-Chancellors who failed to procure funds, is understood in terms of its capacity to encourage enrichment, experimentation and to act as a way of foregrounding the focus on teaching and learning.

15. There was a theme developed by all stakeholders that suggested the danger of 'project' approaches to funding (i.e. what will the legacy be once funding stops?). This might be a particular problem for smaller institutions. Issues of sustainability we discuss in detail below, but the same argument might hold for any injection of cash if the recipient is unable to think creatively about how it might be used. At the moment, the evidence suggests that institutions really need to think more

³ Formally published as a series of reports by the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, chaired by Ron Dearing, in 1997

strategically about the future. Interestingly, all those senior managers who had not been successful did not sustain an in-principle objection to the strategy if a new opportunity to bid were to arise.

16. A summary of the review of 74 self evaluation reports reveals a rich array of analytical descriptions of individual CETLs' work. They have formative potential in identifying potential adjustments, successes, challenges and orientation for the next period, and function as a public account of the achievements of CETLs, adopting, as they do, an affirmative stance. As outputs from evaluations, the reports may be characterised in the following way:

- They contain wide variations in data and empirical bases for estimations of value and worth
- They tend to focus on activities rather than more systematic data or evidence-led conclusions
- There is wide variation in report structure.

17. When considering the **strengths** of the strategy overall, CETL reports identified that the programme had provided a momentum for change in the recognition and status of teaching and learning within institutions, providing the following opportunities:

- The opportunity to network and develop collaborations
- The opportunity to experiment, research, risk-take and trial teaching and learning innovation
- Develop cross-institutional profile
- Raising engagement
- Undertaking professional development.

18. When considering the **weaknesses** of the strategy overall, CETL reports identified that in reporting the work of CETLs, there was a problem of attribution, i.e. changes are difficult to attribute to CETL activity because of the variety of intervening variables that might be relevant. Other issues were:

- Resourcing
- Institutional context and joined up thinking
- Longer-term futures and sustainability.

19. The evaluation reports were focused mainly on reporting the level of activity in which each CETL had been involved since they were established. In the majority of cases, the fact that activities had occurred was the main evidence of effect within the report. Of the 1181 instances of activities reported by the 74 CETLs, 845 (72%) did not provide evidence of effect as such. This leaves 336 (28%) activities which included some form of evidence of effect. Of that group, 149 (44%) based their evidence on feedback from staff, students or employers, and in three cases the evidence of effectiveness was based on an external examiner report, documented changes to the curriculum, and an improvement in student performance in tests.

Formative issues for the management of the project

20. The evidence suggests that the management of the programme has attracted some observations, particularly from the most senior of our group of key informants (through the early interviews with strategically placed individuals and the most recent interviews with Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors). As in other interventions in the higher education sector in the UK, the relative autonomy of a higher education institution is a factor that shapes the 'consensual' approach to change. The tradition of deliberate strategies to change and enhance learning and teaching in higher education in the UK has a relatively short history. Traditionally, its legitimacy among numbers of academics has been uncertain. Central or cross-disciplinary standards, approaches, suggestions and development have run up against the canon of concerns traditionally held by academics. So, academics do not appreciate a heavy central steer on practices that have been very much the local preserve. Managing national interventions in HE within the UK context then has involved a delicate balance between standard programme management and the light touch approaches developed over the past 8 years that acknowledge the relative autonomy of institutions.

21. In the case of the national management of CETLs, the evidence does suggest that the institutions have taken a while to relinquish expectations that HEFCE will be adopting a more vigorous

form of management or coordination and that they have encouraged a relatively open brief to achieve their own aims. This said, there was evidence that senior managers and the CETL teams themselves might appreciate a more central strategy associated with cross-CETL themes, external visibility and wider dissemination. Any increase in central role will have resource implications.

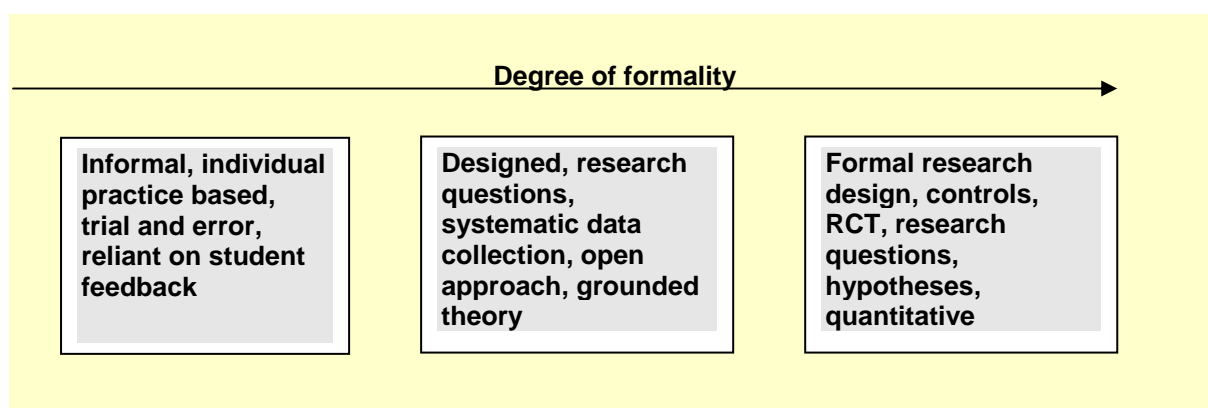
22. Is there a general case for cross-CETL coordination? We find in the evidence that stakeholders placed hope in the self-organising networks, nationally or within a region; some looked to links with Subject Centres or professional bodies and a minority saw a role for the HEA more generally. Yet the networks are not organised to represent the programme as a whole, Subject Centres are not generously funded or staffed and respondents pointed to some unevenness about the HEA Subject Centres in relation to the CETL programme. There may be a need for a more cohesive framework for the CETLs – but without falling into central management. Cross-CETL connections, focusing on generic areas of interest (reflective learning, students as researchers, active learning, pedagogic research planning, engagement with employers, learning support mechanisms) might be enabled through central coordination. Among the ‘common denominators’ were, for example:

- How to develop new partnerships to promote creative learning and teaching practices
- The development of digital and web-based resources
- Involving students in working with external agencies/employers/partners.

23. Is there a specific case for cross-CETL discussion on pedagogic research? Where pedagogic research projects are under way (83% of CETLs are engaged in this activity), the evaluation team did not note many examples of pedagogic research activities feeding directly into teaching practices at this stage. The team is not yet in a position, therefore, to comment on the extent to which pedagogic research is filtering through to practice. One emerging theme, however, is the extent of variation in understanding of the practice of pedagogic research. The pedagogic research (PR) practices that are emerging are diverse and will form the basis of evocative typologies based on method, formality, situatedness and generalisability. The dominant mode is one of individual investigations into student learning or support for learning with the contradictory characteristics of high situated relevance and relatively low generalisability. This point however is hotly debated relying as it does on a traditional ‘science’ model of generalisability. The alternative view sees such situated embodiments or experiments of a less formal kind as useful and evocative examples of what can be done based on a more action-oriented, more collaborative view of research.

What is important, however, is not to encourage a kind of spurious research ‘gold standard’ based on random controlled trials (RCTs) or something akin, but to make sure the status, value and use of PR is clearly understood and articulated, whatever its methodological inclinations. Evidence from all our enquiries (key informants, visits, surveys and self evaluation reports) suggest the possibility of a more engaged and cross-fertilised approach to the pedagogic research practices that are emerging. Figure 2 identifies the main types of pedagogic research, grounded in practice, with the most dominant mode on the left. In the broadest sense, the continuum is based on relative formality with the situated informal ‘trying and testing’ research on the left (almost indistinguishable from ‘development’) and the more traditionally positivistic model (very few examples of this) on the right.

Figure 2 Types of pedagogic research in practice



24. Is there a case for refocusing evaluative practice? This CETL programme differs from many interventions of this kind in that it has expressed a clear justification for the allocation of resources, which had embedded within it an implicit theory of improvement and change based on reward. It also

took seriously the idea of formative evaluation, allowing individual CETLs to own and control their own formative reports alongside the formative evaluation at a national level. While the reports were replete with evocative and fascinating accounts of activities, what is important to note is that many of the CETLs did not refer to evidence collected systematically which could act as an independent resource for judgement. In these circumstances, the self evaluation reports overall tended to merge an estimation of worth with the successful completion of an activity to which there was a positive reaction.

25. In other words, evaluations tended to emphasise evaluations of the experience of an activity. This might be understood as a first step in evaluation i.e. without an activity taking place or numbers of individuals taking part no effects could be expected. However, a reader is still not able to discern on what basis the activity is considered to have produced or not produced desired outcomes or positive effects of a wider nature. In this second period of development, a refocus of evaluative practice to include a focus on new learning or new practices at individual or systemic levels might be useful, including a more transparent evidential base for a wider audience.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Centre for the Study for Education and Training (CSET) and the Institute of Educational Technology was commissioned by HEFCE in January 2007 to conduct the interim, formative evaluation of the Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) programme.

1.2 This report presents a synthesis of the evidence obtained through the period of evaluation between March 2007 and January 2008.

1.3 The CETL programme is an investment of some £315 million by HEFCE in the enhancement of learning, teaching and other aspects of curriculum. This investment is an intensification of the work done under the teaching quality enhancement fund. According to HEFCE,

*The purpose of CETLs is to reward excellent teaching practice and to invest in that practice further **in order to increase and deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community.***⁴

The key phrase in this extract is in bold text to emphasise that the CETL programme was designed as a strategy to maximise the impact of excellent practice across the whole sector. The key metaphoric phrase 'deepen its impact' signals this intention clearly. There are other ways of accomplishing these effects so we can suggest that this particular intervention (the use of Centres for Excellence) had within it the embedded assumption, or theory, that creating or reinforcing existing good practice through CETLs would deepen impact. Guidance⁵ on evaluation circulated by HEFCE on the evaluation approach adopted by HEFCE made similar claims.

*One of our key objectives in designing the programme-wide evaluation is to ensure that it takes account of the complexity of the learning and teaching process and of how excellence is viewed and disseminated. **The CETLs do not stand alone. They are potential catalysts for change and innovation within institutions and throughout higher education; they bring both opportunities and risks in their recognition and reward for excellence.** We believe it is important that evaluation of the CETL programme should examine intended and unintended consequences, and seek to uncover processes that will support better understanding of the relationship between excellent teaching and student learning, and the interplay between pedagogic research and scholarship and learning and teaching 'on the ground'.*

1.4 The evaluation, therefore, focused on the purpose of the reward strategy which was that CETLs should enrich and reward existing good practice in the belief that it would create wider impact across the higher education (HE) learning community. We suggest that investment in CETLs has an embedded theory of change that was developed by HEFCE during preparatory meetings held by the

⁴ http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2004/04_05/#exec

⁵ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tinits/cetl/evaluation/CETLguide.doc>

CETL evaluation network chaired and supported by HEFCE and the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The presentation by HEFCE contained the following 'theory' of CETL development

- Excellent teaching contributes to excellent learning
- Reward and recognition encourage the enhancement of teaching quality, over and above the impetus provided by staff's general commitment to doing good work
- Recognising individual and institutional excellence in teaching and learning promotes excellence across the sector
- The sector is proud of its semi-autonomy, has complex cultures and affiliations and is accustomed to generating its own momentum. Therefore, a relatively light touch is most likely to yield improvement
- Change is brought about by complex causal mechanisms (what Evert Vedung⁶ has called using 'carrots, sticks, sermons and partnerships') but also by the convergence of many long-term and short-term factors (opportunity, funding, policy change, new appointments)

1.5 The strategy for the evaluation of CETLs reflected their broad purpose as outlined above and was shaped by this embedded 'theory of change'. Therefore, the formative evaluation work described in our original proposal had the main focus of providing formative feedback on the extent to which the CETL strategy of rewarding and enhancing excellence is achieving its intended effects of encouraging and inspiring positive changes in teaching and learning in the HE sector as a whole. In particular, we aimed to describe:

- Unanticipated or unintended effects that can be construed both positively and negatively
- The 'light touch' HEFCE has adopted towards the management of the CETLs and the relationships that have developed with agencies, such as the HEA, which have sought to broker CETL networking
- Lessons that might inform the second phase of the CETL evaluation and any developments in the CETL programme
- To create a strategic commentary on the extent to which the programme has developed a significant presence within the institutions in which they are placed and to become influential beyond their institutions and pedagogic areas
- To comment on the effectiveness of the programme in supporting and furthering the aim of HEFCE in its strategic thinking about learning and teaching support and improvement.

1.6 In order to capture the way the CETL programme might 'deepen' the effects of excellent practice, we identify what we call a series of 'mechanisms' adopted by CETLs to both extend and reward their own excellent practice, for example:

- Providing opportunities for visiting practitioners or fellows working with teachers and students
- Awarding bursaries and grants for staff and students to undertake pedagogic research. This appears to be a common mechanism, so we are especially interested in means by which its effects filter through to practice
- Offering bursaries and grants for staff and students to experiment with new learning opportunities and curricula
- Organising and supporting events (workshops, seminars, professional development activity) undertaken to disseminate innovation
- Developing digital and web-based events, affordances and other resources
- Establishing partnership arrangements designed to widen opportunities and promote creative teaching and learning practice
- Making creative and efficient use of buildings, plant and equipment.

1.7 There is however, a sense in which the CETLs may be operating at a level which is greater than the sum of their parts (mechanisms). By this we refer to the way in which the programme might be repositioning teaching and learning (T&L) practices at institutional and sector levels in ways that were

⁶ Vedung E (2000) Public policy and programme evaluation (Transaction Publishers, London)

difficult to precisely determine or predict. It may, for example create 'ripple' effects through recognition that are creating a shift in the way T&L practitioners are being rewarded and resources and attention might be flowing toward T&L. We offer the framework below for understanding the way in which reward and recognition through CETL mechanisms might create 'deeper' effects across institutions and the sector. The model suggests that at the outset of the CETL programme, excellent practice was essentially taking place in pockets within institutions and it is these pockets of practice that have been rewarded. We use the metaphor of an 'enclave' to depict these pockets of excellent practice. The process of deepening, we argue, involves the principles, ways, means and approaches that constitute excellent practice moving out from these pockets or enclaves of practice and influencing the wider case. To have deeper effects therefore would involve the programme as a whole shaping practices at the consequential (5), collaborative (6) and refocusing (7) levels in the table below.

Table 1: Innovation trajectories, below summarises our framework

7	Refocusing	A new community has emerged and is marked by common sites. New ideas are developing for taking the innovation onwards	Attention now on adaptation, major changes, alternatives to original ideas, creativity. A step change with T&L becoming more emphasised in institutional strategies
6	Collaboration	Becoming systemic: moving from enclaves to wider influence	Coordinating and cooperating with other stakeholders in using new practices, systems and processes, creating effective networks across the sector
5	Consequence	Evaluation of new enclaves	Attention on impact on students, staff, departments and whole institution of new practices and processes, relevance, evaluation and implied changes
4	Management	New enclaves developing	Attention on difficulties in the processes and tasks involved in developing new practices, processes and systems
3	Institutional/personal	New enclaves beginning to form	Begins to analyse effects and impacts on existing systems and practice
2	Informational	Bridgeheads forming	Wider emerging awareness and interest in knowing more, thinking of implications for the institution or for other networks, such as subject or regional ones
1	Awareness	Bridgeheads forming	Initial awareness of innovative practice embodied in the CETL and engagement strategies begin to establish new bridgeheads
0	Formation of a CETL as an enclave of excellent practice	The CETL is an enclave promoting excellent practice	Relatively self contained innovative practice rewarded through the CETL programme

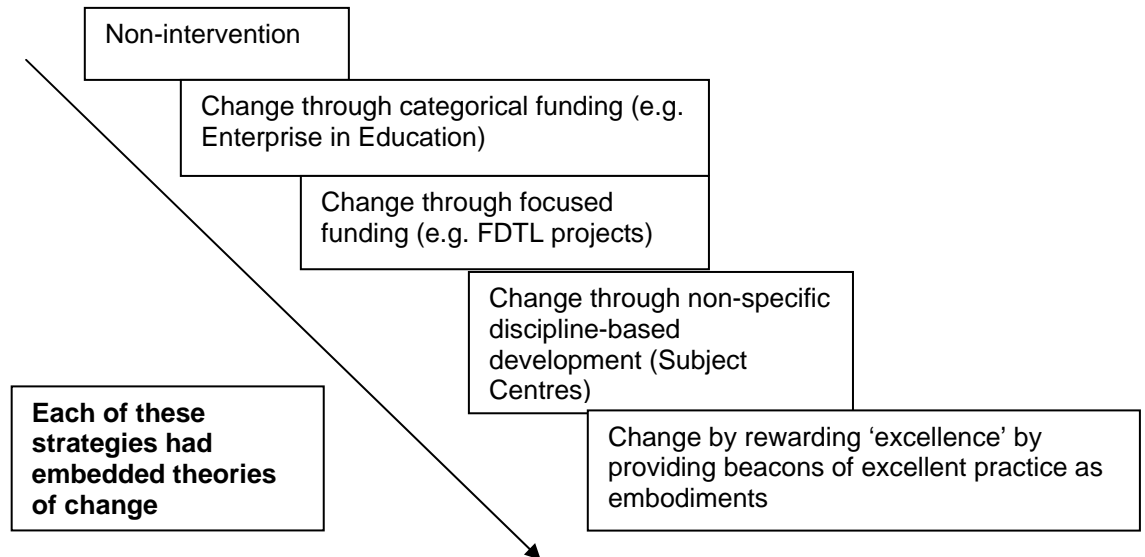
1.8 CETLs are a novel strategy for learning quality enhancement⁷, complementing other work that has been supported by HEFCE's teaching quality enhancement fund (TQEF), including the development of institutional learning and teaching strategies, the national teaching fellowships (NTFs), the learning and teaching support network (LTSN) and the HEA. The evolution of these strategies is depicted in Figure 1.

They give credit to a commitment to teaching enhancement at a time when the research assessment exercise might have distracted attention from teaching. Not only are they intended to recognise and reward teaching excellence, they are also intended to stimulate its spread and, in the process,

⁷ The ultimate aim, represented in HEFCE's teaching quality enhancement fund, for instance, is to affect student learning outcomes. Teaching quality enhancement is a means to that end. In this report we intend learning enhancement to subsume curriculum and teaching enhancement.

encourage innovation. Consequently, in the words of one of our key informants, there is 'quite a lot of freedom on the focus used by institutions and on what they do over the five years'. Indeed, HEFCE and the department for employment and learning in Northern Ireland (DELNI) have insisted that this is not a 'managed programme', as the LTSN, for example, was. For a full exposition of our approach to this formative evaluation see Appendix 1.

Figure 1: HE change strategies since mid 20th Century



2.0 Our formative evaluation enquiries

The following evidence base has been created in the course of the evaluation work:

- Twenty two semi-structured interviews, including video interviews using Skype. Key informant interviews were completed by April 2007. Interviews were undertaken with
 - CETL managers (not included in the Case Study Sweep)
 - Pro Vice-Chancellors (teaching and learning)
 - Non-English informants, to alert us to things we may be taking for granted or overlooking
 - HEFCE, Universities UK, Guild HE, the Higher Education Academy, the Leadership Foundation and Action on Access
 - CETL Directors
- Case studies in a sample of 36 sites. This work began in March and was completed in early December. The institutional visits have provided opportunities to gain evidence from 693 individual stakeholders within institutions
- Questionnaire survey of CETL Directors. The survey was sent out during May 2007 to all the CETL Directors and a final response rate of 86% was achieved (64 responses out of 74 sent out). The aim of the survey was to obtain information about a range of issues connected with the CETLs, the effects of the CETLs so far, and how they are currently developing.
- An overview analysis of all 74 self evaluation reports completed by CETLs for July 2007
- Examination of documents and the 'grey' literature. We have already studied documents about setting up the CETLs
- Participation in CETL activities. Apart from the work we were doing with CETLs before taking on this national evaluation work, we have participated in two national events and have invitations to work with individual CETLs and CETL networks.
- Strategic interviews with senior managers of higher education institutions (HEIs), ten Vice-Chancellors of institutions hosting CETLS and ten senior managers who made bids but were not funded.
- Strategic interviews with 10 HEI partners who were not the lead CETL.

3.0 Summary of themes arising from evaluation activities

3.1 Key informant interviews

3.1.1 Introduction

Key informants are people strategically placed to comment with knowledge on the idea of CETLs and learning quality enhancement, who could provide a commentary on the range of issues associated with CETL programme operations. Not all worked in England or Northern Ireland – their views helped us to understand the CETL programme as one of many international approaches to learning quality enhancement.

We spoke with 22 informants from a list of 30+ compiled in consultation with sponsoring agencies⁸. They are not a representative sample of people involved in the CETL programme but an opportunity sample of people with diverse perspectives on the CETL programme from an ‘informed’ position in the HE environment. What we hoped to gain from them was a sense of how the CETL programme was presenting itself as a major contribution to learning quality enhancement.

The nature of the sample is such that it would be misleading to report the number of informants cleaving to particular views and the conversational, open approach to interviewing, with an emphasis on appreciation, means that there are also robust technical reasons for not giving numbers. However, where we heard similar points from several informants we say so, always with the caution that this could be an artefact of sampling or of interviewing.

They have proved fertile stimuli to our thinking about themes, methods and possibilities and, as such, they fit with an approach to evaluation that seeks illumination and understanding forming what might be termed ‘strategic intelligence’. It is akin to a Delphi study.

Data are reported in two ways. First we provide a summary of responses to our four prompts, followed by a summary of three themes that emerged in discussions. The interviews were structured by using four general prompts designed to evoke broad strategic commentary. These prompts will form the basis of the analysis below.

The prompts are:

- What appears to be working well?
- What appears to be problematic?
- What should be the priorities for the next three years?
- Making a difference to learning quality.

The themes are:

- Fostering systemic change in learning quality
- Dissemination
- A managed programme.

⁸ Our intention was to draw informants from:

CETL managers (not included in the Case Study Sweep)

PVCs (teaching and learning)

Non-English informants, to alert us to things we may be taking for granted or overlooking

HEFCE, Universities UK, Guild HE, the Higher Education Academy, The Leadership Foundation and Action on Access

CETL Directors

3.1.2 What is working well

To create such a complex structure is an achievement in its own right' said one informant, reflecting the amount of work that has been done to make the CETL vision an operating reality.

Overwhelmingly, informants said that CETLs were able to be innovative, allowing teachers to do things that previously would have been impossible, as these quotations indicate:

They're an opportunity to develop and try out new things in UK (sic) higher education.

We've got opportunities to find some creative space for development.

It's bringing some of the most inspirational people in teaching and learning together.

[Risk-taking and creativity] I see that everywhere.

Phrases such as 'risk-taking' and 'blue-skies thinking' were used, often with an appreciation of the ways in which the capital funding was making it possible to turn ideas into actualities. One informant said that her CETL benefited enormously from:

The construction and development of different sorts of learning spaces and spaces to support learning ... I can't quite see they'd have happened in any other way [than by CETL capital funding] and been as innovative and experimental as happened ... the capital may end up making the greatest impact [of all CETL funding] in the host institution.

Frequently mentioned was the development of self-organising networks of CETLs. Three sorts of networks were mentioned:

- Networks centred on a subject area and typically involving the relevant Higher Education Academy Subject Centres
- Generic networks, such as those centring on enquiry-based learning and work-integrated learning; and regional networks, such as the East Midlands grouping. There were also some comments that CETLs seemed to work easily with each other and not to be in competition, although there were not enough of them for this to be taken to be true of the CETLs as a set;
- It was also said that a group of CETLs favoured 'interdisciplinarity' but, again, some care is needed here: remarks came from CETLs with an interdisciplinary remit and it is also clear from a Newcastle event on 'interdisciplinary' on 17 January that the term is often understood in the rather narrow sense in which it is typically used in the health and social care sectors.

However, as will be seen in the next section, some CETLs appear to be unconnected – in the words of one informant, 'in pockets, effective networks of CETLs are being created'. The Academy's work in trying to bring CETLs together was recognised and the April conference at Warwick was commended by several informants. There were, though, some reservations about the Academy's co-ordination work, especially as regards the 'generic' CETLs⁹, as the next section shows.

Self-organisation was associated with HEFCE's decision not to micro-manage the programme. That is not to say, of course, that commentators considered that HEFCE had no meta-management responsibility for the CETL programme but, rather, that it has deliberately created space for innovation and creativity. So too with the formative evaluation, which seems to be being understood as a collaborative and appreciative process. One informant said that HEFCE's approach is 'flexible and professional – we're trusted'.

Plenty of CETL achievements were mentioned. One ran 20 projects in years one and two, while waiting for new buildings to be completed and many other CETL staff referred to their successful 'small grants' schemes to support projects:

As one might expect, the things that are working best are the fairly local things.

Each of them [CETLs] has a lot of funding to concentrate on an area and really make inroads, which I think is great.

There were also reports that CETLs are 'student-facing': when asked, one informant said, 'Yes, definitely, without a shadow of doubt ... at all levels' and there were some comments that it is more common to see joint staff-student projects now. Interviewees provided a glimpse of a higher education

⁹ Some CETLs are oriented to particular subject areas. Many tackle cross-curricular themes, such as workplace learning. We call them 'generic' CETLs.

future in which the distance between students and teachers gets reduced but a leavening of scepticism is in order as well. Many CETLs are involved in recruiting teaching staff and signing them up to the five-year vision. The impression was that a bare majority of CETLs are concentrating on marketing a vision to staff and that it will be some years before effects on students can be seen. Yet, scepticism notwithstanding, there was a view that CETLs are already making a difference to student learning and to the teacher-student relationship.

One of HEFCE's intentions with the CETL programme was to increase the status of teaching, which in effect counterbalances the research assessment exercise (RAE) emphasis on certain forms of research activity. There were comments that the CETLs are raising the status of teaching and learning in universities. They have:

Added a step up in terms of recognition of learning, teaching and assessment – a step change by virtue of the funds available.

Made talk about learning and teaching more positive, better informed and strategic ... [CETLs] raise the level of discourse in universities.

There was reference to 'the privilege of hosting CETLs – institutions are proud of them' and one informant said that 'it's good that it [the CETL programme] deals with the issue that people get rewards for research but not for teaching and learning'.

This enthusiasm also needs to be qualified. On the one hand, there were comments that Russell Group universities were under-represented in the CETL programme, leading to the observation that the status of teaching was indeed being raised but not so much amongst universities that believed themselves to be research stars¹⁰. On the other hand some CETLs feel less than appreciated by their universities and most of them are already wondering whether their institutions will continue a commitment to this area of teaching support once DELNI and HEFCE funds cease. In addition, many are occupied with the perennial quality enhancement question – how do innovators make systemic changes, reaching those outside the innovation fan club?

3.1.3 What is problematic

The CETL programme is no exception to the tendency for fulsome answers to questions on problems, although one colleague insisted that they are 'challenges, not problems' and another said 'risk-taking means people have to be open to problems'.

Most often cited was the issue, also covered in the next section, of sustainability – one CETL said, 'we've little chance of being incorporated into mainstream funding' and others were not convinced that host universities would do anything more than take HEFCE's money and 'shut up shop' when it finished. There were others who were fairly confident that their universities would keep at least the best of their CETLs' achievements. This was complemented by a prominent figure in the UK staff development community who thought that there was no real tension between CETLs and staff developers and that they two groups might eventually merge in some universities. Yet a Vice-Chancellor reckoned that 'the educational developers will survive – they've done it so many times before'.

There were other organisational and political concerns:

There are tensions between freedom to innovate and institutional politics.

I think institutions want a quick fix really and I've been pressurised in terms of internal dissemination.

There's the problem of getting ideas embedded in institutions, of translating ideas into institutions, even at a strategic level, never mind getting them on the ground.

Making the CETL operational had been a challenge for some universities and, while they appreciated the freedom to make 'a slow start', there was some criticism from CETLs that had been operational in April 2005 – 'progress is variable, quite slow in some areas'. However, all informants agreed that all CETLs seemed to be working now – albeit two years into a five-year programme. One reason for the time it had taken some Centres to get to this point was that many of them were 'build dependent', meaning that they could not function fully until capital works were completed. Problems with building

¹⁰ We were invited to pursue the proposition that there is a marked difference between CETLs in post-'92 universities and those in pre-'92 ones.

were the second commonest set, enlivened with some sardonic remarks about Estates departments and building contractors. There is no doubt that some CETLs had to spend so much time on capital projects that their capacity to carry out their operational plans was compromised and there are hints that the requirement to plan, build and spend in two years hindered some more strategic thinking about use of capital funds.

Some Centres had found their initial plans to be unrealistic and had appreciated HEFCE's willingness to listen to proposals to change them. Several interviewees had realised that they had been too frugal in staffing, especially where they were led by (very) part-time Directors and doubly so when the Centre was hosted by two or more institutions¹¹; some realised that what they had hoped to do in two years might take three or four¹², although such tales were counterbalanced by other CETLs that had launched a raft of projects, fellowships and other initiatives and seemed to be hitting targets, even if their approaches seemed to one informant to be 'a bit scattergun'. This line of thinking merged with a realisation that CETLs often lacked the Human Resource expertise – or access to it – to make a difference to university reward and recognition processes. Prizes and project funding helped but there was little belief that they were sufficient and it was here that the realisation that CETLs are temporary projects was sobering – what prospect was there that projects and prizes would be sufficient to redress the teaching-research imbalance? One Vice-Chancellor said that unless universities got to thinking hard about pedagogic research and 'mainstreaming' research-informed curricula, then the CETLs might not have the long-term impact that was hoped for.

There was ambivalence about the nature of the programme itself. There was undoubted appreciation of HEFCE's flexibility and commitment to letting CETLs shape their own futures, and of its approach to evaluation (we, as evaluators, have a sense that our CETL colleagues see themselves as partners in formative, collective self-study¹³). But, some were worried that there might be too much diversity, too much waste – 'There's a lot of wallowing around in re-inventing the wheel and feeling isolated and uncertain but rich.' In a similar vein, there were references to 'a lack of a sense of a strategy that might have inhibited the *programme* at an early stage'. Another informant said that 'it's difficult to grasp this as a programme', with a third adding that 'it's hard to get a sense of the programme as a whole ... there's no overarching mechanisms to give the programme coherence' and a fourth adding 'I'm not entirely sure what they're [CETLS] supposed to do – I might have expected them to be more at the forefront of my consciousness than they are'¹⁴. The concern was that any lack of coherence could result in CETLs 'punching below their weight'.

It was recognised that the Academy had been active in trying to bring the CETLs together and enhance programme coherence. Useful though its work had been, there was a view that it had not remedied the disadvantages of letting 'a thousand flowers bloom'¹⁵. Uncharitably and inaccurately, one CETL manager said, 'I don't think the Higher Education Academy know who we are and what we do'. More generously, another said that relationships with Academy (York) and Subject Centres 'have not worked well in all aspects'. Positive observations were made of the various self-organising networks that are developing. While self-organising structures are reckoned to be stronger than imposed structures, the problem is that these networks do not cover all the CETLs and the CETLs themselves do not cover all subject areas or generic themes and issues. And, although dissemination was most mentioned under the heading of priorities for the next three years, there was also a generally-held view that the un-managed CETL programme faced dissemination problems precisely because it would be hard to represent programme achievements in the face of loose and diverse bonds amongst 74 'centres of difference in teaching and learning'.

¹¹ The most complicated CETL is LearnHigher, which is 'the country's biggest collaborative HEFCE funded Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL); we are a partnership of 16 Universities and the Higher Education Academy.' (<http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/>, visited 9 April 2007.)

¹² 'I find CETLs to be very greedy' said one informant who was trying to do what the CETL had promised while maintaining commitment to teaching.

¹³ On the other hand, we did hear worries about the evaluation, ranging from the lack of evidence ('It's too early to line up 100 students and ask "what difference has the CETL made for you?"') to the amount of time that preparing the self evaluation document could take.

¹⁴ This informant works outside England and Northern Ireland but given the nature of the work, a much sharper understanding of the CETLs could have been expected.

¹⁵ An informant remarked that Centres risk being overwhelmed with every CETL apparently running a conference or seminar, along with network meetings and Academy events.

3.1.4 What are the priorities for the next three years?

To an extent, priorities are attempts to address problems. A clear priority was the need to address **sustainability** – ‘we don’t want this to be a five-year shot in the arm for learning and teaching and then to slowly lose the immunisation (*sic*) thereafter’. There was a shortage of convincing ideas about how the CETLs’ work could be sustained once funding finishes in 2010. It was recognised that ‘not everything can be sustained’, which led to the advice ‘don’t just extend funding but look instead to build on achievements, get more coherence and make links’. This may present difficulties, especially in universities that, notwithstanding their enthusiasm for hosting a CETL, might lack funds, innovative capacity and willingness to invest further in curriculum, teaching and learning. Success would, of course, help but two difficulties in particular were identified.

- One is the difficulty of demonstrating success on such a scale that the university would be convinced of the need to sustain investment in it. This is likely to be more difficult for subject-based CETLs, since it could be hard to convince a university that commensurate benefits would accrue to other departments and the institution as a whole
- The other issue concerns raising awareness of success or, more generally, of dissemination. There was a great deal of agreement that the achievements of the CETL programme as a whole are insufficiently well known – one observer remarked that ‘they’re a lot better than their advertising’. Another reckoned that ‘there’s a mixed picture on the marketing and publicity side’, while a third said ‘get CETLs better coordinated so that they have impact across the sector as a set of 74 (not as 74 x 1)’.

Some informants placed hope in the self-organising networks; some looked to links with Subject Centres or professional bodies, and a minority saw a role for the Academy’s York operation. Yet the networks are not organised to represent the programme as a whole, Subject Centres are not generously funded or staffed and there was thought to be some ambiguity about the Academy’s York operations in relation to the CETL programme. One colleague considered that ‘there is the real beginning of collaboration and sharing – the conferences for instance – but they tend to have a CETL-to-CETL focus and there’s a need for CETL-to-non-CETL discussions’. Calls for a cohesive framework for the CETLs – but without falling into central management – and a stronger sense of purpose are apparently persuasive but may have rhetorical rather than practical value.

Even in individual universities it is not always the case that CETLs’ work is well known. In this light how might they be in a position to evoke the fundamental changes to curriculum and quality that may be necessary to sustain cross institutional innovative learning and teaching practices? Insofar as talking to a colleague is an effective means of dissemination, one piece of advice was ‘stop talking to the converted and talk to the convertibles’. This, though, is time-consuming and time spent on dissemination is not spent on innovation and may also be at the expense of generating the (pedagogic-) research publications that secure careers¹⁶ and make a CETL’s name¹⁷.

After sustainability and dissemination, there was little agreement on priorities. There was some recognition that it would be important to create robust evidence of impact and quite a degree of uncertainty about ways of demonstrating impact on students – no great problems were envisaged in demonstrating staff engagement and documenting changes to courses. One thing that struck the interviewer was that no informant referred to any curriculum or pedagogic innovation as a priority. It was as if the Centre’s course was charted and just needed to be followed or as if innovation was to trail behind work on sustainability and dissemination. Nor was there talk, with one exception, of strategies for participating in university policy-setting and systems reform processes. One informant argued that there is, therefore, an urgent need for a CETL ‘change academy’, a much modified version of the Academy’s existing change academy venture¹⁸. That may be necessary but it may not be sufficient unless there is parallel action to help universities appreciate the value of bringing CETLs

¹⁶ There could be an awful lot of unemployed CETL staff looking for jobs in 2010 and some of the more foresighted are already planning their next career move. The most marketable could well be haemorrhaging from CETLs from 2009 onwards.

¹⁷ Whether this gets the CETL’s name made in the right place is another question. One informant was concerned that CETLs could drift into research and publication at the expense of being forces for practical change in their universities and HE generally.

¹⁸ Another informant remarked that CETL staff were likely to have been hired on the basis of teaching skill, not as street-level politicians adept at systemic, strategic change.

into the kitchen garden of curriculum and systems policy development¹⁹. In the words of one informant 'in-institution up-take may be less than they said in their bids [for CETL status]' – the pride that many universities have in their CETLs may neither be matched by an awareness of the degree of change that may be needed if CETLs work is to stick, nor to a commitment to making that amount of change.

3.1.5 Making a difference to learning quality

The vision is for CETLs to consolidate the work represented in England by the HEFCE teaching quality enhancement fund and to stimulate fresh innovation. The programme is ultimately about making a difference to the quality of student learning. Many informants endorsed this aim but said that 'it's too early to tell', although the programme is now 40% through its lifetime.

Key informants were up-beat when talking about the local impact of individual CETLs – one remarked that they are 'liberating – extraordinary' and another said 'if the students are gaining, it's all good.' They – the CETL staff – had clearly got a lot from working in the CETLs, increasing their own knowledge, skills and, possibly²⁰, career prospects. They commonly referred to small-scale projects or innovations that had benefited from CETL funding and told stories of activities that had excited them and sometimes said that people in their university were beginning to turn to the CETL for advice or support. Most CETL staff interviewed made a point of saying how the capital funding had transformed ways in which they could work with students. They were also taking care to keep evidence for evaluation purposes²¹. One Centre treats evaluation 'as a regular thing, not something you do at the end' and has PhD students evaluating the CETL, carrying out stakeholder interviews and doing case studies.

This is good news but there are several uncertainties. For example:

- In the host institution, how many people (academics, others who support student learning, students, and employers) are reached by these activities? Is that a good return on investment?
- What national impact has a CETL? Participation in self-organising network is good but who is being affected by this activity and how? And how will the CETL programme touch:
 - Universities that do not have a CETL?
 - Subject areas that do not have a CETL?
 - Pedagogic and curriculum developments that were not foreseen in 2004/05, when CETLs were being chosen, but which would be mightily helped by a supporting CETL?
- One informant said that internationalisation was a priority in that CETL. How do we distinguish international impact from 'passport dissemination', which is giving papers to academic conferences and publishing in journals with international readership? How might the CETL programme attract international attention and avoid the criticism that the initiative has scant meaning for cash-strapped Australian, New Zealand or Hong Kong universities because 'anyone can be innovative with £350 million of funding'?
- In short, what is the evidence that CETLs are affecting the quality of student learning outside their own 'Petri dishes'? At this stage it might be reasonable to show that CETLs are changing the ways in which teaching and learning (in certain areas) is talked about. Is it possible to demonstrate it?

