

# **Evaluation of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme**

**A report by Sheffield Hallam University**

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## **Statement of impartiality**

The research team are all based at Sheffield Hallam University and are independent, professional, academic researchers. All our research aligns with British Educational Research Association (BERA) and British Sociological Association (BSA) codes of professional and ethical practice. No members of the research team are National Teaching Fellows nor have any connection with the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme at Sheffield Hallam University or elsewhere. Every effort has been made to ensure this research presents a neutral, impartial perspective, as further described in the methodology.

## **Period of research**

This evaluation was conducted between June and November 2017.

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## **The Office for Students**

The Office for Students (OfS) is the government-approved regulatory and competition authority for the higher education sector in England. OfS was established on 1 April 2018 as a successor body to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

## **Advance HE**

Advance HE is the sector agency for equality and diversity, learning and teaching, and leadership and governance in higher education. Advance HE was established 1 August 2018 through a merger of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE).

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) was launched in 2000 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) with contributions from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland (DfENI).

The NTFS is managed on behalf of the funders by the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

The original aims of the scheme<sup>1</sup> were to raise the profile of learning and teaching, to recognise and celebrate individuals who make an outstanding impact on the student learning experience, and to provide a national focus for institutional teaching and learning excellence schemes. Eligible institutions include those funded by these sector bodies including further education (FE) institutions and alternative providers (AP) which have 100 or more full-time equivalent students on higher education (HE) programmes.

This research project to evaluate the NTFS had two aims and two objectives:

Aims:

1. To evaluate the impact and current relevance of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) across the higher education (HE) sector, including in relation to those providers who have not participated in the scheme.
2. To inform decisions on the future format of the scheme, including the approach to its financing.

Objectives:

1. To establish the extent to which the NTFS has achieved its aims across the HE sector in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
2. To set out considerations and options for funders with regard to the format of the scheme, the approach to delivery and its funding in the new regulatory regime.

This evaluation brings together a range of evidence to address these aims and objectives covering the 17 years since the NTFS began, using a mixed methods approach to data collection and adopted grounded theory to analyse and triangulate the findings. The methodology included: a literature review; a survey sent to 249 UK HEA subscribing institutions, of which 72 responded (29% response rate); secondary data analysis of 17 years of HEA awards data; and a series of 46 interviews with participating institutions, non-participating institutions and sector stakeholders. A stratified purposeful sampling strategy was employed in order to ensure that there was a balance to the qualitative data collection.

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<sup>1</sup> The aims of the scheme have changed since 2000. The current aims are outlined at <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/individuals/national-teaching-fellowship-scheme/NTF>.

## Overall findings

The NTFS was valued by the sample of institutions that contributed to this evaluation, which included all types of HE provider and non-participating institutions. Evidence to support this finding includes the following:

- The survey data suggests that sampled participating institutions would recommend the scheme to non-participants.
- The survey and case studies provide evidence of positive benefits to individuals in receipt of an award.
- The survey responses commended the NTFS as a national measure of teaching excellence in a competitive market.
- The majority of institutions across the interview samples reported that they used the NTFS guidelines when designing internal awards and that these internal awards were used to identify potential NTFS nominees.
- The sample of eligible non-participating surveyed institutions stated that they would seek to engage with the NTFS in the future, but were limited by their somewhat embryonic considerations of reward and recognition and limited resources.
- The sample of participating institutions in the case studies were in agreement that they would continue to absorb significant opportunity costs to participate in the NTFS in its current format.
- Across the qualitative data, respondents noted that the NTFS has played a part in enhancing the status of teaching and learning within a changing policy context, in line with the original aims of the scheme.

The NTFS retains value as an exemplar or 'pinnacle' award for institutional staff, providing a career ladder and potentially providing the sector with new ideas for innovation drawn from the exceptional work of the NTFS Fellows. However, the evidence suggests that **the benefits and impact for the individual need to better align with the benefits and impact for the institution**. There is a need for some institutions to raise their awareness of NTFS winners and be more instrumental in how they are used to directly enhance the student experience, for example, through greater opportunities to influence institutional policy and to share excellent and/or innovative practice. This is particularly pertinent if institutions are asked to cover any further costs of participation.

Careful consideration of a return on NTFS investment for institutions is also necessary. The high level of institutional support currently provided to nominate individuals is a cost to institutions, and this evaluation found overwhelmingly that institutions would continue to provide this. Whilst this indicates the level of value placed on the award, **there was little evidence to suggest that institutions would cover any additional resource costs to participate in the NTFS in addition to their subscription costs to the HEA**. However, the apparent value of the scheme suggests that participation would continue if the funding came from another source.

Overall the analysis shows that, from the perspective of the representative sample, **the NTFS remains valued and should be continued in some way, albeit reformed** so that the wider UK sector feels the impact of NTFS' work and that the scheme is administered on

a more effective and transparent basis so that all sections of the diverse sector can experience a sense of ownership.

**The majority of institutions in the evaluation who did not participate in the NTFS did not feel that they had been adversely affected by this absence.** However, a lack of institutional awareness at all levels, and a lack of institutional readiness to nominate individuals, meant that they were often unable to fully consider the benefits or costs of non-participation.

## **The impact and current relevance of the NTFS**

Nomination and award data<sup>2</sup> showed that universities have on average a 27.5% success rate of obtaining NTFS awards, while HE colleges (which include specialist institutions) have a slightly lower success rate of 26%. FE institutions have the lowest success rate (1%).

There has been noticeable variation in the number of nominations by age with sharp increases in 2005, 2008 and 2015 for the 36-40 age group and in 2006, 2009 and 2016 for the 51-65 group. Some of this may be explained by the introduction of different categories of award from 2004.

Nominations by gender vary over time, with females overtaking male nominations for the first time in 2008 and the proportionate gap increasing particularly in recent years. Nominations by ethnicity also vary over time, with the proportion of non-white staff only becoming substantial after 2006 and peaking in 2017.

Specific awards for Learning Support staff were introduced in 2004 and the largest proportion of Learning Support nominations occurred in 2005 and then decreased as these distinct categories were phased out.

The 53 surveyed institutions that have previously supported applications for the NTFS reported that **national recognition** was the main driver for participating, which was noted by 32 institutions (60%). These findings were supported by the reported benefits of taking part, with 21 respondents (40%) identifying **enhancements to institutional reputation and profile**. The prestige acquired from winning the award led several institutions to cite the NTFS as a useful marketing tool for attracting students and staff.

In response to a closed-ended question, 41 of the 53 NTFS-participating respondents (77%) in the survey stated that they would '**recommend the NTFS** to institutions that currently do not participate'. Two institutions (4%) responded that they would not recommend the scheme, while 10 institutions (19%) were not sure.

The majority of survey comments made about the **costs of participation** and the reasons for non-participation were in relation to institutional support, in particular costs to staff time during the application process. Of the 53 NTFS-participating institutions surveyed, 26 (49%) commented that time providing guidance and mentoring for applicants to apply to the NTFS was a cost. Five of the nine surveyed institutions that are eligible for the NTFS but have not previously supported applications cited **a lack of resource** as a reason for non-participation.

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<sup>2</sup> Changes to the NTFS over the 17 years of available secondary data, means that these conclusions from the secondary data are tentative.

All survey respondents were asked to comment on whether the NTFS has **promoted innovative learning and teaching** within their institution. Of the 68 respondents that commented, 24 institutions (35%) indicated that award winners have had a notable impact and 10 (15%) expressed the view that their role has been limited. In contrast, 21 respondents (31%) implied that the NTFS has not contributed to the promotion of innovative learning and teaching at all, while 13 institutions (19%) declared that they were unable to comment.

All survey respondents were asked to comment on whether NTFS winners have had any **influence on teaching and learning projects**. Of the 66 respondents that commented, 28 institutions (42%) implied that NTFS winners have had a notable impact on projects and 17 respondents (26%) indicated the role of award winners has been limited. However, 10 institutions (15%) felt that NTFS winners have not had any impact on learning and teaching projects and 11 respondents (17%) stated that they were unable to comment on the question.

The evidence from the interviews suggests that **students have limited awareness of the NTFS overall** and are generally more aware of student-led schemes around inspirational teachers, although they **value the quality guarantees and accountability** offered by the NTFS or similar national schemes.

Within the sample of seven non-participating institutions, two interviewees felt that there was a degree of loss in not having access to the collective expertise and resources of NTFS Fellows. One of these interviewees requested that **the network of NTFS winners should be more accessible** for those institutions that do not participate in the scheme.

The triangulated data consistently makes reference to issues of impact, with the literature specifically citing as significant the focus of award spending on **individual professional development rather than pedagogic inquiry** (on an individual or collective basis).

There is evidence of inequity of access to the NTFS and its benefits across the UK sector, which is a component of the value for money assessment. Using the National Audit Office's (2017) consideration of equity in value for money assessments, this evaluation suggests that the **limitations encountered by FE/HE and Scottish institutions** are the most inequitable<sup>3</sup>.

## **The extent to which the NTFS has met its aims**

There is qualitative evidence from the interviews to suggest that since inception the NTFS has made **some progress towards achieving its aims in the sector and for individuals, although the impact is less obvious at an institutional level**.

The **kudos and status** for individuals, the **recognition of excellent teaching** within HE, and the **collective activity across the national/international sector** were noted by the sample as important benefits of the scheme. Indeed, the **level of financial award** was not

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the nature of the funding of the scheme, staff from Scottish and alternative provider institutions were unable to participate.

seen by many as a major factor in the decision to participate in the NTFS and this evidence supports a re-evaluation of the purpose of this payment.

However, this evaluation suggests that **national and international travel** to network, present work and engage in study visits to learn from others has been the most likely spend of the financial award and notes that international opportunities are becoming limited as the financial award decreases. There is also corroborated evidence to suggest that the decreasing value of the financial award has had a negative effect on the outputs of NTFS winners.

*a) To raise the profile of learning and teaching*

There is evidence from the qualitative data to suggest that the NTFS is seen across the sample as contributing to an important **rebalancing of prestige, profile and recognition** and **reward mechanisms** for teaching in relation to research. Respondents noted that the NTFS has played a part in enhancing the status of teaching and learning within a changing policy context, in line with the original aims of the scheme.

However, only 11 NTFS-participating survey respondents (21%) stated that the NTFS has benefitted their institution by helping to **develop a culture that values teaching excellence**. A further six institutions (11%) referred to an enhanced status of teaching excellence as a result of participating. These survey findings imply that the aim of the NTFS to raise the status of teaching and learning has been **only partially achieved** within the sampled institutions.

*b) To recognise and celebrate individuals who make an outstanding impact on the student learning experience*

The second most common reason for participating in the NTFS, taken from the survey data, was the **need to recognise and reward teaching excellence**, which was mentioned by 22 institutions (42%). These findings were supported by the reported benefits of taking part, with 17 institutions (32%) alluding to the role of the NTFS in helping staff recognise their own excellence.

Another key benefit of the NTFS for individuals concerned the **professional and personal development** of members of staff, which was reported by 16 (30%) of the 53 NTFS-participating institutions surveyed. Whilst award winners were perceived to benefit professionally and personally, an unsuccessful nomination was identified as a potential cost.

The **importance of recognising and rewarding individual teaching excellence** was apparent for the majority of the surveyed institutions, with 41 of the 72 respondents (57%) stating that it was extremely important and 25 (35%) reporting it was very important. This finding was also reflected in the interviews with institutions and stakeholders. However, the **potentially divisive nature** of celebrating individual contributions in teaching was raised by a few interviewees.

The majority of institutions participating in the interviews cited **access to the active network of NTFS winners** as a benefit of the scheme.

The majority of interviewees were **less concerned about the monetary value** of the awards than they were about the prestige and status which followed. This perception was equally valid from both individual and institutional perspectives.

*c) To provide a national focus for institutional teaching and learning excellence schemes*

A total of 31 of the 72 surveyed institutions (43%) responded that it was extremely important to take part in a **sector-wide scheme** that recognises and rewards individual or team-based teaching excellence. There were 17 institutions (24%) that stated that it was very important to take part and this is **indicative of the demand for national teaching and learning excellence schemes**. Sector stakeholders also reinforced the value of a national scheme.

The **NTFS individual award** scheme had the **highest level of participation** across the 59 surveyed institutions that currently support applications for sector-wide award schemes, with 49 institutions (83%) taking part. This was followed by the NTFS Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) scheme with 41 institutions (69%), The Times Higher Education Awards with 38 institutions (64%) and The Guardian Higher Education Awards, as reported by 22 institutions (37%). There were 31 out of 47 respondents (66%) that expressed the view that there was no apparent overlap with other sector-wide award schemes in the UK. The **CATE was also particularly welcomed** by the sampled interviewees.

Of the 52 NTFS-participating surveyed institutions reporting that they have **internal schemes for reward and recognition**, 23 (44%) commented that their own approaches were linked to the NTFS in some manner, most commonly as a nomination process. The majority of these institutions **mapped the design of internal award schemes directly on the NTFS**. Nevertheless, 15 NTFS-participating survey respondents (29%) implied that the scheme has not directly influenced their own approaches of reward and recognition.

The evidence from the sample suggested that there is now a **considerable amount of internal reward and recognition across the sector**, bringing into question the need for a national recognition scheme. However, the interview data also suggests that the NTFS (and the UK Professional Standards Framework) plays a **key role in the alignment and trajectory** of internal reward and recognition schemes. There was a perception from some that teaching excellence awards were **not necessarily a clear guide to excellence** within the institution because many choose not to participate. This is often differentiated by disciplinary boundaries.

The data from the interviews suggests that the NTFS is valued by the sector, particularly in the context of **national reputation and profile within the sector**, as an **indication of teaching quality and excellence**. There was a general consensus that individuals and institutions mutually benefit from the national recognition of the NTFS, although reputational gain was a particularly strong driver for pre-1992 case study institutions.

### **The value of a future national award scheme**

The NTFS is perceived to be **qualitatively different to other awards**, based on sustained sector-wide impact recognised by peers, rather than a criterion-referenced award attainable by anyone achieving a pre-set benchmark.

The cost of supporting nominations is covered by each participating institution. Almost all institutions in the interviews suggested that they would look to **continue or begin to participate in the future**, highlighting the value placed on the scheme.

The high level of **institutional support for applications**, which is embedded into institutional academic development at a cost, is another important example of how the scheme is valued. However, **value does not equate to investment**, and there is little evidence to suggest that participation would continue in the future if the public funding for the administration of the scheme was removed and additional resource costs for the institutions were introduced.

Of the 48 surveyed institutions that commented on **recommendations for change for the NTFS**, 14 (29%) identified timescales and communication of key information about the process as areas for improvement. Another change recommended by 15 survey respondents (31%) focused on the **structure** and **categories** of the scheme. Several of these institutions, predominantly non-participating FE and HE colleges, questioned the suitability of the NTFS for different types of institutions. This includes specific consideration for the HEA as custodians of the scheme.

Many in the HE sector felt that more could be done to make the most of NTFS winners and this was supported by some of the literature; there was a view that the HEA could further **incentivise dissemination activity** from the large pool of NTFS winners, to **increase the visibility** of the scheme, to help spread innovative practice and ideas and provide **accountability for post-award activity**.

The data analysis demonstrates that, whilst respondents highlight many limitations in the way the scheme is operated/used by institutions and the sector as a whole, the scheme is generally perceived as valuable by successful applicants and by institutions as a way of 'benchmarking' for innovation and teaching excellence, across the sector.

# Evaluation of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme: Final Report

## 1. Introduction

A team from Sheffield Hallam University was appointed in May 2017 to carry out an evaluation of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) between June and December 2017. This research has two pre-determined aims and two objectives.

### Aims

1. Evaluate the impact and current relevance of the NTFS across the sector, including in relation to those institutions that have not participated in the scheme.
2. Inform decisions on the future format of the scheme, including the approach to its financing.

### Objectives

1. To establish the extent to which the NTFS has achieved its aims across the higher education (HE) sector in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
2. To set out considerations and options for funders with regard to the format of the scheme, approach to delivery and its funding in the new regulatory regime.

### Overview

The National Teaching Fellowship Scheme is a nomination-based award scheme for individual excellence and celebrates those who have made an outstanding impact on student outcomes and the teaching profession in higher education.

The NTFS was launched in 2000 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) with contributions from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland (DfENI). Eligible institutions include those funded by these sector bodies and further education (FE) institutions and alternative providers (AP) which have 100 or more full-time equivalent students on HE programmes with comparable funding. The original aims of the scheme were to raise the profile of learning and teaching, to recognise and celebrate individuals who make an outstanding impact on the student learning experience, and to provide a national focus for institutional teaching and learning excellence schemes.

The NTFS is managed on behalf of the funders by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The NTFS has undergone a series of changes during the last 17 years. This evaluation seeks to review the scheme in the context of the new regulatory landscape created by the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) and recent White Papers that have further emphasised the importance of teaching excellence in a competitive HE marketplace (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016). This evaluation was tasked with

advising on whether there is a case for public investment in individual staff to support innovation and excellence in learning and teaching.