Perhaps greater than these uncertainties are considerations about whether CETLs are the best policy instrument to stimulate systemic change in the quality of learning, teaching and curriculum. Yet, by taking them seriously we may see ways of 'tuning' the programme to get best return on investment in

¹⁹ We know of one CETL that has identified the need for fundamental changes in its host university's ways of doing business, which includes changing core systems, revising assessment practices, re-appraising 'quality' and curriculum design norms. Three months on and University's Executive has agreed that the paper is 'interesting'.

²⁰ Staff wanting to develop a traditional academic career could suffer if CETL work harmed their research productivity.

²¹ 'I'd like to be assessed on risk-taking' said one informant – an interesting idea: what would count as evidence of risk-taking?

the sector – in the words of one informant, ‘the CETLs’ impact depends on how we move the programme’. This is taken up in the next section, which is the first of three thematic commentaries on the interviews.

3.1.6 Theme 1: Fostering systemic change in learning quality

A conspicuous view from this set of interviews is characterised by ‘[the CETLS] are the most significant bit of organisational change I’ve ever seen’. Another respondent said, ‘it has moved hugely in a way that has not been a feature of other quality enhancement initiatives’. In the last section reasons were given for being more sceptical about their effects to date and, with this in mind, one of our informants said ‘it’s always been a controversial initiative’. However, at the beginning of this report we said that HEFCE hoped great things would come from the CETL programme for the sector as a whole.

One informant argued that this evaluation needs to work from the position that this is a major change project. While our brief is wider than that, it is in our minds. When we began this evaluation we considered that the underlying thinking – or theory of change – had the following elements:

- Excellent teaching contributes to excellent learning
- Reward and recognition encourage the enhancement of teaching quality, over and above the impetus provided by staff’s general commitment to doing good work
- Recognising individual and institutional excellence in teaching and learning promotes excellence across the sector
- The sector is proud of its semi-autonomy, has complex cultures and affiliations and is used to generating its own momentum
- Therefore, a relatively light touch is most likely to yield improvement
- Change is brought about by complex causal mechanisms (carrots, sticks, sermons and partnerships) but also by the convergence of many long-term and short-term factors (opportunity, funding, policy change, new appointments)
- Change increasingly relies on many enabling features, sometimes called affordances, being in place; a suitable adage is ‘provide suitable conditions and trust that change will come’
- Change tends not to be linear and happens unevenly, with some areas surging ahead while others take some time to shift or remain resistant to change.

Nothing in these interviews challenges these assumptions but there are concerns that the *programme’s* theory-in-use may not yet be sufficiently developed. The concerns focus on two issues: selectivity and the mechanisms – or the lack of mechanisms – for changing the sector, rather than just innovating in the CETLs.

The selectivity concern can be illustrated by a comparison of English and Scottish approaches to quality enhancement. In Scotland there is a national quality enhancement framework (QEF) that, through five lines of activity, commits the sector to continued improvement in the quality of learning and teaching for all students in all universities. One Scottish informant said that ‘we want everyone [i.e. every university] to be at least very good and excellence is an idea we want everyone to aspire to’. Scottish universities themselves are expected to fund this work as part of their everyday business, which is to say that they are expected to mainstream quality enhancement. This mainstream work is the main focus of Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) enquiries. In contrast, the CETLs are selective. The concern is that quality may be enhanced in *locales* served by CETLs but that systemic quality enhancement is much less likely. There are, of course, robust responses, not least the observation that CETLs are one facet of a much wider engagement with quality enhancement, supported by the teaching quality enhancement fund and, more overtly, by the QAA’s new emphasis in its work in England. However, the concern does direct attention to the mechanisms for fostering systemic change, which also raises issues about dissemination, which are considered in the next section.

One English informant said that success in making a large-scale difference to teaching and learning quality depends on the degree of focus in and quality of thinking about transfer and transformation. Another pointed out that Scottish transformation projects, which complement the QEF, were formally based on Carol Twigg’s account of change management (www.thencat.org/ and www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/sfc). It is an open question whether Twigg’s account is superior to its rivals but it is significant, we feel that it is an account of change *management*. If we take the underlying theory of

change that we associate with the CETL programme, it can be represented as a well-informed view of conditions that favour change and innovation in teaching and learning²². What is less clear is how changes that are evoked might perfuse²³ English and Northern Ireland higher education²⁴. And, as a loosely-coupled programme, the CETL initiative is short of 'perfusing' mechanisms. Arguably, more attention should be given to suffusing mechanisms, particularly to programme-level dissemination²⁵.

3.1.7 Theme 2: Dissemination

We have noted some concern that it is hard to keep track of developments, which are prolific, and that the plethora of conferences and workshops outstrips Centres' capacity to participate in them.

The development of the Academy's regular briefings on the CETLs is helpful and appreciated but they do a much better job of recording the fertility of individual CETLs and the separate networks than of representing the programme as a coherent venture.

In terms of the *programme*, and following some of our informants, we wonder whether the main dissemination issue is one of coherence, of having agreed – or at least, clear – messages about the CETL programme as a whole, its trajectory, its relationships with other projects and organisations, and the interplay between the programme, individual CETLs and the self-organising CETL networks. This might be particularly helpful in the programme's last three years in which commitment to innovation will increasingly be complemented by commitment to making a difference on a larger scale.

3.1.8 Theme 3: A managed programme

There is wide appreciation of the approach that HEFCE and DELNI have taken to the management of the CETL programme. It is an approach that is consistent with the commitment to encouraging risk-taking and imaginative thinking. Several informants also considered that the CETLs do not see themselves in competition with one another and the formation of the self-organising networks supports that view. However, a senior informant in the policy community observed that there 'is no incentive to link up their work'. These interviews have remarked on several drawbacks to this enabling and disarticulated approach to the programme, including:

- Individual centres making local differences but having little influence on practices elsewhere
- Lack of training for CETL staff in areas that challenge them all – change management and leadership, for example; missed opportunities for cross-CETL mentoring arrangements; shared consideration of career development for CETL staff – and perhaps Academy Subject Centre staff as well
- Missed opportunities for collaborative working because the self-organising networks may follow existing patterns of association instead of creating new ones
- Individual centres all trying to recruit people to the same events, all trying to convince colleagues of the merits of *their* take on innovation
- The price of letting 'a thousand flowers bloom' is the possibility that a lot of resource is spent reinventing the wheel – 'If you allow it to be bottom-up for too long you waste a lot of impact on individual projects – there's value to pulling people together and establishing common framework'

²² This theory-in-use is close, in many respects, to the influential work of Michael Fullan.

²³ 'Perfusing', this is a medical term, means forcing a liquid through body part or tissue. It complements the metaphor of 'tanalising' used at the Academy's day seminar on change, held in London on 12 October 2006.

It is a nice question whether HEFCE and DELNI will prefer to perfuse innovations arising from the CETL programme through the higher education body, or whether they will prefer to support suffusion.

²⁴ Rather more bleakly, we have noted some concerns that there may be difficulties in perfusing changes through host institutions, let alone through the sector.

²⁵ We heard a view that subject-based CETLs, as long as they had established good working relationships with professional bodies and Subject Centres would have a fairly easy time influencing their natural constituencies. ['I'm really optimistic that a number of the subject ones [CETLs] will do that [disseminate] quite easily ... institutional [generic] ones will need more risk taking'.] It is not so easy to see how lessons learned in one disciplinary area might cross subject boundaries for the wider benefit of the sector.

- The loss of a *programme* voice, with a lack of programme brand and identity
- The lack of a *programme* contribution to some key strategic themes for the sector – internationalisation and ‘web 2.0’ are two cases in point. There are others
- The lack of programme and associated arrangements for perfusing or suffusing the higher education sector.

We can see a case for the development of mechanisms that support co-ordination while eschewing directive central management of the Centres. Those mechanisms might be derived from consideration of the main challenges that face the CETL programme, with expert groups being asked to contribute recommendations to a CETL programme group. In doing so, programme sponsors might be making the case for sustained investment in teaching innovation. Insofar as the CETL programme can refresh thinking about curriculum and pedagogies, on the one hand, and show the effects of innovation, on the other, then it will help keep learning and teaching quality as a sector priority²⁶. In doing so, it would be helpful to the CETL programme to have good links with the managers of cognate initiatives. In England they would include JISC (the Joint Information Systems Committee), the Leadership Foundation, the HE Academy (especially Subject Centres, pedagogic research and professional recognition), the quality enhancement arm of QAA, and the national teaching fellowship scheme.

²⁶ Should the CETL programme not succeed here, there is a fear that learning and teaching quality might be seen as an issue that has been ‘sorted’, with universities’ attention captured by research and marketing.

3.2 Overview from HEI senior managers

3.2.1 Introduction

Interviews were undertaken with Vice-Chancellors (VCs) at ten institutions which have one or more CETLs and with Senior Managers at nine institutions which had bid for CETLs and been unsuccessful, providing rich qualitative data from 20 individuals in total.

The institutions which had not been successful were also selected on the criteria of kind of institution, geographic area and size. All interviews were confidential and identifying details have therefore been anonymised in this report.

3.2.2. Findings: VCs at institutions with one or more CETLs

The VCs were selected from institutions which had not been involved in case study visits. They were chosen to represent different kinds of institution, geographic area and size.

3.2.2.1 Principal reasons for submitting a proposal for a CETL

The reasons given for submitting a proposal for a CETL were diverse. They included:

Felt we would stand a good chance.

CETL would fit in well with our corporate strategy ('we would also benefit from the opportunity to develop areas that we saw as strategically important but which, without the CETL investment, we couldn't develop as quickly or as fully as we would have liked').

We wouldn't let the chance of getting this kind of money pass us by.

Our university has a reputation for and commitment to learning and teaching (L&T) and we wanted to get recognition for what we do in L&T – that was more important to us than the monetary reward.

We felt we needed a focus for L&T within the institution and the CETL would provide this.

In those institutions with a strong teaching mission, it was felt that a CETL would allow them to develop research skills via pedagogic research.

For an institution that's not had a traditional research background, it's enabled that aspect of our work to move forward but to move forward within the context of the profession in which we're operating.

The pragmatism one might expect from these senior perspectives faced with an opportunity for serious funding should not cloud the strategic imperatives embedded in their decision making. The idea of putting teaching and learning 'on the map' through the boost of reward and recognition both coincided with existing strategy and legitimised the teaching and learning focus.

3.2.2.2 Strategic role of the CETL within the institution

Interviewees were asked about whether they had seen the CETL as having a strategic purpose within the institution. The majority said that they had envisaged the CETL(s) as having a wider institutional role, whilst one informant saw it as standalone. One VC felt that where the CETL 'sat' in terms of strategic role was somewhat debateable:

It raises important issues because is the CETL a law unto itself and an institution unto itself within the institution or is it really something that is changing the institution root and branch? And I think it's a bit of each.

The kinds of strategic purposes mentioned were mainly about contributing to corporate goals, spreading best practice in L&T across the institution, and raising the profile of L&T. The relative autonomy and enclaved nature of CETLs did however, contribute in some cases, to 'strategic ambiguity' in terms of the extent to which it might be used as a whole institutional resource.

Some comments were:

It wouldn't merely affect one School – it would be a major contributor to the overall corporate goals of the institution.

We wanted a wider penetration across the university [for L&T in our topic area]. And the CETL has done that.

We intended to raise the profile of teaching and more importantly the quality of it.

3.2.2.3 The rationale for the CETL programme as a national strategy

The interviewees perceived the national policy rationale for the CETL programme in broadly similar ways:

- To raise the profile and prestige of L&T
- To re-orientate people away from seeing research as the only thing that attracts kudos and reputational value
- To support innovative ways to develop good practice
- To reward excellence in ways other than research.

The majority of the interviewees felt that the CETL programme *did* successfully reward excellence and *did* provide recognition outside their immediate purview.

Some comments were:

L&T still remains a poor relation to the funding from the RAE, but at least now there are other routes to recognition [through the CETL programme].

I have been surprised at the extent of staff morale and enthusiasm. It has raised the professional self-esteem of the academics involved hugely. Also, working with state of the art kit – it has increased their professional pride.

[The rationale was] to counterbalance a perceived (and probably real) emphasis on the Russell Group and on research funds... It was a government initiative to raise the profile of teaching.

The rationale? One read it almost as a kind of sop to those who weren't scoring high on the RAE. There was that kind of fundamental thing there – 'don't worry, folks, because we've got this CETL play up our sleeves and you've all got a chance to have a go at that!' I don't know whether that's really true or not but I think there's an element of that.

Rewarding excellence was not the main thing for us, although you had to demonstrate excellence. It did reward the parts of the institution that had a track record, but [for us it was more about] the contribution to our corporate goals.

There were also some negative views. Some people felt that the CETL programme represented weak policy making and that the money would have been better spent as part of the block grant to universities.

It was a competition invented to send money to universities that they should have been getting anyway (through the block grant) to do what they should have been doing. In higher education, people invent spurious competitions for spurious purposes to satisfy policy makers.

They only reward a fraction of the excellence that is around. It's micromanaging from Whitehall that should really be left to the institutions... [rather than] organising bureaucratic competitions... I am surrounded by very competent people who can do these things – HEFCE should leave it to us to get on with it.

It was artificially setting up artificial structures to do something we were all supposed to be doing anyway – i.e. excellent teaching and learning.

One interviewee felt that it failed to reward excellence and tended to reward those who had teams of bid writers in their institution and had a record of publication in L&T, rather than rewarding excellent teaching ('it is rewarding people's ability to write big proposals').

Another informant was critical of the whole notion of 'excellence':

I think 'excellence' is a difficult term. I mean it's one we all use all the time because to go for anything less is not very ambitious! But actually, the thing about excellence is it doesn't usually stay still very long. Once you've recognised it, it's moved on.

It seems perverse to penalise failing institutions. Yes, stop the very poor [departments], but for the mediocre it seems perverse to withdraw money from them and give it to the already excellent. Only a few [programmes] need closing. There are many courses that could be improved and taking money away from them seems bizarre.

Finally, one informant found this question difficult to answer as, it was felt, there was a lack of clarity over the rationale behind the initiative:

I'm not absolutely sure how clear the rationale was. I think it emerged at a period when the quality of teaching and learning in universities was a sensitive issue. So... the launch of the National Student Survey was part of that context too. I'm not absolutely clear that the objectives were really very clearly identified. I think it was sort of felt to be a good thing and probably would help but I don't see any greater degree of clarity than that, actually.

3.2.2.4 Strengths and weaknesses of the national CETL programme

The main strengths were seen to be that the CETLs fit in with institutional strategy and with the other things which institutions are doing, that they allow innovation, reward excellence in teaching, and propagate good practice.

The aim was to highlight excellence in learning and teaching [here] and it has really achieved that. It has also done most of the other things it was set up to do – to propagate and set up good practice [here].

It has allowed some real innovation and change to take place with L&T as the driver.

It has definitely rewarded excellence here... It's been very successful in that sense... The CETLs do interchange – other CETLs come and visit us.

It has allowed a wide variety within the CETL programme. There was a large degree of flexibility for universities and faculties and this was sensible. It did achieve its goal, redressing the balance and giving something to the post-'92 sector.

It has engaged people and it has said to people who'd perhaps rather think that their job in higher education is to do their research and to do their bit of teaching, to actually think outside the box and how they might influence other areas.

An important weakness of the CETL strategy identified by a number of informants was that the CETLs made a difference to the institution but not nationally.

I'm sure in lots of institutions it is making a huge difference, but I'm not sure nationally.

The weaknesses are, I think, that the CETLs have not had the kind of impact nationally that it might have been imagined they would. I think they stayed more local in their impact than the scheme would first have perhaps desired. On the other hand, the desire to fund collaboration and innovation in teaching is a useful signal. So it has some impact but not actually in the kind of way that might have been imagined.

Linked to this was the criticism that there is little information being circulated about the activities of CETLs. Some CETLs have formed their own networks, based on geographic region or subject area, and these networks are very effective conduits of information – within the networks themselves. In general, however, information does not appear to be circulating effectively throughout the sector:

If you ask me to tell you about the outputs of the other CETLs, I'd struggle – and I read the literature, most academics don't.

There's not much, as far as I know, linkage that's going on or dialogue between the CETLs to compare notes. I don't know if there's a structure for that to happen – maybe I'm just being ignorant.

Related to this, two informants felt that there was a need for far more coherence across the CETLs and that this should perhaps have been built into HEFCE's strategy:

I'm slightly surprised about the extent of the 'light touch' from HEFCE – it's welcome, in a way, because we feel 'let's get on and do what we want' but in a way I would like to feel that with at least some group sector of specialists that you could bounce things off a bit that you could say 'how do you feel we're doing?'

One would expect there to be a HEFCE person saying 'hang on a minute, are you talking to, and did you know that, and gosh, there's some interesting things' – just being the sort of CETL officer keeping tabs on things.

The limited funding life of the initiative was also identified as a weakness which could limit the impact of the CETLs.

The individual projects don't make any impact outside a very small cohort. At the end of five years, nothing will be really different.

The biggest issue is the longevity – we have invested all this effort in structure – it's been very good – but the question now is how to fund it [in future].

Can you create sustainable change through limited life funding? I'm not saying it's failed – you do make progress while funding is available, but then it falls back [when the funding stops].

3.2.2.5 Benefits and disadvantages to the institution of having a CETL

All the interviewees were happy with how their CETL(s) had developed; felt that they had been greatly advantageous to the institution, and that there were synergies within the institution. CETLs had also created a real 'buzz' for the students and raised staff morale.

It has affected every programme in the university... This wouldn't have happened without the CETL... We also generate publications, research, conferences... None of this would have happened without the CETL – the commitment and resource wouldn't have been there.

It has been a magnet for enthusiastic and excellent staff, and that has worked to stimulate those outside that circle... Less able teachers do engage with it.

[It's given us] high quality accommodation which is being used creatively by students... Great new building, full of students using it for group work, using the space creatively. In terms of facilities and generating space in which students can become autonomous learners [it's been great].

It has been a fantastic fillip to this institution. Because this is a small university... it was a massive injection of capital and revenue. Also, good practice is spreading out to other Schools – that wouldn't be the same in a larger institution.

There is a buzz of excitement for the staff and students in our School. We have state of the art equipment, new staff. We are the envy of other Schools.

One main benefit to institutions was how CETLs had provided a focus for innovation:

It has been an important catalyst in this university to take [innovative practice] from the early adopters and make it more broadly based [in the institution].

It produces a focus for teaching innovation – now we do that in all sorts of other ways. We have a big award scheme every year and we have actual funding available for teaching innovation and so on but it's nice to have the CETLs because they actually produce a tangible focus for this kind of work and demonstrate that these kind of things are possible.

Interestingly, one informant felt that, as well as the usual risks attached to innovation of any kind, there was another potential disadvantage:

I think the disadvantage is that when you kind of institutionalize innovation it can actually get less exciting – that's just the tension in any kind of change process. Once you have a team that are clearly associated with the definition of a problem and certain kinds of solutions, it sort of stops some creative thinking as well.

There were also seen to be a few other difficulties. Some Vice-Chancellors felt that, as we noted above, the effect of the CETL was not spreading sufficiently beyond the CETL itself.

I'm not happy the fact that it stays within the subject area – it is not having an impact across the institution.

It's that sort of tension between the need to have something very concrete and specific to have an impact on its immediate target – which then of course makes for challenges of making more general impact. So we had a big event to open it and we've given it a lot of publicity but I'm not clear that it's really transformed thinking outside the immediate context.

It has led to changes in pedagogy and changes in delivery because of the equipment. These changes do ripple out to other Schools, but to be honest we had hoped for more ripple.

It was also felt that the CETL funding was constraining.

The disadvantages are that we had to spend the money – to focus it in a particular way. This was just another ring-fenced jam jar that we had to spend on specific things... just another layer of constraint on what you do and how you do it.

Finally, one Vice-Chancellor felt that these things would have happened anyway and that the CETL made little difference.

The CETLs we've got are great successes, but what they are doing would have been a success anyway. They are doing things we were already doing very well anyway. We would have done this anyway.

3.2.2.6. Future of the CETL after the funding stream ends

All interviewees were concerned about the end of the funding period. Most hoped that the institution would continue to support the CETL in a limited way.

There will be continuing revenue costs and deflation on the kit. We can service it but replacing it will be a problem. Hopefully we can – we are a reasonably well-off institution. The staffing will be no problem – they will be absorbed and we will have better staff-student ratios. The CETL got it moving in the first place, but yes we have a commitment. We are very enthusiastic.

We will continue to sustain what we are doing. We are doing it because we believe it's important. But there will be fewer staff. The CETL may need to move more towards a delivery model – providing module-based work, contributing to programme content, and getting funding that way.

We will continue with something but it won't be fully funded.

Overall it was much needed and I am very supportive of it. It would be a shame to see this level of investment not fulfilling its potential because the funding is coming to an abrupt end. Some funding, even at a lower level, would allow CETLs to continue the good work.

The problem of finding sufficient funding to sustain some – if not all – CETL activities was felt to be a particular problem for the smaller institutions:

I think it's going to be a tough call, it really is. Yes, there will be good things that will remain. There'll be connections that have been made, relationships that have been brokered but they are all dependent on a funding base and such funding as we have identified, in future, will still require a sort of matching element to it. And I think that the tragedy is that a great deal of endeavour – good will – and real achievement will have been brought about which will just suddenly come to an end. Good things will have happened, good connections will continue but a lot will inevitably erode. It may not be the case for a big institution that's got flexibility to move around resources, but it will certainly hit the small institutions.

The issue of staffing mentioned by two informants above was certainly a concern in some institutions – if not in terms of funding the posts as much as finding the appropriate people to carry on the work:

The concern I have is that a number of the key players are approaching potential retirement ages. And I think the big issue that we're concerned with... from our internal point of view is where are we going to find the next generation of people who are excited by this type of thing?

There's an issue about sustainability – which I can't believe you haven't been told about already! In particular, of course, most of the CETLs were run by a particular champion and when those people go – as inevitably they must – then the institution often finds it's difficult to find – it's not difficult to find someone else to do it, but someone who really is comparable in their level of commitment and enthusiasm and knowledge. Now we have actually achieved that in the cases that we've had but it's not an easy process. It's not an easy process. There aren't many people of the standard that you really need in order to convince your colleagues that these things are worth doing.

Finally, there were some fears that there would be no long term effect beyond the end of the five years.

The CETLs will disappear at the end of the funding period and their legacy will be close to zero. CETLs invented things just to bid for the money and that will all disappear as soon as the money goes.

The point was made that CETLs might have a 'limited shelf-life' and might not be appropriate to future agendas:

I think, in our case, it was the right vehicle to initiate the programme, to formalise the activity, to develop it outside the local area. Quite often structures are there as vehicles and have a place in time and I'm not sure if you'd asked me the question three years from now whether I'd say the same thing. It's evolving in some interesting ways and we might not need it – put it that way round – in the future. You could actually use that as a mark of success!

3.2.2.7. Other comments

There was a suggestion from one interviewee that the generic CETLs were more effective.

The subject ones are more problematic, less spread though the institution.

There was also a view that the more the CETLs were linked into other structures within the institution, the more effective they were likely to be.

Changes in culture don't happen overnight. CETLs need to be linked to other structures within the university.

3.2.3 Findings: Senior managers at institutions which had made unsuccessful bids

In order to gain an insight into how not being successful in bidding for a CETL had impacted on institutions, we conducted interviews with ten senior managers (e.g. PVCs for Teaching and Learning).

3.2.3.1. Principal reasons for submitting a proposal for a CETL

There was a range of motivations for submitting a proposal for a CETL:

- Institutional commitment to L&T (*'we're a teaching and learning institution primarily and we saw it as a pot of money that would help us to achieve developments in key areas'*)
- Wanted opportunity to enhance L&T
- L&T was getting a higher institutional profile at the time
- Opportunity to get extra funding for things institutions were already wanting to do (*'building on strengths we felt we had in those areas. So that was the logic and the resource was to build on that and achieve some national influence as well'*)
- To explore ways of addressing an identified need within the institution that was thought to be generalisable to other contexts.

3.2.3.2 Intended strategic role of the CETL within the institution

All interviewees reported that the CETL had been intended to have a strategic role within the institution – often these were connected with the reasons identified above for bidding for the CETL.

The focus of CETL bids frequently reflected key strategic objectives – such as widening participation, employability and e-learning:

I guess that lots of institutions have e-learning and distance learning as a strategic priority and since this came out in 2004 – was it? – this has grown. So for the university it was certainly strategically important.

Raising the profile of, and improving, teaching and learning – particularly in the more research-led institutions – was said by some informants to be a strategic purpose for a CETL:

It had major strategic objectives – improving teaching provision across the university.

It would have been of huge strategic benefit to L&T across the institution.

I think it would have probably speeded things up. Strategically, in terms of actually focusing attention perhaps on the departments – and the subject areas – that show lesser inclination for innovation and for focusing on teaching – you know, the quantitative disciplines in a research-led institution are not notoriously innovative!

3.2.3.3 The rationale for the CETL programme as a national strategy

There was widespread agreement that the rationale for the CETL programme as a national strategy was based upon raising the esteem of L&T and promoting good practice throughout the sector. A typical comment was:

To give parity of esteem to outstanding contributions to pedagogy as of research, to put L&T on an equal footing with research, to establish Centres of Excellence that would promulgate good practice through the sector.

There were however considerable doubts expressed about the effectiveness of the strategy. Although some interviewees did feel that the programme was successfully rewarding excellence, they also felt strongly that excellence was not being disseminated across the sector:

It was a deeply flawed strategy. It was based on ministerial prejudices about the quality of student education which were not well-founded. A jam jar of funding is not an appropriate way to improve in this area, and indeed is antithetical to it. The notion that you can identify good practice within an institution, or transfer good practice between institutions, is not valid. It may have been well intentioned, but it's not likely to deliver excellence.

Only a tiny number of CETLs have influenced the sector. The vast majority are internalised within the host institutions.

The government's [view] of beacon schools and Academies is that if you throw a lot of money at something, and set up something that is really fantastic, then other people will copy it. But HE is too diverse. It doesn't work the same as schools – the institutions are too big. The government hoped that universities would start taking L&T more seriously. But dissemination has been so low. CETLs have been very specific and have had targets and aims within the institution. They are not outward looking at all.

It was a half-baked idea... A policy initiative on the hoof... The analogy with beacon schools and further education was weak – beacon departments are not a powerful proposition in HE.

They seem to have been more of a resource for institutions rather than the sector and the question is – could that resource have been used more effectively across the sector?

It was suggested that the limited sector impact of the CETLs could have been addressed – and possibly still could be addressed – by HEFCE assuming a greater role in Coordinating the dissemination of the activities of the CETLs:

I'm not aware whether there was a strategy for integrating activities across the sector – given that there are 74 CETLs, having an integration strategy for all those would be mind-boggling in itself. There are clusters of CETLs which I think have interacted – like the work-based learning ones. And I think some of the Active Learning ones as well. Myself, personally, I haven't come across much about the distance learning ones. So – patchy – but I think there's an issue about how they are managed as a group. I'm sure, for the institutions themselves, they are great!

I'm sure there are some fairly easy ways you can resolve that. I think it needs more leadership across the CETLs to really bring out what they're doing. When Research Councils do this sort of thing, one thing they do is – you could treat them as a programme and you appoint a Programme Director someone who's got clout and who's got credibility. And it's the job of that person to diffuse the issues across the sector. It's frankly not an expensive thing to do. But it's surprising that they haven't done that – I'm assuming that they haven't. That Research Council model, on the whole, works well. It's surprising that they haven't just kind of organised themselves like that.

We have had nothing from HEFCE about the outcomes of the CETLs – nothing saying you might find X and Y interesting. CETLs have had zero impact on our university.

A related concern was about how well the CETLs were being monitored:

The processes could have been better – some CETLs still have no website and no publications, and no one seems to be following this up. This is public money.

The whole concept of rewarding excellence was seen as problematic.

Excellence is so problematic a concept when it comes to teaching. There is no evidence base and identifying it is extremely difficult.

It didn't reward excellence as much as the ability to write persuasive bids. People were judged [positively] because they write articles about L&T.

We won't go into a definition of what excellence is! I did go to one of the briefings and there was, at the time, a certain amount of disquiet about how you would define that – the balance between track record – as it were – and future potential.

3.2.3.4. Strengths and weaknesses of the national CETL programme

These interviewees, whose bids had been unsuccessful, saw the CETL programme as largely having more weaknesses than strengths. There was a general feeling that it was often not excellence that was being rewarded but other factors such as bid writing and familiarity with the language of L&T publications.

Other views were that:

- There should have been more collaborative CETLs
- There would be little net result at the end of five years
- The programme had not succeeded in finding the people who are good teachers
- In most CETLs there was no effect across the institution or across HE
- The initiative was flawed because the whole notion of identifying excellence in teaching lacks an evidence base.

Again, a number of comments on the weaker aspects of the initiative concerned the lack of information coming to them about what the CETLs were doing and the lack of co-ordination:

It isn't working. 1) Were the CETLs coordinated? No they weren't. 2) Were CETLs truly beneficial to the sector as a whole? No they weren't. 3) Is there any evidence of improvement in the quality or effectiveness of L&T in the institutions with CETLs? No.

It has had a massive effect in some institutions, but it's been poorly disseminated and weakly communicated. HEFCE has done a poor job of pulling out the outcomes. For this amount of money, there should be some massive impact, and there isn't.

I don't feel that as an institution I could really tell you what's happening in other CETLs that much – unless I go to specific institutions... I visited one recently – they had a CETL and I found out about it – but, for me, that might be just because I'm so busy – I've got a very big portfolio. I can't see how it's impacted and how that knowledge is disseminated. It may be through the HEA – I've no idea – or through the Subject Groups or Escalate but I would struggle to mention any CETLs – I could probably mention two or three that I know about and that's it.

I'm not aware of how it's impacted outside the institutions – there may be, within the CETL group, institutions who have been sharing good practice but I don't know what the strategy has been to disseminate that knowledge to institutions that haven't been part of that. Now it may be that if you talk to my Head of Learning and Quality or somebody else, you might get a slightly different view. I think at Vice-Chancellor level, you'd have even less knowledge... I would think most institutions see it as a strategy for institutional change rather than sectoral change.

Other criticisms of the strategy included:

People who are good teachers are not part of the L&T mafia. They don't write in L&T journals – they just get on with it. Rewarding excellence has degenerated into rewarding those who are part of the L&T mafia, not those who are actually good teachers.

The more you divide funding into jam jars, the more institutions compete on dubious criteria and the less you get out of it.

Spending serious money to get people to create things called CETLs was bound to get some good outcomes. But could we have got better outcomes with a different use of the money? Yes we could.

Excellence in teaching is often not noticed – it is extraordinarily difficult to get hold of – there's a lack of external markers.

3.2.3.5. Disadvantages to the institution of not having a CETL

There was a diverse set of reported reasons for the bids not having succeeded:

- Lack of replicability to other institutions
- Too small a student group
- Didn't 'play the game right' – used the 'wrong' language
- The bid was not written by the most appropriate people
- Deliverables were too non-specific.

One comment was:

We have great L&T here but no language to talk about it.

One interviewee felt strongly that the process of application had been poor and lacked rigour; that the criteria for success were unclear and there had been no detailed feedback given.

The RAE is more evidence-based and thorough. The only feedback we got [on our CETL bid] was 'the quality of your submission'. There was no rigorous process with clear benchmarks. No detailed feedback.

Another informant had received detailed feedback but had not been wholly convinced by the reasons for his bid being unsuccessful:

The feedback we got – that we didn't like but you never do! We actually thought we'd done something strong and brave and good but clearly we didn't articulate it in a way that pleased our readers... Anyway, we felt proud of it and were deeply disappointed when we didn't get it. Why do I think we didn't get it? I suppose we sort of consoled ourselves that it was just too ambitious.

Opinion was mixed about the consequences of not having been successful. To many it was a major disappointment

It was massively significant. Incredibly discouraging. Not just the money – this is an institution that takes L&T very seriously, we invest a lot in it. It was a huge kick in the teeth.

To others, writing the bid had focused intentions and, albeit to perhaps a rather more limited extent than would have been the case if the institution *had* gained CETL funding, some of the planned activities set out in the bid had carried on or been developed:

I think some of the things, yes, we've probably gone on with. I think that those that were slightly more different it would have taken development in a different area. I can't say that it's been – I don't think we put a proposal in that was that mission-critical... because that's not the way to deal with these things because if it's that mission-critical, you're going to do it. But it's about taking you down a new direction, trying something out – setting up something that could be a catalyst for other developments. So when we didn't get it, it was disappointing given that we set our flag as a teaching and learning university and I think we've just got to get more savvy about how to do these things.

The (planned activities) did continue and have featured strongly in our widening participation work but probably not on the scale it might have done and hasn't been quite so diffused in terms of the lessons from it that perhaps might have been the case if we'd had the CETL bid. More importantly, I think we could have – our actual approach to learning and teaching might have developed more if we'd had a CETL – in other words, there might have been benefits for the institution – not just about the specific projects but hopefully about other things which would have spun-off but we haven't had that.

One informant went so far as to see the failure of the CETL bid as a positive advantage:

Not having it means we are free from the problem of what to do at the end of the funding, and we have done what we planned to do anyway. It's been good strategically that we didn't get it.

3.2.3.6. Intention to bid again if the opportunity is offered

Notwithstanding the above criticisms, all the interviewees expressed an intention to bid again if the opportunity offered and would use the lessons learned in their unsuccessful bid to improve their chances of success:

Oh, I always bid! In principle – I think these things are important but I do have reservations about – I would hope that it would be run differently if there were going to be others. I just think this hasn't quite had the cross-institution, sector-improving impact that might have been hoped for.

Probably, yes. Would this one be successful? I doubt it! One thing that has struck me with all of this bidding process in sort of educational development is that quite a few places have got very canny at it. It's like any fund bidding, people get good at it and they know what it needs to look like.

3.2.3.7. Other comments

There were a number of other comments suggesting that the outcomes would not be long-term and that, as the comments we have noted in this section of the report suggest, a future set of funding might be better if done differently:

The ones that are discipline-specific... are not cross-university. They have no impact on their institution and so they will fade... The generic ones may survive, if they have managed to embed themselves in the institution... What have we as a sector learned from the CETL programme? What outcomes are there that we have benefited from? ...I can't see any.

[If it is done again]: Pose it as a problem for the sector – say here's this money to raise the quality of L&T across the sector and in particular to reward excellence... [Invite the] sector's ideas on how these objectives could be achieved. It would be sad if it's just the same again. governments invent solutions and invite people to bid for them instead of problem solving – saying to the sector, here's the problem, what can we do about it?

[If I were HEFCE]: Well, I think I would make more of a steer. I think I'd kind of write quite a structured programme brief which set out clear priorities – identified areas and six or seven areas and possibly sub-areas or sub-themes within that that we would be looking for – not that we would exclude anybody not covering those themes but those are the kinds of themes that we thought the sector had weaknesses in and it would be useful to have projects in those areas. I'd also, though, have it under the leadership of an academic who would supervise the thing hopefully from beginning to end – bringing some coherence to it and making sure that people were delivering on objectives and spreading what they were doing through the sector as a whole. So all of that I think is very do-able but I think needs to be written in from the beginning. If you don't have it written in from the beginning, it's difficult to recover.

To summarise and conclude, the majority of the senior managers we interviewed were fairly consistent in their views on the strengths and benefits of the CETL initiative. The majority felt that CETLs have – or could have had in the case of unsuccessful CETL bids – a key strategic role within their institutions and that CETLs were an effective and appropriate means of rewarding excellence (albeit with the proviso that excellence is a notoriously difficult concept to clarify and define). However, there was considerable concern expressed over the limited extent to which CETLs were having an impact outside their own institutions. There was felt to be a need for co-ordination – perhaps on HEFCE's part – in order to better disseminate the outcomes of CETLs activities. Related to this, it was felt that there had been insufficient mentoring of the CETLs on the part of HEFCE. Finally, informants considered that CETLs were most likely to be effective when they were linked closely with the structures of their host institutions.

3.3 The partners' perspective

3.3.1 Introduction

Partners were very positive about the effects of the CETL. They reported a large number of benefits. There was no feeling that the lead partner had gained particular advantages and all the partner CETLs reported that there had been benefits to the student experience, to learning and teaching, to staff development, and to a range of aspects of institutional life.

3.3.2 Background Information

A total of ten participants were interviewed. Interviewees were selected from among the Site Directors or Co-directors of partners in a CETL. CETLs which had taken part in case study visits were not included. All interviewees were assured of confidentiality.

Current role in the CETL

Interviewees had a number of different job titles, as shown below.

Site Coordinator	2
Deputy Director	1
Site Director	3
Co-director	2
Associate Director	1
Coordinator	1
Total	10

Number of partners in the CETL

Interviewees were connected with CETLs which had a variety of numbers of partners.

2 partners	5
3 partners	2
4 +	3
Total	10

How the partnership arrangements work

Respondents were asked about how the partnership arrangements worked. Their responses are summarised below.

Core team + management groups	1
Joint administration	2
Tasks/project based	2
Collaboration	3
Shared resources	2
Total	10

A typical comment was:

The university provides the curriculum and we all devise our timetable and way of delivery. We keep in contact, we've got all of our resources on the shared drive and the students are all encouraged to use them. [Coordinator]

3.3.3 Reward and recognition

Ways in which CETL provides reward and recognition for academic staff

Respondents gave a variety of ways in which staff received reward and recognition through the CETL. This included financial reward through bonuses as well as non-financial benefits such as personal development opportunities.