## Report structure

The remainder of this report outlines our methodological approach (Section 2) and in turn considers the methods and sampling strategies employed during the evaluation period. Section 3 outlines the main findings from:

- Literature review (including analysis of Teaching Excellence Framework submissions and HEA Final Reports)
- Survey of institutions
- Secondary data analysis of HEA awards data
- Qualitative findings (from interviews)
- Overall thematic analysis
- Conclusions

## 2. Methodology

### Our approach

In order to evaluate the impact and relevance of the scheme, this research employed a mixed methods programme of data gathering and analysis in order to provide evidence that feeds into the wider dimensions of the NTFS review. This methodology is informed in part by the principles of Value for Money (VFM) and Return on Investment (ROI) outlined within the Treasury Green Book (2003) and by the National Audit Office (2017). However, a qualitative appraisal of VFM has been necessary, given the largely non-quantifiable benefits of the scheme and its outputs. The data used to inform this evaluation includes:

- Review of the literature, including grey literature, around the impact of the NTFS and similar schemes (including international examples) and an analysis of institutional Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Year 2 provider statements and final project reports provided by the HEA
- Secondary data analysis of HEA datasets for NTFS nominations and awards from 2000-2016
- Survey completed by HEA institutional contacts (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland on behalf of their institutions)
- Case studies of a stratified purposeful sample of institutions sampled by type of institution, mission group, geographical location, level of engagement with the NTFS, nature of the institution's survey response, and the institution's TEF Year 2 award category, selected from the survey response data where possible
- Purposive counterfactual sample of institutions who have not participated in the NTFS, selected from the survey response data, and focusing on Scottish institutions (who are not funded to participate in the NTFS), FE/ HE and AP institutions
- Series of purposive interviews with key stakeholder organisations to explore the current relevance and impact of the NTFS and its relationship with other reward and recognition measures for teaching and learning

## Literature review methodology

This evaluation has analysed and synthesised academic and practitioner perspectives on the NTFS and similar schemes from published and grey literature. The scale of the literature and desk review was proportionate to the timescales and budget of the project. During each stage of the literature review the analysis was grounded by the overarching aims and objectives of the evaluation.

The literature review was carried out from July to October 2017. It included database searches (Scopus, Web of Science, Proquest, Google Scholar) and hand-searching of reference lists for the following keywords ("National Teaching Fellowship Scheme" OR "Teaching Excellence Awards" OR "National Teaching Awards" OR "reward and recognition of teaching excellence" OR "Learning and Teaching Fellowships") AND ("higher education" OR "tertiary education" or "further education"). In addition several other terms were discussed but not adopted: "professional accreditation" (removed due to overlap with disciplinary awarding bodies), "excellent teaching" OR "good teaching" OR "transformational teaching" (to add if search did not glean necessary results), "teaching quality" (to add if search did not glean necessary results). A literature review protocol was created which outlined the methodology for the review, including the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Appendix C).

Using this approach, 172 artefacts were found and then filtered to 130 for data extraction after further application of the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Each artefact was scored (1-6) for relevancy using a data extraction template (see Appendix D). In total, 33 of the highest scoring artefacts (9 scored 6 and 24 scored 5) were included in the review.

The literature review also included an analysis of NTFS Final Reports written by winners, and provided by the HEA. All available final reports from 2010, 2011 and 2012 winners were reviewed (n=80, 53%) to produce a quantitative overview of spending during the three years following the award<sup>4</sup>. Final reports for the 2013 and 2014 winners were not available.

Finally, this research randomly sampled 35 institutions (using an alphabetical list of TEF returning institutions), sorted by award type. The TEF is the most recent instrument created to identify and measure teaching excellence in HE. In many ways the TEF provides another mechanism for highlighting and rewarding teaching excellence and the term 'award' is now commonplace in the TEF narrative. This evaluation sought to locate any discussion of the NTFS in the TEF submissions, with specific reference to engagement with the NTFS, NTFS-led innovations and reference to internal award schemes. It is important to note that the NTFS is not a prescribed measure of teaching excellence (TEF metric) and there was no guidance about the inclusion of the NTFS in the TEF submissions.

Although currently focusing on institutional level excellence (in TEF Year 2), the open access evidence used to support TEF submissions provides an interesting collection of data which can be used for this evaluation. The TEF Year 2 Provider Statements and institutional websites were reviewed for each sampled institution, including distinct samples for FE/HE and Scottish providers. Institutional websites were also reviewed for those institutions that chose not to enter TEF Year 2. The sample was restricted to a randomised approach in line

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<sup>4</sup> All uncommitted money remaining at the end of a three-year period, and not subject to a formal extension, is reclaimed by the HEA.

with the proportionality of the research brief. Further analysis of all institutions has been provided by Rolfe (2017) and Moore *et al* (2017).

## Survey of institutions

The survey was launched on 20<sup>th</sup> June and closed on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2017. The survey population was the HEA 'Subscribers List' of institutional contacts provided by the HEA, consisting of 249 UK institutions (of which 137 are HE institutions): 219 in England, 13 in Wales, 3 in Northern Ireland and 14 in Scotland. The survey was designed to be completed by individuals with an institution-wide responsibility for the NTFS and any delegated individuals who may be involved with supporting or facilitating the scheme. Respondents were clearly advised to provide an institutional response in the survey brief and the email request for participation. The roles of the population of HEA Subscriber contacts are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Job Titles of HEA Subscriber Contacts**

Job Title	Count	Percentage
Academic	17	4.5
Administrator	6	2.4
Dean/Associate Dean	15	6.0
Educational/Staff Developer	32	12.9
Head of Department/School/Faculty or Director	93	37.3
HR	2	0.8
Other	2	0.8
Pro Vice-Chancellor/DVC/VP	73	29.3
Registrar	4	1.6
Student	1	0.4
Vice Chancellor/Principal	4	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	

The HEA took responsibility for administering the survey to protect the confidentiality of the institutional contacts. Survey reminders and further communication (e.g. requests for Word versions of the survey to enable collaborative responses) were managed through the HEA. The HEA also managed feedback from some Scottish institutions who questioned the reason for their participation. The counterfactual angle was explained and encouraged by the HEA where necessary.

The survey was piloted within the research team's institution, using supporting researchers and individuals with a range of job roles, mirroring the survey population.

A set of closed-ended questions were designed to elicit quantitative information (for example, whether institutions have participated in the NTFS or not) and open-ended questions were used to acquire qualitative perceptions about the impact of the scheme (for example, the impact on the wider teaching and learning cultures, institutional cost-benefits). Each question was mapped against the objectives of the evaluation.

Results from the survey are presented in the Findings section. The survey also asked respondents to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in a follow up case study. Of the 72 respondents, those at 44 institutions (61% of the sample) stated that they would be willing to be contacted for this stage of the research.

## Secondary analysis of HEA award data

The analysis of HEA awards data covered the years 2000 to 2016 by institution type and over time, comparing nominations and 'wins' (awards) to approximate success rate and cost-benefit by institution type. This data informed the case study sampling and the interview schedules. This analysis presents relative performance data on age, gender, ethnicity and employment role. This data has been contextualised with a commentary of changes to the NTFS that may explain some of the variations in the data.

## Qualitative research

The qualitative data collection consisted of 46 interviews in total and included 7 institutional case studies (28 single interviews and 2 focus groups interviews) and 16 interviews with both non-participating institutions (7) and various sector-wide stakeholder groups (9). In order to ensure research integrity and balance, the case studies were sampled to include a range of engagement with the NTFS, so it purposefully included institutions that had been successful and unsuccessful in applying for the awards.

### Case studies: sampling methodology

The aim of the sampling approach was to construct case studies of institutions that have previously supported applications for the NTFS. Case studies included interviews with a range of individuals at different levels, including: strategic leads (e.g. those in strategic learning and teaching roles); those in academic development roles (e.g. in relation to supporting the application of potential NTFS Fellows); faculty/school leads (e.g. in disciplines where there has been engagement with the NTFS or similar schemes); and student representatives.

A stratified purposeful sampling strategy was employed in order to ensure that the following subgroups were represented in the case studies:

- **Provider type:** post-1992 universities, pre-1992 universities, HE colleges/specialist institutions, FE colleges and APs
- **Mission group:** a range of institutions selected from groups with similar origins, aims and values
- **Geographical location:** representation from the regions of England and also institutions in Northern Ireland and Wales
- **Level of engagement with the NTFS:** based on a consideration of the number of nominations (2000-2017) and winners per institution (2000-2016 only, due to the date of the evaluation). Includes varying levels of engagement and return on investment (winners proportionate to nominations)
- **Nature of the survey response:** most notably responses to questions on the perceived impact of the NTFS on teaching and learning; the perceived influence of the NTFS on the student learning experience; and whether NTFS participants would recommend the scheme to non-participating institutions. Drew upon a range of survey responses with mixed views, helping to ensure that the case studies represented a balanced view
- **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Year 2:** representation from Gold, Silver and Bronze rated institutions, and those who did not engage in the TEF

A group of institutions were approached to participate in the case studies drawn from the list of survey respondents. Of the 72 respondents to the survey, 44 institutions (61%) stated that they would be willing to take part in a follow-up case study.