Personal development	5
Staff bonuses	3
Award fellowships	2
Raised profile	2
Conference presentation	2
Buy out time	1
By being involved	1
Writing retreats	1
Share experience	1

Some comments were:

We award fellowships to promote the work with undergraduate research and one of the criteria for those fellowships is that people must already have some evidence of good work/excellence in teaching and learning so we see that as one of our major reward recognitions. [Deputy Director]

The real reward and recognition comes from them being able to share what they've done with the rest of the community and seeing their work published and then having dissemination events where other people are very interested in what their findings are and moving that on and moving it into the subject forums and being able to develop that further. [Coordinator]

The Fellowship and continuing professional development awards provide time for them to carry out, I mean some of them do buy themselves out of teaching. [Co-director]

We're holding writing retreats for staff to have a writing retreat for a few days to try to get them to write up what they've been doing. [Co-director]

We've always encouraged staff to go to conferences to present... we've said to staff now... if there's somewhere you know there's an area you want to get into and you wouldn't be able to put a paper in because you're not into it... then we'll pay for you to go to conferences to develop yourselves.... So that's been another avenue that we've made available for staff. [Site Director]

Just being involved in the CETL gets you a certain amount of recognition... [It] takes me outside my own School and the site... so I think I have for me personally a certain amount of recognition because it seems to be quite prestigious to be leading the CETL. [Site Coordinator]

Reward and recognition across other partner sites

The majority of respondents indicated that the reward and recognition processes worked the same in all the partner organisations.

Some comments were:

The processes and principles that we jointly develop, so the whole secondment process has been a policy that's been jointly developed and we operate the same in both sites. [Co-director]

We worked out these projects in an immense detail even the costing[and been] very clear to people the kind of sums of money and the kind of activities they're expected to be associated with each project and the individuals associated with it so the stakeholders knew where they stood. [Site Director]

3.3.4 Funding

Value for money of the capital spend

The majority of respondents indicated that the capital spend had provided value for money.

Yes	7
No	0
Don't know/ too early to say	3
Total	10

Some comments were:

The most difficult part about it is that we've had to spend it all early on and we would have preferred to have kept some of it back. Obviously with technology that will age it would have been nice to have been able to keep a chunk back, but we've been able to spend it very usefully. [Site Coordinator]

One of the problems with that, which does need feeding back, is that the money has to be spent before a certain date. This policy of having to spend the money before a certain date has led in some cases to decisions having to be rushed and perhaps decisions not being as well thought out as they might have been. [Site Coordinator]

We were very fortunate that the lead institution were very generous in the original bid so we got by far and away the lion's share of the capital money and we have renovated two thirds of a floor of a building and it's just coming on stream now so yes it's been hugely valuable. [Deputy Director]

We've clearly enhanced the environment and seen a much greater take up of use of our spaces since we've refurbished so on that level I do think that it's been value for money. [Site Director]

Only one respondent indicated that they thought they could have derived the same learning and teaching benefits if there had been less capital spend.

Other comments were:

I think the main advantage of the capital spend is that it's given us a physical location and focus and probably made people more aware of our existence than if we were just working out of an office trying to persuade people. [Deputy Director]

We wouldn't have been able to accrue the specialist equipment that we require for developing so we couldn't have delivered what we have delivered. [Co-director]

That's really difficult to say because we've not finished it yet and we don't know what the learning and teaching benefits are going to be because we're only halfway through. [Site Coordinator]

If only we could have had it a bit longer... we can now see exactly what we should have done and so we have this sort of overdose and now it's a drought and so that's my biggest thing [that] I would change and you would get more value for money if we could have done that. [Site Coordinator]

We would like to have been able to keep the whole of the capital back so that, given that there are three years left to run, in terms of technological advances, things in two years' time will be quite different than they are now and we would have liked to have been able to hold,

not an enormous amount, but a reasonable size of capital spend back for later in the lifespan of the CETL so that we could have another injection of what would then be state of the art technology rather than two year old technology. [Site Director]

3.3.5 Learning and teaching benefits derived from the recurrent spend

None of the respondents thought that they could have derived the same learning and teaching benefits if there had been less recurrent spend.

Some comments were:

We've really focused on the capital at the moment and getting that bit out of the way and we are only now engaging with the recurrent funds starting to get stuff going really. [Associate Director]

Because the more you've got to spend the more you can do so if there was less we would be doing less. We'd still get benefits but we wouldn't have the amount of benefits that we're getting. [Co-director]

Recurrent spend goes on staffing. All our staff are fully utilised. Ideally we'd like more and that's the balance that we've got to trade off in terms of if we buy further equipment then that's less to spend on staffing so no, the recurrent spend is very much needed. [Site Director]

We're struggling to meet our objectives on the amount of money we've got and I know it sounds an awful lot of money but when you actually start doing things it soon goes so in fact we're struggling on the amount we've got. [Site Coordinator]

3.3.6 Perceptions of the community

How the CETL is regarded in the partner institution

There were a variety of responses when interviewees were asked how the CETL was regarded in their own institution. These are summarised below.

Well thought of/very highly/well known	4
Interested	2
Growing awareness	2
Limited awareness/known in some places	2
Resistance to change	1

Some comments were:

Within my own School it's very well known. It's less well known within the university I have to say and that's partly because there are two other CETLs within the university which are hosted by the university itself. It's likely because we are a partner rather than the lead it doesn't go down quite so well. [Site Coordinator]

The impact was significant because it's not usual for an arts department even when you've got a few research groupings to get in a grant, in our case over a million pounds. The true value of the CETL perception has escalated rapidly as people begin to realise, not just in this university but elsewhere, particularly with things like new realms of institutional audits coming round and the quality enhancement agenda, that actually CETLs are politically very useful. [Site Director]

We've tried our best to build it into the timetable so that we can make sure that our students are able to take advantage of it and make it value for money and we have done that this year but it has caused problems in terms of teaching hours available to do the academic teaching. [Coordinator]

It's regarded very highly in our faculty because we've been able to benefit the academic staff and students and technical staff as well, quite directly so I think, through the secondments, the materials, and also we offer sort of pedagogic consultancy to help people think about how they build that in to their teaching and learning assessing. [Co-director]

Our Pro Vice-Chancellor of teaching is very pleased with the fact that we've... focused on the impact of the CETL within this institution and you know our PVC was glowing in his summary of the impact that [the CETL] had had on the institution and he felt it was a great benefit across the institution. [Site Director]

There is a range... I'm sure there are people in our institution who still despite our best efforts, if you went up to them, would say they haven't a clue what we are. [Deputy Director]

Its presence is known, we have interacted with other people in the university. Some have used our facilities for example. I would say there is growing awareness of its existence. [Site Coordinator]

How CETL is perceived by other HEIs

Half the interviewees were unsure about how the CETL was perceived in the wider HE sector.

Highly regarded/positively/model of good practice	5
Not sure	5
Total	10

Some comments were:

It's starting to get out there and again, because of the way it was constructed, we were never supposed to take over the world to start with. It was meant to be a gradual process. [Deputy Director]

We've been approached by other CETLs to collaborate who are in similar areas and so as far as I can tell it's viewed quite positively. [Co-director]

What people aren't quite clear about is to what extent will we go beyond the talking and probably, given that there isn't any other funding, I'm not sure we can go much beyond the talking. But we've been asked for consultancy advice on a regular basis. [Site Coordinator]

How CETL is perceived by other outside organisations

Interviewees were asked how the CETL is perceived by other outside organisations, such as business, the Sector Skills Councils, or the Regional Development Agency. Only a few thought that outside organisations had much awareness of the CETLs.

Positively	3
Limited understanding	2
Unaware of our existence	3
Don't know	2
Total	10

Some comments were:

We're unable to engage at the moment and it's a general point but certainly affects the CETL, it is very difficult to engage with some of these organisations because they're not used to the idea of collaborating on a much longer-term basis. They're looking for short things like what can you do in the next six months or nine months. [Site Director]

Various companies that we talk to, I'm not sure when we talk to them about what we're doing that they actually identify that with the CETL. [Site Coordinator]

3.3.7 Effects of CETL on partner institutions

CETLs generating new activity in the institution

All respondents indicated that the CETL had generated new activity in their institution.

Some comments were:

We've engaged almost all of the members of staff in the department, 90% of the staff have been involved in teaching developments related to the CETL... So there's almost a transformational impact within the department and we're recognised quite high up in the university after this transformation. [Site Coordinator]

The strategic push to get teaching better recognised is valuable and is a significant change in culture. There's also not just the strategic level but also at grassroots level where we're working now there is the [idea] that teaching suggests being in a draughty old classroom with blinds, and actually the space that you teach in has a profound effect on the knowledge that you're trying to get over. [Associate Director]

We've bought and tried out various new technologies. As we've come across technologies which we believe are promising, or more than promising, we've run internal staff development events to show off the technology. [Site Director]

It's helped us completely review all of our [subject area] provision and we are looking at how we increase multimedia as part of that. One of our members of staff had a Fellowship to look at what was going on in the rest of the country in HE provision, what was going on within the workplace and what the requirements would need to be for students going out into the workplace and that piece of research has made us completely re-look at the whole of our [subject area] provision and how we might restructure that and use a different curriculum model. [Co-director]

Other ways in which staff have been affected by the CETL

There were a wide range of ways in which staff had been affected by the CETL. These are summarised below.

Improved environment	2
Sharing activities	1
Fellowships	1
Strategy paper	1
Staff development	1
IT support	1
Provided equipment	1
Conference attendance	1

Some comments were:

There are a number of activities within the CETL that we are trying to push out within our subject area particularly and certainly in other modules other than our team project. We're certainly pushing it out and benefiting. [Site Coordinator]

It's a nice space and so people like to use it even outside this unit for teaching and learning and creativity, they like to have teaching in there and so I think it's a good nice general facility. [Associate Director]

We said if you're involved in teaching anything to do with [our subject], it doesn't matter what department you're in and if you've an approach you would like to investigate but it will need some equipment, we'll put in the money for the equipment. [Site Director]

We've got a strategy paper that's been accepted by our learning and teaching committee and we're now moving into a follow-up phase of that strategy paper, where we're going to hopefully be funding one person in each of our Schools. [Deputy Director]

3.3.8 Overall benefits of participation in the CETL

There were a variety of benefits reported by respondents. These are summarised below.

Enhanced student provision	3
Recognition	2
Share good practice	2
Good working relationships	1
Transformed environment	1
Resources	1
Space to do things	1
Credibility	1
Improved staff competence	1
Challenging and thought provoking	1

Some comments were:

Being able to pool resources, share ideas and work with people in other universities, I think that's been really beneficial and we've got lots of examples of that. [Site Coordinator]

It's been highly beneficial to the students because I think it's offered them the support that in an ideal world should have been there in the first place but because of the funding mechanisms that we have and the amount of time that we have to deliver courses, we do not put into place as much support as students actually need. [Coordinator]

It enables us to expand out the provision of what we do face to face with students. It's enabled us to take a step back and look a bit more at the bigger picture and think of bigger developments as opposed to incremental developments. [Site Director]

We now have an environment where groups can form and interact naturally in which, if you like, there is a learning community. We've got enough computers, we've got enough space for students, all of which space existed before but it's now been redesigned so that it's actually used efficiently. [Site Coordinator]

3.3.9 Other comments

One of the criticisms would be that the way the original granting of the CETLs was set up seemed to treat each one on its merits, which in one sense looks fair but it actually seems to me to be somewhat crazy that the 74 CETLs actually cover a slightly weird and skewed range of issues. I haven't counted them recently but I think there is something like 15 aren't there on employability and only two about assessment. It seems to me that was daft... I don't think it's very rationally thought through in the sense of what are the major things that we need in higher education. How many centres do you need in any one of these given areas? I would have much rather we'd competed for a centre for assessment or a centre for employability... if they're going to do it again, that would be my major criticism. I can't believe we need 15 centres on employability. And I don't see much evidence of who's bringing that together in the right place. [Deputy Director]

It has been a fantastic catalyst for change and it will be interesting to see how we sustain that once the funding disappears because without it there is no way we could have done what we've done and finding some way of sustaining that once it happens, to keep some momentum going is going to be the next real key. [Co-director]

The biggest impact which does relate to this is the effect on morale, enthusiasm – it's been enormous. I think that's one of the biggest things, people often feel under pressure whether research-led universities or not. The effect of a) being recognised that you could deliver, b) the power to do it, it has really raised morale and I think that's been useful because that leads to better teaching. [Site Director]

3.4 CETL case study visits

3.4.1 Introduction

Approach to the CETL visits

In CSET's tender document, it was stated that visits to approximately 50% of the 74 CETLs in England and visits to all seven CETLs in Northern Ireland would be undertaken. We indicated that we would be structuring our case study visits by seeking movement from enclave to wider embedded practice: 'bridge heading' or engagement strategies being of particular interest. During these visits the focus of the interviews is on the following key issues:

- The practices of those immediately involved in the CETLs (teachers, practitioners, departments and wider partners engaged in specific courses or programmes) and, in particular, examples of innovative practices and pedagogic research
- Where appropriate, students' experience of the learning processes associated with the work of the CETLs
- The extent to which the CETLs reward and recognise excellence in teaching
- Wider departmental, school or faculty practices and systems – with a focus on teaching and learning strategies and how CETLs fit in with these
- Sector-wide influences and external partnerships, focusing on strategies for active engagements
- 'External' effects or connections (for example, within external communities of practice, the local community or internationally)
- Unanticipated or unintended effects.

Preparatory Stage

We began planning the case study visits in February 2007. During this phase the necessary preliminary activities took place.

The Sample

First, the sample group of CETLs for the visits was selected. In selecting the CETLs for the case study visits, the following criteria were taken into account:

- Disciplinary area (including multi-disciplinary CETLs)
- Size/type of institution (e.g. Russell Group universities, 1994 group universities, post-'92 universities, HE colleges, specialist institutions)
- Single host CETLs (i.e. Centre run by one HEI)
- Collaborative CETLs (i.e. partnerships amongst a number of HEIs or HEIs working with other organisations such as further education (FE) colleges, health, social care and other non-educational organisations).

The selected group of CETLs represented the following categories (see below):

Disciplinary area

Disciplinary area	Numbers of CETLs selected in these disciplinary areas
Media Practice	1
Creative Arts	4
Physical Sciences	3
Subjects Allied to Medicine	8
Maths and Computer Science	2
Architecture, Building & Planning	1
Business and Administrative Studies	2
Biological Sciences	1
Engineering	1

Languages	1
Veterinary Sciences	1
Cross-disciplinary	11

Type of institution hosting the CETL

Type of institution	Numbers of CETLs selected in these categories
Post-'92 university	22
Russell Group university	6
'1994' Group university	5
Specialist institution	3

Single host/collaborative CETL

Single Host	Collaborative
24	12

The selection of the CETLs reflects the balance of representation within the overall total of 74 CETLs: for example, there are a number of cross-disciplinary CETLs, CETLs concerned with Subjects Allied to Medicine and a high representation of post-'92 institutions.

Initial Contact with the CETLs

Based on the above criteria, 36 of the 74 CETLs were selected as potential sites for the case studies. Following the initial letter sent to all CETLs from HEFCE, we sent an email to each of the selected CETLs explaining the purpose and form of the case studies. Within each CETL, we suggested that useful sources of information might be the CETL Director, other core members of the CETL team (such as the manager), subject and teaching Coordinators or leaders, practitioners in receipt of CETL resources (e.g. pedagogic research fellows, teaching fellows, visiting practitioners), departmental heads, school or faculty heads, senior managers (e.g. pro Vice-Chancellors) and external stakeholders. We also asked to interview students (we see this group as key stakeholders) about their perceptions of effects of CETL resources or activities on their teaching and learning. After this initial preparation in setting up the case study visits, we concentrated on the design of the research instruments.

The Research Instruments

Draft semi-structured interview schedules were designed for use with the core CETL team (e.g. directors, assistant/associate directors, managers), external stakeholders (e.g. industrial or business partners or other commercial agencies involved with the CETL), practitioners in receipt of CETL resources (e.g. pedagogic research fellows, teaching fellows, visiting practitioners) and students who may have been directly, or indirectly, affected by any of the CETL activities. For the core CETL team members, the issues addressed related to those identified above. We also added questions designed to explore informants' perceptions of their CETL's most successful achievements so far and, conversely, the main challenges (past, present and, possibly, future). Related to the latter, we raised the important issue of sustainability. For external stakeholders, practitioners/those in receipt of CETL resources and students the questions were adapted accordingly.

Finalising the details of the case study visits

In order to use the time available for this part of the evaluation most efficiently, we had established a provisional timetable of CETL visits, arranged according to geographical location. However, when we began the process of telephoning CETLs to arrange dates for our visit, it became clear that it would not be possible to keep to this schedule as it was not always possible for CETLs to agree to the dates that we had provisionally allocated to each visit. Also, within each CETL, there were considerably more potential informants than we had originally anticipated and so, not surprisingly, it took some time for those within the CETLs to Coordinate timetables for our visits. However, by the beginning of March, we were able to begin the round of case study visits.

The Evidential Base

Between March and December 2007 the team of two researchers completed visits to the 36 case study CETLs (and also undertook case study visits to the seven CETLs in Northern Ireland). At each of the CETLs, a range of people were interviewed, all of whom provided informative perspectives on the progress of their respective CETLs. In total 693 people participated in evaluative discussions.

At each CETL, the team emphasised that the purpose of the visit was to contribute towards the overall evaluation of the CETL initiative by CSET. We ensured that those we interviewed understood that it was not our role or intention to evaluate individual CETLs. This is an important point that needed to be clarified at the outset of each visit. Interviews were conducted either with individuals or groups and were recorded (with the permission of informants). Informants were assured that any quotes or comments that we used in our reports to HEFCE would be 'anonymised' so that they could not be attributed to particular individuals, their CETLs, their institutions or organisations.

3.4.2 The findings: the meta themes from the visits

In this report, we present our findings grouped under three overarching 'meta' themes with corresponding 'sub-themes':

Recognition and rewards

- Recognising 'good' teaching
- Promotion
- Resources and time.

The influence and effects of the CETLs

- Effects on teaching and learning
- Institutional level impact
- HE sector and beyond (for example, within local communities and at national and international levels).

The Challenge of Sustainability

- Long-term planning
- Funding
- Embedding.

This framework of overarching themes provides us with a useful strategy for interpreting and reporting on the substantial amount of data we have amassed. We have also included an additional section on 'other issues' which informants have raised during the course of the case study visits. These are:

- Challenges relating to collaborations (both within and outside CETLs' 'home' institutions)
- Unanticipated or unintended effects
- Time and financial issues
- Pedagogic research
- General comments on the CETL initiative.

In the sections that follow we report our findings from the case studies. We have included a sizeable number of verbatim quotes to illustrate the points being made as informants' 'first hand' perceptions

and experiences are, of course, pivotal in the context of qualitative evaluation. Quotes have only been amended where there have been specific references to individuals, institutions or organisations.

3.4.2.1 Recognition and rewards

As the key informants' interviews indicated, underlying the CETL initiative is a theory of change that assumes that:

- Excellent teaching contributes to excellent learning
- Reward and recognition encourage the enhancement of teaching quality, over and above the impetus provided by staff's general commitment to doing good work
- Recognising individual and institutional excellence in teaching and learning promotes excellence across the sector.

During the case study visits we pursued this issue of how informants regard CETLs as both recognising, and also rewarding, excellence in teaching. Not surprisingly, perceptions of what constitutes 'reward' and also of the ways in which CETLs can, and do, provide rewards varied considerably across the case study CETLs. However, some common themes have emerged.

Recognising 'good' teaching

A number of informants agreed with the following informant (a Director of a Centre for Lifelong Learning) that *'the whole concept of how you recognise is going to be the major issue, rather than the rewarding'*. Whereas research output is more easily quantifiable, teaching excellence generally relies on qualitative and more subjective perceptions. Relying on students' views on the effective of teaching may not always be appropriate but there was little consensus on the validity of alternative sources of information:

How do you decide which are the good teachers? What students think are good teachers may not be what other people think are good teachers – a good raconteur giving a good lecture? It means different things to different people. [Lecturer]

I'm less convinced we've made as much progress on how we recognise expertise in teaching. I've got to think how we address that because I think we're not shouting loud enough about that. I think we need to challenge some national thoughts on this. But how do we go about that? I'm not so sure. [Head of School]

Perhaps not surprisingly, there were some comments about the relative value attached within HE to teaching vis-à-vis research and some informants expressed scepticism as to whether the rewards for excellence in teaching offered by the CETLs would really serve to enhance the status of teaching compared to that attached to research:

Academics respond to incentives. If there were huge incentives to be stunning in one's teaching – academics would follow it. It's as simple as that. But at the moment it's RAE-driven, it's your research publications relating to your discipline that actually ensure that you're promoted. So no wonder people say that 'well, I'll do my teaching, I'll do it as well as I can but don't ask me to spend too much time on it'. [Senior manager]

However, these opinions were not shared by the majority of informants who saw the CETL initiative in a more positive light as a welcome recognition of the importance of teaching:

I think this is one area where the playing field is a lot more level than it is in terms of the RAE. We don't have pots of cash from the RAE to distribute around research innovation – we just don't have it. This gives us another chance to play to our strengths so I really welcome it. It's something that does enable universities of this size to really develop. It gives us an opportunity to develop which we couldn't find from our own resources. It's absolutely vital. [Pro Vice-Chancellor]

All of a sudden people who've been very committed to teaching, as opposed to research, have suddenly found that they are valued more than they were before. There's no doubt about that. [CETL Director]

I think it's outrageous – and I say this as an active researcher – the amount of money that they throw at research which oils people's careers in a very particular way and the very fact that with teaching you're scraping every penny. All the time you're fighting [with] the people who have got to write this next article! Not everyone does that but there's enough of it to make it difficult for people who really want to address learning and teaching. [Deputy Vice-Chancellor]

A number of informants felt that this recognition of the importance of teaching was reflected in parallel developments (such as Teaching Awards and Teaching Fellowships) within their own universities (see also section on Promotions below). This was a view ('it gives you a place at the table so that you can negotiate') that we noted in CETLs in a range of universities from (perhaps surprisingly) the research-intensive institutions to the post-'92 and smaller universities.

Finally, in terms of recognition of good practice, one informant made the point that it is not just academics who should be rewarded but that there are other staff equally deserving of recognition:

It's academics that are being rewarded generally. [The CETL Manager] and one of our learning technologists have made such a massive contribution that I sort of feel in a way it seems unfair that it's academics and maybe we should actually be challenging the Academy in terms of who it does see as being active contributors. And if things change, it will be more learning technologists or managers that actually should be recognised – and I know in some schemes they are – but in CETLs the emphasis is put upon academics and I don't think it should be confined to academics. [CETL Director]

Certainly, as many of the CETLs involve exploring and developing the uses of (comparatively) new technologies for learning – in particular mobile technologies such as iPods and mobile phones – the role of technologists has assumed considerable importance in helping academics develop their uses of such technologies as learning and teaching tools.

Promotion

Linking promotion structures more closely to excellence in teaching is already under way in many universities and CETLs are seen in those institutions as helping to push forward this agenda and to be contributing significantly to policy decision-making processes:

As an institution, we're looking very closely at developing a teaching career path. We're a Russell Group institution so, traditionally, career paths have developed in research. I'll not say we've paid lip service to teaching because we haven't but it's never been the major driver. But we're very strongly now moving towards developing a teaching career path – not just teaching, it has to be teaching and scholarship. There will still be a research element but it's going to be around the scholarship area. At the moment our promotion processes – although they are changing and changing quite radically – they are still quite biased towards the research side. So it's how you begin to develop that, what you mean by excellence in teaching, how you measure it, how you make sure that you've got a transparent system. [Director of Centre for Lifelong Learning]

The CETL people are in dialogue with the HR people at the moment about the development of a firm set of criteria for a teaching track career because it doesn't exist here at the moment. Except exceptionally, to be promoted here you have to get points in teaching, research and administration. We are just bringing in new criteria and they [CETL staff] have helped with those discussions directly. [Pro Vice-Chancellor]

The CETL initiative in this institution has been important and useful in building up the profile, really, and the status of learning, teaching and assessment more broadly across the university. One specific example of that would be the way in which the kind of CETL activities and the work people have done has put some momentum behind developing an LTA (learning, teaching and assessment) career path in the university. So one of the big strands of the LTA strategy in the university now is to develop an LTA career path. You've got a career path for people who are interested in research, you've got a career path for people who want

to engage in the management aspects, and now there's an emerging career path for people who are interested in learning, teaching and assessment matters. It's not there yet but it's halfway there – it's kind of there but it's not explicit. [CETL Director]

These are positive indications that the CETLs are, in many institutions, making an active contribution to strategic discussions, and influencing decision-making processes, on how institutions can begin to redress the relative balance between the status and rewards attached to teaching and research. In some universities, this will no doubt be a slow process – as a senior manager of one such university points out:

We've worked hard to change the culture in the institution to create reward structures to reflect good research records and now we're more able to reflect good teaching as well. Centres for Excellence have focused the debate more towards teaching. I don't think it's actually achieved much in reality yet, but that new focus on teaching is beginning to guide where the institution is going.

Other informants in research-intensive institutions echoed this:

There are ongoing discussions about how you reward teaching in career development and in a university like this where traditionally research was the thing that got you where you wanted to go and people talked about rewarding teaching but it didn't necessarily happen! But I think that is changing. I think the CETLs – our CETL together with the other CETLs in this area – are having an influence on that – it may be slowly, slowly but I think they are. [Local Academic Coordinator]

In a research-intensive institution like this one it's not that we don't take education seriously, we do and we always have, but that extra little push to invest in education has been very important. The CETLs also came along at a time when we were developing new career pathways – some of the people who've got promoted now, they've actually been focusing on education for many years in their departments and although they've had moments of glory, for example, when we had external reviews of teaching... they haven't, until now, had this university recognition that they were valued. So I think the CETL has been very important in helping that to occur. [Director of Teaching Support Unit]

I think as an institution, specifically in relation to this CETL, I have no doubt over the last two to three years in the institution we have moved significantly towards recognising the importance of teaching and I see that because I sit on the internal promotions committee when people are promoted to senior lectureship level and I would think that three years ago it was nigh on impossible to get promoted here in terms of teaching excellence. [Head of Department]

Whilst not perhaps directly leading to promotion, being associated with a CETL was regarded as certainly having some influence:

The other thing that we've done is to try to help people – kind of mentoring people – to go into the university promotion route and supporting them in getting small grants and things like that and we've been successful in that because since CETL was formed, we've had three academic staff associated with CETL who've got university teaching fellowships. We've got one National Teaching Fellow, we've got one nominated this year from the university for a National Teaching Fellow – now obviously whether she'll get it or not, we don't know yet. I've got a university professorship – probably just before the CETL started so not purely that but I'm sure the fact that we were at that point through to stage two of CETL didn't hinder that! So we've been quite successful. And also there are about 12 people who are part of the CETL network who have been successful getting Small Grant Awards. So we are plugging into the other awards that are available. [CETL Director]

Association with a CETL was, in some of the case study institutions, regarded as providing a 'foothold' on the promotions ladder and again, the emergence of the CETLs has been fortuitous in coinciding with institutional developments:

There are a number of mechanisms that are emerging through different CETLs in terms of staff reward schemes that are encouraging staff to take the steps on that ladder that will support them in their promotion and promotion criteria will look for the sort of experience they are getting through CETL projects and things like that and that will be part of the portfolio.

This is now demonstrated by the number of people who've been taken right through to professorships. The route to the old principal lectureship was via the university teaching fellowship at that stage and that wasn't totally appropriate and that was reviewed just as the CETL was beginning. So I think the CETLs have tied in very much with that reward and promotion structure. [Dean of Faculty]

A Pro Vice-Chancellor who was very actively involved in the CETLs within her institution felt that the opportunities provided by participation in the CETLs would stand staff in very good stead in terms of future career opportunities:

At the end of six years, if you haven't got the track record, CV and expertise to apply for an Associate Dean job or for a learning and teaching faculty job or something like that, then you haven't been using the advantages. It's very much my contention that for everybody who gets actively involved in the CETL there will be real career advancement at the end of five years because we give them lots and lots of opportunities.

In confirmation of this, during the case study visits we became aware of a number of promotions (to professorial level in a couple of cases) of staff who were associated with a CETL and who have strong interests and expertise in teaching as much as in research.

We noted instances where there were some clashes between how the CETLs would like to have rewarded staff and institutional policies. For example, in one research-intensive university, the notion that CETL money could, or should be used to address career progression and reward for staff was said to be 'anathema' to central administration. In another CETL, the director said that *'there is scant reward for the efforts that people make in innovative teaching in this university – which says that it values its teaching'*. Similarly, another informant from a Russell Group university said:

Coming from this university, you're not rewarded for being a great teacher! So certainly within the university, if you wanted to get involved in this, you do it additionally to your ordinary work – your peers in the department may not think very much of what you're doing. [Local Academic Coordinator]

Resources and time

It must be emphasised that to many of those we interviewed rewards are seen as less to do with improving chances of promotion as providing opportunities and resources to pursue personal areas of pedagogical interest. The extra finances provided by the CETLs are certainly appreciated as offering recipients the opportunity, for example, to try out new practices or activities:

We didn't have enough cash – we didn't have enough input as far as money was concerned – to do what we really wanted to do. We were certainly limited by finance until we were awarded the CETL and then some of those shackles were removed. We can try things out. You can see if things work or don't work. You can certainly throw a little bit of money at some things. We don't know all the answers so we have to try things out. [CETL Director]

The freedom to innovate with just a bit of resource – 'freedom' is probably the wrong word but having a bit of resource to experiment and take maybe more risks than you might do in a normal budget is – well, it's a strange kind of reward in fact in that it brings you more work but it's more challenging and more interesting for folks who are involved as they can actually engage in leading edge pedagogy or student experience or whatever they've focused in on. [Head of Department]

Many informants referred to comparatively small rewards – such as having funds to enable them, or others, to attend conferences:

We've had a £400 staff development fund each this year and what's great about that is that I've been able to do a couple of things that I probably otherwise wouldn't have done because usually I can only go to conferences if I'm presenting and even then only if the expenses have been paid but I've actually been able to do something I wouldn't usually have been able to do under ordinary staff development – and also buy a couple of books! [CETL project leader]

The CETL for me is like a bag of opportunities and I feel I've learned so much since I started. I'm really pleased and grateful (for the opportunities to attend conferences) because I had the feeling that, prior to being a CETL Fellow, I remember being really bitter about the fact that so

much time had gone into personal development, had gone into students, but I was thinking what about me? I've been teaching for years – eight or nine years – I've been to one or two conferences throughout all that period. It changed completely when I joined CETL. It opened up a whole world where I could go and listen. So all these projects which have been mentioned, I wouldn't have known about if it hadn't been for the CETL. [CETL Fellow]

Anything that helps staff to get out and about and to see what's going on elsewhere has to be very beneficial. It's really struck me, coming here from (another university), how many people don't seem to get outside (this university) at all and that's really weakening for people – they don't necessarily see that there are alternative ways of doing things and life becomes duller, quite frankly when there isn't that sort of externality. [Middle Manager]

One lecturer stated that she had anticipated working to retirement without ever attending a conference, but with CETL funding she was able to have time to prepare and to present. This was felt to be a great boost to her motivation that has revitalised her working practices in line with CETL objectives. It seems that these small financial costs can lead to large psycho-emotional gains.

A concrete example of reward is the very pleasant physical environment in which many CETLs operate. The majority of CETLs visited had spent CETL funding on either building new premises or refurbishing existing spaces. The results are very impressive and provide a highly visible focus for CETL activities within the host institution. Informants were, not surprisingly, extremely appreciative of these improvements:

What has been more useful are the physical resources: being able to have a decent working office, having meeting rooms well-resourced, high tech equipment. It's got to the stage when they're vital now. We've got so used to having them. [CETL Associate]

A particularly valuable benefit for busy academics is to be rewarded with the luxury of *time* and CETLs have been able to provide this opportunity in various ways. For example, some have provided money to buy out academics' time so that they can pursue a particular area of interest, whilst others have provided funds for academics to carry out research or developmental activities:

The kind of projects that have been funded have been very valuable. One of the teachers said 'I've always wanted to have the funded time to do something like this and never in my career before has that happened'. You know – that's wonderful. The challenge which immediately follows is how do you then build on that. That empowering of teachers who are very experienced but have never had the money to do something like this, the CETL has allowed that. [Director of School]

The CETL funding has allowed me to create a properly conducted research exercise. A lot of the work you do tends to be ad hoc – it follows from work the university has given me. I do see it as being an essential part of being a teacher. If you're not able to follow through lines of enquiry and do research or some other activity that stretches you and gets you out of day to day activities – I think it's really essential and I think it's at the heart of the discussion about whether you have teaching-only universities. [CETL project holder]

Within this subject area you have a large number of people that come from a non-academic background so for those people who are never probably going to be researchers in the traditional sense of the word, it gives them an avenue for scholarly activity. [Academic Coordinator]

Staff were appreciative of the opportunity provided by CETLs of having time to enable them to reflect on their professional practice:

It gives you some time and space to actually think and talk about issues which perhaps otherwise would have been less organised, less managed – car park, corridor kinds of conversations. I think to actually physically make that more formal – to record it and to actually have time and space to talk about those issues with colleagues is invaluable. We've had quite a few outside speakers coming. We've actually gone to quite a few different conferences and meetings which would have not happened without the CETL. Apart from the actual completely concrete bricks and mortar, I find it incredibly useful to have designated time, designated space to actually talk about these issues and problems – things which otherwise would be talked about but less formally so those issues and problems would have been lost when the conversation had ended. [CETL Fellow]

When I come here it feels like a day off – which is actually far from the case – but it means I'm not having to deal with research or students or management or other areas and I come here and I'm with a group of real colleagues – really close colleagues and friends – I feel as though I'm kind of coming home for the day. It's a really good feeling. And there's a kind of a forum for discussion about matters which you don't discuss anywhere else and I have been able to take that back to my department and in meetings I can be knowledgeable and say 'well, actually research has shown, discussion has shown, we've had somebody in to talk about (that) and they said..' and that has influence. [CETL Fellow]

In a number of cases, association with CETLs has led to membership of wider networks – both formal and informal. This is seen as of considerable benefit, or potential benefit, to those who have had this opportunity.

In fact it's not primarily about the money, it's about building networks so that people have got a network or more than one network – being plugged into a network so they've got like-minded people that they can go and talk about things and share their ideas. That's really what the Associate scheme is about and it does seem to be generally working. [CETL Director]

Of course, having spoken to so many informants, there were bound to be those who are more sceptical and cynical about there being *any* reward attached to being associated with a CETL. Some, albeit a minority of those interviewed, had found that CETL activities were merely an added burden and that any 'rewards' provided by the CETL were by no means commensurate with the extra pressures on their time.

Finally, a note of caution was sounded by the following informant (a Vice-Chancellor) who suggested that there needed to be a more coherent approach to policies related to rewarding excellence in teaching:

I think the other issue which would need to be part of the strategic review (of the CETL initiative) is the rewarding excellence for individuals. And, if anything, I think that, as far as I can tell, has been slightly underplayed within the CETLs. Because a number of people in our CETL are National Teaching Fellows, and we've our internal scheme and they feature large in that. But that's not coming from the CETL, that's an institutional plan and an HE Academy plan. So there's a sort of lack of dovetailing. I think it's another area they [HEFCE] need to be clear about. Is this going to be their main route to rewarding excellence or is it through the Higher Education Academy? I don't think we need two routes for it, I think one is enough. As for which would be the better, I don't know.

Summary of recognition and rewards

Whilst it was acknowledged that identifying what constitutes excellence in teaching is not a straightforward process, the CETL initiative is generally regarded as a welcome move to raise the status of teaching across higher education and to signify that teaching is a valued activity in its own right. A number of institutions are already reviewing their policies on promotions to take greater account of teaching excellence and, in these universities, the CETLs are seen as having a positive and welcome contribution to make to this agenda. Even without a direct link to promotion, involvement with a CETL is seen as advantageous for general career prospects in terms of the opportunities provided for personal and professional development. To many informants, however, taking part in CETL activities is less to do with 'formal' rewards (such as promotion) but more about providing opportunities and resources previously unavailable or certainly more difficult to access. Even activities that are taken for granted by many academics – such as being able to attend conferences or have the time to write papers – had not previously been possible for some staff before CETL resources were available. To many informants the reward of having time to take part in discussions with like-minded colleagues and make new contacts is seen as a luxury that the CETLs have certainly made possible. Finally, it is worth noting here that amongst the significant number of informants who contributed to this evaluation, we encountered very little cynicism that recognising and rewarding teaching excellence was merely tokenism in the face of the far greater status attached to research profiles and RAE contribution. This could well be, of course, because those who are most likely to be involved with and attracted to the CETLs are the already 'converted' to whom teaching has always been a priority.

3.4.2.2 Influence and effects of the CETLs

In terms of exploring the impact of the CETLs, we begin at the micro level of the effects on the teaching and learning experience from both the perspectives of students and practitioners. We then report on the 'meso' level: effects and impact within the institutions immediately involved with CETLs. Finally, we turn to the macro level – the impact of the CETLs at a sector level and outwith the HE sector (for example, within local communities or at an international level).

Effects on Teaching and Learning

Whilst both students and staff were able to provide anecdotal evidence of learning gains linked to CETL-provided activities or resources, few CETLs appear to have formal mechanisms in place (such as that described below) to systematically evaluate the impact on learning and teaching:

One of the things we've tried to ensure is that there's proper evaluation so we can capture data specifically about projects that we've done. One of the benefits of that is that it brings rigour to the projects but also it becomes the evidence to say, 'Look, something did happen here, students did respond to what we're trying to do'. I think, what we'll start to find, as always happens to these things, is that it doesn't matter how much impact it has on learning, it's how much it's saved on costs. So where innovations have been shown to save costs, or staff time, it will be readily accepted by the school, and wider. [CETL Fellow]

Developing processes to more formally evaluate the impact of CETL interventions was recognised as a challenge that really needed to be addressed:

I think that's a challenge for us all – whether it's government asking that question – is there an impact? The same sort of question can be asked by colleagues within our faculty, for example, who might reasonably say 'won't LTA enhancement have to happen automatically anyway?' So we've got to do our best to try and measure progress in the right direction. It may be a subjective judgment at the end of the day. You can't somehow say the CETL had had that effect. It's part of a whole matrix of activities. [Assistant Dean, Academic Development]

A challenge will ultimately be around measuring impact. I think we have got a view of how we may do that but that's difficult always in education. With a lot of LTA initiatives the big question – particularly the line managers ask is 'so what difference is it going to make to us? How's it going to help us? What's the evidence?' They want something nice and succinct and tangible. And I think that will be a challenge for us but we've been thinking a lot about that. [CETL Director]

Some informants felt that it was still too early in the life span of the CETLs to be able to discern any significant effects on teaching and learning. Also, CETL activities were often closely linked with other aspects of students' programmes so 'disentangling' the specific effects of CETL-related interventions was not easy. Indeed, the point was made that, as the intention is to integrate CETL activities within mainstream teaching and learning, this inter-relatedness was a positive indication of embedding taking place:

We haven't actually promoted things as particularly CETL-oriented. We will tell them that it's to do with the CETL but as far as we're concerned, they should see everything as part of the curriculum because we had hoped – and I think it's still a reasonable aspiration – that actually the whole of the School would be seen as a centre of excellence and actually the whole of the curriculum be regarded that way. [Director of Studies]

In a number of the CETLs, there is a greater emphasis on involving students in planning and designing learning activities. One student we interviewed was particularly enthusiastic about this:

It was just wonderful because it actually makes you feel a part of the university not just like, I don't know – like a car in a garage. You actually feel a part of the whole system and that you can actually be heard. Your voice is being heard. And if you feel that people are going to make changes based on what you say, you're going to want to be there, you're going to want to study there. And you're going to want to work harder because you feel as though what you're doing is being appreciated.