During the first wave of sampling, eight institutions were contacted based on the above criteria. All responding contacts were initially positive about participation; however a number of institutions subsequently withdrew due to time commitments, personal commitments and concerns about lack of institutional awareness. During a second wave of sampling, another nine institutions were chosen and contacted using the outlined criteria. Seven case studies were secured in total.

### **Non-participant interviews: sampling methodology**

The filtered survey question which explored the institutional involvement in the NTFS enabled the identification of non-participants. A purposive sampling strategy was employed in order to ensure that the following were represented in the non-participant interviews:

- **NTFS eligible institutions:** those who identified during the survey that they were eligible to participate in the NTFS, but had not supported applications
- **NTFS non-eligible institutions:** those who identified during the survey that they were not eligible to participate in the NTFS due to funding restrictions (Scotland)

Once identified, these institutions were then sampled based on the same criteria as the case studies.

All eligible non-participating institutions that responded to the survey were FE colleges with a significant proportion of HE students and APs. No Scottish (non-eligible) institutions responded to the survey to say they would be willing to be a case study, however we did secure participation from three such institutions. The research team selected Scottish institutions based on the criteria above and approached contacts found via institutional webpages (e.g. PVC Academic, Deans of Higher Education, Directors of Academic Development). A range of institutions types, locations and TEF awards (including non-engagement) was secured.

For each non-participant, we sought to contact a senior policymaker at that institution and conduct a semi-structured telephone interview. Seven interviews were arranged and conducted.

### **Stakeholder interviews: sampling methodology**

In order to seek the views of the wider HE sector we approached key stakeholders and sought their views on the impact, current relevance and future implementation of the NTFS. Twelve stakeholders were approached; some organisations reported that they did not have a position on the NTFS, or were unable to find anyone with enough knowledge of the scheme to participate in an interview. We then approached a wider set of stakeholders. Nine telephone interviews were arranged and conducted within conditions of anonymity.

## **Impartiality**

The research team are all based at Sheffield Hallam University and are independent, professional, academic researchers. All our research aligns with British Educational Research Association (BERA) and British Sociological Association (BSA) codes of professional and ethical practice. No members of the research team are National Teaching Fellows nor have any connection with the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme at Sheffield Hallam University or elsewhere. Every effort has been made to ensure this research presents a neutral, impartial perspective as described in the methodology.

The methodology outlined includes action to ensure impartiality throughout the design, data collection and analysis of this research. In addition to the neutrality of the research team, the survey respondents were explicitly reminded to provide institutional answers to the questions. Personal reflections that were unrelated to the institutional context have been given less weight in the data analysis. The sampling criteria for the interviews were also designed to elicit a balance of perspectives across a range of providers, including specific counterfactual interviews from non-participating institutions.

The research followed prescribed BERA processes for obtaining consent, enabling withdrawal, and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity during the reporting of the findings.

## **Mixed methods and analysis framework**

The mixed-methods approach brought together different evidence sources in alignment with the aims and objectives of the evaluation. Survey data provided a reasonable approximation of the views of institutions within the sector gleaned from factual and attitudinal questions; our case studies approach enabled us to delve much deeper into key issues, as well as offering the opportunity to ascertain the views of individuals in different institutional roles. Interviews with non-participating institutions provided the counterfactual perspectives. The stakeholder interviews and literature review provided perspectives from beyond the institutional and even sector boundaries in some cases. All interviews were transcribed.

A deductive thematic analysis was employed based on responses to the open-ended survey questions, interview questions and other themes that emerged in the semi-structured interview context. This method, commonly used in 'grounded theory' evaluative research, ensures that the analysis will be informed not just by theoretical understandings that underpinned the agreed research questions, but by themes emerging in the data itself, in other words driven in part by the subjective responses of participants. Thus the data we refer to in this evaluation also explores themes and issues beyond the agreed research questions, reflecting the concerns of participants. This allows the analysis to better reflect the grounded reality of relationships and activities, and also to be contextualised by external factors such as competing pressures on participants.

## 3. Findings

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

The identification and reward of teaching excellence in HE has developed throughout a period of time during which the term 'teaching excellence' itself has been fluid and contested (Austen *et al* 2016). As Skelton (2007, p 214) noted *in order to clarify how Teaching Excellence is being constructed in higher education, therefore, we need to examine award schemes and the specific forms they take*. The evolution of the NTFS over the last 17 years has seen a reduction in the individual financial award (from £50,000 in 2000 to £5,000 in 2016), an increase in award holders (from 20 in 2000 to 55 in 2016), alongside changes in focus (three-year projects in 2000 and Fellowship Funds from 2006-2010) and categorisation (including specific awards for 'rising stars' and learning support staff in 2004). In 2011, the NTFS expanded to include Wales in the scheme, and HEFCE began to explore the inclusion of Scotland through a pilot in 2014. For nominations from Scottish institutions there remains an individual nomination fee of approximately £333 for administration, and any agreed financial award was to be met by the institution.

Since 2016 the NTFS has focused on prioritising prior achievements of individual excellence rather than supporting pedagogic inquiry. HEFCE and the HEA announced a further category in 2016 – the Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence (CATE) – which awarded six teams the sum of £15,000 and shifted the focus away from sole recognition of individuals to team-based excellence. The HEA also introduced Global Awards for Teaching Excellence in 2016. Finally, in 2017, two NTFS Ambassadors were recognised for their outstanding contributions to learning and teaching. A monetary award of £3,000 was presented to each winner to champion the NTFS and to research reach, value and impact derived from the innovative work of NTFS Fellows.

#### Institutional context

##### The NTFS as an enabler of innovation and change

The NTFS is an award for individual teaching excellence, evidenced by enhancing and transforming the student learning experience. In making an application, the nominated individual must also consider how they will continue to develop their own professional/academic practice, whilst outlining the historical evidence for supporting colleagues and students beyond their immediate role. There was some contention in the literature regarding the role that NTFS Fellows play, at institutional or sector level, to bring about change upon receipt of award (Skelton 2004, Gibbs 2008, Brown 2011, Rickinson *et al* 2012) and a lack of clarity about *whether the award was a reward for good teaching or a grant to further develop teaching* (Trowler *et al* 2014, p15, also see Skelton 2007). In contrast, Land and Gordon (2015, p17) provide evidence to suggest that the NTFS should *use broad criteria which do not only require evidence of individual practitioner excellence but also plans to demonstrate impact, leadership, collaborative partnership, and ongoing professional development*.

Strategies for achieving successful change through reward and recognition were also found in the wider literature. Building leadership into the reward, mirroring the teaching excellence award scheme in Canada (3M NTF), was one suggestion (Smith *et al* 2017). Further recommendations included utilising strategic leadership more fully, so that awards facilitate change (Devlin *et al* 2012), and the use of distributed leadership strategies via recognised individuals (Gibbs 2009, Gunn and Fisk 2013, Beckmann 2017), noting that such strategies may still rely on the 'heroic' personal responsibility of rewarded individuals (Gunn and Fisk 2013).

Importantly, Gunn and Fisk (2013) noted that innovation – the development of new practice that leads to more effective learning (used alongside 'sharing best practice') – is the most internationally common feature of teaching excellence awards. The assumptions used to elevate the role of 'innovation' and 'change' do require careful consideration of whether *evidence of innovation is of itself evidence of good teaching* (Gibbs 2007, p9).

### **The impact of the NTFS on others**

An NTFS application can have significant benefits for cementing a professional narrative (Walker-Gleaves in Brown 2011). However, the use of the reflective practitioner model for rewarding teaching excellence has been criticised (Elton 1998, Skelton 2004) and the broader impact of NTFS activity on others is a key consideration. There was evidence in the literature to suggest that NTFS Fellows have a significant impact on others at the micro level (e.g. mentoring; Rickinson *et al* 2012) and the meso level (e.g. developing internal mechanisms for reward and recognition of teaching; Peters *et al* 2009, Sadler in Brown 2011, Rickinson *et al* 2012). The reviewed literature also discusses the positive impact of the NTFS through the support and promotion of innovation, enacted through enabling cross-disciplinary research and academic writing (Frames *et al* 2004, Rosie *et al* 2006), and networking through formal or informal communities of practice (Rosie *et al* 2006, Sadler in Brown 2011, Chapman Hault in Brown 2011, Rickinson *et al* 2012). Numerous authors (Rosie *et al* 2006, Jones 2010, Sadler in Brown 2011, Chapman Hault in Brown 2011) highlighted the benefits of collective activity and purposive interactions of smaller groups of NTFS Fellows operating at the macro level (national and international), whilst observing that institutional impact (especially without institutional support) is more challenging (Rosie *et al* 2006).