We noted a number of similarly enthusiastic responses from students to specific CETL-funded activities. For example, in at least one CETL students had been given the opportunity of writing academic papers and contributing to conferences:

Having the opportunity to write articles, have them published, gives you a bit of credibility. When you go for a job, it's going to put you ahead of all those other people who are applying for that job.

Other students had taken part in placements that involved taking responsibility for a project abroad and those we interviewed were highly positive about the impact of this experience on their learning and career prospects:

We've all taken different things away from it – like I feel that my confidence has improved – and presentation skills and things like that. Getting you out of your comfort zone, all those things are important. And obviously it looks good in your CV.

I just thought it was a great experience – something I've never done before and I probably won't get to do anything like it again. You learn more about yourself like what your limits are or that you can push your limits – plus meeting all the different people.

However, to counterbalance this enthusiasm towards being a more 'active' learner, other students may well be more comfortable with being taught in a more traditional and less demanding way. Whilst their tutors can see the potential benefits to the less proactive students of taking more responsibility for their own learning, there was a concern that this was the group that was the most hard to reach and influence:

As in all things I've found with students, you tend to preach to the converted. The students that become involved tend to be the students who were good at it anyway or would have been likely to have been a great graduate recruit. Or, often new students are pretty keen so they'll come along. There's a lack of understanding about the benefits that they can gain, we think, and it's very hard to get the message across. Convincing them that this is not just a waste of their time is hard work. [Careers Adviser]

I noticed in my group it was more the sort of stronger students actually who took advantage of it and benefited whereas the ones who you think 'gosh, they need it', they're the ones it's hard to reach often. And they've got other problems, of course, and the fact that they've got to come here from (another campus) as well to get one-to-one tutorial – they find it hard to get here, to be honest. That's part of their problems – there are all sorts of problems going on outside perhaps. [Practitioner]

Related to this, informants were aware that some students – and staff – may well have initially been wary of being treated as guinea pigs in what they might see as various pedagogical 'experiments' being undertaken by CETL staff. For the most part, these sceptics appear to have been won over by their subsequent experiences:

We had students who were very reluctant to take on something that they saw as perhaps we were experimenting with but they've actually gone onto it and embraced it and come out the other end much richer for the experience. [Head of Department]

There's always the danger that we experiment on them and they're there as objects – they're just 'done to'. Whereas it seems to me that they're very much involved in this and it has significant benefit for their education and also for their employability at the end. [CETL manager]

One important area where informants felt that CETL resources are having a significant impact on teaching practices is in the provision of new and exciting learning and teaching spaces. We saw many examples during the case study visits of innovative uses of space that are far removed from traditional lecture and seminar rooms. These spaces represent a much more informal approach to what is considered an 'appropriate' learning environment and informants were in no doubt that this was having a positive impact upon attitudes to learning and teaching:

One of the critical things here is the fact that what we're trying to do is to promote a way of working which is effective – for the students to recognise that what we want them to do is to continue working wherever and whenever they can. The normal experience they get is fixed rooms, fixed times, constraints, 'you can't's': 'you can't bring drinks in here', 'you can't have

food in here', 'you can't have groups in here'. And, in a sense, the capital has allowed us the opportunity to create the space that allows us to bring the students in and for them to see that their experience is not just being in a room with a member of staff. [CETL manager]

In this semester, people have actually designed – not really designed completely but modified – the structure of their seminars to fit the room. Whenever I have a chat with any student in my own class or somebody else's class, they just say 'wow, this is the sort of room we want to be in. Tomorrow when we go into employment, we are going to see these kind of rooms and we'll be very confident because we've used it in our seminars and for presentations'. They are going to have a flavour of employability by the time they graduate. [Associate CETL Fellow]

The impact of these different forms of learning environments is being felt not only in those departments most immediately involved with the CETL but also elsewhere within institutions:

One impact is in how we look at our teaching space. The CETL has made us think much more about the kind of teaching space we need for different types of subjects – which I think has been very important because we had issues to do with the amount of space that we have in our institution anyway and we had complaints from academics about the teaching space not being suitable for their teaching – those sort of fundamental things have really grown into a much more interesting approach to zoning our classrooms. That's been really important. [Head of Learning and Teaching Strategy]

It's drawing more people in. We haven't drawn everybody in to use the spaces yet. For example, with our main undergraduate facility that we've had refurbished – which is a large teaching lab – very good audio visual services – it's a teaching lab that can be used for web or computing facilities and it's for 150 students at one time. It's a large lab. Now some people who just take their groups in there to teach, have taken them in and more or less done exactly the same as they did before. Other people have taken their groups in there and thought 'with this new space and these facilities I can design a new practical or I can add a computing element that I couldn't do before'. I would say it's probably 50-50. And that's quite a large impact because that lab is used for 80% of the time throughout the teaching year – so it's used a lot. So the impact's quite high on people doing new things. Even the people who are going in and doing the same old things, they are using the new audio visuals so they are using some video and linking to the Internet sometimes which they perhaps weren't before. So at least everybody's done that. [CETL Director]

It has allowed us to improve our teaching but also it's brought home to people across the School who are not directly involved with the CETL that we ought to be thinking about how we do our teaching rather than, you know, 'I've stood up and given the same lectures every year and I'll carry on doing that'. I don't think people think like that any more and it's helped by having people within each of the four departments who are focusing on that. The CETL is changing – and I don't think it's finished its job – the culture in that sense. [Head of School]

Predictably, not all staff feel comfortable with using some of the new (to them) teaching technologies provided by CETLs and sometimes need considerable 'hand-holding' from staff – as this member of a CETL Support team explains:

They do the teaching they would normally do but they use, for example, the interactive whiteboard, they use classroom management software, they might do voice recording. Also, a very good point about this CETL is that there is extensive support provided – pedagogically and technically – by my colleagues and by me. For a lot of teachers it is about relaxing them because they have never used such things and then sometimes it is a question of introducing them slowly: 'write your name' and then they say 'Oh – so that's how it works!' And then they include it in their teaching.

Loosely related to this last point is the (lengthy but apposite) quote which neatly encapsulates what many lecturers may well feel about adapting to changing methods of teaching:

I thought it through and I thought why are we doing this? Why are we as lecturers breaking our backs to come up with these things? I sometimes feel I'm dancing to entertain the students – the ungrateful little wretches! They sit there expecting more and more. The answer I gave myself was partly that the world in which we're working is changing and you cannot actually stand still and sometimes you have to run like mad to do what seems like standing still. It's standing still in terms of just keeping the level of engagement with the students that

you might have been able to expect without any effort. When I came into teaching 22 years ago, then the students took whatever you gave to them really and didn't have any complaints. They should have probably complained but that was the day when if the students were really lucky they got a Banda hand-out, you know, something that you ran off that was hand written the night before. If you just went on kind of being like that, education effectively wouldn't have made any innovations and education would have gone backwards because society has gone forwards. So I think, in a sense, it's quite often difficult to find concrete evidence that all these things we're doing make things better because actually they are making things better sometimes to do not much more than to keep up with the change in expectations, the change in society, the change in what students have, what they expect, the different inputs because the students we get now are quite different from the ones we got 20 years ago. [CETL Teacher Fellow]

Impact at the institutional level

In this evaluation, we have made use of a model of change trajectories (Table 1) as providing a useful means of depicting how CETLs might be moving through a series of changes. This model depicts CETLs as being, initially, relatively self contained enclaves, moving through the formation of bridgeheads (dissemination or engagement strategies) to the formation of enclaves elsewhere and leading finally to a step change in routine practices in the institution and the sector as a whole. One of the main foci for this part of the overall evaluation is to depict the way different mechanisms in CETLs aid this transition from enclave to sustainable change.

Although it is comparatively early in terms of the progress of the CETL initiative and of the evaluation, nevertheless we can identify quite significant effects some CETLs are having both within and outwith their institutions. We have made use of the model of change trajectories to look at the impact of CETLs within their institutions.

Very few of the CETLs we have visited could be described as 'enclaved' in a strong sense but, not surprisingly, there is some variation in the extent to which they have moved through the formation of 'bridgeheads' (dissemination or engagement strategies) to being instrumental in bringing about change in practice at an institutional level. In some institutions there does seem to have been a tendency (at least in the early days of the CETLs) for those outside it to regard the CETL in terms of an enclave – a group of enthusiasts 'over there':

I think one of the early challenges for us was not to be seen as a kind of Centre made up of small number of people that were complete experts – who weren't engaging with anyone else in the university. If anyone had a problem or an issue they'd hand it across to us but we would be self-contained and we'd be in a corridor somewhere and wouldn't have any presence or input across the university. In other words, that we would become a completely marginalized initiative. That was a challenge but I don't think that's happened. I think because of the way we've operated we've got round that. It will always continue to be a danger that we're seen to be the latest fad and the latest bunch of enthusiasts who just want to do things amongst themselves and not with other people. [CETL Director]

I think one of the things that the CETL was concerned about probably from the first year was that we felt that we were being viewed as a sort of niche group but I think now the word's getting out that there are actually these opportunities that there otherwise wouldn't be without the CETL. So as soon as people see those benefits emerging, then they start getting a bit more interested. [CETL Team member]

To address this, a number of the case study CETLs had been aware of the importance of taking a 'softly softly', non-threatening approach from the start:

My strategy is not to push the CETL because in a research-led institution that's not always the way in which you're going to make the most impact. What I tend to do is to say 'actually we've done some work in that if you'd like to come and talk to us, if you'd like to borrow one of our staff, if you'd like me to come and give you a seminar'. And once you pick on something that's of interest, I find that's a better way of offering or creating bridges between departments. [CETL Director]

Similarly, the following informant stresses the need to assure staff that the CETLs are there to support rather than to be prescriptive:

If people in the CETL and management keep banging on about the CETL themes, then people switch off because they think that they've got to get on and teach their subject. We need to let them know that we're not telling them to change their teaching in a threatening way, but to show them ways in which they can make adjustments that won't necessarily take a lot of time and extra planning. But it is difficult though. It isn't that they're obliged to do it, but it can be used to excite. [CETL Director]

In none of the CETLs we visited were we told of any outright antagonism towards the CETLs, instead those not immediately involved in the CETL had shown cautious, but passive, interest:

The attitude is welcoming but not pro-active. If I go and say 'would you like to get involved in this project?' they say 'yes, that would be great'. But I wouldn't say there's a proactive attempt to contact the CETL. [CETL Director]

In some respects, there's a little bit of 'that's great, you do it and then roll it out across the department' which, of course, is a bit annoying. [Practitioner]

As the CETLs have become more established, informants can identify a shift in attitudes from cautious acceptance to a more proactive interest. In the stages of concern model, this equates to the second 'informational' stage where there is a wider emerging awareness and interest in knowing more and considering the broader implications:

When the CETL started off, indeed with my colleagues in my department, there was this feeling of anything that nobody wanted to do, 'oh well, get X to do it'. But I think it is changing and I find people coming to me now to ask me about things, to ask me for a way forward or if I know anything about something or I can put them in contact with someone. I think at the beginning, but no longer, there was an 'ooh, that [CETL Director] – he's got a lot of money! The bank account! How can we manoeuvre things to get our hands on it?' And I think that is changing or if it hasn't changed, is changing. It's seen as a really positive initiative and a knowledge bank rather than simply a hole in the wall bank! [CETL Fellow]

The biggest challenge was really to get ourselves known, to get ourselves in a supportive role, to work across admin support staff and academic staff and explain what the CETL was about and what we were there for – but also, sometimes, what we were not there for because I think inevitably, when a bid goes in, there's a big cash cow sign for some people and they all see it as an opportunity. Sometimes it's about the clarity of what you're doing, who you're doing it for and why and actually getting that established. [CETL Manager]

I think one thing about the CETL scheme is it raised expectations of the range of services which were really nothing to do, often, with what CETL has set out to do, what it could do, and I think because people saw quite a large amount of money, I think it just raised a whole host of expectations which were unreasonable. I think in a way we've struggled with that. [CETL Director]

References were made to 'CETL envy' amongst some colleagues as a barrier to be overcome ('we are the gatekeepers of the CETL pot of gold and that can cause some resentment'):

It has created tensions – which it was always going to do – because there is a perception that this is an initiative that is funded especially by the Funding Council and that there are, therefore, a group of staff who are benefiting from this. So there have been tensions around the other faculties around 'well, why that particular group? Why not a group of staff from the Business School or whatever?' [Pro Vice-Chancellor]

When we first got the money, there was a lot of negativity – 'Oh, they're all rich over there and we're all under pressure' and actually we were really keen not to be seen to be elite. [CETL Director]

As in the following CETL, greater understanding of the role of the CETLs has led to others within the institution becoming more proactive in their interactions with Centres:

Whereas in the first six months, it's been us approaching people and finding out what they did and how we could fit in and how we could relate, people have now actually approached us and wanted to do things – which is a sign of acknowledgment. [CETL Manager]

These are positive and encouraging indications that many CETLs are on the way to moving on from being enclaves of excellent practice to having a more central role within their institutions. However, the next stages beyond raising awareness and providing information were recognised as more challenging by a number of informants in the case study CETLs.

As in so many similar initiatives, there were frequent references to the 'usual suspects' being most closely involved with or interested in the CETLs. Many informants spoke of the need to develop ways of bringing in those who were 'convertible' if the Centres were to spread their influence on a wider scale within their institutions. It was recognised that too much time and effort could be wasted on trying to win over those who would always be resistant to change (one informant felt that in any institution 10% would be enthusiastic, 80% capable of being 'converted' and the remaining 10% would always be unconvertible):

There is a big group of staff who just see this as a threat, providing more work for them to do, or 'undoing all the stuff I'm quite happy with'. I've come to the conclusion that there is a group of staff that you're not going to change, and you can spend a lot of time with them and you realise that, at the end, you're just banging your head against a wall, and its more productive to work with the group of staff that are out there that do want to change. [Practitioner in receipt of CETL funds]

This notion of the 'threat' posed by the CETLs to some staff was repeated by other informants, for example:

I think that there are some dinosaurs that we need to deal with fairly urgently and I wonder quite how the university envisages supporting the processes of cultural change. The Centre is one thing and it can have a certain sort of impact – particularly amongst those that will come to it and will bring their friends. But there are many staff beyond that for whom this kind of approach is quite a threat. It's quite a challenge – they're going to be very resistant to it. [CETL Team Member]

CETLs had developed various strategies to break through these barriers – dogged perseverance on the part of CETL staff probably being one of the most effective, if time-consuming!

Identifying local champions to spread the CETL message was seen as a particularly effective strategy to disseminate awareness and knowledge of the CETLs:

I think we could waste a lot of time trying to convert the people who are unconvertible. I think the way in which we work – quite often there's the people who have responsibility for leadership in individual areas who are the ones who are broadly converted or convertible. So we work with those individuals and there will then be those in their individual areas who will also see the advantage of it. And there'll be some staff who are 'well, I'm just off to do research in other things' and don't see the advantage and the only way in which you can have actual impact is when everybody else locally is talking the language and doing things that we want them to do. And so we are starting with a strategy, we are going to work with these key influencers – programme leaders and other people – and anybody else that wants to get involved and from there we hope and expect to spread out as far as possible. [CETL Director]

I would argue that it's probably better that it's quite strategic. I think it's probably better to focus on departments where there are local enthusiasts who will take on board the opportunity to bring development into their discipline – that kind of local impetus – a kind of drop in the pond ripple effect, I think. If you've got staff who really are committed and who are actually making concrete changes to their courses and to the way they teach and they start to tell other colleagues about that, I think that is a much more effective way than to try to get everybody on board all at once. [Teaching, Learning & Curriculum Development Coordinator]

You have to do it sort of informally. You can write to the heads of department and they may not be interested at all so it's finding a lecturer who is and getting them to broadcast within their department. You need a champion because you can talk and talk and talk about the pros and cons of it and blah, blah, and there's a pro and a con for everything basically. [Local Academic Coordinator]

Whilst those CETLs with a cross-disciplinary focus are perhaps at an advantage in terms of institutional impact as their activities are specifically designed to promote inter-disciplinary working, the subject-specific Centres might be seen as more likely to be concerned with promoting excellence in often quite specialised disciplinary areas. However, by and large we did not find this to be the case

and informants in the latter group of CETLs could readily identify generic issues that they were addressing through CETL activities that had potential relevance to a range of subject areas.

Although it is this stage of moving away from enclave to bringing in a much wider range of participants that is somewhat challenging to a number of CETLs, as barriers are (slowly, in some cases) being broken down, new institutional networks are developing. This is represented in the Stages of Concern model as the third stage where new enclaves are beginning to form. Informants are highly positive about the benefits of the opportunities provided by these new partnerships:

Quite often when we try to collaborate across Schools it proves slightly difficult and it relies on individuals within Schools who can actually work together and keep the momentum going. So the fact that it's outside all the Schools and collaborating with all of them has overcome some of these difficulties, I think, and made it less to do with individual teachers. [Head of Department]

Normally you stay in your silos – stay in your area and you wouldn't speak to other people. Because you're so, I don't know, used to your own sort of area. To paraphrase Charles Handy²⁷, 'that's how you do things round here'. So it's great to hear your colleagues from a different discipline and how they look at issues and it does encourage you to think laterally maybe or differently about a situation that you would really have thought about in a very subject-specific way previously. [CETL Fellow]

If few of the practices of the CETLs we visited could be said to be, at this stage, systemic (stage six of the change model), the majority of the case study CETLs have *considered* rather than *enacted* strategies for embedding their activities within mainstream practices. The following informant refers to the need for sensitivity in this respect:

In terms of tapping into the existing structures in the institution to add value to them, to drive them along, maybe to accelerate them a little bit, maybe to enthuse some new thinking, I have to say they've done that with tremendous sensitivity. It is possible when something like that – sort of a ship comes alongside called 'CETL' – that a bunch of people who maybe on a minimum budget would perhaps feel 'I've been doing the job for 20 years and then in comes this great big cruiser with all the lovely facilities'. It's very easy for there to be a culture issue. But from where I'm sitting I don't see that. I think the staff here have shared what they've got, have made it very, very accessible, they haven't shut themselves in. [Director of Library and Learning Services]

The following informant uses a particularly evocative metaphor to describe the gradual effect of the CETL:

In terms of multiplier effects, I think what we're seeing happening across the curricula is – I think it's quite organic. I think it's a bit like putting a spoonful of yoghurt into a pint of warm milk – that gradually we're changing attitudes. [Pro Vice-Chancellor]

As we noted above, in some of the institutions visited the advent of the CETL was seen as serendipitous in terms of other related developments within the institution. In these institutions, the CETL and its activities are seen as complementary to a wider agenda – such as, for example, widening participation, the development of new teaching and learning strategies and the setting up of new centres for the enhancement of teaching and learning:

The CETLs are doing different but complementary things which actually feed into the teaching learning programme. So if we take (one of the university's CETLs), the fact that the university also has amongst its strategic objectives the whole question of widening participation and outreach, you can see that reflected in the kinds of activities that the CETL does and that has implications in terms of spreading the knowledge base across the university. [Vice-Chancellor]

One of the advantages of [the CETL Director's] involvement in a wide range of university committees, and my involvement with the quality enhancement side, is that when the draft of the university's new learning and teaching strategy was being prepared, we had the opportunity to see it and suggest ways in which the CETLs might be included as a more integral part of the university's overall learning, teaching and enhancement strategy. And I

²⁷ Irish author/philosopher specialising in organisational behaviour and management

think we were relatively successful in that. The way it's written, it's much more clear that the two (institutional) CETLS – not just this CETL – are an integral part of the university's way forward in enhancing learning and teaching. [CETL Manager]

The university's just produced a new strategic plan and it's just beginning to percolate through now. The CETLS are mentioned in that. The Learning and Teaching Implementation Plan – again the CETLS are mentioned in that. And there's a proposal to set up a new – it's not got a name yet – but it's a learning and teaching centre – a quality enhancement centre. That remit has not been fixed but it's a central unit, one that will work very closely with the CETLS and faculty units and, as a CETL Director and as an ADT (Associate Dean Teaching), I've been asked to go on the group that's deciding the remit of that. It's not exactly sure what it's looking like but we expect strong links. [CETL Director]

In at least one institution, it was felt that the CETL had been instrumental in shaping institutional policy:

The achievements of [the CETL] have gone so far as to change the University Mission Statement. This has gone to the heart of the university. The VC refers to it in all the promotion of the university – the way in which [the CETL] is unique – the only government-recognised centre of excellence in [this subject area] in the country. It's got into the Mission Statement, it's got into all of our publicity. It's core. So whenever we sell the university, we sell it as a university committed to these kinds of things. It's incredibly good for our kudos and reputation and really has affected the heart of the university. All the Colleges want to be involved because it shows their commitment. So I think once you feel that, you get something that changes the University's mission and commitment and how it promotes itself, I think that's something that makes you feel quite incredible. [Senior Fellow]

Similarly, in the following examples, CETL members are key players in decision-making processes at the institutional level:

I see the work of the CETL as being a kind of energy room in the core business of my committees strategically. The CETLS will be represented on our new student experience enhancement committee with a view to embedding their experience and the research they've undertaken into our activities and some of the things the committee will be reviewing have direct echoes in the CETL's work – for example, the work they're doing on assessment and feedback is one of our key themes. [Pro Vice-Chancellor]

I think the unusual thing from the very start was that the CETLS were seen to be strategically important and all three were highly visible really in terms of the centre, in terms of the various committees. The fact that all the CETLS meet together as well ensures that there's a lot of cross-fertilisation. The key players, as well, in all the CETLS are sitting on some very interesting committees which means they have influence over new teaching initiatives. Also two of the CETL leaders sit on the employability working group – which again gives them a kind of input into not just teaching but also the student experience as well. So certainly from my view, from the VC downwards, there's been a strong recognition of how the CETLS play a very important part in the development of the institution. [Director of Student Support and Development Service]

The HE sector and beyond

In terms of the extent of the influence and impact of the CETLS, we turn to the impact of CETLS:

- With other HEIs
- Within local communities
- With employers and other external bodies
- At an international level.

For the Interim report we used data from interviews from the case study visits carried out between March to June 2007. We reported that the aspect of impact within and outside the sector elicited far less information than other issues we explored. We suggested that this might have been because, as

some CETL staff pointed out, CETLs had so far been mainly concerned with establishing themselves within their own institutions:

I think this is one of the things that we have not cracked – our relationships with external bodies, external individuals – and I hold myself partly to blame for this. There's been so much going on within the university. All that work needs to be done in terms of cultivating, developing, maintaining relationships with outside bodies and it takes a lot of time. So we've concentrated, I think, on what's going on within the university. [CETL Director]

The point was made that building up external links and networks takes up a lot of time:

Networks need time devoting to them and it's actually been really busy. I could spend my entire life at the moment roaming the country networking and I think, although that would be nice, I'm not terribly sure, at this stage of the game, whether we gain a lot. We gain knowledge of each other and we get the interpersonal stuff and we start to know each other and I guess that's quite important but it's getting that balance between spending sufficient time here to make sure what's going on and to get the jobs done as well as go out and talk. [CETL Director]

In terms of how effective the CETLs had been in promoting excellence across the sector, we suggested that it might have been too soon in their lifespan to discern any significant or widespread effects as yet.

However, when we analysed our data from case studies conducted between June 2007 to December 2007, it became clear that many more of the CETLs were now turning their attention to disseminating their activities, and building up links, more widely and more systematically across the sector. These CETLs are using their resources to build on and strengthen existing links outside their own institutions and to develop new forms of partnerships:

I don't know what your experience of other CETLs is, but ours has a very outward looking sector focus. We tend to be less involved, perhaps, internally than our outward focus, although my colleagues may well correct me on that from their own institutional point of view, but certainly my view point is outwards. I travel widely, I've got very large networks of colleagues across universities, across the sector. [CETL Team member]

We started out by making sure that we were going to talk to people within the university and now we are in the process of going out and talking in a much more structured way rather than responding to other people... We now have a timetable of events and we're now starting to think, for example, about dissemination to other scientific communities. [Member of the CETL management team]

Patterns of involvement of CETLs with other HEIs vary considerably. In those CETLs based on collaborations with other HEIs, ready-made networks are, of course, already in place. In other CETLs, dissemination to other universities has taken place through, for example, conference presentations and journal articles. Subject-specific CETLs seem more likely to form external networks and involve other institutions in their activities than do the cross-disciplinary CETLs:

When I started I did a proper look around, thinking about what does this CETL really do? If this is for (the subject area), you can't institutionalise it. You can't – because it needs to have this bigger picture. So I tried to not have it sit too strongly inside the institution. [CETL manager]

However, the point was made that these CETLs (with a subject-specific focus) are also more likely to be the victims of 'CETL envy' amongst those subject areas within institutions that do not house a CETL. To help combat this one CETL had set up a subject-based network within a number of HEIs:

We've got 14 of them at the moment, and we pay someone in each of those an honorarium and give them some seed money, so that if we're doing something, or they're doing something, we'll be able to share that amongst us. And if they're valuable, they take them back and disseminate them in their own departments. It did take about the first six months of

that network to stop people being competitive really and saying 'Why should I share my stuff with my rivals?' but what they discovered is that they have the same issues and problems really, and if somebody's doing something interesting it can benefit everybody. [CETL Assistant Director]

Conversely, many of the cross-disciplinary CETLs appear to have concentrated more on spreading their influence (so far) within their own institutions. Related to this, one informant (in a subject-specific rather than a cross-disciplinary CETL) raised the point that it was sometimes easier to disseminate outside, rather than inside, his own university:

To try to be analytical about this, I would say I think that spreading of the practice outside the university might almost be quicker than internally because in higher education, things need to be adapted to subjects and there's a lot of feeling 'Oh well, it wasn't invented here...'. [Pro Vice-Chancellor]

Another pro Vice-Chancellor provided an interesting, if somewhat contentious, perspective on why some CETLs or their host institutions might be cautious about sharing the outcomes of their activities more widely:

If you have some sharing but also some silos, you get significant differences as well as opportunities to share. And I think if HEFCE sees itself as a body that forces sharing, it will stop innovation. Some of the greatest research projects are people keeping their heads down and having an idea. We know some of them are excellent but what's going on now is probably happening in Japan at the same time as America and actually we all want the patent for it. So you don't say we won't invest because three of us might find it at the same time, do you? So I think you really do need to see this as investment in a core product for society and therefore the selfish gene in it is inevitable. [Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning]

A similar comment on the possible advantages of not being too 'visible' – for a different reason – was provided by another informant:

There is quite a debate about the advantages of keeping your development head down – i.e. if you stick your head up you get swamped!

A less 'risky' activity is the work that a number of CETLs are engaged in outside the higher education sector. For example, some of the case study CETLs are making considerable efforts to become known within their local communities. This may be through outreach activities (particularly in local schools) or inviting schools to take part in various activities. Examples of activities designed to engage local communities include:

- Working with local schoolchildren on support for 'A' level students and development events for local schoolteachers. This is also contributing to the university's strong widening participation mission
- In order to encourage wider participation in language learning – particularly within the local community with no tradition of participating in HE, one CETL held a one-day event targeted at schools, teachers and parents around community languages which was 'an incredible success'. More similar events are planned
- A CETL Director has made contact with a temple in the local community that runs an independent day school and Sunday School and is very interested with working with the CETL to 'professionalise' their teaching and to share resources.

A team member in one of these CETLs with strong links to the local community said:

People locally, and schools locally in particular, have embraced the Centre and have therefore seen the barriers between the university and the world beyond crossed. We try very hard, and I'm sure each HEI tries very hard, to be seen to be part of the locality.

In one of the CETLs outreach work with local schools had been a particular success and exceeded all expectations. It was seen as an important means of attracting those young people to higher education who may not have considered higher education as a career path:

The outreach is possibly the most important achievement if only because however much we improve our teaching, if we don't enthuse the kids to come and join us anyway, then it's a waste of time. So I think enthusing the next generation is arguably the most important thing. [Head of School]

Kids come and they get a feeling of what university's like which dispels the ivory tower but also, at the other end of the scale, dispels the kind of boffin attitude which is prevalent in the media. [Head of Department]

The success of outreach in this particular CETL was felt to be largely due to the appointment of a School Teacher Fellow – an appointment that seems to be unique to this CETL:

Appointing a School Teacher Fellow, has meant that our outreach activities are now done in a much more structured way and the amount of outreach work that we do has increased. It's not only more effective, there's more of it as well. So it's now a significant part of the project, it really is. It's taken over the School as well so in terms of outreach work it's not just the academic staff and our School Teacher Fellow that's involved. We have, for example, about a third of our post-grad students who are desperate to get involved in outreach work. And I think part of that comes from the energy that our School Teacher Fellow brings to the project. Instead of desperately trying to do something on a shoestring, being able to do it properly makes a big difference. [Member of the CETL management team]

Where CETLs are located in subject areas where students go on placements as part of their studies, there are generally existing links with employers and the CETLs have been able to capitalise upon these:

There's been a certain amount of spreading amongst industry as well – it's not quite as obvious as some of the education stuff but even so we are set up to work with industry. An example of this is that we have a scheme for project-based learning working with companies. It's a scheme that's been running for 20 years so it's not exactly new but sometimes we've struggled to get companies on-board. Now we are actually inundated with companies and one of the factors – it's not the only one, it's probably not even the decisive factor – but one of the factors is we've been able to get some publicity material professionally made whereas before it's always been something off my own little printer sort of thing. And we can get that out to companies and hopefully attract more and better companies on board. At the moment that's been successful. I think there are other factors involved but that is one. [Seconded Academic]

However, where new links have had to be made, some CETLs reported not making as much progress in this respect as they had hoped:

I think (employer engagement) is something that we need to do more work on now. In the first couple of years we haven't done a lot of work in terms of how employers have been involved. We've done some research with employers, for example in terms of what they're looking for in new graduates and things like that. We've had one or two employer inputs into certain projects but we need to do much more work on that and it is an area we need to work on. [CETL Director]

On the international front, some CETLs had made links with other universities through, for example, conference presentations and some interesting collaborations were being set up or were planned:

The title and the kudos attached to the Centre has meant that we have had a huge number of international links – we were quite good in that area anyway – but we've had probably hundreds of approaches internationally to go and do things. We're getting more invitations and offers of partnerships than we can take up. [CETL Director]

Internationally – very interestingly someone from the Business School came with a few people from a university in South Africa – there were some six or seven delegates from that university. I took them through the rooms and they are going to have those rooms in their university in South Africa and they are either going to send someone from there to see how it works or they want me to go there for a week and show them how to design it. I told them that

I'd rather go myself! It has gone outside, outside the department, outside the institution.
[Associate CETL Fellow]

Earlier in this section on external impact we quoted an informant who had stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between promoting the CETL externally and maintaining the level of developmental activity within the institution. Similarly others felt this point also applied to international dissemination:

What we've tended to aim for is looking at the national policy. My feeling is this is funded by the UK government and, first and foremost, we must benefit not only our individual institutions but the wider HE UK community – in the UK we would also include Scotland and Wales – and that really has been our focus. So while we may occasionally publish at international conferences, our aim is to ensure that we promote higher education good practice and pedagogic good practice in the UK. [CETL Director]

We have [presented at international conferences] but it isn't our main approach that we use. Again I very much took the lead from HEFCE that seemed to me to be giving the message 'don't organise international conferences'. You can see a fair number of these. There's a lot of CETLs that are doing that. I didn't really feel that our time was best spent doing that – particularly because in our discipline the Higher Education Academy – our Subject Network – is very proactive. It has its own journal. It has its own national conference. If we duplicated that, then that's clearly not an effective use of our time. [CETL Director]

Other informants referred to their links with HEA and relevant Subject Centres as one important way of capitalising on existing networks and 'plugging in' to new ones:

We're working with a range of Subject Centres and that's important – they have strong links into the community. We've been doing that [linking with the Subject Centres] for two years and that's a very important way forward because that's what they do and normally they've got pretty deep links. We're working with several of those. [CETL Director]

Also, of course, links with other CETLs provided access to communities of those with similar concerns and interests. In some regions, such as the East Midlands and in the South West, CETLs have formed particularly strong and productive networks. One informant, however, sounded a note of caution in stressing the need for CETLs to be quite strategic in becoming part of networks as there could be negative as well as positive effects:

The individual CETLs have been quite careful, I think, about their links and one of the other CETL Directors put it rather nicely recently in his evaluation and he said something to the effect that at the moment, in the early stages, it was good to make the acquaintance of other CETLs but it's not necessarily good to become close friends. There's quite a selective relationship because the CETLs could be overwhelmed with links and people wanting information. So I think they are looking quite carefully – and I know [the Director's] been pretty effective in sort of putting feelers out in that respect. [CETL Coordinator]

Summary of the influence and effects of the CETLs

As many informants stressed the methodological difficulties (or even appropriateness given that one of the main aims of the initiative is to embed activities within mainstream practice) of measuring the specific effects of CETL activities in isolation from other influences on the student experience, perceptions of the impact of the CETLs at this level are based, in the main, on anecdotal rather than on 'hard' evaluative evidence. However, far more tangible effects are those attributable to the provision of the new kinds of teaching and learning spaces and resources which many of the CETLs have provided. Traditional definitions of what constitutes a 'learning space' are being challenged by innovative approaches to providing more exciting and student-centred teaching and learning environments.

The Stages of Concern model we included in our proposal provides a useful means of portraying the degree of impact that, at the time of the case study visits, CETLs are having within their institutions. Not surprisingly, rates of progress vary considerably at this stage in terms of where CETLs sit on the continuum from enclaves (generally of teaching enthusiasts) to their activities becoming systemic within institutions. Perhaps not surprisingly, we noted that those CETLs with an interdisciplinary focus

are making more rapid progress towards having a more widespread impact within their institutions than those with a more specialised subject-based focus. The opportunity for working with colleagues in other disciplines – or even other subject areas within disciplines – is regarded as a very positive outcome of CETL activities (an example of the formation of new enclaves).

Progress in disseminating the work of the CETLs across the HE sector and beyond is, at present, somewhat patchy. However, more CETLs now appear to be turning their attention to this issue. Obviously collaborative CETLs are at an advantage here as they can tap into the networks of contacts of partner institutions. Presenting papers at conferences, nationally and, to a lesser extent, internationally, is a means of informing other HEIs and communities of practice of CETL activities. Some community links have been formed – mainly but not exclusively with local schools. Existing contacts, such as HEA and Subject Centres, are also being utilised, in some cases, to spread information about the work of the CETLs beyond the institutions in which they are sited. It must be stressed, however, that comparatively few of the CETLs visited referred to making use of the Subject Centres. Where regional networks of CETLs have developed these are proving to be a very strong and effective means of collaboration and dissemination. Overall, we gained the impression that focusing on developmental activities and promoting their presence within their own institutions had been a higher priority for a number of the case study CETLs rather than looking to spread their impact on a wider scale. However, there are clear indications that this is definitely an area on which CETLs are now devoting more attention.

3.4.2.3 The challenge of sustainability

Inevitably when we asked informants about any challenges that they had faced or anticipated facing in the future, the issue of sustaining the CETLs after 2010 was a major preoccupation (we could have probably written our whole report based around the comments and discussions arising from this!). We have sub-divided this section on sustainability into three broad areas: long-term planning, funding and embedding. In effect, however, the three issues are inevitably inter-related: sustainability relies to a large extent on how effective CETLs are at embedding their activities and outcomes, at an institutional level, within mainstream practice.

Long-term planning

Whilst sustainability is obviously a major concern for all of the case study CETLs, the extent to which CETLs have a well-defined and explicit strategy for survival beyond the current funding period varies considerably. In one CETL, for example, the director said:

Try to talk to anyone here about sustainability and they say 'but you've got another three years' – you'd just be laughed out of court. We don't have forward plans for that length of time. So I find that really difficult. Maybe I'm too negative about this – and I did hear people at the CETL meeting at Warwick saying what they were doing to plan for sustainability and how they were talking to this person and that person. I think it's completely a matter of chance because it depends – will the PVC Learning and Teaching still be here in three years? So to ask him to champion it, I don't know. Will the Deans of Schools still be the same? I really don't know and I think it very much depends on personalities – individuals at senior level championing it – what you're going to get. I don't think there's been plans. I mean we will have to start making plans and proposals but they need that senior level champion. I think it's in the lap of the gods really.

In another CETL, sustainability had been a major concern at the bidding stage (and it is our understanding that this was a requirement of all CETL bids so the lack of foresight in some CETLs was surprising):

We've had this in mind right from the beginning. We've said all our projects need to be sustainable so we're evaluating them on that basis. This revision of the curriculum which we are spreading should be embedded. The built-in sustainability is there. [CETL Associate Director]

Most CETLs sit somewhere between these two extremes: sustainability is being strategically addressed but there is an awareness that there are potential challenges to be faced – particularly in terms of income generation:

We're in the middle of planning for the next two and a half year cycle and as part of that we've got a business plan which we're just putting into place which is going to be funding streams – that's going to be the next stage. I don't know how many millions we will need to continue but we will get a figure on a piece of paper and we'll have a plan and we'll take that forward. So I would hope that in two and a half years' time we're not all saying goodbye to the CETL.
[CETL Reward and Development Manager]

This is an issue for all the CETLs, obviously, because it's quite nice funding. The trouble is, the more funding you get, the bigger the shock is when it stops. That really means you need to start planning quite a way ahead but you can't just sit down and do a paper plan because you have to know what's actually possible. So, in a sense, in terms of sustainability – well, to take the income side of it, there are basically three levels of income which are institutional, national through things like JISC or Research Councils, and international – mainly EU bids.
[CETL Director]

Finally, in terms of long-term planning in general, a pro Vice-Chancellor provided the following observation:

In the first two years you can be in the first flush of enthusiasm because it's all new, there's a lot of kudos, you've got all this money coming in, but actually, the third year, I think, is going to be a make-or-break year because you've got to get yourself sorted out in this third year to decide what you're going to do in the next two years. You've used the money, everybody is working hard, the university has finished patting everybody on the back because other things have come along, so I think that this year is make-or-break because all people can see in front of them is hard slog.