Rosie *et al* (2006) also discussed limitations, including failed opportunities for a 'shared identity' amongst Fellows and time pressures on Fellows who are called upon to influence institutional learning and teaching initiatives. Rickinson *et al*'s review of the NTFS in 2012 commented that, whilst some Fellows were acting as beacons, a lack of a 'critical mass' was limiting institutional impact. This conclusion aligned with the work undertaken by Rosie *et al* in 2006. Institutional engagement with the scheme, and the return on investment to turn nominations into award winners, may have an association with the NTFS' ability to impact on learning and teaching innovations. Chapman Hault (in Brown 2011, p11) reflected on having *spent much more time in the last three or four years with colleagues outside of the institution than those inside*.

Whilst there is little in the published literature surrounding the pedagogic values of the work created by NTFS Fellows, Owens (2015) explored this directly in her research into online teaching practices. She concluded that Fellows were more likely to practise *what they*

*preach* in relation to student-centred pedagogies (often considered as a marker of excellence, Gibbs 2007), although individual teaching practices did vary.

### **Mechanisms for ensuring impact**

The association between individual (micro), institutional (meso) and sector (macro) impact has been noted as a challenge since the first evaluations of the NTFS from 2001 (including HEFCE 2005). Changes in emphasis away from the project strand have further exacerbated these associations (Skelton 2007). Without a focus on systematic inquiry, the mechanisms for impact become less apparent (or more difficult to measure). Gunn and Fisk (2013) noted that the scholarship aspect of a teaching award is the least likely to be known by students, but contend, supported by Fanghanel *et al* (2016), that scholarship is *commensurate with teaching excellence* (p33). Similarly, as scholarship becomes more focused on student learning (rather than individual practice), and has more impact when collaborative in nature with students and peers (Jones 2010, Fanghanel *et al* 2016), there is evidence to suggest that the NTFS could ensure greater impact by focusing on future collaborative inquiry.

Mechanisms for ensuring that the NTFS has impact, post-award, could also consider the wider literature which discusses the dissemination of practice. Halse *et al* (2007), in relation to Australian national teaching awards, found limited evidence of winners disseminating excellent practice, whereas Skelton (2004) suggests that the reliance on the transmission model of 'disseminate and share' is a flawed pedagogical approach which is unlikely to change the practice of others. This is also in line with HEFCE's findings of Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) funded activities in 2005, criticised for simply disseminating outputs rather than 'assisting adoption'.

### **Individual context**

#### **NTFS impact on the individual**

Gunn and Fisk (2013) clearly identify teaching awards as a mechanism to distinguish between good and excellent teaching, although they note that (p47):

*What is demonstrated clearly by teaching excellence awards is that individual excellence has primarily been defined by initiatives and individuals which have come to be recognised as excellent, rather than as having been identified through theoretically robust, systematic or strategic models.*

This is qualified by the work for Land and Gordon (2015) which found that awards, such as the NTFS, focus primarily on the individual teacher rather than the teaching and that more work should be done to balance individual excellence with, for example, programme level excellence. The introduction of the CATE award in 2016 goes some way to addressing this.

The evidence from the sampled literature did highlight the positive impact on the individual receiving an NTFS award. The status of the award is discussed in terms of credibility (Rickinson *et al* 2012) and as influential in gaining further recognition through funding or sector awards (Gibbs 2009, Chapman Hault in Brown 2011, Rickinson *et al* 2012, Skelton 2007). The impact of the NTFS on career progression, through status or as a measure of teaching performance, was also a common theme (Skelton 2004, Sadler in Brown 2011, Chapman Hault in Brown 2011), not least to add weight to the perceived unbalanced

environments of teaching and research. Additional benefits included personal and professional development and further study, career progression, confidence (to speak at events), a voice (to innovate and challenge) and space to develop (Skelton 2004, Chapman Houlton in Brown 2011, Rickinson *et al* 2012, Botterill 2013). This emphasis on the individual is highlighted by Hewitt (Brown 2011, p13) who stated:

*I would like to argue that achieving the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme award in 2009 is the single most important factor in helping me to adapt to and mould the circumstances in which we now find ourselves.*

Skelton (2004, 2007), Walker-Gleaves (in Brown 2011) and Rickinson *et al* (2012) all discuss the NTFS award as providing the validity to make changes which may not otherwise have been apparent. In contrast, there are published reflections of how opportunities to teach have diminished since winning the award (Sadler in Brown 2011, Chapman Houlton in Brown 2011), and that institution type (how teaching or research appears in promotion criteria) can limit the impact on any individual who wishes to pursue a career in learning and teaching (Parker 2008).

### **NTFS role in raising the status of learning and teaching**

The aim of the NTFS at inception was to 'highlight and reward truly outstanding individual teachers', specifically through the identification of a professional identity for teachers (Skelton 2004), and to challenge the dominance of research excellence in HE (Cashmore and Ramsden 2009, Young 2009, Rickinson *et al* 2012, Trowler *et al* 2014). As Gibbs (2008, p22) noted:

*A substantial proportion of national teaching award winners in the UK (through the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme) have a track record of acquiring institutional or national teaching development grants of one kind or another, and evidence of such income earning may be considered as an indicator of teaching excellence, just as the size of research grant income is used as a proxy for research excellence.*

The importance of a recognised measure is noted, considering that avenues for disseminating evidence of excellent teaching practice, or the scholarship of teaching and learning, may be judged as 'alternative outputs' (Halse *et al* 2007), or may not be through publication at all (Skelton 2004). Furthermore, the recent 'decoupling' of the individual award from the research component of the award has been critiqued as detrimental to the vision of effectively balancing teaching and research agendas (Skelton 2007, MacFarlane in Skelton 2007). Some of this was countered by the role played by the HEA, when it replaced the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE), and began to focus on research and evaluation, and the activities of Centres for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CETL) (Gosling 2013). However, even though the impact of teaching awards to readdress the balance between research and teaching is contested (Gunn and Fisk 2013), the shift in focus for the NTFS should be noted.

### **The original aims of the NTFS**

The literature also raised some challenges surrounding the original aims of the NTFS, which Trowler *et al* (2014) attribute to a 'Bid and Deliver' model. These include: teaching as a competing identity to research (Skelton 2004), including the management of competing

portfolios (Rosie *et al* 2006); a 'backlash' against winners at some institutions (Rickinson *et al* 2012); and the personal effects of unsuccessful applications (Rickinson *et al* 2012, Trowler *et al* 2014, Brooks *et al* 2014, Land and Gordon 2015). Rickinson *et al* (2012) also comment on the disparity of engagement with the scheme, either through opportunity or perception, noting variations by job role, type of provider and geographical scope. On the latter point Brooks *et al* (2014, p76) note that:

*There does not appear to be (from those institutions we have spoken to) a clear consensus on HEA's role in rewarding teaching in Scotland, which does not take part in the NTFS.*

Variation in how excellence is achieved across different disciplines is also highlighted as a challenge for cross-disciplinary awards (Fanghanel *et al* 2016, Gibbs 2009, Gunn and Fisk 2013). The similarity in the profile of NTFS winners was also raised as a criticism of the scheme (Brooks *et al* 2014).

## **Sector context**

### **The sector relevance of the NTFS**

Almost all of the highly scoring literature gleaned for this review fails to consider the current climate and reference to teaching excellence. The analysis of the current relevance of the NTFS to the sector, in comparison to other mechanisms of reward and recognition, has inherent limitations although, historically, the NTFS has been credited as a 'significant contributor' to the official discourse of teaching excellence (Skelton 2007).

Variations in design and structure of the NTFS during its lifespan also make comparisons difficult. Previous reviews have focused on the NTFS as a whole (Rickinson *et al* 2012, Rosie 2006), whilst others seek to critique the reward and recognition of teaching excellence more broadly (Skelton 2004) – noting that the concept of teaching excellence has shifted since this research was conducted. Since these publications, teaching excellence awards have also expanded to include, for example, the Times Higher Education award for Most Innovative Teacher, which is noted as comparable to the NTFS (Rickinson *et al* 2012).