Funding

Before we report on specific issues relating to funding, we include some critical observations from informants on the way that HEFCE has funded the CETL initiative. There is a general uncertainty over what will happen to CETL funding in 2010 and informants would welcome a stronger indication from the Funding Council as to what might be expected. Observations from informants reflected this uncertainty:

It's in stark contrast to the RAE that the better research profile you have, the more money you attract the next year. It kind of self-sustains. But you can do a really excellent job with your CETL and there's no guarantee of any further funding – which seems to me to go a bit contrary to the whole ethos of raising the profile of teaching and learning. It's almost setting it up to fail. [Member of CETL team]

We have to work for five years to prove our position but after that, if the government said 'sorry, we're going to move the money somewhere else – however good you are, however much research you've done, however good you've turned your programme into in five years – we're going to take the money away', I think that would be a complete and utter disaster. I would hate to feel we only had five years and nothing more because you can't turn an education programme in five years – it's a minimum of ten. [Director of Studies]

Five years is a long time to keep something going if you're then just going to pull the rug away from under it. If you say this is just a six month pilot or a 12 month pilot – it either succeeds or it doesn't – people haven't got used to it too much if it's not going to continue. But five years – particularly with people who've been involved from the outset, people will have got used to it so to pull all that away, that will be a problem and there will be an awful lot of staff looking for other jobs. Once you've built something up and kept it going for so long, I think for it to suddenly disappear would create a whole raft of problems. [Seconded Academic]

My fear is that, given that you never quite get going quite as quickly as you think, that you're just really motoring along when the money goes. The carrot is taken away. Five years sounds

like a long time but it goes very quickly. You spend the first year and a half getting going and you spend the last year and a half worrying about what you're going to do when the money's not there. [Dean of Arts]

None of us know what's going to happen in 2010. Now any form of scenario planning for that is usually problematic. On one hand [the CETL Administrator] and I have been driving the team forward and being optimistic about what we are going to do but behind the scenes, both of us are thinking sustainability is a big issue and on our shoulders so behind the scenes we're working really hard. And why haven't we got any idea what's going to happen in 2010? You cannot plan – it's as simple as that – you cannot plan. You want to build capacity as a CETL but then you don't want to build things that you know in 2010 you're going to have to cut. So I think the message probably coming from all of the CETL Directors is please give us some idea – if there's going to be no funding in 2010, that's fine but tell us now. I think that my team very strongly feel that would be a waste of that huge investment. There needs to be something to enable Centres to sustain some of their work. [CETL Director]

One of the main issues for a number of CETLs in terms of sustainability relates to staffing and the issue of the length of contract that could be offered to staff associated with the CETLs:

We know it takes years to develop people both to have the skills and to have the skills in context and yet because of the way the Funding Council funds this kind of work, we are continually offering people two year or three year contracts. It doesn't make sense. You don't want excessive stability because I think if you build everybody in for permanent posts forever then that doesn't produce the kind of change that you want but we need to do better than we're currently doing in managing people over a longish period of time. We're simply not offering people the kind of stability to encourage them to come into this area of work. [Academic middle manager]

This insecurity of employment for CETL staff was leading to fears that mid-way through the life-span of the CETLs, key staff on fixed term contracts would already be looking for other employment:

The problem of people deserting the ship! If you've got a five year contract, and you've done three years then you're going to start getting edgy, aren't you? At the minute, I think we've got three good years and then I think that will be a problem because it's managing the demise, so to speak, it's not just five years and then what happens? It's going to be that semi-decline really – there'll be a point where it's building up, up, up but then it's going to be down. And it's managing that whole process where you might have some people who are still fully functioning and who want to stay to the bitter end but maybe because other people have left. It will impact on how they can operate and limit the way things operate. I think that could get a bit tricky. [CETL Administrator]

The effect of job insecurity on motivation was a recurring theme – there was a concern that the momentum would be lost if staff moved on:

Motivation-wise, I suppose that when I reach my last year, it might be a bit difficult for me – and for everyone, I suppose, when you know that next year you have to find a different job. But, at the moment, we have to do what we have to do. [CETL Support Officer]

However, some informants did not regard retaining staff appointed to CETLs from the start as an issue as universities would be required to offer permanent posts to those staff who had been employed for five years (the life time of the CETLs):

And the other question, of course, is whether we have any choice in the sense that these people will have been on contracts for five years anyway. So we will have to re-deploy and integrate and find ways of supporting quite a chunk of this activity because it would be difficult to do anything else. [Dean of Faculty]

In a few institutions, CETL staff had already been fortunate enough to have been given permanent contracts by the universities concerned:

A number of the commitments on staffing in relation to this CETL are, as it were, already taken up by the Faculty so we have appointed a number of people principally to work on the

CETL but we haven't appointed them on three or five year contracts, we've appointed them to our permanent staff. [Pro Vice-Chancellor]

Another issue was that of staff whose posts were funded, in part or fully, by CETLs. The concern was that these staff would have to 'go back to their day jobs' in 2010 when funding ceased. In a sense, this could be seen as part and parcel of embedding CETL activities into the mainstream but the reality might very well be that, without the focus of a CETL, momentum and motivation would gradually fade.

In the main, informants were prepared for what they guessed would be the most likely scenario in terms of funding – that there would be no more HEFCE funding for existing CETLs after 2010. If CETL activities are to continue, therefore, they recognise the necessity of generating income. There were wide-ranging degrees of optimism over their ability to achieve this. In one CETL, for example, there was considerable confidence that the senior management of the university involved were totally committed to ensuring the CETL's survival:

I think it can carry on because the university had a vision or a determination to have something like this anyway. The funding's been fantastic. It's provided us with a building, it's provided us with a lot of things that we wouldn't have been able to do with our own funding but the core idea of a group of staff dedicated to enhancing teaching and learning, I think we had it before the CETL came along and I think we'll have it after the CETL. And the reason why we'll have it is if you look at NSS (National Student Survey) scores, our NSS scores are second to none as a university and that is pushing us considerably up the league tables – that one score has made a big difference to the university's standing in the league tables. And the university's very precious about that position and therefore anything they can do to maintain that – and they see that initiatives like this are enhancing their teaching and learning capability which is enhancing the students' experience which is then being reflected in their NSS scores which is then being reflected in the league tables. And therefore if the CETL money stops, I'm sure (this university) will continue to invest in that area. [Head of Department]

A Vice-Chancellor of another institution was very clear about her university's means of sustaining CETL activity. She felt that this was a matter of shifting the focus from the innovative beginnings to the embedding of that work. To this end, she stated that in the beginning, CETLs '*developed interesting and new projects and activities for people that were keen and interested, and we've now reached the point where we have to change their focus*'.

Another Vice-Chancellor, although committed to maintaining the institution's CETLs, felt that the universities themselves could not be expected to fund the CETLs without additional funding that the CETLs themselves would need to attract:

The directors of the CETLs will have to think imaginatively about how they continue long term because each university isn't going to be able to sustain a CETL and, in our case, we would be sustaining three. We've signed up to say, yes, we will secure certain resources and certain posts but then there's got to be other money in order to drive the activity and that means, I think, CETLs winning research style grants, winning development money, charging for services – all of that really.

This was recognised as a likely future scenario by CETL staff that, without the benefit of CETL funds to provide resources or activities, few of the host universities would be able, or inclined, to 'dig into their own pockets' to provide substantial financial support:

The danger is that Schools could turn around and say 'well, thanks for doing that – there's been some free teaching for a while and that's been great but no, we're not going to top slice [from other funding] or afford to do it'. [CETL manager]

And, of course, the issue really that we've got to look at is whether when people are going back into their day jobs full-time, the Deans will then start to pull back? It's not rocket science – it's just basically what the Deans will do. They'll say 'well, you're not going out doing that for them, I want you to do this'. [(Deputy Vice-Chancellor)]

Smaller institutions, particularly those with comparatively little experience of gaining research funding, might find generating sufficient funding to ensure the survival of their CETLs a considerable problem – as the following quotes illustrate:

I think that that's an issue that all of us have from Day One. It's bound to be challenging for an institution of this size – a £350K recurrent sum handed to you over a five year period and looking at how you can replicate that. We can't bring in additional student numbers as we can't accommodate them. We simply don't have the space or the critical mass of staffing to manage that size of operation. Expansion can happen through validation and franchise arrangements but that's really the only way in which we can expand our student numbers. And inevitably it's going to be small because we value quality above all else. So we're looking at other income streams. Research fellows are going to have to be self-supporting in terms of grants and they knew that from Day One – which puts a lot of pressure on. [CETL Director]

What to do in 2010 when suddenly there is no more funding? Inevitably a lot of the good work we've done will disappear. We won't be able to, with the best intentions in the world, sustain it beyond that stage unless there's some form of additional funding. We don't want to suddenly say 'OK – that was it, we've done our bit – 2010 we no longer have a Centre for Excellence, we just spread the work across the institution – what's left of it – move staff back into where they came from where we've transferred them in'. To me the investment that's been put in will be lost because we can't fulfil that. It's fine to say one option is they [HEFCE] will just put out the bidding process again, we'll have another 70 Centres, but there's an issue there that they're not going to reap the benefits from the investment they've put into the first lot of CETLs. And I think it's a particular issue for smaller institutions that can't increase student numbers that some of the work will inevitably just stop at that point however hard we work to sustain and we've worked incredibly hard to do that. It's just not going to be possible to bring in that amount of money – it's simply not. So whilst we're doing everything we can, I'm really concerned that in 2010 some of the work will just be starting up and will be really exciting and we're not going to be able to complete it. We can tender for everything in sight – we have been doing that – we'll succeed in some, we won't in others. [CETL Director]

I think it would be a shame if HEFCE pulled the rug in 2010 because I think we've been able to get so much off the ground. If you're scrabbling around for funding, it lowers your ability to do all this pioneering work and it also lowers your motivation because we've not all got the skills to play the funding game. [Professional Development Manager]

In one CETL, the institution's senior management team were known to be very supportive of the CETL but the CETL team felt that they could not wholly rely on this necessarily being *financial* support:

As the senior management team is supportive, it might be assumed that funding will be found to continue the CETL but that is not official so we don't want to get lazy in terms of our sustainability – generating income to make us sustainable. So that is a priority and a challenge. How do we do that? Well, because of the nature of the CETL, we're not entrepreneurial in the way that some might see themselves. In terms of what is the knowledge we can sell, what is the activity we can sell – we've got to have that conversation amongst ourselves. There is a product here to sell, there is a way in which we can roll this out, there are ways in which we can bring in money. We're definitely committed to achieving it. I know the VC's committed to keeping it one way or another but that's not formal or official in any way, shape or form. [Senior Fellow]

At a more practical level, many of the CETLs that we visited have invested in new purpose-built premises or have re-furbished existing spaces. Clearly, these will continue to be available as learning and teaching spaces even if the CETLs themselves disappear. Where CETL funds have been used to buy equipment, then there are implications for maintenance beyond 2010. Teaching and learning technologies are constantly evolving and what is now 'state of the art' to many of the CETLs may rapidly be replaced by newer and more powerful learning tools. Clearly, where CETLs have invested in such technologies, there need to be resources available to enable these to be up-dated. This applies to not only financial resources but also to the availability of staff with the necessary technical expertise. Also, in terms of spending on resources, there were comments from some informants that suggest that the compulsion to spend quickly has resulted in some CETLs buying electronic 'white elephants' and simply wasting money on equipment that has limited use value.

Embedding

We reported above on the impact of CETLs at the institutional level. At this stage in their development, to many CETLs 'impact' is defined more in terms of dissemination rather than as embedding. In the majority of institutions we visited there was little indication that, as yet, new practices were moving from being fairly localised to becoming embedded and having widespread influence on departments, institutions or the sector in general. We emphasise 'as yet' as it may be too soon to note any widespread embedding effects. Most CETLs have formulated strategies to ensure that they would move beyond the information-giving (dissemination) role to becoming instrumental in bringing about change within – and hopefully beyond – the HE sector. They feel that they now need to turn their attention more purposefully to implementing these strategies:

And this is the next stage – where the CETL will be sort of moving away from the Faculty, I think – which is fine. I've never been particularly proprietorial about it because I knew that was going to happen. [Dean]

It seems to me that the real issue here – and this extends beyond (this university) and this CETL – is the business of embedding. The world's full of wonderful projects but it's the ones that stop being projects and start getting embedded – you know, the thing I really loathe and detest is 'we've done a piece of work on that!' Well – what do you bloody do with it? [Dean of Faculty]

One of the things that's at the forefront of the steering group is to make sure it's sustainable but it won't necessarily be sustainable in exactly the same form as it was before. There's a very strong will – and there was a strong will before, I think – to maintain this in the future. We have a core of staff here who will inevitably stay doing what they're doing because it will be funded somehow. We've got the building which will be a good centre. The fact that we're disseminating around this university and, to some extent, other universities means that there's going to be a critical mass and it's almost inevitable that we're going to maintain that. [Head of Department]

As the informant quoted above indicated, his CETL – and others – may not carry on in the same form as they are at present. Some may become embedded to the extent that they no longer exist as a separate entity. Other CETLs are committed to ensuring that the institution retains the 'badge' of a CETL as a distinct entity as they see this as an important focus for pedagogical interest within their institutions:

It maybe harder to sustain motivation if the group itself is fragmented. At the moment it's concentrated – people do know where CETL is, they do know what CETL does and they do know what's going on. If you were suddenly to split that, to fragment it, then you have little pockets doing little things on their own. Then although there may be communication between the different groups, it's much easier if it's centred at the Centre. [CETL Associate]

Obviously, I think it's about extending their impact but I think that because of the strategic approach that they have taken, which I think is very good, they will meet that challenge. For me the big question mark is what will happen when the funding dries up and the extent to which the university will be able to sustain this initiative. Is it worth keeping? It's a very interesting question. I suppose you could make one argument that as they embed their expertise within the institution, they become redundant. But I don't think that holds because I think if we accept the notion of teaching as a scholarly activity, there will always be a need for people who are experts and researchers around particular areas of practice – and innovators who can keep alive the research and the innovation that's needed to sustain responsive good practice. And so, in that sense, I think that if we can find a way of linking this work so that it can continue to play that development role, I think it would be very good for the institution. [Teaching, Learning & Curriculum Development Coordinator]

The following informant is talking about the likelihood of the CETL in her university surviving intact in the light of experience of past initiatives concerned with enhancement. The point was made that the wheel, in terms of teaching and learning initiatives, is constantly being re-invented – with the same people involved each time. Rather than keeping the CETL, there is a likelihood that the 'Next Big Thing' will replace it:

My feeling is that, knowing (this university), they'll all be looked at and something new will emerge – which is quite strange in a way because you could argue if you looked at the actual people in the CETL here, these people sort of turn up advancing themselves through various iterations, getting more and more visibility, getting more and more impact, getting more influence and in fact becoming more and more experienced and credible and academically viable. [Director of Library and Learning Services]

Some informants considered that the legacy of the CETLs would live on but perhaps the CETLs themselves had a finite life-span:

I think there's an element of saying we'll do what we do for five years and we make a difference and there will be legacy, there will be things. There's part of me that says if all that can't carry on, well, it can't but we've made a difference and we've done five years. I'm not sure that everything is always sustainable. I used to be of the opinion if I couldn't see it continually happening, if I hadn't crossed every 't' and dotted every 'i', I didn't want to do it – but I think that's wrong. I think actually a lot of people will have benefited from it and I think that's my attitude at the moment. [CETL Director]

It's a problem for all projects that have a period for which they're funded and then that funding stops. It's a very big problem. I think it depends what you call 'sustainability'. Structures do fall apart once the funding goes but what remains are the ideas and hopefully the network on which you can build new networks. Networks are so important when you try to develop something new. So there are important things there but it depends where you look. It applies to any new projects – it'll be what people have learned and it will be the communities and the networks they have formed that can grow and develop. [Senior lecturer]

I would not see it as a success if it didn't continue in some way because I think that's the point of a CETL – to embed that into the faculty and into the university and create an environment where it will carry on regardless of whether we're there or not. I don't think we necessarily need to be but I think what we do will carry on. I hope it will carry on otherwise I think we'll have failed in our mission of engendering the enthusiasm we wanted to – and the skills to do that. [CETL Associate Director]

The last comment on sustainability and embedding is provided by the following informant:

The sum of all this in terms of the effects on the people who've been associated with it is something that needs to be monitored because I suspect it will be greater than might have been anticipated. In the end if all you do is walk away from that and you've left a changed population, you have done something about sustainability. [CETL Fellow]

The Challenge of Sustainability: Summary

In terms of long-term planning, the extent to which CETLS have a well-defined and explicit strategy for sustainability beyond the current funding period varies considerably. Some CETLs have clear strategies to take them beyond the current funding period whilst a minority appear to feel that this is 'in the lap of the gods'. Most CETLs fall somewhere between these two extremes: sustainability is being strategically addressed but there is an acknowledgment that there may be considerable potential challenges ahead – particularly in terms of generating funding streams to sustain developments. Sustainability is, of course, closely related to the degree to which CETL developments become part of mainstream practice. In the majority of institutions we visited there was little indication that, as yet, emerging changes were moving from being fairly localised to becoming embedded and having widespread influence on departments, institutions or the sector in general. We emphasise 'as yet' as it may be too soon to note any widespread embedding effects.

3.4.2.4 Other issues

In this final section we summarise some of the other issues raised by those we interviewed during the case study visits that are not included under the three broad themes above. They are:

- Collaboration
- Unintended and unanticipated effects
- Time and finance
- Pedagogic research
- General comments on the CETL initiative.

Collaborations (both within and outside CETLs' 'home' institutions)

Although not strictly an issue of 'collaboration', one of the first challenges that a number of CETLs had to face was that of dealing with bureaucratic processes within their own institutions. In many cases, this had hampered the initial progress of the CETLs concerned. Appointing new staff, for example, could be a protracted and slow process with CETL Directors having to go through numerous procedures and internal committees to get approval for new posts – even when these posts were going to be externally funded. Some divisions within universities do not seem to have been able, or willing, to adapt their established procedures to take into account the quasi-autonomous nature of CETLs. The experiences of the following informants reflect that of others:

The other limiting factor was what the university would allow someone to be employed for without going through the full employment processes of the university which, if we had to go through them, would have involved 18 pages of forms, a Vacancy Approval Panel procedure, a Project Approval Panel procedure, external, possibly, advertising for a post which is – well, for £900 of expenditure I calculated that my time alone would have been eight to ten hours of form-filling and procedural work just to spend £900. So I managed to persuade the senior management of the university, including the Director of Finance, that their procedures for small projects were too complicated. To their credit, when I put this to them, they actually agreed that we could go through the normal appointment of a part-time lecturer. [Practitioner in receipt of CETL funding]

Because a lot of what we've done has engaged us with different functions within the university who're not used to engaging with us in the way we want to be engaged with – that's been a challenge as well. Simple things like, for example, marketing: we want our own visual style, identity, marketing brochures – things like that. That's not been easy because we've had to fit into the university brand and things like that so we've had battles about that. With the Human Resource people, because we had these roles of Associate Directors and Associates and so on, we had to develop role descriptors because HR were very worried about the appointments process and equal opportunities and things like that so we had to build a process in terms of developing what the roles are – having a proper interview process – things like that. That kind of took some time. Placing this initiative within the context of a university process and set of systems that wasn't used to this – we wanted to push the boundaries – that's been a challenge. [CETL Director]

It goes back to the capital. HEFCE had allowed us to capitalise on things like furniture but when you hit the accounting side of it – in true accounting form – you can't capitalise anything under £15,000. Well, most of our equipment doesn't cost very much. So that was my first challenge – to try to convince the university – and I think it ended up with quite senior level talks between our financial people and HEFCE for HEFCE to say 'yes, for goodness sake – this is all part of their capital bid'. We've got through it! [CETL Manager]

We have to go through various hoops and it's so frustrating when you know that all you're trying to do is for the benefit of other people and not dangerous at all. And you just have to jump through these hoops. And one committee will look at the staff but they won't look at the students and the other one won't look at the students because the other one's looked at the staff first! We got there eventually but it's just been a complete nightmare. [Member of one of the Development Activity Teams]

University structures are nightmarishly rigid – sometimes understandably and sometimes not. That's caused so many problems. The additional funding we got – we wanted to do things that

were really quite innovative that didn't fit within the structures. We wanted to order technology, we tried to make it as future-proof as possible and to do that we maybe had to approach companies that were not part of the procurement. It was like trying to bang my head against a brick wall! It was difficult. [CETL Manager]

Working across disciplines, faculties or even with different departments had not been easy for some CETL staff. Not surprisingly, challenges to established ways of working were not always welcome and CETL staff quite often had to take a 'softly softly' approach to establishing good working relationships:

It was a problem not knowing whose toes you might step on if you did something. You might have contacted A but by not contacting B as well, that might be a sensitive issue. So it's learning the sensitivities of people as well. [CETL Administrator]

People come with very different perspectives on things and they look at it as being very different rather than seeing the similarities and the common ground. It's taken a while to actually tease out that commonality. [CETL Associate Director]

The 'silo' mentality in some parts of institutions was not seen as conducive to collaborative working. CETLs in these highly 'compartmentalised' universities faced the possibility of being seen as outsiders with little relevance within the wider institution:

I still sometimes think that despite the developments and what's happening with CETL, I still see myself as a bit of a lone voice sometimes when I take things back but that again is rooted in wider cultural and organisational issues outside the CETL's control, if you like, because of this silo-ing, this subject-centred module structure of the university. So I'm not sure how that can be broken down but that would be a major issue. [CETL Fellow]

Working with other HEIs has also created some challenges for those CETLs working with partner institutions. As one informant said, working with other universities sounds 'good in practice, it ticks all the boxes' but can often mean that progress is slower than for a single-site Centre as, for example, decision-making involves so many people – and often involves also the bureaucratic processes of the partners' own institutions:

The cross-institutional working is very interesting because I think in the Quality Development group we've met and overcome all kinds of issues about cross-working across two pretty complex institutions – with management structures and complex reporting lines. It's taken a lot of time and will and energy that's had to be expended to get it to where it is now. [Senior Manager]

Maintaining communications with a number of partners can also be demanding but essential if all are to feel equally involved in decision-making and progress:

One of the challenges of any project involving partnerships is to maintain that partnership – to ensure the exchange is in all directions and everyone's involved. Though we are meeting the challenge, there is an effort in 'oh yes, I must remember to put that on the wiki, I need to share that, I need to ask about that' – that kind of thing. There is maintaining the enthusiasm for that over this extended time. It helps that we all seem to be communicators. [CETL Fellow]

[There are] many, many challenges on a daily basis because when you're involved in an outward-facing collaboration, you're juggling an awful lot of factors and issues. Basically, it's very difficult to achieve innovative and groundbreaking things without ruffling a few feathers here and there. That's par for the course and is certainly not going to stop us from going ahead. So I think I've had to hone my diplomatic skills rather more than I would have wanted to in the course of this. I think actually that's taught me a lot. Nobody said it was going to be easy – HEFCE don't give you £3.5 million just to sit around doing nothing. [CETL Team member]

A particular challenge for cross-disciplinary CETLs is that of working with colleagues with differing disciplinary cultures and 'languages':

I think the other challenge has been for the team to work across disciplines where they speak a different 'language' and even the same role in different places means different things. That's been a challenge. It's been interesting. There's still misunderstanding across disciplines of

what the others do. That's an ongoing challenge but an interesting one – in a sense. [CETL Director]

Finally, the following informant recognises that there may well be future challenges to face in terms of keeping collaborations working effectively:

So far we've managed to keep most of our communities together but I think that is going to be one of the challenges for the future. We've raised people's expectations and worked with them as well as, as we move into the next phase, becoming more outward looking in terms of outside our own institution and how we're going to keep those communities going. [Local Academic Coordinator]

Unanticipated or unintended effects

In the bid document, one of the issues that we said we would explore is that of 'unanticipated or unintended effects that can be construed both positively and negatively'. Responses to this issue fell into two distinct categories. Firstly, some informants felt that beyond certain strategic plans, everything is flexible so that the unexpected can emerge. The point was made that, in a sense, most developments were 'unanticipated' as flexibility had been built into proposals from the start:

Although we've had an idea of where we want to go, everything's been unexpected in a sense because we have a plan and we have ideas and we have areas that we want to work in but it's all so new and we're establishing everything from the ground up, that it's all, in a sense, unexpected. [CETL Director]

No, but then I'm not 100% convinced that we did know what was going to happen! It wasn't too constrained by having lots of detail about what it was doing because with all of these things, you never know how they are going to develop until you start and in fact if you end up with something that you had on paper five years previously, then you've failed. [Director of Centre for Lifelong Learning]

Other unanticipated outcomes reported were:

- The development and take-up of new forms of learning technologies
- How quickly teams had 'gelled' in terms of working together
- The extent to which knowledge and awareness of the CETLs had spread across the HEI sector
- The unexpected success and growth of outreach activities.

In the second category of unanticipated outcomes, there were those, particularly senior managers, who said that everything was going exactly as planned – the underlying assumption being that anything other than this would mean that the CETL was not progressing as it should.

We noted a very strong thread within responses to this question, and that was the surprising and highly welcomed effect of breaking down traditional lines of communication. It was talked of in terms of vertical and horizontal novelty. Talking to students gave us an insight into how they felt that they were treated much more as equal, or professionals, in relation to their teaching staff or their placement professionals. Some specifically mentioned how good it was to be able to talk in an informal way with, for example, their Head of Department. On the horizontal level, many of our informants noted the excellent networks allowing conversations and ideas across intellectual and subject areas that could not have happened without CETL influence.

Time and Financial issues

Two areas that a number of informants referred to as challenging were associated with managing time and finances. In terms of time, the most common complaints related to the difficulties that some staff had found in balancing CETL activities with other responsibilities:

The relationship between the CETL and other roles within the university – another challenge is to negotiate that because quite clearly everyone wants a bit of us and when you are divided in terms of buy-out, it is always difficult to manage a pure 100% commitment. It's sometimes

impossible. It's quite crucial that it doesn't lead to more work and that it actually leads to reward and recognition of staff rather than an additional burden. We didn't want to lose our enthusiasm for it by feeling that it was just going to be more work. We did all that in order to be rewarded and suddenly it's just given us more work because the other sides of our lives aren't playing ball, as it were, because they need us. So that's a bureaucratic challenge that many CETLs will be facing. [Senior Fellow]

*The idea was that we were bought out a few days a week from our departments. But our departments just had no idea – they just seemed to think that they could take the money for those two days a week which they were getting and just use us to do our jobs as per usual. And actually I know (the CETL Director) had a stern word with our Head of Department about that and also I ended up just saying no to things – 'no, I haven't got time'. So that kind of time management and convincing our department that we *did* need that time – we didn't just write on the walls over here once a fortnight. Finding that time has been quite a challenge. [CETL Fellow]*

One of the things that has worked less well is attempting to get their time to do it. So it's the 'half hour' reward syndrome. They're rewarded and they're supposed to be bought out but buy-out hasn't worked terribly well. [CETL Director]

One middle manager had found conflicting demands so difficult to manage that she had, reluctantly, reduced her commitment to the CETL:

One of the problems I found was, that being a Subject leader, if there's a 'fire' somewhere in my group – like if there's illness, if there is a problem, I have to go and solve it or do something to rectify it. So having those two roles, they haven't always worked in harmony. I've had to decide, very often, what was the priority. And to be perfectly straight with you, I've thought over the summer and asked for my input (to the CETL) which was two days a week last year to be reduced to one day. I just couldn't combine the two and I felt I wasn't doing justice to either of them. [CETL Associate Director]

A CETL manager with an administrative background had experienced unforeseen problems with discrepancies between the different work patterns of academics and support staff:

I think it raises another thing which is to do with alignment of working hours. It sounds like a very basic thing but in terms of support staff we're working generally kind of nine to five-ish through the year but then the academic staff, of course, work in very, very busy bursts and we're trying to catch them and engage them during those very busy bursts. And then suddenly they're off – they're gone! Those kinds of things are problematic. I thought alignment was one of the most difficult things because we could quite easily just schedule ourselves into a very manageable workload across the year but, of course, that's not how it ends up happening. Academic rhythm was the thing completely under-estimated. [CETL Manager]

Finally, we turn to financial challenges. The capital spend had caused a number of CETLs considerable problems at the start of the initiative:

I think the capital has been quite a challenge – getting your hands on it. I'm sure we're not the only institution where clearly there are lots of stakeholders in the capital and that's been frustrating – that we've not been able to shape what we do as much as we'd like. It's taken forever to get it organised – as these things always do – running things through the estates department. And it's challenging the mindsets – which is good because CETLs are supposed to do that. I think the capital challenges people a lot more than the rest. [CETL Associate Director]

Many informants felt that the timescale for the spend was too short and they would have welcomed greater flexibility in this respect:

We've had a challenge with the capital and I think that was due to two things. One of them, frankly, was the ludicrous timescale that we were given for spending money and that's been very, very difficult. So that's been a challenge – to actually spend the money and get what we want out of the capital. [CETL Director]

Related to this issue of time limits, the point was made that it would have been useful to have been able to save some of the capital sum for future contingencies – such as up-dating or replacing equipment:

It has not been all that helpful to have a two year limit on the capital. Now I can understand if you want buildings put up quickly but, in terms of equipment especially, or renovations you may want to make in the future, I feel that we are restricted. Things are changing, technology is changing, and it would be nice to be able to spend at least some of it over time to keep current. I do think next time – I'm hoping there'll be a next time – it will be worth looking at that and at least allowing some leeway for equipment. And if you want a proper building done – if you really want a well-constructed building that's going to last and attract attention, you can't get it up overnight. [CETL Director]

HEFCE said that the capital had to be spent in the first 18 months, or whatever, which is not very realistic because all of the capital is committed and not necessarily spent, and the other thing is that things need replacing. We spend a lot of money and equipment at the beginning and after the five years some of the things that we bought will be out of date and we haven't got the capital funding to replace them, so I think that could have been, definitely needed rethinking. [CETL deputy director]

The only thing I would say is it would have been quite nice to be able to keep a little bit of the capital funding back because the part that we're using for equipment and whatever, we didn't need all the equipment right at that time. Now when you're buying computers and things like that it would have been nice to keep some back for a year or two. [CETL Director]

Whilst we have used the words 'challenges' and 'concerns' frequently above, it must be emphasised that in many respects these were regarded as almost inevitable 'teething' troubles that should not distract from the considerable progress that the CETLs have made in what is a comparatively short period of time.

Pedagogic research

The extent to which pedagogic research is taking place varies considerably across the case study CETLs. As we reported above, we noted a number of examples of pedagogic innovation through technology building on existing practices. Also, in many of the CETLs, new teaching spaces are creating new pedagogies. However, as yet it is too early for many of the CETLs to have concluded research into the effects of these practices.

Where pedagogic research projects are under way, we did not note many examples of pedagogic research activities feeding directly into teaching practices at this stage. However, we noted indications that in a number of CETLs pedagogic research is helping to develop a culture where pedagogy is being given far more prominence than had been the case pre-CETL:

I guess something else that's new is that we've really been able to develop our culture of pedagogic research. Although we've known in [this subject] that we're good at teaching – and I don't say that arrogantly. We knew that we were good at teaching but it was instinctive – everybody was operating at an instinctive level. We were being reflective [in that] we were looking at student feedback, looking at exam results, seeing what worked, seeing what didn't work. But we weren't formally being reflective and we weren't publishing our work and what the CETLs really enabled us to do is to develop that culture where we're publishing, where we're now talking with each other much more about how do we know something's working and something isn't. That's been very good. We've been able to kind of lead the way across the institution really with our [work]. [CETL Director]

Other comments referred to the fact that, as a result of CETL opportunities, a much wider range of personnel were undertaking pedagogic research:

Another thing that's great about the CETL is that it's not just the people running the project who are publishing – our developers are publishing, the students are publishing, the academics who come and work with us are publishing and presenting at conferences and so on. [Local Academic Coordinator]

Overall, we are not yet in a position to comment on the extent to which pedagogic research is filtering through to practice. One emerging theme, however, is the extent of variation in understanding of the practice of what constitutes pedagogic research.

General comments on the CETL initiative

Finally, we include here some comments provided by informants on the CETL initiative as a whole – did they, for example, feel that it was an effective means of bringing about change within higher education? Not surprisingly, perhaps, the general consensus was that the CETL initiative has been very effective in raising the profile of teaching and learning amongst those institutions in which the CETLs are based:

I think what the CETL has done is to introduce into the university and specifically in the School what you might call a core of professionals who are really doing the job extremely effectively and showing other people what can be done. Most of us whose activities are not focused on teaching enhancement in the same way wouldn't have thought of the projects that have come out of CETL but we can say 'hey, that's brilliant – I'll take that on'. I think to have this core of professionals – it would be nice to have one of these in every university. It's certainly proved extremely effective in our case. [Head of School]

It's that critical mass – the fact that there's a block of money there with a block of people involved that gives it the status within the university. You can have individuals around the university who are very good teachers and who promote teaching but having the CETL has really helped that because this has been the equivalent of a research group – it has the same sort of impact. And – just to follow up on that – when the promotions committee met, we talked about the CETLs. It's often difficult for people to prove excellence in teaching. The CETL's been a good vehicle for that – it promotes teaching within the university. [Dean of Graduate School]

I think it's worth saying that the CETLs have been a great advantage. I think they've drawn issues to the attention of the university that might have taken a bit longer to do. I think they've caused us to stop in our tracks. They've given us cause to just pause and say 'well, hang on, what are we doing?' I think promotions is a good example – I don't know how long that would have taken without the presence of the CETLs. [Vice-Chancellor]

Clearly the jury's still out in terms of how much, so far, CETLs have been able to influence the sector. I mean, clearly they're going to have some influence, but I think there's going to be clearly a big difference between a post-'92 institution and somewhere like Oxford. There are going to be huge differentials depending on what the missions of the universities are, and to what extent you can shift those perceptions just by developing an institute, a centre, put a lot of money into it, give people the time, and what you will find is that some of them will take off and some of them won't. [Pro Vice-Chancellor]

Concluding Comments

The case study visits represented in this report reveal a largely positive and encouraging engagement with the enhancement agenda. In general, there appears to be a sense of the CETLs making good progress and utilising resources effectively and enthusiastically. If any warning notes need to be sounded it is that HEFCE might consider ensuring that the CETLs have a much clearer idea of the Funding Council's intentions in terms of the future of the CETLs beyond 2010. In the absence of clear information, many CETL staff are understandably unsure of what lies ahead for them and there are mixed messages circulating within the sector in terms of likely future scenarios.

3.5 Surveys and interviews with CETL Directors

3.5.1. The scope

The survey of CETL Directors reveals some interesting programme wide characteristics. The survey was undertaken of all CETLs in England, a total of 74. The survey was sent out during May 2007 to all the CETL Directors and a final response rate of 86% was achieved (64 responses out of 74 sent out). The aim of the survey was to obtain information about a range of issues connected with the CETLs, the effects of the CETLs so far, and how they are currently developing. Overall the CETL programme was seen by CETL Directors as a successful and worthwhile initiative. It has had a considerable effect upon learning and teaching within institutions and has also begun to have a sector-wide effect.

3.5.2 Methodology

Sample used

All 74 English CETLs were included in the survey. The survey was targeted at Directors only as the intention was to obtain information focused at this kind of strategic level. Managers and other staff were not included in the survey. All respondents were therefore Directors except for one manager who answered on behalf of a Director who was away on sick leave.

Focus of questionnaire

The questionnaire focused on a number of key topics. These included:

- Characteristics of the CETLs (e.g. disciplinary focus, number of partners)
- Activities and achievements
- Effects so far
- Managing the capital spend
- Effect of capital spend on student learning
- Relationship with host institution
- Sustainability after the end of the funding period
- CETLs as part of a strategy for change.

Questionnaire design

It was decided to use an e-mail questionnaire, which could also be downloaded and printed off by those who preferred to send hard copy. An electronic questionnaire was therefore designed which could be completed and submitted online.

The questionnaire was designed to be easy to complete, with many of the questions being simple tick boxes that would not take long to fill in. There were also a range of open-ended questions where people could give more detailed and in-depth comments.

Each Director received an individual e-mail letter, addressed to them by name, explaining what the evaluation was about and asking for their help. There was an URL in the body of the e-mail. By clicking on it they were taken to the online questionnaire where they could respond to each question, finally clicking on *submit*. Completed responses went automatically back to the research team. Participants were also offered the option of printing off the questionnaire and sending it back in hard copy. All respondents were offered confidentiality and they and their CETLs are therefore not named in this report.

In addition to the original questionnaire being sent out, a follow up e-mail letter was subsequently sent to all Directors who had not yet responded. Finally, a hard copy was sent out to the small number who had still not replied, as it was felt that some people might find it easier to respond in this way.

Response rates

A total of 74 questionnaires was sent out, one to each English CETL. 30 responses were received in the first instance, a response rate of 41%. After the e-mail reminder was sent, a further 28 replies were received. Finally, hard copies were sent out to those who had not yet replied, generating a further set of responses. The total number of responses finally received was 64, a response rate of 86%.

3.5.3 Characteristics of CETLs

Partnerships

Just over three quarters of the CETLs (77%) were single host CETLs. Nearly a quarter (23%) were partnerships.

Table 1: Single host or partnered CETL

	No.	%
Single host	49	76.6
Collaborative CETL (has a number of partners)	15	23.4
Total	64	100

Where there were partners, these were in the majority of cases (67%) other HEIs. A small number of CETLs had other kinds of partners in addition to or instead of HEIs.