The NTFS has taken influence from international HE institutions, namely Australia, Canada and the USA, and is mirrored by other national schemes (see Ireland, Land and Gordon 2015) and in turn has influenced institutional processes across the sector (Gibbs 2008, Rickinson *et al* 2012, Skelton 2007, Gunn and Fisk 2013). Gibbs (2008, p5) concludes that:

*There is also often a confusing superimposition of the criteria for the UK's national teaching award scheme, the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS). Many institutions use their internal teaching award as a means to identify and select their nominee to the NTFS, but this often cuts across local intentions and values and muddies the focus of the scheme.*

## Value for money

There is very little discussion in the literature surrounding the value for money of the NTFS from the perspective of the funder. Therefore considerations of value for money cover the perspectives of the institution, the individual and the funder in relation to the 'return on investment'.

### NTFS sector impact

The impact of the NTFS could be compared to previous HEFCE spending including the TQEF (£48 million for 1999-2002 and again in 2002-2005, Trowler *et al* 2014) and the CETLs (introduced in 2004 with an investment of £350 million, Saunders 2011). The NTFS (with a spending total of less over a longer time period) has been commended for its involvement in 'cultural change' within HE (Gosling 2013), positioning teaching excellence as a priority. This 'cultural change' may be time bound, and one perspective is that the NTFS has fulfilled its original aim, emerging from the Dearing Report 1997, to raise the status of teaching within HE. In contrast, Gosling (2013) states that questions still remain over the quality of learning and teaching across the sector, and the recent introduction of the TEF adds weight to this contention.

Land and Gordon (2015 p. 21) state that *more needs to be done by funding agencies both to showcase examples of teaching excellence and refresh the debate on this topic at various levels*. This is supported by the conclusion of Brooks *et al* who found that *the HEA has yet to establish a clear approach to demonstrating value for money and the impact of its work* (2014 p90), which includes support and training for reviewers (who offer their time and expertise without financial payment), oversight of the nomination and review process for the NTFS (Spencer 2013), and the dissemination of NTFS impact. Botterill (2013, p12), writing for the HEA, concluded by suggesting that:

*The overall worth of the award outstrips the direct financial investment made by the HEA by dint of the energy, enthusiasm and activities the award generates for the NTFS Fellows, their students, colleagues, institutions and the higher education sector.*

### The value of the financial award

Alongside changes to the design and structure of the NTFS, there has been considerable variance in the amount of money available for award winners, and in spending requirements. As the first teaching excellence award to offer a financial sum (Skelton 2004), the incentive was used to reward past experience and to develop research-based project work. Applicants were required to outline spending intentions in their application (Frames *et al* 2004). More recently, all NTFS award monies are able to be freely spent on the individual's personal and professional development (Rickinson *et al* 2012), which differs from the Canadian 3M model of supporting collective activity through a paid residential retreat (Gunn and Fisk 2013, Smith *et al* 2017).

The financial sum was created to attract publicity and to signify the prominence of teaching within HE, and exceeded comparable rewards in other countries (Skelton 2007). Trowler *et al* (2014), during their review for HEFCE, found that varying funding levels, chances of winning, and time to write applications, all contribute to bidding fatigue, which could impact

on an individual appraisal of value for money (time and energy). This is supported by Gunn and Fisk's (2013) findings that award processes could be more of a burden than a reward. Gosling (2013) suggests that the fluidity of the scheme is another example of a quality enhancement initiative which often lacks coherence and, as such, has inherent limitations for bringing about change.

Skelton argues that the significance of the initially large sum (£50,000) was *the need for it to emulate those in other countries, to attract publicity and to be treated seriously in the predominantly research-based culture of UK higher education* (2004, p46). The value for money, or 'added value' as Skelton notes, was the benefit of collective activity. He concludes that *in practice, however, this activity has not become a formal requirement; for example, non-attendance at shared meetings of the Fellows would not result in money being withheld* (ibid).

This evidence begins to question whether the money or the promise of collective activity is the real prize (Rosie *et al* 2006), often critiqued as the distinction between award (financial) and reward (other, more complex benefits) (Skelton 2007). In addition, Walker-Gleaves (in Brown 2011) concluded that whilst the financial reward provided freedom and credibility, the act of reflection had the most impact on teaching practice. Research into the impact of the 3M Scheme in Canada found that *while the 3MNTFS award is not accompanied by any monetary award, this creation of community can provide winners with rewards that while less concrete, may be more satisfying* (Smith *et al* 2017, p389) and that:

*For those considering implementing similar awards programs, it may be useful to keep in mind that the absence of a monetary value attached to the award was not a factor for those who have one, or for the institutions of which they are a part. Rather, the sense of community which is created through their lifetime association with the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education [a Canadian equivalent to HEA] and especially through their cohort retreat, was something that almost all the participants identified as one of the most memorable and life-changing aspects of the award. (ibid, p392)*

The sector clearly offers mixed views on the future of the financial incentive (Rickinson *et al* 2012), although evidence suggests that the value of the monetary award could be reconsidered alongside a refocus on supporting collaborative ventures. Gunn and Fisk (2013) refer to this as a focus on a 'culture of excellence', and one which is not dependent on a financial incentive. In contrast, Land and Gordon (2015) found that reward schemes are likely to have a much stronger impact on 'culture' if money is attached.

### **Institutional costs of NTFS engagement**

Engagement in large, externally funded, NTFS projects may have been at the expense of other institutional strategic priorities. Rosie *et al* (2006, p35) noted that:

*The institution is prepared to allow the winner to engage more easily in quality enhancement activity which focuses on their 'project' and presumably are also prepared to 'cover the loss' of their non-involvement in the on-going quality assurance activities of the institution.*

In this situation, the redirection of resources as a result of the NTFS places some costs on institutions, which may examine the value for money of supporting applications. This cost is exacerbated by evidence of projects stalling or being suspended during the first year (ibid and Skelton 2004).

With reference to the considerable institutional investment needed to support applications, failure to make the most of NTFS Fellows has been outlined as a *waste of a valuable institutional resource* (Frames *et al* 2004). Institutional resources, include supporting application writing and nominations, and any subsequent project administration, are referred to by Land and Gordon (2015) as the 'sunken costs' of rewarding teaching excellence. There is no comment about the value for money for the funder (HEFCE) in these considerations.

### **Evidence of spending**

Evidence of spending on travel, often to develop internationally, was a common theme in the literature (Sadler in Brown 2011, Walker-Gleaves in Brown 2011, Chapman Houlton in Brown 2011, Rickinson *et al* 2012). Brown (2011, p4) noted that the decrease in NTFS funding has made international travel less likely:

*This at a time when HE needs a more international perspective but when universities in the UK risk becoming more insular, and where survival and damage limitation are threatening to dominate policy and practice.*

### **Examples of value for money**

When looking to the wider evidence around value for money in teaching and learning, Trowler *et al* (2014, p3) noted, in their review of HEFCE enhancement activity, that:

*Large, high-profile projects often do not represent good value for money. In times of fiscal constraint and resource depletion, better thinking about small but effective initiatives would be beneficial.*

To add weight to this, in 2010, Jones (2010, p281) found that institutional fellowships were value for money when they incorporate specific characteristics, commenting that:

*An obvious question that might be posed in relation to initiatives like learning and teaching fellowships is whether they produce a good return on investment. This article argues that research underpinned learning and teaching fellowships that focus on pedagogic development are effective when they operate within a COP context.*

### **TEF analysis**

As outlined in the Methodology section, the NTFS is not a prescribed measure of teaching excellence and there was no guidance about the inclusion of the NTFS in the TEF Year 2 submissions. The analysis of the written submissions concludes that there is limited evidence to show that the NTFS has supported and/or promoted innovation in learning and teaching, with the majority of institutions making no direct links between the work of Fellows and institutional teaching excellence (21 out of 35). There was little distinction by TEF award/engagement, with the two providers who strongly promoted the NTFS categorised as a TEF Silver awardee and a non-TEF engager. Examples provided within these 14

submissions linked the work of NTFS Fellows to the development of learning and teaching strategy, showcasing teaching and learning practice, leading research projects and acting as external speakers.

The TEF participating Scottish institutions, sampled for this analysis, made no reference to the NTFS (although one did reference the Times Higher Awards). Interestingly, Robertson (2017) reflects on those Scottish institutions that did take part, noting that *it is pleasing to see the prominence given in several of the statements to an institutional culture which facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching*. The sample of written TEF submissions and institutional websites also showed links between internal reward and recognition schemes and the NTFS, and the use of Fellows as assessors/panel members. Aside from the NTFS, all TEF Gold award institutions discussed a range of institutional teaching excellence awards, including student-led awards and development funds, apart from the one sampled specialist HE college that made no reference to reward and recognition within the submission.