Table 2: Kinds of partners

	No.	%
One or more other HEIs	10	66.7
One or more other organisations (not HEIs) *	2	13.3
Mixture of HEIs and other organisations *	3	20.0
Total	15	100

* e.g. FE colleges, health or social care organisations, etc

Where there were a number of partner institutions, just over half (53%) involved one or two partners only. It should be noted that 'partnerships' here refers to main partners. Many CETLs also have a range of other looser relationships or wider links with a number of outside bodies which are not included here.

Table 3: No. of partner institutions

	No.	%
1 partner	3	20.0
2	5	33.3
3	1	6.7
4	2	13.3
5	-	-
6	1	6.7
7+ partners	3	20.0
Total	15	100

Disciplinary focus

A fifth (20%) of the CETLs had an Arts and Humanities disciplinary focus, and just over a fifth (23%) had a Maths and/or Sciences focus. Only one reported having a Social Sciences focus. The remainder (45%) felt that they did not have a main subject-discipline focus and that their CETL was thematic and/or cross-disciplinary.

Table 4: Main disciplinary focus of CETL

	No.	%
Arts & Humanities (e.g. Art & Design, Education, Linguistics, Performing Arts)	13	20.3
Sciences and Maths (e.g. Computer Science, Environmental Science, Health Sciences)	15	23.4
Social Sciences and related subjects (e.g. Built Environment, Geography, Social Policy)	1	1.6
Other	29	45.3
No response	6	9.4
Total	64	100

When specifically asked if they had a cross-disciplinary focus, nearly all (80%) said that they had.

Table 5: Whether or not CETL has a cross-disciplinary focus

	No.	%
Yes, CETL has a cross-disciplinary focus	51	79.7
No, CETL does not have a cross-disciplinary focus	11	17.2
No response	2	3.1
Total	64	100

Where there was a cross-disciplinary focus, there was a wide range of different areas covered, as is shown in the table below.

Table 6: Main cross-disciplinary focus (of CETLs that are cross-disciplinary)

	No.	% *
Enquiry based learning	5	9.8
Work based learning	4	7.8
Creativity	4	7.8
Study support/learner development/study skills	4	7.8
E learning	3	5.9
Assessment practices	2	3.9
Personal Development Portfolios/career development	1	2.0
Experiential learning	1	2.0
Enterprise skills/education	1	2.0
Research skills	1	2.0
Other	25	49.0
Total	51	100

* As a % of those CETLs which had a cross-disciplinary focus

3.5.4 Survey analysis

3.5.4.1 Capital spend

Managing the capital spend

Nearly all the CETLs (89%) were on target with their capital spend. Only a very small number were either overspent or under spent.

Table 7: Whether capital spend is on target

	No.	%
On target (as outlined in original bid)	57	89.1
Under-spent at present	4	6.3
Overspent at present	3	4.7
Total	64	100

About half had had some difficulties with managing the capital spend (52%) and the other half (48%) had not had any difficulties with it.

Table 8: Whether have had difficulties with managing the capital spend

	No.	%
Yes, difficulties	33	51.6
No, no difficulties	31	48.4
Total	64	100

A third (31%) had made no changes and had spent exactly as planned. Nearly two thirds (63%) had made minor changes to the kinds of purchases they were making but only a small number (6%) had made major alterations to their spending.

Table 9: Changes to the planned spending

	No.	%
No changes, have spent exactly as planned	20	31.3
Yes, have made some alterations to the kinds of purchases we are making	40	62.5
Yes, have made major alterations to the kinds of purchases we are making	4	6.3
Total	64	100

Difficulties in managing the capital spend

Respondents who had had difficulties in managing the capital spend were asked an open-ended question about what the problems had been. The most common problems were working to a short timescale, meeting challenging deadlines, having to spend so quickly, and difficulties with the university's central services and bureaucratic procedures. There were also difficulties due to lack of experience at managing capital programmes, and keeping the costs within budget. Responses are summarised in the table below.

Table 10: Difficulties managing the capital spend

Challenging deadline/short timescale/having to spend so quickly	8
Working with devolved/central services /procurement policy	8
Lack of experience/managing complexity	6
Costs overran/insufficient funds/overspending	4
Project management/additional administration/matching financial and academic year	3
HEFCE constraints/requirements	3
Project overran/building delays/problems finalising the design	3

Some comments were:

Finalising the designs for refurbishment took much longer than anticipated. This was exacerbated by the time taken to appoint key staff through the correct HR procedures.

Lack of experience on our part.

It has been very difficult to spend quickly enough to satisfy HEFCE. The timescales are too short. It would have been much better to be able to profile over at least three years, maybe more.

Internal constraints, e.g. dealing with Estates, have meant that progress has not been possible at a rate that HEFCE might anticipate is possible. There are competing demands for time of Estates staff and CETL compete with others in the university who also have large sums to spend. Procurement of equipment has been a lengthier process than we imagined.

The proportion on capital equipment was problematic. It was deemed ALL capital spending had to go through Estates Management, because of legitimate concerns about some projects which had over-spent in the past. However, 'Estates' had no expertise in equipment procurement and added no value to the process other than slowing down the ordering and procurement process. Ideally the capital spend would have been divided into building (through estates) and equipment (monitored by our project manager).

CETLs tend to draw on staff with expertise in teaching and learning rather than staff experienced in University level procurement procedures. Although the University did allocate central services staff to support the capital expenditure process, a lot of the administrative burden fell on the centre manager.

The requirement to spend quickly meant that there was little time for reflection and consideration. This is not the most effective way to spend public money. It would have been helpful to have spent over a longer timescale and ensured quality. It would be helpful to have created a two phase spend so that this could be planned or allowed a longer period.

Changes to the planned spend

The most common changes to the planned spending were changes to the technical specs and equipment.

Table 11: Changes to the planned spending

Change to technical specs/equipment	14
Minor alterations	8
Change to original plans/sites changed	4
Saved on ICT spend	2
University requirements/funding	2

Some comments were:

Changes were mostly to do with savings made in the ICT spend and changes to the CETL hub.

The technical specs in the original bid have been modified to reflect advances in technology and the developing role of the CETL.

As time progresses the technical specification of IT equipment changes and these have been addressed in our spend activity. In addition price inflation on refurbishment required us to cut back on some equipment.

Some equipment has fallen in price since the bid (e.g. PCs, laptops, PDAs) This has enabled us to purchase more. The association with the CETL of certain key staff has not been as planned necessitating a shift in some major items of expenditure.

Variation in some software and hardware purchases replacing purchases with in-house developed products.

More money has been spent on equipment to support tutorial work and e-learning and less on laboratory-based teaching.

Video conferencing item did not require the amount set aside on account of new (cheaper) equipment and economies of scale across four CETLs, so additional projects occurred, with HEFCE approval.

Importance of the capital spending dimension to the CETL

Over half (58%) felt that the capital spending had been an essential part of the CETL and that it would have been impossible to deliver the CETL objectives without it. A third (33%) felt that it was a key factor and central to their activities, while only a small number (9%) felt that it was important but not critical.

Table 12: Importance of the capital spending dimension to the CETL

	No.	%
Essential – impossible to deliver the CETL objectives without it	37	57.8
Key factor – central to the activities intended for the CETL	21	32.8
Important but not critical	6	9.4
Total	64	100

Planned usage of the equipment and facilities involved in the capital spend

Most CETLs (78%) had invested in equipment and facilities for both staff and student use. A small number (6%) had used the capital spend mainly for staff use and 16% had used it mainly for student use.

Table 13: Planned usage of the equipment and facilities involved in the capital spend

	No.	%
Mainly for staff use	4	6.3
Mainly for student use	10	15.6
For both staff and student use	50	78.1
Total	64	100

Effect of capital spend on student learning

Over three quarters of the respondents (76%) reported that the new facilities and/or equipment had contributed directly to improved student learning. Over two thirds (67%) also felt that the new facilities/equipment had contributed indirectly to student learning through changes to staff practices and procedures. In only a very small number of cases did respondents feel the capital spend had mainly affected staff or institutional practices rather than student learning so far.

Table 14: Effect of capital spend on student learning

	Strongly agree/ Agree No. (%)	Neither/ don't know No. (%)	Disagree/ Strongly disagree No. (%)	No reply No. (%)	Total No. (%)
Yes, the new facilities/equipment have contributed directly to improved student learning	55 (75.9)	2 (3.1)	2 (3.1)	5 (7.8)	64 (100)
Yes, the new facilities/equipment have contributed indirectly to improved student learning through changes to staff practices/procedures	43 (67.2)	10 (15.6)	2 (3.2)	9 (14.1)	64 (100)
No, the new facilities/equipment are mainly aimed at staff and institutional practices so far	3 (4.7)	3 (4.7)	41 (64.1)	17 (26.6)	64 (100)

Kinds of effects on student learning from the capital spend

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about the kinds of effects which the capital spend was having on student learning. The most commonly reported effects were that it enabled new activities to be engaged in by students through the use of new equipment, new technologies and e-resources. There were also benefits in terms of more collaborative learning, increased student engagement, and more flexible learning. Responses are summarised in the table below.

Table 15: Effects on student learning

Enabled activities previously not possible/using new equipment/use of new technologies/e-resources developed	9
More collaborative learning	6
Increased student engagement	6
Flexible learning	5
Change in teaching practice	4
Conducive environment for learning	3

Staff engagement	3
Improved student confidence	2
Video conferencing	2
Provided a generative environment	2
Independent learning	2
Assessment changes	2
Space well-used by students	2
Industry standard environment	1
Spend on student projects	1

Some comments were:

Use of space has caused staff to think about their own teaching practices and spawned some new learning spaces around the campus.

The Creativity Zones enabled by the CETL grant have provided a generative environment for students and staff inspiring new behaviours.

We invested in learning cafe style space which is well-used by students. We have undertaken surveys which back up the claim that this has contributed to student learning.

Staff are experimenting with using new technologies in their work with students (e.g. podcasts) and in their research of student learning (e.g. videoing students discussing their learning).

The new building has generated much needed high quality practice, tutorial and rehearsal facilities, plus space for professional partnerships. We now have a state-of-the-art observational research laboratory for research fellows and students, inc. space for seconded researchers for UK and overseas HEIs. We will shortly have a Self Promotion Suite for students, offering them the opportunity to create effective materials to support their career.

The availability of differently configured spaces (designed to foster interaction, communication, collaboration, discussion etc) has steered academic staff into utilising more active styles of learning, this alongside pressure from [the CETL] more generally and support to do it. The attractiveness of the premises has also encouraged staff who want to use this space, but who have to explain how they are using active learning styles in order to make a booking, to do so.

Our research has shown that the students spend a significant part of the time on academic work and collaboratively learning, in the social learning areas created.

The establishment of flexible learning areas has enabled a number of student groups to partake in Enquiry-Based Learning within a sympathetic context. We are hoping that the numbers so using the spaces will gradually increase. The impact of spaces on learning is significant.

The professional new surroundings have had an unexpected impact upon student assessment, which can now take place in our showcase space. This has 'raised the game' of many students, and brought new stakeholders to support our assessment strategy. Students have had a new environment in which to learn, which is non-traditional (i.e. no traditional space for 'teacher' to stand etc) and this has had a direct effect on the classes taught in these spaces – due to the environment they demand student engagement and staff facilitation, rather than didactic inputs. This provides students with enterprise 'experiences' as part of their curriculum – learning through dialogue; networking etc.

The new facilities enable us to do things that were not previously possible (to the extent they are now), in particular in relation to the production, editing and distribution of digital video artefacts, e.g. through web-streaming and podcasting.

Video conferencing used in teaching situations is having a major impact on student learning especially in courses involving professional preparation.

Very positive feedback from student users of our first collaboratory space, indicating strongly beneficial impact on their learning experience.

Introduction of new a/v technologies has enabled us to alter our teaching & learning styles. Other technologies, e.g. mp3 recorders, have had a direct effect on students' creative practice. Purchase of specialist instruments... has made it possible for students to work with repertoires previously unavailable to them (or in ways previously unavailable).

Students and colleagues enjoy the way in which the design allows for collaborative working between teachers and students. The students particularly appreciate the ways in which the space challenges their perception of teaching and learning and in doing so prompts them to think creatively and critically not only about the substance of the modules, but the teaching and learning process.

Students stay longer in labs.

Students now able to book group working space independently and this is highly valued by the students. Students are now able to use high quality and well equipped facilities and technologies which they previously did not have access to.

Improved access to ICT in and out of class has improved learning. The CETL has improved learner support service take-up and users' achievement.

3.5.4.2 Relationship of CETL to institutional strategies

Embedding in institutional strategies

A third of CETLs (33%) reported that the CETL was fully embedded in the host institution's learning and teaching strategy and nearly half (48%) that it was partially embedded. A further 17% responded that it was not yet embedded but they expected that it would be. Only one CETL reported that it was not embedded in the host institution's learning strategies and was not expecting to be.

Table 16: How CETL relates to the host institution's strategies

	No.	%
Fully embedded in institutional learning and teaching strategy	21	32.8
Partially embedded in institutional learning and teaching strategy	31	48.4
Not yet embedded in institutional learning and teaching strategy but will be	11	17.2
Not embedded in institutional learning and teaching strategy and not expecting to be	1	1.6
Not sure how it features in institutional strategy/don't know	-	-
Total	64	100

Collaborative CETLs were also asked if there had been any embedding in the partners' institutional strategies. All but one (who responded that they didn't know) (93%) felt that there had been.

Table 17: For collaborative CETLs only, whether there is also any embedding in the partner institutions' strategies

	No.	%
Yes, embedding	14	93.3
No, no embedding	-	-
Don't know	1	6.7
Total	15	100

Other aspects of CETL's relationship to host institution

Over three quarters of respondents (78%) had a clear idea of how the CETL would be used to promote learning and teaching in the institution. 75% reported that there were already influences on institutional practice that could be traced to the existence of the CETL. 70% reported that the work and activities of the CETL were known across the institution.

More than half (59%) reported that their institution had plans to develop approaches to learning and teaching across the institution on the basis of the CETL experience after the funding period was over, and 55% said they expected that most of the activities of the CETL would continue after the end of the funding period. Only a small number (9%) felt that although the CETL featured in the host institution's strategy it was not featuring in its practices.

Table 18: Other aspects of CETL's relationship to host institution

	Strongly agree/ Agree No. (%)	Neither agree nor disagree No. (%)	Disagree/ Strongly disagree No. (%)	No reply No. (%)	Total No. (%)
We have a clear idea of how the CETL is/will be used to promote teaching and learning developments in our institution	50 (78.1)	12 (18.8)	2 (3.1)	-	64 (100)
There are already influences on institutional practice that can be traced to the existence of the CETL	48 (75.0)	9 (14.1)	6 (9.4)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
The work and activities of the CETL are known across the institution	45 (70.4)	14 (21.9)	4 (6.3)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
Our institution has plans to develop approaches to L&T across the institution on the basis of the CETL experience after the funding period	38 (59.4)	19 (29.7)	7 (11.0)	-	64 (100)
Most of the activities of the CETL will continue after the funding period	35 (54.7)	26 (40.6)	3 (4.7)	-	64 (100)
It is in the strategy but not featuring in practices	6 (9.4)	14 (21.9)	44 (68.8)	-	64 (100)

Influence on institutional practice that can be traced to the influence of CETL

Respondents were asked to give examples of the kind of influence on institutional practice that the CETL had had. The main influences reported were on the institution's L&T strategies and corporate plans, on both the embedding and the development of institution-wide practices in the CETL's topic area, and on rewarding teaching excellence.

Table 19: Influence on institutional practice

Revised L&T strategy/included in corporate plan/policies/contribute to committees	9
Topic area embedded (employability, e-assessment, work based learning)	9
Developments in topic area (e.g. active learning, laboratory teaching structure, improvements to placements, online work based learning, flexible learning)	7
Rewarding excellence in teaching/robust awards process	5

Changes in teaching practices	3
Increased partnership working/external connections	3
New degrees/new strands developed	3
Increased external funding	1

Some comments were:

Some new degree programmes are directly linked to case studies and experiences derived from the CET Creativity Development Fund activities

The University 'Mission and Vision Statement' wording has been altered to reflect the emphasis of the whole institution on active styles of learning, and it features in many other papers at faculty level. This is starting to affect practice, initially in the host Faculty, but increasingly in other Faculties as joint projects start up.

The CETL may have influenced the host institution by provided higher quality connections with world class institutions in the specialist area that could be developed to better assist further internationalisation of the curriculum. The CETL has influenced on a School-wide basis work around Personal Development Planning (PDP).

We are working within a mindset of creating a 'legacy' – this is provided by sustainable change to the curriculum, but one of the unanticipated benefits on institutional practice has come from the momentum of our institution's wider involvement in three CETLs. This has allowed for the agenda of 'real world' teaching to reach across faculties more quickly than we could have achieved working alone.

Influences on policy for rewarding excellence in teaching and learning. Influence on practice of PDP and e-portfolios.

For example in the development of a policy and guidance material on APEL (accreditation of prior / experiential learning) or in the diversification of approaches to assessment.

The University awards Vice-Chancellor Teaching Awards. The process has been significantly influenced by the CETL, which helped to make the nomination process more robust. Furthermore, the CETL hosts a celebratory dinner in honour of all winners, providing a public forum and raising profile of Learning and Teaching across the University; this event also encourages dissemination of good practice. The CETL also supports, through planning and funding, the annual Learning and Teaching Theme week. This event actively encourages the dissemination of good practice across the whole of the University.

Other departments are considering introducing a laboratory teaching structure that mirrors ours – specifically the use of pre-laboratory work using computer-based simulations of equipment and procedures.

Provision of more flexible learning spaces. Many more examples of active learning. Massive changes in institutional employability strategy.

Development of a pan-university Institute of Work Based Learning – agreed in principle by the University Executive.

Input into revision of university Learning and Teaching Strategy.

The links between undergraduate research and teaching are now regarded as an integral part of the development of teaching and learning at the university. This approach is currently being discussed at senior levels in the University with the expectation that it will be written into policy documents concerned with the future of teaching and learning here.

Departments changing practices such as style of group working or assessment.

The Centre, by providing exemplars of e-learning materials, is influencing institution-wide policy and procedure in this area – with the development of e-based self assessments and engagement with the Learning Development Unit, and University Corporate Web initiatives.

The Centre plays a key role in the University Placements and Work Experience Group; participating in its annual conference, subsidising the events, contributing to University policy and practice.

How institution views the role of the CETL

Respondents were asked what they thought their institution saw as the role of the CETL. The most frequent responses were that the CETL's role was seen to be that of developing excellence in teaching and learning, being a catalyst for change, facilitating innovation in teaching and learning, and providing prestige externally. Responses are summarised in the table below.

Table 20: How institution views the role of the CETL

Develop excellence in learning/teaching practice	21
Catalyst for change/facilitate development and innovation/demonstrate commitment to innovative teaching	9
Marketing and PR/external prestige/showcase excellence	8
Component of the University's vision/help achieve goals	3
Improving student learning	3
To take forward an area of priority	1
Test bed for collaboration	1
Source of funding	1

Some comments were:

To take forward an area of priority and opportunity faster than would otherwise be possible e.g. strategic HE in FE development.

Catalyst for change and innovation in L&T.

Senior management was most interested in the external prestige accruing from getting the bid accepted.

At this stage it is regarded as a trophy that it can boast about, but that can be quite useful. We are certainly encouraged to have an impact across the University and elsewhere.

I don't think there is consensus on this – different units/sections see it through their own perspective – how it relates to their issues and how we might be useful in progressing their needs and agenda.

Acting as a centre for developing innovative learning and teaching practice that can be disseminated more widely.

The Centre is central to the efforts to innovate in the areas of learning, teaching and assessment.

As a catalyst for stimulating change in pedagogic practice.

The university sees the CETL as a flagship for teaching and learning and a think tank for new, innovative and effective methods of teaching.

Raising profile of learning and teaching in a research-led institution; contributing to wider cultural change in the institution in this regard.

To develop expertise in our approach and support innovative teaching methods, disseminate our approach to technology to appropriate areas in the University and nationally so as to build our reputation and that of the University.

To develop and disseminate learning and teaching practices emerging from the CETL's work, an opportunity to evaluate current practices and enhance, contributing to the development of the new LTA strategy for the University and operational LTA issues.

To stimulate learning and teaching innovation and develop new and innovative partners and knowledge across the creative industries sector.

A beacon for innovation and excellence in learning and teaching. Recognised for developing innovative teaching resources and systems to enhance teaching administration.

I think they see it as a way to enhance and change teaching and learning practices at the University and a way to strategically develop more people with a special interest in pedagogy.

As a key player in demonstrating the institutional commitment to innovative teaching and learning. As a key example of the institution's commitment to high levels of student support, skills development and enhancement of the learning experience.

3.5.4.3 Support from senior management

How fully supported a CETL is by senior management

Well over half (58%) reported that the CETL was fully supported by senior management and just over a third (34%) that there was some support from senior management. Only very small numbers (8%) reported a lack of any support.

Table 21: Whether or not CETL is actively supported by senior management

	No.	%
Yes, fully supported by senior management in the host institution through regular informal and formal meetings	37	57.8
Yes, some support from senior management	22	34.4
No, little or no support from senior management	4	6.3
No, senior management are more critical than supportive	1	1.6
Total	64	100

Other aspects of CETL's relationship with senior management

Nearly two thirds (61%) said that they worked closely with the senior management to disseminate the work of the CETL across the institution. For a quarter (25%) the relationship was less developed and they only discussed the progress of the CETL with senior management through steering or management board meetings. A small number (6%) felt that senior management had little knowledge of what they were doing.

Table 22: Aspects of CETL's relationship with senior management

	Strongly agree/ Agree No. (%)	Neither agree nor disagree No. (%)	Disagree/ Strongly disagree No. (%)	No reply No. (%)	Total No. (%)
We work closely with the senior management to disseminate the work of the CETL across the institution	39 (60.9)	14 (21.9)	11 (17.2)	-	64 (100)
We discuss progress of the CETL with senior management only through steering or management board meetings	16 (25.1)	7 (10.9)	38 (59.4)	3 (4.7)	64 (100)
I don't think the senior management have much knowledge of what we are doing	4 (6.3)	12 (18.8)	45 (70.4)	3 (4.7)	64 (100)

Support from senior management

Respondents who felt that their CETL was actively supported by senior management were asked about the ways in which this happened. This was usually seen as being achieved by the presence of senior managers on the CETL management board/steering group or equivalent. It was also done through report-back mechanisms and other kinds of meetings. A number of other kinds of support were also mentioned as shown in the table below.

Table 23: How CETL is actively supported by senior management in the host institution

Senior manager(s) member of CETL group/management board	24
Report to senior management	9
Regular meetings	5
Support at launch/opened building	3
CETL seen as a focus for education-related advice/speak positively about CETL/mentioned in the university learning strategy	3
Generally supportive	2
Extra funding provided/funded building works	2
Involvement in university strategic discussions	2
Central services support	1
Active in implementation	1
Interest in integrating the skills training agenda	1
CETL team lead working parties	1
Promotion of CETL staff	1

Some comments were:

Regular quarterly meetings with PVC (academic) who is also responsive to issues raised.

I am a member of the university senior management team. VC is Chair and PVC a member of the CETL Strategic Advisory Group.

Our Management Board is chaired by a PVC and others occasionally attend. Our values are beginning to be fed back to us from statements made by PVCs to third parties.

This is variable and depends on individuals. The bidding process was supported by an extremely pro-active PVC, then in the first year of life of the CETL there was one who was disinterested, and now again there is one who is thoroughly engaged. This is not due to institutional fit, but 'the individual'. Broadly we are supported, but we are fairly small beer compared with some current issues in HEIs, none the less our potential usefulness in market-positioning is recognised.

The CETL reports formally to the university's Education Policy Committee. This senior management group endorses the activities of the CETL. The second accountability and reporting mechanism is through the Strategy Group. This group also supports the CETL's activities.

PVC T&L sits on steering group; invitation to myself to address conference of senior management about our work; currently exploring with PVC new ways of supporting dissemination to other subjects. Head of School extremely active in CETL: sits on steering group and executive committee, participates in events including delivering presentations, meets informally with myself and others in the CETL.

There is a supportive CETL Board chaired by a PVC and there are many invitations to meet less formally with other senior staff at PVC or Vice-Chancellor's Executive level. More tellingly, funds have been made available from internal sources for various CETL initiatives.

Strong support from PVC with responsibility for Learning and Teaching, increasing support from Deans of School.

The involvement of the CETL in discussions concerning the future direction of teaching and learning at XX and direct input into how policy documents are being written. Promotion of staff associated with the CETL

Lack of support from senior management

Respondents who did not feel supported by senior management were asked to give details. There were very few responses as only a small number of people (five respondents) did not feel supported by senior management. The main factors mentioned were:

- Antipathy from Deans and PVC
- CETL doesn't fit with university systems
- University 'support' functions not supportive
- Management have other priorities
- Management not attending steering group
- Little contact with senior management.

Some comments were:

While there is support from chancellery, some 2nd level managers, especially in the support functions are less consistently supportive e.g. Estates, finance and computing.

Some antipathy from Deans and PVC. Largely stems from CETL being outside their direct control. But we now have a regular meeting with Deans to address these issues, share what's happening and plan for future [so hopefully it will improve].

We're not supported in that, as a free-standing centre, we don't fit with 'systems' and we don't get much help with that. We're caught up with university budgeting processes so at the moment we are desperate to spend (on staff) – but we're not allowed to.

It is not at the highest level, but rather at the level of some Deans or Pro-Deans, and some Heads of School or Department. For example I've only had rather limited support, if any from my own department and the Head of School, who... tend to view [our topic area] as peripheral to core discipline activity.

Sustainability after the end of the funding period

Respondents were asked if their institution had any plans to provide resources for the CETL after the end of the funding period. For nearly half (42%), this was a matter still under discussion and nothing had been agreed. A small number (6%) reported that the institution would provide resources to fully fund CETL activities after the end of the funding period, while 14% reported that the institution was planning to partially fund some continuing CETL activities. 14% of institutions were not planning to provide any resources for the CETL after the end of the funding period. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) did not know if the institution had any plans to provide resources for the CETL after the end of the funding period.

Table 24: Institutional plans to provide resources for CETL after the end of the funding period

	No.	%
Continuation funding is under discussion but no plans have yet been made	27	42.2
Yes, institution will provide resources to fund a more limited range of activity	9	14.1
No, institution is not planning to provide resources for the CETL after the end of the funding period	9	14.1
Yes, institution will provide resources to fully fund CETL activities	4	6.3
Don't know/not sure	15	23.4
Total	64	100

Some comments were:

The CETL is expected to be self-sustaining.

Aspects of the CETL's work will start to be incorporated into mainstream university.

No one is prepared to think about it yet. End of CETL is a long time off in institutional terms.

Working with a mindset of creating a legacy, we expect to become part of the university's commitment to teaching and learning, and the university is supportive of our continued activities. It is, however, accepted that all the staff... should have delivered [the core CETL] activity within five years, and the focus of activity will be through the new estates provision and refreshing the curriculum.

This is difficult to answer because of the collaborative nature of the CETL. Current discussions already ensure that there will be some continuation of activity, but the level is not yet clear, nor the distribution between the partners.

This is not clear at this stage as there have been few discussions as yet. This will be discussed following the review in mid 2007.

Continuation of CETL activities is built into the proposal for the establishment of a pan-university institute [in this topic area].

Capital equipment will be replaced.

A very sparse continuation strategy (worth £40,000 per year) was agreed prior to starting. No sign of this changing despite considerable dialogue and discussion.

Continuation of lecturer and director posts but not other roles.

Current thinking is that, on the one hand, continuation will happen anyway if [our] agenda has become deeply embedded in all areas of the institution, so there might be no great need for a discrete entity called [CETL]. On the other hand, there are a range of lines of development... that would be income-bearing and this would allow for the continuation of a slimmed-down Centre. Discussions continue.

3.5.4.4 Main activities of the CETL

CETLs engaged in a wide range of activities and most of them covered the same ground. The most common activities, engaged in by over 80% of the CETLs, were support for events (workshops, seminars etc) to disseminate innovative practice, development of new partnerships to promote creative learning and teaching practices, development of digital and web based resources, finding new ways to use technology/equipment, involving students in working with external agencies/employers/partners, bursaries/grants for staff to experiment with new technologies, bursaries/grants for staff to undertake pedagogic research and bursaries/grants for staff to experiment with new curricula. Details are shown in the table below.

Table 25: Activities in which CETL engages

	No.	%
Support for events (workshops, seminars) to disseminate innovative practice	63	98.4
Developing new partnerships to promote creative learning and teaching practices	62	96.9
Development of digital and web based resources	61	95.3
Finding new ways to use technology/equipment	59	92.2
Involving students in working with external agencies/employers/partners	57	89.1
Bursaries/grants for staff to experiment with new technologies	54	84.4
Bursaries/grants for staff to undertake pedagogic research	53	82.8
Bursaries/grants for staff to experiment with new curricula	52	81.3
Finding new ways to use the plant/building space	49	76.6
Visiting practitioners/fellows working with students	38	59.4
Development of digital and web based events	37	57.8
Bursaries/grants for students to experiment with new technologies	24	37.5
Bursaries/grants for students to undertake pedagogic research	23	35.9

There were a number of other activities in which CETLs also engaged. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 26: Other activities

Staff development/visits	3
Student involvement	3
Collaborative working	2
Networking	2
Seminars & events	2
Developing academic practice	2
Outreach activities	2
Project support	2
Master classes	1
Research	1
Development of internal workplaces	1
Industry projects	1
Case studies	1
Evaluation activities	1

Some comments were:

Providing opportunities for staff to visit other institutions or for staff from elsewhere to work with us. Also, providing opportunities for staff from distinct disciplines to talk together and develop teaching or research ideas – Learning Network Lunches.

Hosting and running events, seminars, workshops. Active dissemination of good practice. Running seminars and workshops externally. Establishing Centre as resource of expertise and research. Strong involvement of students as partners.

Supporting the development of internal workplaces and curriculum development around that – and within this employing students to help develop some of the resources. We are also supporting a student-led company, and are planning to fund more. Most of what we support includes collaborative working with the funded group rather than bursaries.

This has been a period of activity where fresh opportunity has been sought by the CETL team and others to take advantage of new equipment, facilities and methods of teaching and learning. We have been able to adapt and adjust our thinking to accommodate new directions that were not available before the CETL. Concentration on teaching and learning has paradoxically initiated conventional and applied research possibilities that would not have been apparent without the CETL impetus. Our aim to link with like minded industrial and academic partners has provided very high quality contacts that would not have been possible without the CETL.

We have a strong staff development platform – including train-the-trainer events; master classes and regional dissemination events. We share our practice from subject based activities across the curriculum and work in partnership to deliver this. We have created new programmes and work to embed enterprise skills within the curriculum across the university.

Involving students in management of teaching. Involving students in supporting other students' learning. Work with Subject Centres to customise generic resources. Produce newsletters. Run events and conference.

Mini projects and academic practice awards in conjunction with the University. Calls for proposals where we offer staff development time to enhance the student learning experience through new learning technology resources, outreach activities with industry, and pedagogic research support.

Whole-university special events; national conferences; interactive website; occasional newsletter; HEA events; large-scale dissemination strategy at national and international level.

3.5.4.5 Current development of the CETL

Nearly everybody felt that the CETL had been a success so far (99%), and was achieving its aims (97%). 92% said that they could see how the experience of the CETL could be used to change practice more widely, 89% that having access to extra resources through the CETL had been an effective way of changing practice within their institutions, and 88% that the CETL was having a positive effect on teaching and learning in the host institution.

Most (78%) reported that the steering group worked effectively. Most respondents (72%) also valued the support they had had from HEFCE/HEA organised events and network activity. 61% felt that the CETL was having a positive effect on teaching and learning in the wider academic community.

Just over a quarter (28%) were being hampered by problems with the equipment or with delays in the capital spend.

Table 27: Current development of the CETL

	Strongly agree/Agree No. (%)	Neither agree nor disagree No. (%)	Disagree/ Strongly disagree No. (%)	No reply No. (%)	Total No. (%)
The CETL has been a success so far	63 (98.5)	-	-	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
The CETL is achieving its aims	62 (96.9)	2 (3.1)	-	-	64 (100)
I can see how the experience of the CETL can be used to change practice more widely	59 (92.2)	4 (6.3)	1 (1.6)	-	64 (100)
Having access to extra resources through the CETL has been an effective way of changing practice within my institution	57 (89.1)	4 (6.3)	2 (3.1)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
The CETL is having a positive effect on teaching and learning in the host institution	56 (87.5)	8 (12.5)	-	-	64 (100)
The steering group works effectively	50 (78.2)	10 (15.6)	4 (6.3)	-	64 (100)
We have had useful support from HEFCE/HEA organised events and network activity	46 (71.9)	14 (21.9)	4 (6.3)	-	64 (100)
The CETL is having a positive effect on teaching and learning in the wider academic community	39 (60.9)	21 (32.8)	4 (6.3)	-	64 (100)
The equipment we have bought does not always function properly	9 (28.2)	14 (21.9)	40 (62.5)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
Delays in the capital spend have impeded the CETL's progress	18 (28.2)	10 (15.6)	36 (56.2)	-	64 (100)
Relationships with the host institution have been difficult	6 (9.4)	12 (18.8)	45 (70.3)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)

3.5.4.6 Current achievements***Progress so far***

Respondents were very positive about the effects their CETLs were having so far. 92% felt that their CETL had had a direct effect on the quality of learning and/or support for their students, and 91% that the CETL had enabled collaborations with other partners. 89% felt that the biggest achievements of the CETL lay in opportunities to think more effectively about teaching and learning.

Just over three quarters (77%) reported that the CETL had enabled teachers to work together more effectively, and three quarters (75%) that the most rewarding aspect of the CETL's work had been trying out new teaching and learning approaches with students.

Over two thirds (69%) felt that the capital spend would be an important aspect of the CETL's sustainability after the end of the funding period, while over half (55%) said that the CETL had

supported a more central focus on teaching and learning within the institution. Less than a quarter (22%) felt that it was too soon for the capital spending to create real changes in teaching and learning.

Table 28: Current achievements

	Strongly agree/ Agree No. (%)	Neither/ don't know No. (%)	Disagree/ Strongly disagree No. (%)	No reply No. (%)	Total No. (%)
The CETL has had a direct effect on the quality of learning and/or support for our students	59 (92.2)	4 (6.3)	-	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
The CETL has enabled collaborations with other partners	58 (90.6)	6 (9.4)	-	-	64 (100)
The biggest achievements of the CETL lie in opportunities to think more effectively about teaching and learning	57 (89.0)	5 (7.8)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
The CETL has enabled teachers to work together more effectively	49 (76.5)	12 (18.8)	2 (3.1)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
The most rewarding aspect of the CETL's work has been trying out new teaching and learning approaches with students	48 (75.0)	14 (21.9)	2 (3.1)	-	64 (100)
The capital spend will be an important aspect of the CETL's sustainability	44 (68.8)	15 (23.4)	4 (6.2)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
The CETL has supported a more central focus on teaching and learning within the institution	35 (54.7)	20 (31.3)	8 (12.5)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
It is too soon for our capital spending to create real changes in teaching and learning	14 (21.9)	11 (17.2)	38 (59.4)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)

Main achievements

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they considered the main achievements of their CETL to be so far. The most frequent responses were collaboration and the development of partnerships and networks, innovative teaching practices and the impact on learning, the provision of new and specialised facilities, staff and team development, and increased staff and student engagement. A number of other achievements were also mentioned, as shown in the table below.

Table 29: Main achievements of your CETL so far

Collaboration/partnerships/networks	16
Innovative teaching/impact on learning/leading L&T/raised profile of teaching	11
Completion of new facilities/well resourced facility/provision of specialist facilities/new educational technology	6
Staff/team development	5
Staff & student engagement/attitude change	4
Pedagogic research	3
Develop web based teaching/raised profile of multimedia	3

Rewarding with research time/fellowship scheme	3
Programme or course developments	2
Student opportunities/experience	2
Impact on policy	1
Embedding employability	1
National reputation	1

Some comments were:

Providing opportunities for students to do new and exciting things; raising the profile of teaching and learning within the institution simply by having secured such a large sum of money (i.e. the 'WOW! Respect!' factor); building an exciting and award-winning new building which people want to use, making it possible for staff and students to enjoy working in a particularly pleasant space; having opportunity to spend a little time thinking about new ideas and opportunities; promoting international pedagogic links; providing opportunities for staff (sometimes for the first time) to interact with colleagues overseas to generate and share new ideas; providing staff time to try new things and talk about them.

Excellent space for students to work in which is well-resourced. Pedagogic research under way with several new research students. Influencing other institutions to develop better student support – we are funding three other institutions to develop support).

Much of our resource went directly out to the chalk-face to provide support for academics developing L&T materials. The presence of capital equipment and refurbished space immediately changed the way staff and students felt about their learning experience and what they could do.

The CETL has helped to formalise and structure the training given to postgraduate research students and contract research staff who wish to teach, or to develop their teaching skills. The Centre has also initiated and sustained an important wider conceptual conversation over the nature and meaning of academic practice, and the ways in which the next generation of academics can be supported and guided.

The establishment of a network of 'Curriculum Developers' in 13 other leading HEIs teaching media. The development and recruitment to a new online work based learning MA which has recruited established media professionals and can be used as a model for other MAs. The development and launch of a range of online communities of practice, enabling students, staff, alumni and other media professionals to debate, discuss and share good practice online. Collaborations with the industry sector skills council, Skillset, to shape accreditation schemes, the new 14-19 Creative & Media Diploma, and work placement arrangements.

The main achievements are the collaborative work the CETL is engaged in with external partners. Internally, we have made significant contributions to processes that raise the profile of learning and teaching. Our very focused approach to pedagogical research and evaluation has already resulted in publications.

A complete change in attitude towards laboratory teaching and learning. There is excitement across the entire department from students to staff. Students are now more informed when they come to the lab and staff enjoy demonstrating. The outreach side of the CETL has also been a tremendous success.

Wide scope of development/innovation activity across core faculties; design and creation of new learning spaces; development of student partnership working practices; championing of practitioner-led scholarship and research (within an institutional context that is somewhat cautious about this) and development of research programme; taking risks in terms of 'doing things a bit differently' in the institution, and impacting on central institutional processes of support for teaching enhancement; directly influencing institutional-level learning teaching and assessment strategy.