Two Gold award submissions (out of a sample of five) stated the number/frequency of winners, compared to six (out of nine) Silver award submissions. Moore *et al* (2017) found the Silver rated submissions were the most likely to mention the NTFS. Rolfe (2017) found that there were notably more NTFS Fellows working in Gold and Silver institutions, and her analysis showed that *Of the 103 institutions with at least one NTFS Fellow, most built this into their narrative – only 25 universities who had Fellows did not write about them*. Given the lack of association between Gold awards and NTFS mentions, and the evidence pertaining to institutions that had Fellows but did not write about them, the TEF provides evidence of the current variance in the value placed on the NTFS and its impact on learning and teaching. Alternatively this evidence could highlight the lack of awareness of the NTFS by those strategic leads involved in writing TEF Year 2 submissions. As the TEF process considers the holistic appraisal of teaching excellence from various sources, both conclusions are significant.

## Financial analysis of HEA Final Reports 2010-2012

The spending activity of the NTFS award winners has been coded and totalled. Counts are recorded once per award (where applicable), not for each explicitly stated activity (e.g. five conferences attended would be counted as one not five; granular frequencies are unnecessary as they are dependent on the cost of each activity). This approach is distinct from Botterill (2013) who counted all expenditure, but produced comparable findings. Final reports for the 2013 and 2014 winners were requested, but were not available.

**Table 2: 2010, £10,000 award – 32 records (50 awards made)**

Activity	Count
Resources (including ICT, printing, postage etc)	24
Non-UK travel (to attend/lead events)	18
UK travel (to attend/lead events)	14
Led/ran events/workshops	10
Courses/training (personal development)	8
Research assistant	5
Services (e.g. IT support)	4

Replacement teaching	4
Memberships/subscriptions	3
Curriculum developments (new courses)	3
Outreach/community work	3
Group/Team/Community of Practice created	2
Travel (not specified)	2
Students (work experience etc)	2
Professional fees (e.g. authoring, guest lectures)	2
Other research costs	2
Staff development (general)	1
Publications	1

Table 2 outlines money spent by 2010 NTFS winners from 2010-2013 (the date restrictions set by the award). For these 2010 awards, 19% of the available reports indicated that the allocated funding (£10,000) had not been spent within the time frame, with remaining money ranging from £1 to £5,740. Two of the reports outlined their intention to ask for an extension to the spending time restriction. A number of the reports indicated that the budget was overspent (topped up with independent funding) and one report indicated that a proportion of their activities had been match-funded by the institution to allow greater reach.

This data should be interpreted in conjunction with the analysis undertaken by Botterill (2013) on behalf of the HEA. This report used the same data (albeit a sample of 25 reports) and found that 'Travel, conference attendance, and subsistence' and 'ICT', accounted for just over half of grant expenditure (p.3).

In each final report perceived 'Impact Level' was indicated via self-assessment: raised awareness, increased understanding or a change in practice and policy. Similarly, perceived 'Reach', was indicated via: impact on yourself, your colleagues, your students, your institution, and the HE sector. Botterill (2013) found that:

*The self-assessment of the NTFS Fellows shows that their activities have had most impact in terms of raised awareness (38 percent) and increased understanding (44 percent). In terms of the 'Reach' of impact, the proportions of activities considered by the NTFS Fellows to have impacted 'yourself' is highest at 30 percent, followed by roughly equal impact on colleagues (22 percent), students (20 percent), and institution (17 percent).*

**Table 3: 2011, £10,000 award – 29 records (50 awards made)**

Activity	Count
Resources (including ICT, printing, postage etc)	19
UK travel (to attend/lead events)	18
Non-UK travel (to attend/lead events)	16
Led/ran events/workshops	12
Other research costs	11
Courses/training (personal development)	9
Replacement teaching	3
Group/Team/Community of Practice	3

Memberships/subscriptions	2
Professional fees (e.g. authoring, guest lectures)	2
Research assistant	1
Services (e.g. IT support)	1
Curriculum developments (new courses)	1
Outreach/community work	1
Students (work experience etc)	1
Publications	1

Table 3 outlines money spent by 2011 NTFS winners from 2011-2014. For these 2011 awards, 21% of the available reports indicated that the allocated funding (£10,000) had not been spent within the time frame, with remaining money ranging from 2p to £6,808. Extenuating personal circumstances limited spending in the latter case, while changes in job role were also cited as an explanation. All of those with large outstanding budgets outlined plans to spend and of their intentions to request extensions. Two of the reports indicated that the budget had been topped up with independent funding by the institution.

**Table 4: 2012, £10,000 awards – 19 records (50 awards made)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Count</b>
Non-UK travel (to attend/lead events)	16
UK travel (to attend/lead events)	15
Resources (including ICT, printing, postage etc)	13
Other research costs	5
Courses/training (personal development)	5
Led/ran events/workshops	3
Memberships/subscriptions	3
Research assistant	3
Students (work experience etc)	3
Replacement teaching	2
Group/Team/Community of Practice	1
Professional fees (e.g. authoring)	1
Curriculum developments (new courses)	1
Outreach/community work	1

Table 4 outlines money spent by 2012 NTFS winners from 2012-2015. For these 2012 awards, 47% of the available reports indicated that the allocated funding (£10,000) had not been spent within the time frame, with remaining money ranging from £34 to £3,500 (with extenuating personal circumstances limiting spending in the latter case). One report indicated that £1,232 was still uncommitted. Three reports indicated formal extensions had been granted. Three of the reports indicated that the budget had been topped up with independent funding by the institution and one through personal funding. One report indicated that the award holder moved overseas with spend uncommitted, therefore forfeiting the remaining money.

Overall, UK/non-UK travel for conferences, study visits, research etc. and the purchase of resources were the most likely spend of NTFS winners.

## Summary

The identified literature highlights the varied benefits of the NTFS to individuals, institutions and the sector, and indicates that the scheme is valued in the UK for those that participate. The associated costs are also noted with reference to institutional costs via supporting applications and individual costs via application, impact on teaching opportunities and managing the risks of failure. Missed opportunities were also noted – the lack of a critical mass within institutions clearly impacts on visibility and change. This is also evident in the varied acknowledgement of the NTFS in TEF Year 2 provider submissions.

The impact of the scheme is difficult to assess. Assessment is reliant on personal reflections and this poses some challenges, not least for providing evidence of teaching excellence within the TEF Year 2 provider statements. The opportunities to engage in collective activity and inquiry-based outcomes are noted as the most likely to have impact beyond the individual, with no associated costs to the sector evident in this review. There was little discussion of value for money in the literature, and few methodologically robust studies which could be used as evidence. The spending activity of a limited number of NTFS winners provides an overview of outputs. This data, alongside evidence from the literature, suggests that international and national travel to network, present work and engage in study visits to learn from others has been the most likely spend, noting that international opportunities are becoming limited as the financial award decreases.

## Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this review which should be noted. Subjective and reflective accounts dominate the literature and form the basis of the perceived impact and reach of the projects themselves (in the Fellows' final reports). Impact may be hidden by publication or be less visible as a product of the NTFS over time. For example, the Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment (TESTA) initiative was a result of an NTFS project and is now widely used across the sector, but may not be referenced as an NTFS output by those who utilise it. Furthermore, there is certainly a gap in the literature review surrounding the impact from NTFS projects. The experiences of the authors and their (sometimes complicated) engagement with the NTFS application process should also be considered under the caveat of impartiality. There was also a lack of comprehensive discussion about the direct impact of the NTFS on students. Changes in the design of the award over time also make following the commentary of the literature difficult. This review has also been completed in line with the proportionality of the time and resources. A proportion of artefacts which were found to have some relevance to this topic area have not been included, but could be used to widen the review.

## Survey findings (quantitative and qualitative)

This section contains a summary of the responses to the open-ended and closed-ended questions from the survey (see Appendix A: Survey Questions). The comments from the open-ended questions, which explore the perceived influence of the NTFS, have been analysed thematically to provide further insight into the nature of the responses.

### Descriptive overview of the survey population and sample

The survey population was the HEA 'Subscribers List' of institutional contacts, which consisted of 249 UK institutions (of which 137 are HE institutions): 219 in England, 13 in Wales, 3 in Northern Ireland and 14 in Scotland (although Scottish institutions are not funded to participate in NTFS). The majority of these contacts held senior strategic positions within their institutions, for example, Pro Vice-Chancellors, Deans/Associate Deans and Heads of Schools and Faculties.

In total, 72 of the 249 institutions participated in the survey, which represents a response rate of 29%. All respondents were asked to select the mission groups that their institution belonged to (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Summary of responses to the multiple-choice closed-ended question 'Please state whether your institution belongs to any of the following mission groups'**

Mission Group	Frequency
Cathedrals Group	4
FE and HE college	11
GuildHE	9
Million+ Group	10
Other	2
Russell Group	13
Unaffiliated	15
University Alliance	10

Table 6 shows the NTFS participation of institutions that responded to the survey. There were six FE and HE colleges that stated they did not support applications for the NTFS, while a further three were not sure about their eligibility. There were only two surveyed FE and HE colleges that have previously supported applications for the NTFS.