The effects have been transformational. Colleagues have been energised and are finding imaginative ways to deploy resources, and this is translating into the student culture, with undergraduates approaching us with a variety of initiatives that we have been able to help

them run with (e.g. development of CDs to promote and disseminate their creative work) – all adding yet a further (and unanticipated) layer of value to the CETL.

A considerable volume of research evaluating teaching and learning, support of a large range of innovative initiatives via our innovations funds to people who would ordinarily not receive funding, transforming student experiences on placement; working together with others with whom one would not normally work.

3.5.4.7 The CETL programme as a strategy for change

Effectiveness of the strategy

Nearly all the CETLs agreed that exemplars of excellent practice offer an important way to influence change in the sector (88%); that rewarding excellence is an effective strategy for achieving change across the sector (84%); and that rewarding excellent practice is a positive way to introduce change in higher education (84%).

Nearly two thirds (63%) agreed that the timescale of the CETL programme was sufficiently long for serious change to be achieved.

Only very small numbers felt that the CETL programme was unlikely to effect change outside the host/partner institution/s (11%), or that the money spent on the CETL programme would have been better spent elsewhere (3%).

Table 30: The CETL programme as an effective strategy for change

	Strongly agree/ Agree No. (%)	Neither/ don't know No. (%)	Disagree/ Strongly disagree No. (%)	No reply No. (%)	Total No. (%)
Exemplars of excellent practice offer an important way to influence change in the sector	56 (87.5)	6 (9.4)	2 (3.2)	-	64 (100)
Rewarding excellence is an effective strategy for achieving change across the sector	54 (84.4)	7 (10.9)	3 (4.7)	-	64 (100)
Rewarding excellent practice is a positive way to introduce change in higher education	54 (84.4)	8 (12.5)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	64 (100)
The timescale of the CETL programme is sufficiently long for serious change to be achieved	40 (62.5)	12 (18.8)	12 (18.8)	-	64 (100)
The CETL programme is unlikely to effect change outside the host/partner institution/s	7 (11.0)	8 (12.5)	49 (76.6)	-	64 (100)
The money spent on the CETL programme would have been better spent elsewhere	2 (3.1)	14 (21.9)	48 (75)	-	64 (100)

Strengths of the CETL programme as strategy for change

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they saw as the strengths and weaknesses of the CETL programme as a strategy for change. The main strengths were seen as the focus on teaching and learning, the opportunity to raise the profile of teaching, the level of ring-fenced investment, the ability of the CETLs to be a catalyst for change, and the wider impact on the sector.

Table 31: Strengths of CETLs as a strategy for change

Raised focus/profile of teaching/strong L&T strategy/focus on a whole range of teaching and learning	19
Level of investment/ring fenced financing	11
Catalyst for change	8
Sector-wide impact	5
Team working/collaboration	2
Identified best practice /harnessing energetic and creative solutions	2
Increased confidence	1
Student involvement	1

Some comments were:

Level of investment is large enough to make people take notice. Plus awarding CETL status on the basis of track record – which should ensure that all CETLs involve a well-informed and capable core group. Staff involved do feel that it's a reward and other staff and students want to be part of it as something new with a real buzz.

The CETL programme has provided an opportunity for institutions to focus on, and invest in, teaching and learning, and given internal and external credence to work taking place in this context.

Excellent that it is possible for those with a passion for T&L to demonstrate that they can bring in such large sums that the University has to sit up and listen.

The CETL programme has been high profile enough to make a difference. The levels of funding have demanded the attention of senior management and supported change. As with all strategies for change, they draw upon culture change, which requires a sufficiently long period of activity – so currently two years is too small to see the true impact.

Strengths: CETLs harness the energetic and (in the case of this CETL) develop creative solutions to identified problems.

The main strength of the CETL programme is that it concentrates resources and personnel within particular units with a clear remit to bring about change. There is thus a precise focus to the mission of each CETL.

Recognition of excellent practice and funding to support this has been very welcome. We have found one of the most valuable experiences has been the opportunity to work with a range of partners in other HEIs... to develop projects, to share good practice, and to address common concerns.

The programme has given us the resources we need to invest in infrastructure and expertise and create a step change in education in the laboratory. Focusing resources to set up a national beacon like this is a good way to inspire excellence elsewhere in the subject (and related subjects) and is already doing so whereas spreading money thinly would have achieved very little change. We are not able to comment on the programme as a whole.

I think the CETL programme is excellent at identifying areas of strength and supporting them to develop and disseminate best practice. This is a sensible approach and allows diverse, dispersed, grassroots dissemination.

The strengths of the programme are that it provided opportunities for developing new ways of learning and teaching and curricula with embedded evaluation enabling us to continue to develop practices that are supported by evidence of effectiveness in supporting student learning. It has provided us with time and resources to do this.

The CETL programme has increased the status of learning and teaching, provided space for serious thinking about pedagogic issues and opportunity for 'experts' to reach out to the HE sector. As a consequence of these it provides great potential for change or at least speeding up the change process to improve student learning.

The CETL programme is a high profile initiative which hopefully will have the critical mass to really put teaching 'on the map' even in research-intensive universities and give excellent teachers the reward that they deserve.

The CETL initiative has some considerable strengths and has encouraged a place for learning and teaching alongside research. This is part of the issue of scale of the funds available and that are not usually so when set against the scale of research funds either through the research councils or through QR (quality related research) income.

Strengths: the scale of the investment (time and money) is sufficient to make real, sustained change to every day practices; we have thought creatively and laterally about teaching and learning, across both cognate and disparate disciplines, in ways we never have before; we have brought the results of pedagogic research to a much wider audience (and they listened); we have taken some enormous risks with capital developments that would not have been supported any other way, these have acted as a catalyst for further discussion of T&L and some really big strides forward in provision for students; every 'big idea' we have had has been capped by another one – we have learned to be more ambitious.

The strength of the CETLs is that the amount of the funding and the five year time period has had a major impact on the emphasis that is placed on teaching and learning in the sector. The way in which we have been given the space to develop our work and record and report on it, through the evaluation process, has given us the confidence and scope to develop the work.

The CETL programme has helped to readdress the balance between the priority of teaching compared to research. It has led to the impression that L&T is a priority and improved the opportunities for staff, particularly those on teaching only contracts.

The scale of funding has been important in that it was big enough to engage academics with different agendas to focus on teaching and learning activity and its dissemination; the capital investment has been important in signalling to external partners that we are serious about upskilling the potential workforce in their areas – this has been important for employer engagement. In our institution the CETL is seen as an institutional L&T initiative, coordinated through our educational development unit so hopefully this will overcome any potential divisiveness that could result from certain subject areas being seen as 'cash rich' at the expense of others (although it's a little too early to be definitive about this!).

I think it is easy to underestimate the inertia inherent in universities. It is exceptionally difficult to effect change but we are trying.

Weaknesses of CETLs as a strategy for change

The CETL programme as a strategy for change was seen to have very few weaknesses. Only small numbers of respondents felt that there were any weaknesses. Those mentioned were a lack of sustainability and lack of institutional commitment, a sense of some inequity in the system, vague and confused expectations of the CETL in relation to host institution, unrealistic timescales and that the initiative was too small to address fundamental problems.

Table 32: Weaknesses of CETLs as a strategy for change

Sustainability/need for institutional commitment	5
Divisive reward system/CETL funding seen as bringing inequity	5
Confused messages/vague expectations in relation to host institution	4
Unrealistic timescales	3
Small initiative/doesn't address fundamental problems in HE	3
Lack of sectoral impact	2
Huge amount of work	1

Some comments were:

The original focus on directly rewarding staff in the CETL has been divisive and is the root cause of some of the hostility towards the CETL. The very concept of 'excellence' and how it is measured is still highly contested. Trying to run a cross-university initiative, where most internal structures are vertically organised, is highly challenging. Dissemination and shared practice is always difficult in HE – not convinced of the likely effectiveness sector wide of CETLs, will be happy if we can have an effect within the university.

Vagueness in expectations of what CETLs can reasonably do – so everybody expects everything. Apparent HEFCE assumption that a short term and, in institutional budget terms, small initiative can lead institutional change. We can contribute but... it doesn't address any fundamental problems in HE (such as staff overload).

Timescales unrealistic. CETL's priority for reward and recognition unsuccessful due to lack of alignment with institutional strategy. We must fit in with existing strategies. There are tensions here. Also – some see the CETL funding as bringing in inequity [because] we have money to spend on reward whereas other do not.

By its very existence the CETL programme is a force for improvement. But the key criterion for successful implementation is explicit, substantial and detailed institutional commitment to continuation and development. This has yet to be demonstrated here.

The weakness of this approach is that initially these small pockets of activity across the HE sector appear to be making institutional change, rather than sector impact.

Weaknesses: the impact of CETLs would be maximised if commitments were written into a CETL contract by the potential beneficiaries that evidence based outcomes would be acted upon.

It's a huge amount of work that, although very rewarding, has to be done on top of everything else! There is some confusion about how CETL finances and management map onto the more conventional financial and management processes of academic departments. Sustainability issues are already beginning to worry the management team.

For our CETL it is relatively easy to see how it can enhance learning and teaching and effect change [and] for most CETLs this is probably the case. The question remains: is the CETL programme simply the sum of its component parts (the individual CETLs) or is it greater than the sum of its parts? This has not been considered sufficiently, and I don't think HEFCE has really thought this through enough – or is managing to enable this yet.

3.5.4.8 Other issues

There were a number of other comments about various aspects of the CETL programme. Some respondents were worried about the sustainability of the CETLs without further funding.

The CETL programme offers a real opportunity to change practice across the sector. However the dissemination of the learning will take many years – we just don't have the time to absorb it all immediately and build on it. This process of absorption is much more likely to continue within the context of a continuing evolving CETL programme where the CETL status and their rewarding/building excellence mission are ongoing rather than in the context of a one-off five year event which came and went, possibly leaving teaching and learning as poor relation again.

It is clear that many CETLs are having a significant impact on the sector but that more time will be required for the full benefits to be realised – especially as many capital projects have only just reached completion. If future funding is used to develop a second tranche of CETLs post-2010 without providing any form of sustainability/moderation funding for those that have already been established, much of the excellent work that has taken place will simply fail to fulfil its longer-term potential.

We are already thinking about what happens after our CETL. Undoubtedly much will be embedded and sustainable; but some form of funded continuation scheme would still make a world of difference.

There were some suggestions for future similar programmes.

It would help future CETLs:

1) To establish a clearer brief about the national v local role of the CETL as this could help maintain a useful relative autonomy for the CETL. This should be reflected in a recommended framework for a CETL's steering committee and the production of an unambiguous template for reporting on CETL progress.

2) The intellectual property rights of CETL developed products needs to be clarified.

There were some doubts about whether reward is an effective strategy for change.

It is too soon to tell whether 'reward' is an effective strategy for achieving change across the sector. Whilst exemplars provide good examples of practice, I wonder at the extent to which they are taken up by those to whom they are disseminated and how they are used. If they are not used and developed for use in other contexts other than those in which they were originally developed then they will have little ability to influence change. I also do not feel they should be adopted without proper evaluation to provide evidence that they support student learning. I do however feel that CETLs have provided opportunities to do all of this which otherwise would not have been available.

There were also comments about the problems encountered with the institution.

Time spent on building project was much greater than anticipated and required skills that were completely new to me but there was little support on offer from the university. The set-up time for the CETL was much longer than anticipated. HR procedures caused huge delays in recruitment of staff contributing to long set-up time. The work involved in running a CETL is much greater than anticipated.

Finally, there were some very positive comments.

It has been a privilege to take part in this development, and I am confident that our CETL is having a positive impact at the chalk-face and through its outward facing activities. Continuation and the commitment of the institution remain the major concerns.

I feel we are starting to make a real difference for our students that will be maintained after CETL funding is finished. We are thinking about, and talking about, teaching and learning in ways that I wouldn't have thought possible a couple of years ago, and with staff who wouldn't normally be interested. Our capital facilities are opening up tremendous opportunities for us. I feel that the CETLs encouraged us to take risks, we have done and are doing this; it's paying off now and will continue to do so.

I think the CETL initiative is an exciting and unpredictable way to effect change. I think it was a risk and in any creative endeavour you have to take risks to enable innovation. We have already made a difference to learning here and we have certainly raised awareness and the status of learning and teaching here. That was due in part to the large amount of capital and the way we were free to identify, from the ground upwards, how that would be spent... The other [thing] is that we are semi-autonomous. We can decide how we spend the money and... I do not feel coerced in any ways to fund any particular hobby horses, and we are free to come up with ideas through our conversations as well... It is wonderful though to be part of.

3.5.4.9 Summary of the survey of CETL Directors

Significant statistical relationships: No significant relationships were found between the success of the CETL, its achievements, its reported range of activities, its relationship to the host institution, level of support from senior management, or the effect on student learning so far. There were also no significant relationships with any of the following attributes:

- Whether CETL was single host or collaborative CETL
- What the subject or disciplinary focus was
- Whether or not CETL was cross-disciplinary
- How well the capital spend was managed
- Whether capital spend was mainly for staff or for student use.

Only one significant relationship was found. CETLs were more likely to have had difficulty managing the capital spends if the CETL was not fully embedded in the host HEI's institutional learning and teaching strategy. Overall, these findings suggest that there is a remarkably consistent pattern for the CETLs' directors, with the vast majority making similar responses on most indices. This suggests a certain cross-institutional effect and a degree of similarity across most CETLs.

Partnerships: Just over three quarters of the CETLs (77%) were single host CETLs. Nearly a quarter (23%) were partnerships. Where there were partners, these were in the majority of cases (67%) other HEIs. A small number of CETLs had other kinds of partners in addition to or instead of HEIs. Where there were a number of partner institutions, just over half (53%) involved one or two partners only.

Disciplinary focus: A fifth (20%) of the CETLs had an Arts and Humanities disciplinary focus, and just over a fifth (23%) had a Maths and/or Sciences focus. Only one reported having a Social Sciences focus. The remainder (45%) felt that they did not have a main subject-discipline focus and that their CETL was thematic and/or cross-disciplinary. When specifically asked if they had a cross-disciplinary focus, nearly all (80%) said that they had, in addition to any subject discipline focus they may have had.

Managing the capital spend: Nearly all the CETLs (89%) were on target with their capital spend. Only very small numbers were either overspent or underspent. About half had had some difficulties with managing the capital spend (52%) and the other half (48%) had not had any difficulties with it. A third (31%) had made no changes to the capital spend and had spent exactly as planned. Nearly two thirds (63%) had made minor changes to the kinds of purchases they were making. Only a small number (6%) had made major alterations to their spending. Where there had been changes to the planned spending these generally consisted of changes to the technical specs and equipment.

Kinds of difficulties in managing the capital spend: Respondents were asked what the difficulties were that they had had in managing the capital spend. The most common problems were working to a short timescale, meeting challenging deadline and having to spend so quickly, and difficulties with central services. There were also difficulties due to lack of experience and managing the costs involved.

Importance of the capital spending dimension to the CETL: Just over half felt that the capital spending had been an essential part of the CETL and that it would have been impossible to deliver the CETL objectives without it. A third (33%) felt that it was a key factor and central to their activities, while only a small number (9%) felt that it was important but not critical.

Planned usage of the equipment and facilities involved in the capital spend: Most CETLs (78%) had invested in equipment and facilities for both staff and student use. A small number (6%) had used the capital spend for mainly staff use and 16% for mainly student use.

Effect of capital spend on student learning: over three quarters of the respondents (76%) reported that the new facilities and/or equipment had contributed directly to improved student learning. Over two thirds (67%) also felt that the new facilities/equipment had contributed indirectly to student learning through changes to staff practices and procedures. In only a very small number of cases did respondents feel the capital spend had mainly affected staff or institutional practices rather than student learning so far.

Kinds of effects on student learning from the capital spend: the most commonly reported effects on student learning from the capital spend were that it enabled new activities to be engaged in by students through the use of new equipment, new technologies and e-resources. There were also benefits in terms of more collaborative learning, increased student engagement, and more flexible learning.

Embedding in institutional strategies: A third of CETLs (33%) reported that the CETL was fully embedded in the host institution's learning and teaching strategy and nearly half (48%) that it was partially embedded. A further 17% responded that it was not yet embedded but they expected that it would be. Only one CETL reported that it was not embedded in the host institution's learning strategies and was not expecting to be. Collaborative CETLs were also asked if there had been any embedding in the partners' institutional strategies. All but one (93%) felt that there had been.

Other aspects of CETL's relationship to host institution: Over three quarters of respondents (78%) had a clear idea of how the CETL would be used to promote learning and teaching in the institution. 75% reported that there were already influences on institutional practice that could be traced to the existence of the CETL. 70% reported that the work and activities of the CETL were known across the institution. More than half (59%) reported that their institution had plans to develop approaches to learning and teaching across the institution on the basis of the CETL experience after

the funding period was over, and 55% said they expected that most of the activities of the CETL would continue after the end of the funding period. Only a small number (9%) felt that although the CETL featured in the host institution's strategy it was not featuring in its practices.

Influence on institutional practice that can be traced to the influence of CETL: Respondents were asked to give examples of the kind of influence on institutional practice that the CETL had had. The main influences reported were on the institution's L&T strategies and corporate plans, on both the embedding and the development of institution-wide practices in the CETL's topic area, and on rewarding teaching excellence.

How institution views the role of the CETL: Respondents were asked what they thought their institution saw as the role of the CETL. The most frequent responses were that the CETL's role was seen to be that of developing excellence in teaching and learning, being a catalyst for change, facilitating innovation in teaching and learning, and providing prestige externally.

Support from senior management: Well over half (58%) reported that the CETL was fully supported by senior management and just over a third (34%) that there was some support from senior management. Only very small numbers (8%) reported a lack of any support.

Kind of support from senior management: Respondents who felt that their CETL was actively supported by senior management were asked about the ways in which this happened. This was usually seen as being achieved by the presence of senior managers on the CETL management board/steering group or equivalent. It was also done through report back mechanisms and other kinds of meetings.

Other aspects of CETL's relationship with senior management: Nearly two thirds (61%) said that they worked closely with the senior management to disseminate the work of the CETL across the institution. For a quarter (25%) the relationship was less developed and they only discussed the progress of the CETL with senior management through steering or management board meetings. A small number (6%) felt that senior management had little knowledge of what they were doing.

Sustainability of CETL beyond the funding period: Respondents were asked if their institution had any plans to provide resources for the CETL after the end of the funding period. For nearly half (42%), this was a matter still under discussion and nothing had been agreed. A small number (6%) reported that the institution would provide resources to fully fund CETL activities after the end of the funding period, 14% were going to partially fund some continuing CETL activities and 14% were not planning to provide resources for the CETL after the end of the funding period. Nearly a quarter (23%) did not know if the institution had any plans to provide resources for the CETL after the end of the funding period.

Main activities of the CETL: CETLs engaged in a wide range of activities and most of them covered the same ground. The most common activities, engaged in by over 80% of the CETLs, were support for events (workshops, seminars etc) to disseminate innovative practice, development of new partnerships to promote creative learning and teaching practices, development of digital and web based resources, finding new ways to use technology/equipment, involving students in working with external agencies/employers/partners, bursaries/grants for staff to experiment with new technologies, bursaries/grants for staff to undertake pedagogic research and bursaries/grants for staff to experiment with new curricula.

Current development of the CETL: Nearly everybody felt that their CETL had been a success so far (99%), and was achieving its aims (97%). 92% said that they could see how the experience of the CETL could be used to change practice more widely, 89% that having access to extra resources through the CETL had been an effective way of changing practice within their institutions, and 88% that the CETL was having a positive effect on teaching and learning in the host institution. Most (78%) reported that the steering group worked effectively. Most respondents (72%) also valued the support they had had from HEFCE/HEA organised events and network activity. 61% felt that the CETL was having a positive effect on teaching and learning in the wider academic community. About a quarter (28%) were being hampered by problems with the equipment or with delays in the capital spend.

Progress so far: Respondents were very positive about the effects their CETLs were having so far. 92% felt that their CETL had had a direct effect on the quality of learning and/or support for their students, and 91% that the CETL had enabled collaborations with other partners. 89% felt that the biggest achievements of the CETL lay in opportunities to think more effectively about teaching and learning. Just over three quarters (77%) reported that the CETL had enabled teachers to work together more effectively, and three quarters (75%) that the most rewarding aspect of the CETL's work had been trying out new teaching and learning approaches with students. Over two thirds (69%)

felt that the capital spend would be an important aspect of the CETL's sustainability after the end of the funding period, while over half (55%) said that the CETL had supported a more central focus on teaching and learning within the institution. Less than a quarter (22%) felt that it was too soon for the capital spending to create real changes in teaching and learning.

Main achievements: Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they considered the main achievements of their CETL to be so far. The most frequent responses were collaboration and the development of partnerships and networks, innovative teaching practices and the impact on learning, the provision of new and specialised facilities, staff and team development, and increased staff and student engagement.

The CETL programme as a strategy for achieving change: Nearly all the CETLs agreed that exemplars of excellent practice offer an important way to influence change in the sector (88%); that rewarding excellence is an effective strategy for achieving change across the sector (84%); and that rewarding excellent practice is a positive way to introduce change in higher education (84%). Nearly two thirds (63%) agreed that the timescale of the CETL programme was sufficiently long for serious change to be achieved. Only very small numbers felt that the CETL programme was unlikely to effect change outside the host/partner institution/s (11%), or that the money spent on the CETL programme would have been better spent elsewhere (3%).

Strengths and weaknesses of the CETL programme as strategy for change: Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they saw as the strengths and weaknesses of the CETL programme as a strategy for change. The main strengths were seen as the focus on teaching and learning, the opportunity to raise the profile of teaching, the level of ring-fenced investment, and the ability of the CETLs to be a catalyst for change. Only small numbers of respondents felt that there were any weaknesses. Those mentioned were a lack of sustainability and lack of institutional commitment, a sense of some inequity in the system, vague and confused expectations of the CETL in relation to host institution, timescales unrealistic and that the initiative was too small to address fundamental problems.

4.0 The review of the self evaluation reports

4.1 Introduction

Part of the evaluation of the CETL strategy involved using the self evaluation reports submitted to HEFCE at the end of July. This section outlines the findings of the analysis of 74 self evaluation reports. The self evaluations were not part of the monitoring exercise but were intended to be part of the way the CETLs themselves presented their work as *public information*. From the perspective of the national evaluation of the CETLs, these reports yield important insights into the way CETLs present their work and come to provisional conclusions about how their experience might be captured. Most CETL formative evaluation reports observe that it is relatively early in the change process. They are, therefore, an evaluative resource for the national evaluations but are secondary to the independent evaluative activities of the national evaluation team.

The original evaluation design suggested the following challenges in using the self evaluation reports as an evaluative resource for the national evaluation:

- CETLs were encouraged to commission evaluations which reflected their own needs and sense of what might be useful as a mid term self evaluative statement. This has resulted in evaluations that had large variations in scope, purpose, agency and focus
- This has meant that there will be very wide variations in the quality and focus of the evidence and data available from the local evaluations to use for broad conclusions
- Local evaluators and the CETLs take seriously issues of confidentiality, access and other ethical issues
- Two levels of evaluation can create serious overload on CETL stakeholders where the same questions and foci can be asked creating duplication even though for different purposes. The administrative burden of local support should also not be underestimated
- The developmental and formative nature of local CETL evaluations may not yield 'stable' enough data for definitive assessments of the CETL change theory at a national level but yield ample indications of the experience of the strategy at this juncture.

In the event, these predictions have proved to be more or less accurate (apart from the point about overload; there was no evidence from the CETLs themselves that this was an issue) and overviews of a sample of the reports reveal the following.

- They contain a rich array of analytical descriptions of individual CETLs' work
- They have formative potential in identifying potential adjustments, successes, challenges and orientation
- They contain wide variations in data and empirical bases for estimations of value and worth
- They tend to focus on activities rather than more systematic data or evidence led conclusions
- There is wide variation in report structure.

4.2 The approach

The depiction of the CETL self evaluation reports as an 'evaluative resource' was adopted by the team who viewed them through limited and specific foci. This was an attempt to control and manage the process of analysis in the light of the huge diversity contained within the reports. The approach focuses very much on what 'policy learning' opportunities the self evaluation reports offer to a national evaluation. This meant that the interrogative framework was based on themes which are drawn directly from reflections on the idea of a CETL as a change strategy (reflections on CETLs as a national strategy). Five experienced researchers in HE practice were involved in the process.

HEFCE stresses the fact that reward and recognition is a key element of the CETL initiative. It expects self evaluation reports to reflect on this in some detail. The evaluation provides information about effective models to reward and recognise excellence in institutions. It follows that the overview remains focused on the extent to which the CETL self evaluations address or refer to all six of the CETL objectives:

- 'Rewarding practice that demonstrates excellent learning outcomes for students enabling practitioners to lead and embed change
- Addressing the diversity of learners' needs, the requirements of different learning contexts, innovation and the expectations of employers
- Enabling institutions to support and develop practice that encourages deeper understanding of ways to address students' learning effectively
- Recognising clusters of excellence that are capable of influencing practice and raising the profile of teaching excellence within and beyond their institutions demonstrating collaboration
- Facilitating debate and the sharing of ideas and practices to enhance standards of learning, teaching and assessment throughout the sector raising student awareness of effectiveness in teaching and learning
- To inform student choice and maximise student performance.'

(Source, HEFCE 2004/05)

In the light of the discussion above, we have devised a framework which:

- Is straightforward to use
- Can be undertaken in the time available
- Captures the main points of interest
- Lends itself to numerical analysis
- Will allow an overview of the whole programme.

The framework (in the form of a proforma) is reproduced in Appendix 2. The CETL aims are used to structure the analysis. Activities are categorised by the extent to which they address the CETL's aims as a national strategy. We have inferred its relevance to a particular aim based on statements within the self evaluation report. Evidence of effectiveness is then identified for each activity. This consideration is associated with evidence that has been gathered with the explicit purpose of assessing the value or worth of the activity. We then identify the determination of whether the activity was deemed to be effective or not and the justification that has been offered. There is space to identify any significant changes of approach within the self evaluation report and the strengths and weaknesses of the CETL strategy as a whole. The proforma also has an opportunity to include aims of an individual CETL that fall outside the national framework.²⁸

We have synthesised 74 self evaluation reports in the way described above and are able to offer an overview of the range of activities undertaken. As we note above, the reports are analysed using the strategic aims of the CETL policy. It should be noted that different CETLs saw the same kind of activity as meeting different aims. For example, some CETLs saw teaching fellowships as rewarding good practice, others saw them as developing institutions' understanding of ways of supporting student learning, and others as a way of raising the profile of teaching excellence institutionally. In this commentary, the same activity may be counted more than once if it addresses a different aim.

Because of these methodological challenges, the following analysis can only be indicative and rather tentative and is presented to give a flavour of CETL formative reports rather than a

²⁸ When the framework was followed the interpretation of what activity reflected which aim differed between CETLs. For example, raising the profile of excellence across the sector and encouraging debate across the sector appear to have been very broadly interpreted as 'developing links with external partners'.

definitive account. It is important then to read the following commentary in the spirit in which it is offered.

4.3 A word about the evidence provided

What counts as evidence in this kind of environment is contentious. All of the evaluation reports were focused mainly on reporting the level of activity in which each CETL had been involved since they were established. In the majority of cases, the fact that activities had occurred was the only evidence of effect that was offered. Out of 1181 instances of activities reported by the 74 CETLs, 845 (72%) had no systematic evidence of effect. This leaves 336 (28%) activities which included some form of evidence of effect. Of that group, 149 (44%) based their evidence on feedback from staff, students or employers, and in three cases the evidence of effectiveness was based on an external examiner report, documented changes to the curriculum, and an improvement in student performance in tests.

4.4 Leading and embedding change

For many CETLs, leading and embedding change appeared to characterise all of their activities and so it was not separated out as a particular aim. Where it was, some CETLs focused on their membership of university committees (seven cases), or their input into corporate plans or learning and teaching strategies (21 cases). For others, their approach to embedding change was to develop new modules, programmes or resources that were embedded in the curricula of particular departments (33 cases), offering competitive awards (three cases), fellowships (two cases) and setting up projects (seven cases). Two CETLs offered MPhil/PhD bursaries and four CETLs are providing student funding for research assistant posts. In 15 CETLs the creation of new buildings and learning spaces was seen as a way of embedding change in their institution.

Activity	No.
Membership of university committees	7
Input into corporate plans or learning and teaching strategies	21
Development of new modules/programmes/resources	33
Competitive awards	3
Fellowships	2
Projects	7
MPhil/PhD bursaries	2
Student funding for research assistant posts	4
New buildings/learning spaces	15

4.5 Addressing diverse needs in diverse contexts

A number of approaches were taken to addressing diverse needs in diverse contexts. 27 CETLs used the provision of new programmes or modules to address previously unmet needs. Of these one established the first certificate programme in the UK for those with a specific special need in a particular discipline. Others (18 cases) have piloted the use of new technologies, such as PDAs, or new approaches to supporting students, such as peer learning, in order to meet diverse student needs. In eight cases, CETLs have sought to support student placements with employers in order to facilitate the understanding between students and employers, CETLs (five cases) have created learning labs for the same purpose, and CETLs (eight cases) have supported projects with employers. CETLs have also put on outreach events (11 cases), workshops (seven cases), conferences (two cases), supported student projects (10 cases) and a student network (five cases), another has the intention to establish one. Eight CETLs have developed new materials and at one CETL late night learning sessions were introduced to support diverse student need. Finally another CETL has

introduced changes to student assessment and in eight cases, partnerships with external bodies have been established.

Activity	No.
New programmes/modules	27
New certificate programme	1
New technologies	18
Student placements with employers	8
Creation of learning labs	5
Projects with employers	8
Outreach events	11
Workshops	7
Conferences	2
Student projects	10
Student network	5
Development of new materials	8
Late night learning sessions	1
Changes to students assessment	1
Partnerships with external bodies	8

4.6 Institutions developing understanding of ways of supporting students' learning

The most frequent way of developing institutions' understanding of ways of supporting students' learning was through the funding of fellowships (20 cases) and small scale development projects (23 cases). CETLs (20 cases) focused on funding pedagogic research projects, and four CETLs had also developed a pedagogic research network. CETLs (nine cases) had been involved in the evaluation of current provision in their institutions, whilst other CETLs (nine cases) had focused on bringing together teaching teams from different institutions and CETLs (two cases) also offered secondments. CETLs (two cases) had worked with student societies and another intends to, in order to develop ways of supporting students' learning. New technologies have been introduced (four cases) and engaging colleagues in trying new approaches to teaching and learning was emphasised (14 cases) as a means of supporting students' learning. 10 CETLs have made developments to the curriculum and in five cases there have been collaborations with other departments. Two CETLs established PhD studentships and CETLs (10 cases) have set up student learning events such as away days and workshops as a means to support students' learning. Finally one CETL participated on a student support review team and a programme committee.

Activity	No.
Fellowships	20
Small scale development projects	23
Pedagogic research projects	20
Pedagogic research network	4
Evaluation of current provision	9
Collaboration with teaching teams from different institutions	6
Secondments	2

Collaboration with student societies	2
New technologies	4
New approaches to teaching and learning	14
Curriculum development	10
Collaborations with other departments	5
PhD studentships	2
Student learning events	10
Student support review team	1

4.7 Raising the profile of teaching excellence – institutionally

There was less direct evidence of CETLs' capacity to raise the profile of teaching excellence in their institutions (although many of the activities discussed under the other aims might contribute to this). One CETL provided bursaries for staff to undertake a Postgraduate Diploma in learning and teaching. Three CETLs hosted teaching and learning symposia, and CETLs (five cases) saw teaching awards as a way of raising the profile in their institutions. In CETLs (16 cases) involvement in developing institutional policies was understood to be raising the profile of teaching excellence, and CETLs (22 cases) saw its funding of developmental projects as doing so. At three CETLs, new staff posts were created and in one CETL three PhD studentships were offered. CETLs (eight cases) hosted or attended seminars and conferences, five created a new website while other CETLs (16 cases) developed networks/communities of practice. 15 CETLs provided professional development opportunities (some of these are secondments, internal and to other CETLs' teaching) while increasing faculty engagement in teaching (six cases) were other activities introduced. Three CETLs have developed links with external partners and another three have developed links with other CETLs while for some the prestige of advising other institutions was also seen as a means of raising the profile of learning and teaching institutionally (six cases).

Activity	No.
Staff bursaries	1
Teaching and learning symposia	3
Teaching awards	5
Development of institutional processes	16
Funding of development projects	22
New staff posts	3
PhD studentships	3
Seminars/conferences	8
New websites	5
Networks/communities of practice	16
Professional development opportunities	15
Faculty engagement with teaching	6
Links with external partners	3
Links with other CETLs	3
Advising other institutions	6

4.8 Raising the profile of teaching excellence – across the sector

CETLs sought to raise the profile of teaching excellence across the sector through networking days (seven cases), conferences or workshops (29 cases), and visiting fellowships (seven cases). CETLs (two cases) had established a journal to do this, and another an educational resources centre and one CETL organised a festival of student excellence. For some CETLs (17) the aim was met through collaborative work with other CETLs whilst other CETLs (27 cases) built partnerships with schools, other universities, professional bodies and Subject Centres. Two CETLs arranged an international study trip and the appointment of teaching and research fellows were considered to have helped raise profiles (seven cases). Supporting curriculum change, both internally and externally through master classes, bespoke advising and summer schools (six cases) and by publishing in journals and supporting pedagogic research (13 cases), was also seen as a means of raising the profile of teaching excellence across the sector. Finally four CETLs felt that web presence helped raise their profile across the sector.

Activity	No.
Networking days	7
Conferences/workshops	29
Visiting fellowships	4
Journals	2
Educational resources centre	1
Festival of student excellence	1
Collaborative work with other CETLs	17
Partnerships with schools/universities/Subject Centres/professional bodies	27
International study trip	2
Teaching and research fellows	7
Curriculum change	6
Publishing in journals and pedagogic research	13
Websites	4

4.9 Encouraging debate, sharing ideas and practices about teaching, learning and assessment across the sector

This aim was mainly met through collaboration with other CETLs (17 cases), institutions (14 cases) or Subject Centres (13 cases). In addition, one CETL set up an international symposium to meet this aim. For six CETLs, publication in journals and for another two, creation of a journal was a way of sharing ideas and practices and another by broadcasting (BBC series and book). Four CETLs created websites whilst two CETLs developed a web based teaching package and in 16 cases, workshops and conferences were ways the CETLs shared ideas. The encouragement of cross-disciplinary work and discussion (eight cases), supporting pedagogic research and scholarly activity (12 cases), encouraging relationships with professional bodies (seven cases) and appointment of faculty pioneers (two cases) was also ways of encouraging debate and sharing ideas and practices about TLA across the sector.

Activity	No.
Collaboration with other CETLs	17
Collaboration with institutions	14
Collaboration with Subject Centres	13
International symposium	1

Publication in journals	6
Creation of journals	2
Broadcasting (BBC series and book)	1
Websites	4
Web based teaching package	2
Workshops/conferences	16
Cross-disciplinary work and discussion	8
Pedagogic research and scholarly activity	12
Relationships with professional bodies	7
Faculty pioneers	2

4.10 Informing student choice and maximising student performance

CETLs employed student fellows (six cases) to meet this aim, CETLs offered studentship awards (five cases), ran workshops or conferences (four cases) and CETLs (six cases) ran projects which improved students' performance. In two CETLs students were offered the chance to bid for project funding. CETLs developed e-support and tutorials (four cases) and developed new materials and offered more student choice (11 cases). Two CETLs saw its fellowships for academics as a way of informing choice and maximising student performance, another CETL sought to support this aim through the development of an employment skills website and another through work with their careers centre. 15 CETLs developed new facilities with new technology, including independent learning facilities. In three CETLs they achieved the same through closer work with the student union. One CETL commissioned a documentary from some of its students, another four set up a student network whilst two CETLs conducted student surveys to maximise student performance. In one case a new style research project was set up in the final year and another encouraged deep learning and reflection from student research. Finally two CETLs improved assessment attainment.

Activity	No.
Student fellows	6
Studentship awards	5
Workshops/conferences	4
Projects	6
Project funding for students	2
E-support and tutorials	4
New materials	11
Fellowships	2
Development of employment skills website	1
Work with careers centre	1
New facilities with new technology	15
Collaboration with student union	3
Student documentary	1
Student network	4
Student surveys	2
Final year research project	1
Improvement in assessment attainment	2

4.11 Reward and recognition of excellent practice

Most of the 74 CETLs saw the capital investment in learning and office spaces as a reward for their excellent practice. CETLs (34 cases) saw their teaching award or fellowship schemes as meeting this aim and three saw the funding they made available for teaching and learning projects in the same terms. CETLs (six cases) gave student prizes and had student fellowship schemes. Project schemes providing small grants (sometimes described specifically as supporting pedagogic research) were seen as supporting the aim of reward and recognition of excellent practice (19 cases) whilst there were small financial rewards and prizes (17 cases). CETLs saw the internal promotion or regrading of their own staff as a reward for, and recognition of, their excellent practice (12 cases) whilst others had introduced sabbatical or secondment programmes (nine cases). Various development projects are being undertaken (15 cases) and in one CETL a new university career structure was developed. Enabling staff to enhance their CVs through giving presentations and publishing papers was seen by three CETLs as an example of reward and recognition of excellent practice.

Activity	No.
Investment in learning and office space	40+
Teaching award/fellowship schemes	34
Teaching and learning projects	3
Student prizes/student fellowship schemes	6
Project schemes with small grants	19
Small financial rewards and prizes	17
Promotion/re-grading of staff	12
Sabbatical/secondment programmes	9
Development projects	15
New university career structure	1
Presentations and publishing of work	3

4.12 Additional aims

CETLs had clear aims that went beyond the overall aims of the CETL policy (six cases). For example, four of the CETLs emphasised the importance of building capacity for, supporting and engaging in pedagogic research, another felt it had a key role in regional development and one CETL having an explicit aim to have an impact on national policy. A third CETL had the aim to develop and apply 'an intelligent theory of education'. A fourth felt it important to include the student voice and one of the ways they did this was by employing three student networkers. Similarly, another CETL also included students as partners in some of their activities and another wanted to directly engage student perspectives on their CETL work. Some CETLs had additional aims which were the result of evaluation of activities but are expressed as intentions for the future. These include linking a professional teaching standards framework to PDP for staff, facilitating the wider extension of established good practice to all academic disciplines, ensuring that work fits with institutional priorities and maximising potential opportunities to evaluate and disseminate development, without, in the short term, compromising front line support of students. Finally, one CETL highlighted some additional aims that included a greater emphasis upon examining the effects of learning design, identifying and conducting research as part of realising the CETL strategy/plan, increasing the usage of facilities, further support of CETL work at the policy level and to broker change within the university and sector in new ways.

4.13 Any significant changes to approach

Three CETLs reported making students more central to their overall strategy and CETLs (two cases) had given funding to its NHS partners. One CETL commented that capital funds had to be spent within the first two years. This meant that their aim to provide leading edge/new technologies could be constrained and it was likely that new technologies would emerge in that period. Most CETLs have

suggested re-emphasising, confirming or reconstructing orientations that were in the original proposal based on their experience.

4.14 Reflections on overall CETL strategy

Hosting the CETL

There were a number of reflections on the overall CETL strategy. The most frequent issue was the relationship between the CETL and its host institution(s). Many CETLs were clear that becoming integrated into their institutions systems was a key factor in attempting to embed change. A few CETLs felt that this integration had helped them to change teaching and learning practices across their institution. However, many CETLs felt that they did not fit into their institution's structures, and CETLs whose mission was in some way in conflict with their host institution reported finding the resultant tensions difficult to manage. Another CETL reported that 'it is difficult being an expert in your own institution'.

Other CETLs reported that being named a centre of excellence had helped to raise their profile and another welcomed the opportunity that being made a CETL had given them for 'blue skies thinking'. There was a widespread sense that a CETL community was developing across the sector but there was also a feeling that CETLs needed to become more embedded in the HE system as a whole if they were to be instrumental in bringing about lasting change. One CETL felt that it was too early to evaluate the overall strategy.

Capital investment

Space and capital investment is key to the change strategy. One CETL identified how the conditions under which capital investment could be deployed illuminated the 'newness' of the CETL approach and created specific challenges. In another case the approach taken by HEFCE toward capital investment differed to that followed in other areas of capital funding. This caused some short-term disagreements and misunderstandings. These have been resolved and did not impede a series of complex projects. Another issue was about how CETL activities fitted into the financial reporting systems of the university. One CETL report noted for example that the university's financial management system could not fully meet the needs of CETL Directors for project financial information. Some CETLs wanted to allocate funding categories that did not exist (such as dissemination and development). Project attributes were added so that CETL managers could extract the additional information they required to support project management. In this case a project team was established to find solutions to accommodating the new demands of CETL activities within financial reporting systems. Another 'solution' was creating a system to transfer funds from the university to its associated colleges. One had not existed.

Joined up thinking

There is an institutional concern about the co-ordination of research funded by the Research Informed Teaching Initiative and research undertaken under the aegis of CETLs. A suggestion was made for a more Coordinated or joined up and focused approach to supporting pedagogic research.

Unintended effects

Though the CETLs provide resources for enhancing learning and teaching, they also create resource pressures within CETLs. For example, it was noted in one case that Fellows appointed to teach often have prior teaching workloads. This established teaching workload has been picked up by other colleagues to free up the fellows.

CETL funding is based upon existing excellence. For one CETL this was interpreted as a tendency to confine development to that model or require that the model be replaced. It was noted that this contradicted the blue skies approach identified by other CETLs and may reflect tensions between universities partnered within the CETL expressing this concern.

There was a widespread sense that a CETL community was developing across the sector but there was also a feeling that CETLs needed to become more embedded in the HE system as a whole if they were to be instrumental in bringing about lasting change. CETLs (three cases) felt that it was too early to evaluate the overall strategy and most commented it was too soon to address issues of impact/success

Strengths

Creating change

- Accelerated development
- Creating agents of change x5
- Timescale and timing of the opportunity.

Networking and collaborations

- Collaborations with other CETLs x2
- Collaborations with industry x3
- Collaborations between institutions
- National interest in conference
- National and international networking
- Sense of community developing across the CETL x2.

Experimentation, research, risk taking and trialling

- Capacity for the experience to be genericised
- Enables risk taking/piloting and experimentation x8
- Provides a platform to develop research.

Cross institutional development, raising profile of teaching and learning

- Opportunities for enhanced student learning x5
- Bridging the gap between the academic and non-academic community on campus
- In one CETL it strengthened and sustained academic conversation about how the particular CETL's focus could be integrated with enterprise in every area of the curriculum
- Raises profile of teaching and learning in a research led institution x7.

Professional development

- Dynamic and energetic team development x3
- Staff development opportunities x3
- Developed a better understanding of multiple components of professional development.

Resources

- Extra resources for those directly involved x7
- CETL provides scope and visibility
- Extra income generated from CETL activities, use of building space x3.

Weaknesses

Problems of attribution

- Too ambitious x6
- Too much assumption that excellence in the centre's delivery necessarily translates into effective pedagogical innovation x4
- Funding is provided based on existing excellence. This can confine development to that model or replace that model (this may be a reflection of inter-institutional tensions/understandings).

Resourcing issues

- Increased workload for some CETL team members x6
- Appointment of fellows difficult to support financially
- Projects used resources meant for new equipment
- Materials are context specific and not easily transferable to other institutions
- Not enough resources to provide a critical mass for change x3
- Timescales x7
- Students negatively associate the CETLs with a decrease in small group work. This trend occurred because increase in student numbers has not been off-set with teaching income x2.

Institutional context and joined up thinking

- Still leaves the change process open to enclaves unless institutions respond
- Institutional embedding x3
- Uncertain multiplier effects at university and sector wide levels
- Variability in implementation of activities across the sites
- Lack of fit between culture of CETL and the host university leading to tension and the CETL's position in the university unclear x3
- Other research informed teaching HEFCE funded projects do not necessarily link up with research carried out in the CETL.

Specific CETL observations

- Experiments in using blogs and community web spaces as a means of engagement and encouraging social construction of knowledge have not been successful
- Connecting to the international community still under-developed
- Hub space at one CETL cumbersome to use
- Need for more focus and coordination of pedagogic research.

4.15 Summary comment

The CETL programme differs from many interventions of this kind in that it has expressed a clear justification for the allocation of resources which had embedded within it an implicit theory of improvement and change. It also took the idea of formative evaluation seriously, allowing individual CETLs to own and control their own formative reports alongside the formative evaluation at a national level. As we note above, CETLs have responded to this new evaluation environment disparately but this review of the self evaluation reports (74) reveals a rich resource of experience that illuminates and enables an appreciation of CETL progress to date.

It is important to recognise that the indicators of effectiveness within the reports vary. We have shown where the CETL uses a specific indicator. It may well be that an indicator exists in the case of a CETL but the self evaluation report simply does not refer to it. It appeared that monitoring, audit activities and the organisational reporting systems within CETLs were used within the self evaluations. While these record activity or lack of it, they often do not usually examine the worth of the activity. In this sense, they are not evaluative, however useful in documenting what is happening. At times the use of these data has created a tension between the aim of the CETLs to use the self evaluations formatively and to demonstrate performance and efficacy. For the purposes of the national evaluation, this tension might obscure aspects of implementation that could provide data about CETLs as a change strategy. Understandably, some of the self evaluations did not follow, or follow closely, the eight strategic aims in their reporting. On occasions it was necessary to interpret which aim the CETL intended the activity to support. The self evaluation reports tend to evaluate their progress against their targets, not their impact – so evidence often took the shape of quantitative data on attendance, occupancy, etc and satisfaction rates.

It was not always clear from the self evaluation reports how or how much data had been collected and there was often a need to refer to other documents to get a full picture. One CETL adopted an ongoing, systemic and qualitative approach to evaluation, claiming that impact on practices and cultures may only be evident in the long term. It focused on collecting 'rich' rather than 'easy to synthesise' data and was critical of the applicability of the evaluation framework offered by HEFCE to the CETL claiming it doesn't allow for a focus on organisational change, but rather on 'local interventions in learning and teaching programmes at the level of a department or discipline'.

What is important to note is that many of the CETL reports did not refer to evidence collected systematically which could act as a resource for a judgement of the effectiveness of an activity as a change mechanism whatever its subtlety or timeframe. In these circumstances, the self evaluation reports overall tended to reduce an estimation of effect to the successful completion of an activity to which there was a positive reaction. This might be understood as a first step in evaluation i.e. without an activity taking place or numbers of individuals taking part no effects could be expected. However, a reader is still not able to discern on what basis the activity is considered to have produced or not desired outcomes or positive effects of a wider nature. It may be, however, as many CETL self evaluation reports note, too early to address what we call level 3 type considerations (see figure 2).

Notwithstanding this highly pertinent observation, it might be helpful to assess the possible use of evaluation tools²⁹ which are designed to organise an evaluation focus for planning purposes that go beyond the successful completion of an activity to which there was a positive reaction. It understands possible evaluation foci in terms of levels. Originally designed for use as a tool for the evaluation of training interventions, it can be adapted for use in any environment that involves an intervention

²⁹ See for example, Saunders M, Bonamy J and Charlie B (2005) Using evaluation to create 'provisional stabilities': bridging innovation in Higher Education change processes published in *Evaluation: the International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 2005 Volume 11, Number 1, Spring 2005 pp 37-55

Saunders, M (2006) The presence of evaluation theory and practice in educational and social development: toward an inclusive approach in *London Review of Education* Vol. 4, No 2, July 2006, pp. 197-215

strategy. Essentially, it corresponds to the elements of the trajectory taken by an intervention from the quality of the target group's experience of the initial engagement (which could be workshops, a seminar, visits, mentoring, fellowship etc) through to the extent to which the strategy creates longer term strategic effects on a whole system. This final level is normally associated with estimations of the effectiveness of a government policy through its various mechanisms. It lends itself to a relatively lightly managed approach (like the CETL programme) in terms of non-prescribed strategies.

Figure 2: A trajectory approach to self evaluation

Level 1: Quality of the experience of the intervention

(How was the intervention experienced by the target group 'at the time'? Essentially this level of concern is associated with the tone, pitch, quality of resources, space, timing and relevance of the engagement activity.) In many cases this diagnostic tool is used as a quality check, customer service tool or 'happy sheet'. It is important as a diagnostic tool for the quality of the delivery of an engagement strategy or estimations of awareness.

Level 2: Quality of the situated learning outcomes

(If the engagement had specific learning or knowledge based outcomes in mind on the part of the target group, this level is concerned with measuring what these may be.) In traditional training environments, these might be specific skills or new knowledge acquisition. In the CETL environment it might be associated with new information acquired by the target group (courses and frameworks they were not aware of), attitudinal changes, the development of new horizons, new knowledge etc. These outcomes are important. However, while not corresponding to new behaviour or practice on the part of the target group, they might be considered a necessary condition for such change.

Level 3: Quality of transfer or reconstructed learning to new environments and practices

(This is probably the 'gold standard' in terms of a CETL strategy overall and is a direct reference to the extent to which strategies have produced more routine, longer term changes in the attitudes, capacities, confidence and identities in the target group.) This level of consideration can be addressed by quantitative indicators with relatively little diagnostic potential (inclusion rates associated with the target group, stay on or drop out rates, types of courses etc) but might also include indications of the experience of university life, its support services, and teaching and learning practices by staff involving more narrative enquiry techniques.

Level 4: Quality of institutional or sector impacts

(This level shifts the focus from the experience of individuals to the extent to which strategies are promoting 'new ways' of doing things at the institutional level in terms of new systems, routine systemic practices and assumptions which are framed by the widening participation agenda.) As an evaluation focus, other key stakeholders (undergraduate and postgraduate officers, teaching and learning committees, teams engaged in learner support practices, teachers engaged in routine teaching and learning practices) will form the source of evaluative evidence.

Level 5: Impact on macro or long term strategic objectives

While not of direct interest to the self evaluation of CETLs, from the sector coordinating point of view, it may be interesting to work with individual evaluations at CETL level (concentrating on levels 3 and 4) to develop a meta perspective on how the CETL programme is achieving positive effects overall. To some extent that is what this section of the report is attempting to do.

In summary, we have responded to the way the CETL self evaluation reports use evidence and different foci by referring directly to evidence of effect when it is apparent. That is not to say of course that positive effects were not being produced. There were many instances of richly textured descriptions of activities that were clearly enjoyable and memorable and suggested an extraordinary range of creative and well planned interventions. These activities are likely to have had positive effects on those who were directly involved and possibly wider afield in the institution, its partners or the sector as a whole. The problem is from a meta-evaluative stance, apart from the self reporting of success; there is no way of knowing how it might have influenced practice. Analysts noted that only a minority of reports referred to an explicit evaluation theory or approach. There was a general absence of reference to known evaluation framework(s) or approaches and/or frameworks chosen were not referenced in the evaluation literature.

5.0 Formative overview

5.1 Overall

5.1.1 The various dimensions of this evaluation reveal an overall positive narrative for the development of the CETLs as 'nodes' of teaching and learning focused activities.

- Notwithstanding the tendency for newly formed entities like CETLs to have a strong sense of emerging identity, internal culture and excitement, the interviewees were able to point to a range of positive effects the existence of the CETL had enabled. As this report suggests, these effects tend to be circulating around the direct beneficiaries of CETL resources but there is growing evidence that effects are beginning to move out from the enclaves of practice within CETLs and, in some cases, are being used to strategic effect within institutions. Overall, we can identify some supportable but provisional propositions concerning the effects of reward and recognition through the CETL programme
- A minority of CETLs have had profound effects on institutional policy and practice; particularly in cross disciplinary areas e.g. work based learning, assessment, student learning processes, and student support and have begun to influence the wider teaching and learning community
- Where good links with the appropriate HEA Subject Centres and other strong networks exist along with a strategic approach to engagement, CETLs have been able to enrich teaching in their discipline across the sector
- At this stage, a large minority of cases have had little or no effect on institutional practice outside the immediate CETL beneficiaries.

However,

- Most, if not all CETLs have enriched and extended the expertise of teaching practitioners and fellows through reward and have experimented in an innovative way with course content, learning process and assessment. The longer term influence and potential of this enrichment is difficult to estimate but may be important in developing a cadre of 'extended' professionals through which increased priority is given to teaching and learning
- A large proportion of cases have had effects in pockets where optimum 'deepening factors' (see below) are present
- There is a strong message from the senior managers and key informants that the relative autonomy and 'loosely coupled' nature of the programme, whilst being immediately attractive to the academic community in terms of its hard fought but now probably illusory independence, there are some downsides. They talk of missed opportunities to coordinate, rather low visibility in terms of 'impression management' and a difficulty in capitalising on the collective outputs and learning of the programme as a whole
- The existence of a CETL has enabled good practice to develop further with the injection of resources. These resources have enabled pedagogic research opportunities, small scale development projects, new curriculum designs, experiments with new methodologies, professional development and support for dissemination
- Capital spend has been a visible and iconic symbol of a shift in attention toward teaching and learning. Some senior managers were able to use the attraction of serious resources into the institution from a teaching rather than research imperative as a way of leveraging the status of teaching and learning within institutions. In this sense the 'recognition' dimension of the strategy is working subtly to reposition the status of teaching practitioners
- CETLs are part of a general shift in the backdrop of priorities, emphases, seriousness and awareness within HE over the last 10 years or so associated with teaching and learning. The 'gamble' that reward and recognition would give teaching and learning a serious boost within the sector may have yielded a strategic dividend. This has also coincided with other important changes where the quality of teaching and learning have been fore-grounded (for example, changes in fee structure sensitising students to good and bad quality of teaching and the

National Student Survey, being as it is, a public estimation of teaching quality reducible to individual courses and thus members of staff)

- There are signs that the time limited rewards associated with the programme may have prompted or supported some systemic changes in the way academic career paths and routes within HE teaching are understood and designed
- CETLs have highlighted the uneasy relationship between disciplinary knowledge, active research within a discipline or cluster of disciplines (traditional research based practice), how that research based knowledge is reproduced through teaching and learning programmes (teaching and learning practices embedded in courses) and the pedagogic knowledge (produced through research) or experientially, which may or may not have a disciplinary boundary. The latter has an uncertain status in some quarters with its legitimacy and the legitimate position of its proponents being questioned. Their position is that separating out pedagogic research within a discipline from its disciplinary research base is unsound i.e. the emergence of academic teachers who teach within a discipline and have pedagogic expertise, but are not active researchers within the discipline, is antithetical to the core purpose of higher education. These polar positions are probably not helpful however. The dominant position held by most interviewees was more integrative with a view that any university academic should be supported in the development of their own pedagogic expertise
- As an embedded theory of change, the idea of a CETL programme does have its critics. The focus for the critique does not lie in whether or not reward and recognition has worked to produce further positive developments by those in receipt of new resources and attention (reward and recognition). The critique points to the sub-aim of the programme to '**deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community**'. Senior managers (VCs, PVCs and key informants) pointed to the difficulties of using the CETL experience to deepen its effects within institutions and across the sector. They argue that there is no necessary connection between wonderful practice within a CETL and the chances it might have for wider engagement unless there is an explicit 'engagement strategy'. This position, it has to be said, is supported by what we know about how change works³⁰. The message is to concentrate on 'engagement' as well as increased activity.

5.1.2 The trajectory of the programme overall is complex. However, interviews with senior managers of institutions that host CETLs suggest a mixed although overall optimistic picture of CETLS' propensity to 'deepen' the effects of excellent practice. Overall, it is justifiable to say on the basis of the evidence collected during this evaluation that only a relatively small proportion of senior managers were able to point to their CETLs as embedded in or providing leadership to the strategic direction of the institution's teaching and learning strategy. Most commented on its relatively 'enclaved' state at present and saw a need for a more integrative approach going forward.

At institutional level, factors that enable the deepening effects of excellence enshrined in CETLs include:

- An active rather than rhetorical connection to institutional policy making, makers and strategic planning process
- CETL activities that have a cross disciplinary rather than uni-disciplinary focus (although we heard a convincing argument that there was nothing intrinsically uni-disciplinary about creative and excellent teaching simply because it takes place in a single discipline. It is often a matter of creatively reconstructing some core dimensions such that they can 'travel' across the disciplinary landscape)

³⁰ Connell, J.P. & Kubisch, A.C. (1996) Applying a theories of change approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives. New York: The Aspen Institute.

Fullan M (2003) *Change Forces with a Vengeance* (Routledge, New York)

Hall G E and Loucks S (1978) Teacher Concerns as a Basis for Facilitating and Personalising Staff Development in *Teachers College Record* Vol 80(1) 36 –53

Hughes, M & Traynor, T (2000) Reconciling process and outcome in evaluating community initiatives. *Evaluation*. Vol 6(1): 37-49.

- CETLs that have a robust framework of systemic or networked connections to other institutions or partners
- The pre-existing framework for reward and status within the institution that acted favourably toward teaching excellence
- The strength and dominance of traditional incentives for reward within the institution (promotion based mainly on research output)
- The status, success, recognition and priority of existing practices and frameworks constructed to support, enhance and reward teaching (e.g. CETLs within institutions)
- A relatively sophisticated approach to strategies of external engagement with the work and outputs of the CETL on a continuum from information giving to active engagement strategies
- The scope of pedagogic research as an authentic support for claims of 'better learning'. We offer the broad range of approaches to pedagogic research on a continuum of from relative informality to traditional 'scientific' designs (see 5.3.2 below).

5.1.3 Practitioners tend to see the reward aspect of the CETLs in comparatively modest terms of providing opportunities not normally available to them in the context of their routine practice. For example: being able to carry out research in a more systematic and less ad hoc way, having the funds to allow them to go to conferences, being able to network and build up contacts. Interestingly, in an initiative designed to enhance the status of teaching, practitioners involved in CETL activity refer to the reward of being able to undertake research (albeit pedagogic research) as a way to possibly advance their careers – research still being regarded by them as the main route to career advancement and promotion.

It may be the case that the focus on the enhancement of teaching and learning, and the reward component of involvement with a CETL, is different in the more research-intensive universities, moving more toward a focus on teaching whilst post-'92 institutions are more likely to be rewarded by being given opportunities to carry out research. For practitioners, the CETLs may be more about reward (opportunities to take part in new activities or to develop areas of interest) rather than recognition (in the form of promotion for teaching excellence). It should also be noted that for a number of practitioners, the reward aspect of CETL involvement is slightly diminished by the fact that it entails extra work for them as not all teaching staff are being given adequate time by their departments from their 'core' practice to enable them to meet the extra commitments of CETL activities.

Another group of 'practitioners' whose roles have become increasingly important for many of the CETLs are support staff and, in particular, learning technologists. The latter are taking on key roles in those CETLs where new forms of technologies are being exploited for teaching and learning. It may be that CETLs, or their institutions, might wish to consider how their contribution to the CETLs can be appropriately rewarded.

5.1.4 CETL team members are more likely to see CETLs in terms of both reward (for example, funding to develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning) and recognition. The rewards include being able to develop existing activities or to try out innovative pedagogical approaches. Also, being awarded a CETL has tangible status and carries the sense that it is a reward for being 'special' in terms of teaching excellence (this notion, as one of the VCs pointed out, is diminished in those institutions where wholesale appointments from outside the institution were prompted on receipt of CETL funding). This stakeholder group are more aware of the potential of the CETLs to raise the status of teaching as a career path in its own right. As we note above, CETLs are seen as key strategic players in the development of policies, in many universities, for more structured career pathways for those who excel at teaching

5.1.5 Middle and senior managers tend to see the CETLs as providing both reward in terms of wider opportunities to those involved (research, conferences etc) and, possibly, the reward of boosting career prospects. The latter depended very much on institutions' own HR policies (there were dislocations in some universities) but there seems to be a change where the development of clearer promotion and career pathways for teaching within many institutions is taking place. CETLs are seen by senior managers as contributing effectively to this agenda.

5.1.6 The accumulative effect of the various strategies of government since 1997 to increase a focus on teaching and learning as a response to the Dearing Committee Report is creating a sea change. The cultural positioning of teaching and learning within universities has shifted and the landscape is

very different to that of the early 1990s. As part of this shifting backdrop, CETLs are playing a role. This strategy, for even those VCs who failed to procure funds, is understood in terms of its capacity to encourage enrichment, experimentation and to act as a way of foregrounding the focus on teaching and learning.

5.1.7 There were of course those who point to the real danger of 'project' approaches to funding i.e. what will the legacy be once funding stops? This might be a particular problem for the smaller institutions. Issues of sustainability we discuss in detail below, but the same argument might hold for any injection of cash if the recipient is unable to think creatively about how it might be used. At the moment, the evidence suggests that institutions really need to think more strategically about the future. Interestingly, all those senior managers who had not been successful did not sustain an in-principle objection to the strategy if a new opportunity to bid were to arise.

5.2 Relationship with host institution

5.2.1 Issues associated with the capital spend and the appointments of appropriate staff have been the most frequently cited problems as CETLs have started up. Delays with both have resulted in some false dawns, or as one respondent put it, 'a phoney war creating a bit of a hiatus'. As we note above, the evidence from the CETLs suggest the next period might focus more explicitly on wider dissemination and engagement (nationally and internationally, within and without the CETL network) of its successes and contributions to thinking on teaching and learning.

5.2.2 There is evidence from visits, survey and the self evaluation reports that the relationship between individual CETLs and their host institution is a critical factor in moving from enclave to wider effects. In some cases, CETLs could show that their connection to a wider disciplinary constituency was stronger than with its own institution. While not overwhelming, the evidence shows a mixed picture concerning support and strategic thinking with respect to CETLs' role and function (both potential and current) within institutions. Uncertainty about futures, lack of integration and a degree of hesitation about longer term strategic value characterises a significant minority of CETLs. Clearly there is a challenge in seeking cross institutional relevance from a CETL with a strong disciplinary focus. However, many of the experiences of CETLs do have more generic teaching and learning relevance (e.g. assessment processes student support practice, reflective learning, employability themes, and engagement with wider community). The strategic implication of these findings is that if CETLs are to have lasting effects, a concerted effort may be required to discuss with host institutions the way in which the work of the CETL might be institutionalised such that they may play a more robust role within institutions. In terms of the model of an innovation trajectory we are using to depict CETLs as a change strategy, the dominant mode is within:

- Stages 0-3 which involves wider emerging institutional awareness and interest in knowing more, thinking of implications for the institution or for other networks, such as subject or regional ones and initial awareness of innovative practice embodied in the CETL and engagement strategies that begin to establish new bridgeheads
- Some CETLs are beginning to move toward stages 4-5 involving wider emerging awareness and interest in knowing more, thinking of implications for the institution or for other networks, such as subject or regional ones, more attention on the impact on students, staff, departments and whole institution of new practices and processes, relevance, evaluation and implied changes. At this stage, attention is on difficulties in the processes and tasks involved in developing new practices, processes and systems
- We might expect, toward the final period of funding for the CETLs that they begin to experience activity at what we understand as stages 6-7 where attention is now on adaptation, major changes, alternatives to original ideas and creativity. This opens up the possibility of increased coordination and cooperation with other stakeholders in using new practices, systems and processes.

5.3 Issues in the management of the programme

5.3.1 The evidence suggests that the management of the programme has attracted some observations, particularly from the most senior of our group of key informants (through the early interviews with strategically placed individuals and the most recent interviews with VCs and PVCs).

We have synthesised these perspectives in the form of sub themes that might focus management attention during the next and last phase of funding.

As in other interventions in the higher education sector in the UK, the relative autonomy of the higher education institution is a factor that shapes the 'consensual' approach to change³¹. The approach of having deliberate strategies to change and enhance learning and teaching in higher education has a short history. Traditionally, its legitimisation among numbers of academics has been uncertain. Central or cross-disciplinary standards, approaches, suggestions and development have run up against the canon of concerns traditionally held by academics. So, academics do not appreciate a heavy central steer on practices that have been very much the local preserve. Managing national interventions in HE within the UK context then has involved a delicate balance between standard programme management and the light touch approaches developed over the past eight years that acknowledge the relative autonomy of institutions.

In the case of the national management of CETLs, the evidence does suggest that the institutions have taken a while to relinquish expectations that HEFCE will be adopting a more severe form of management and that they have encouraged a relatively open brief to achieve their own aims. This said, there was evidence that senior managers and the CETL teams themselves might appreciate a more central strategy associated with cross CETL themes, external visibility and wider dissemination. Any increase in central role will have resource implications.

5.3.2 Is there a general case for cross CETL coordination? We find in the evidence that stakeholders placed hope in the self-organising networks, nationally or within a region; some looked to links with Subject Centres or professional bodies, and a minority saw a role for the HEA more generally. Yet the networks are not organised to represent the programme as a whole, Subject Centres are not generously funded or staffed and respondents pointed to some unevenness about the HEA Subject Centres in relation to the CETL programme. One interviewee considered that 'there is the real beginning of collaboration and sharing – the conferences for instance – but they tend to have a CETL-to-CETL focus and there's a need for CETL-to-non-CETL discussions'. There may be a need for a more cohesive framework for the CETLs – but without falling into central management – and a stronger sense of purpose are apparently persuasive but may have rhetorical rather than practical value. Cross CETL connections, focusing on generic areas of interest (reflective learning, students as researchers, active learning, pedagogic research planning, engagement with employers, learning support mechanisms) might be enabled through central coordination. Among the 'common denominators' were, for example

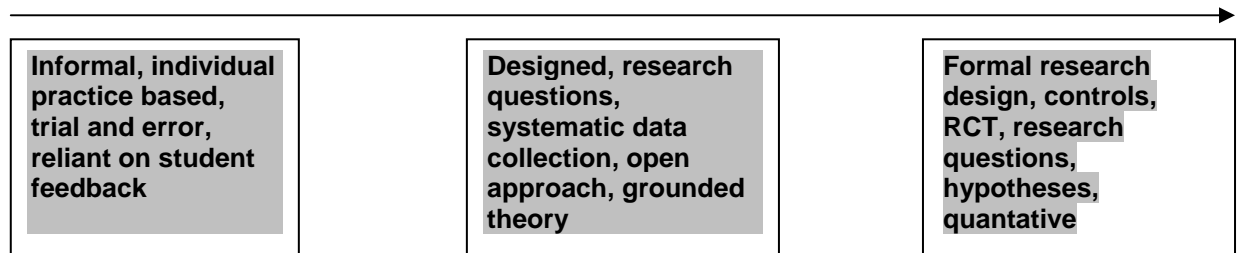
- How to develop new partnerships to promote creative learning and teaching practices
- The development of digital and web based resources
- Involving students in working with external agencies/employers/partners.

5.3.3 Is there a specific case for cross CETL discussion on pedagogic research? Where pedagogic research projects *are* under way (83% of CETLs are engaged in this activity), we did not note many examples of pedagogic research activities feeding directly into teaching practices at this stage. We are not yet in a position, therefore, to comment on the extent to which pedagogic research is filtering through to practice. One emerging theme, however, is the extent of variation in understanding of the practice of pedagogic research. The pedagogic research (PR) practices that are emerging are diverse and will form the basis of evocative typologies based on method, formality, situatedness and generalisability. The dominant mode is one of individual investigations into student learning or support for learning with the contradictory characteristics of high situated relevance and relatively low generalisability. This point however is hotly debated relying as it does on a traditional 'science' model of generalisability. The alternative view sees such situated embodiments or experiments of a less formal kind as useful and evocative examples of what can be done based on a more action oriented, more collaborative view of research. What is important however, is not to encourage a kind of spurious research 'gold standard' based on RCTs (random controlled trial) or something akin, but to make sure the status, value and use of PR is clearly understood and articulated, whatever its methodological inclinations. Evidence from all our enquiries (key informants, visits, surveys and self evaluation reports) suggest the possibility of a more engaged and cross fertilised approach to the pedagogic research practices that are emerging. Figure 3 below identifies the main types of pedagogic research, grounded in practice, with the most dominant mode on the left. In the broadest sense, the continuum is based on relative formality with the situated informal '**trying and testing**'

³¹ See for example evaluations of the Subject Centre Network and the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland

research on the left (almost indistinguishable from ‘development’) and the more traditionally positivistic model (very few examples of this) on the right.

Figure 3 Types of pedagogic research in practice



5.3.3 Is there a case for refocusing evaluative practice? This CETL programme differs from many interventions of this kind in that it has expressed a clear justification for the allocation of resources which had embedded within it an implicit theory of improvement and change based on reward. It also took the idea of formative evaluation seriously, allowing individual CETLs to own and control their own formative reports alongside the formative evaluation at a national level. What is important to note is that many of the CETLs did not refer to evidence collected systematically which could act as a resource for a judgement of the effectiveness of an activity as a change mechanism. In these circumstances, the self evaluation reports overall tended to merge an estimation of worth with the successful completion of an activity to which there was a positive reaction.

In other words, evaluations tended to emphasise level 1 evaluation (see Figure 2 above). This might be understood as a first step in evaluation i.e. without an activity taking place or numbers of individuals taking part no effects could be expected. However, a reader is still not able to discern on what basis the activity is considered to have produced or not produced desired outcomes or positive effects of a wider nature. The idea of individual reward also suggests a focus on level 1 evaluation (i.e. did the recipient find the opportunity useful, enjoyable etc). In this second period of development, a refocus of evaluative practice to include levels 3 and 4 considerations might be useful, including a more transparent evidential base for a wider audience.

Appendix 1: The national evaluation of CETLs formative approach

This appendix elaborates the evaluation approach embedded in the original proposal. Our formative evaluation was intended to help HEFCE, as well as individual CETLs and others committed to learning quality enhancement (HEA and the Leadership Foundation) to judge whether the programme is showing promise after two years – the first CETLs opened avoid overly informal language like this on 1 April 2005³². In judging the effects of the CETL programme we have referred to an account of the impact of innovations that derived from the school sector.

Table A1: Innovation trajectories, below summarises our framework

7	Refocusing	A new community has emerged and is marked by common sites. New ideas are developing for taking the innovation onwards	Attention now on adaptation, major changes, alternatives to original ideas, creativity
6	Collaboration	Becoming systemic: moving from enclaves to wider influence	Coordinating and cooperating with other stakeholders in using new practices, systems and processes
5	Consequence	Evaluation of new enclaves	Attention on impact on students, staff, departments and whole institution of new practices and processes, relevance, evaluation and implied changes
4	Management	New enclaves developing	Attention on difficulties in the processes and tasks involved in developing new practices, processes and systems
3	Institutional/personal	New enclaves beginning to form	Begins to analyse effects and impacts on existing systems and practice
2	Informational	Bridgeheads forming	Wider emerging awareness and interest in knowing more, thinking of implications for the institution or for other networks, such as subject or regional ones
1	Awareness	Bridgeheads forming	Initial awareness of innovative practice embodied in the CETL and engagement strategies begin to establish new bridgeheads
0	Formation of a CETL as an enclave of excellent practice	The CETL is an enclave promoting excellent practice	Relatively self contained innovative practice rewarded through the CETL programme

Evaluation and innovation

³² The plan was that all CETLs would start on 1 April 2005 and shut up shop on 31 March 2010. Whatever the funding arrangements, some CETLs were still having launch events in 2007. Clearly, applicants to run CETLs were not chosen on their 'readiness to roll'. A few key informants have said that they should have been.

The evaluation (and all its data gathering activities) is attentive to the 'mechanisms' designed by the CETLs to promote changes based on 'rewarding excellence', by, for example:

1. Providing opportunities for visiting practitioners or fellows working with teachers and students.
2. Awarding bursaries and grants for staff and students to undertake pedagogic research (this appears to be a common mechanism, so we are especially interested in means by which its effects filter through to practice).
3. Offering bursaries and grants for staff and students to experiment with new learning opportunities and curricula (this may conveniently be integrated with 2 above).
4. Organising and supporting events (workshops, seminars, professional development activity) undertaken to disseminate innovation.
5. Developing digital and web-based events, affordances and other resources.
6. Establishing partnership arrangements designed to widen opportunities and promote creative teaching and learning practice.
7. Making creative and efficient use of buildings, plant and equipment.

The formative evaluation work described in this tender has the following main foci:

- To provide formative feedback on the extent to which the CETL strategy of rewarding and enhancing excellence is achieving its intended effects of encouraging and inspiring positive changes in teaching and learning in the HE sector as a whole. In particular to describe:
 - Unanticipated or unintended effects that can be construed both positively and negatively
 - Multiplier effects in resource procurement for T&L developments (e.g. matched funding)
 - Outcomes of HEFCE's capital funding investment through the CETL initiative
 - Promising and effective practices—this can be understood as 'appreciative inquiry' approach to the evaluation
 - The 'light touch' HEFCE has adopted towards the management of the CETLs and the relationships that have developed with agencies, such as the Higher Education Academy, which have sought to broker CETL networking
 - Lessons that might inform the second phase of the CETL evaluation and any developments in the CETL programme
- To create a strategic commentary on the extent to which the programme has developed a significant presence within the institutions in which they are placed and to become influential beyond their institutions and pedagogic areas
- To comment on the effectiveness of the programme in supporting and furthering the aim of HEFCE in its strategic thinking about learning and teaching support and improvement.

The approach to be taken and a provisional schedule of work are outlined in Sections 4 to 6 below. In brief, our approach combines two powerful traditions of evaluation – *Utilisation Focused Evaluation* and *Theory-Based Evaluation*. Utilisation-Focused Evaluation simply means taking care that the evaluation design and processes are negotiated with those who are likely to use the evaluation in order that both the process and the outcomes are likely to be useful to sponsors and other agreed stakeholders. It is well suited to the task of providing key stakeholder groups with evidence they can use to judge the value and worth of the HEFCE approach to quality enhancement.

Theory-Based Evaluation focuses on the connections between strategies and intentions. It has a firm basis in evidence but is open to unintended and unanticipated processes and outcomes. It helps to articulate both the formal and the informal theories of change embedded in policy strategies and the adaptations and modifications which occur as a policy is created in practice.

We aim to:

- Provide formative independent evidence of the overall effects of the programme to HEFCE and its partners.
- Offer an analytic account of the experience of the programme from the perspective of all the key stakeholders.
- Be responsive and flexible enough to capture unintended outcomes and unanticipated effects.
- Provide an overall summary of the progress of the programme, highlighting strengths, weaknesses and areas of development for use at the review moments within the next period.
- To inform current and future developments of CETLs, paying particular attention to their structures, procedures, working practices, relationships and practices.
- To contribute to assessments of the value for money estimations in the CETL programme.
- To test and extend understanding of the CETL theory of change.
- To establish novel ways of collaborative working between local and national evaluation processes and outputs.
- Provide strategic intelligence for integrative development of HEFCE's broader teaching and learning enhancement objectives.

Objectives

These aims map on to the Tender Document's key evaluation objectives, as shown below in paragraphs 25-27 in the 'invitation to tender' document.

Table A2: Mapping of aims and objectives with Tender Document brief

Tender document objective	Aim(s).
A. Provide objective formative input to HEFCE on the overall effectiveness of the programme at the different levels of sector, institution, teacher and student as well as external stakeholders	1,6,9
B. Provide objective formative input on the effectiveness of the programme as viewed from particular perspectives, including those of senior management within the institutions, chalk-face academics, students and external communities of practice	2,4,5
C. Identify unanticipated successes of the programme (both positive and negative)	3, 4, 5
D. Provide independent input on the effectiveness of the programme which can inform HEFCE's planned interim review in 2007 leading to a more summative overview in 2010	1,7,8, 9
E. Develop appropriate evaluation criteria and impact measures for aspect of the programme	6,8,

Appendix 2 : Proforma for analysis of X CETL (Institution(s))

CETL Aim	Activity	Evidence of Effectiveness	How was it effective or reason for ineffectiveness
Leading and embedding change			
Addressing diverse needs in diverse contexts (including needs of employers)			
Institutions developing understanding of ways of supporting students' learning			
Raising the profile of teaching excellence – institutionally			
Raising the profile of teaching excellence – across the sector			
Encouraging debate, sharing ideas and practices about TLA across the sector			
Informing student choice and maximising student performance			
Reward and recognition of excellent practice			

Additional Aim	Activity	Evidence of Effectiveness	How was it effective or reason for ineffectiveness

Any Significant Changes to Approach

Reflections on Overall CETL Strategy

Strengths

Weaknesses