All survey respondents were asked to comment on questions relating to: internal approaches to reward and recognition for teaching; the extent to which the NTFS has promoted innovative learning and teaching in their institution; the extent to which NTFS winners have influenced teaching and learning projects in their institution; the extent to which the NTFS has influenced the student learning experience in their institution; future changes to the NTFS; and other sector-wide award schemes that recognise teaching excellence.

Respondents that identified that they have supported applications for the NTFS were asked further questions on: the main factors for participating in the scheme; the benefits and costs of participating; and the internal provision of support to help applicants.

**Table 6: Summary of responses to the closed-ended question 'Which of the following scenarios apply currently to your institution and to your involvement in the NTFS?'**

NTFS Participation	Count	Percentage of Survey Respondents (n = 72)
My institution is eligible for the NTFS and we have supported individuals or teams to apply	53	74%
My institution is eligible for the NTFS but we have never supported individuals or teams to apply	9	13%
My institution is not eligible for the NTFS (for example, Scottish Higher Education Institutions)	3	4%
Don't know	7	10%

## Institutional context

### Policies and processes of reward and recognition for teaching

There was a strong indication from the survey comments that the NTFS has been integrated into the wider processes of reward and recognition across many institutions that participate in the scheme. Of the 52 NTFS-participating institutions reporting that they have internal approaches of reward and recognition, 23 (44%) commented that their own approaches were linked to the NTFS in some manner, most commonly as a nomination process. The majority of these 23 institutions mapped the design of internal award schemes directly on the NTFS or used the criteria as a framework for staff to understand teaching excellence: *The Fellowships scheme is designed to support staff in building a profile towards NTFS Fellow status, and its criteria mirror those of the NTFS.*

Nevertheless, the influence of the NTFS was less apparent for 15 participating survey respondents (29%) that implied that the scheme has not directly influenced their own approaches of reward and recognition. Several of these respondents adopted different criteria for teaching excellence after judging the NTFS to be unsuitable for their local needs, while others insisted that their internal approaches had been established before the inception of the NTFS. A small number of institutions still described the NTFS as complementary to their internal approaches, despite disparities in design and structure: *So, while the NTFS does not influence our approach, it could be viewed as the 'icing on the cake' for our schemes that promote and recognise teaching excellence.*

In response to a closed-ended question, eight of the 53 surveyed institutions (15%) that participate in the NTFS responded that their institution has targets for the number of staff holding NTFS Fellowships. The remaining 45 institutions (85%) stated that they did not have any targets.

In the wider context of teaching excellence, 64 of all the 72 survey respondents (89%) reported having internal approaches for reward and recognition, including the three institutions from Scotland that were not eligible for the NTFS. The majority of respondents indicating that they did not have internal approaches were FE and HE colleges. The 64 institutions with internal approaches were asked a follow-up question to describe their own approaches, with 37 (58%) commenting that they use a type of an internal award scheme,

most commonly student-led or staff nominated (see Table 7). A total of 39 institutions (61%) made reference to promotion routes for teaching staff, such as positions for Senior Teaching Fellowships and Professorships. Processes of reward and recognition for teaching excellence were widely established within institutions; however, many indicated that there was still significant progress to be made:

*Teaching and scholarship is beginning to feature in the promotions pathways and attempts to reward and incentivise teaching [are] being introduced. However, this remains a research intensive university and there is more work to be done in this area.*

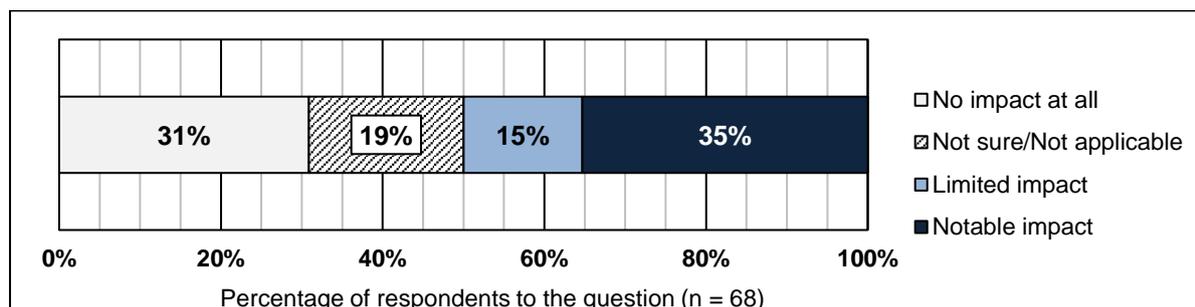
**Table 7: Frequency of themes identified from the open-ended question 'Please provide a short description of your institution's approaches for recognising and rewarding teaching excellence'**

Type of Approach	Count	Percentage of Respondents that Commented on the Question (n = 64)
Promotion routes for teaching staff	39	61%
Internal award scheme, for example, student-led or staff nominated	37	58%
Reference made to supporting other frameworks, such as the HEA fellowship/UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)	17	27%
Internal fellowship scheme	14	22%
Teacher development grants	9	14%
Reference made to membership of networks and communities of practice for teaching	9	14%

### **Dissemination and promotion of innovative practice**

All survey respondents were asked to comment on an open-ended question exploring the extent to which the NTFS has promoted innovative learning and teaching in their institution. The responses imply that the contribution of NTFS award winners in promoting innovative practice was recognised by half the institutions that provided a comment; however, there was considerable variation in the perceived level of the impact (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Frequency of themes from the analysis of survey responses to the open-ended question 'Has the NTFS promoted innovative learning and teaching in your institution? If so, please describe how. If not, please state why not'**



Of the 68 survey respondents that commented on this question, 24 institutions (35%) provided examples of the ways in which NTFS award winners have had a notable role in sharing innovative practice. This was most commonly achieved through the delivery of workshops, seminars and presentations and through professional development initiatives and mentoring:

*Each year we have an annual learning and teaching conference at which new NTFS Fellows and in-house Teacher Fellows are required to share best practice. As such, innovative and effective approaches to learning and teaching are promoted.*

The survey comments indicate that the perceived level of the impact of NTFS winners was greater in institutions that have established procedures in place to celebrate their work. The role of NTFS winners was more encompassing across these 24 institutions, where award winners were presented with further opportunities to share their work. Examples include being asked to contribute to educational strategy, join communities of practice and sit on working groups.

There were 10 institutions (15%) that provided comments indicating that the contribution of NTFS winners in promoting innovative practice has been limited. From these perspectives, there was a sense that the limited impact of NTFS winners was partly due to the lack of institutional procedures in place to disseminate excellent practice:

*To a certain extent and mostly through individual activity – recently, however, there has been a shift towards more coordination of NTFS Fellow activity, there is an internal NTFS Fellows network group and a plan to disseminate practice more widely.*

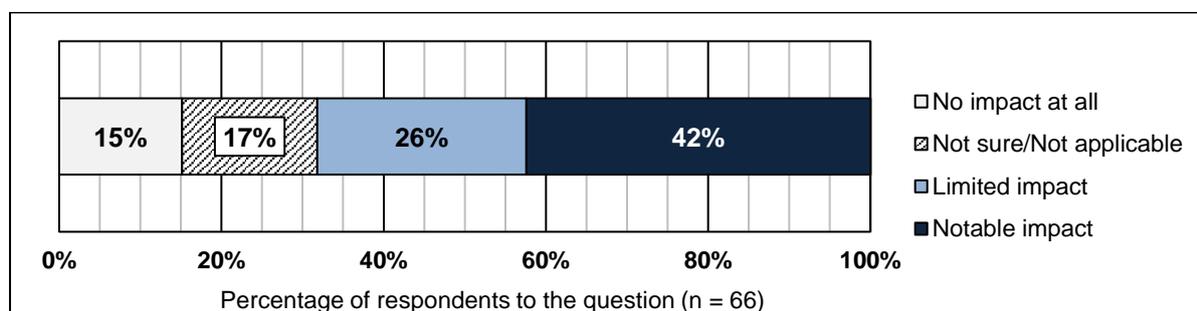
A total of 21 respondents (31%) implied that award winners have not contributed to the dissemination of excellent practice at all. A range of reasons were provided for this perception, including: the inactivity of individual award winners; a lack of awareness of the scheme; perceptions that the NTFS only recognises excellent practice demonstrated in the past; the difficulty of transferring practice across disciplines; and poor engagement with staff due to perceptions that the chances of winning an individual award are very low. There were 13 respondents (19%) that declared that they were not sure or unable to comment, the majority of which were non-participating NTFS institutions. There were no notable differences in the nature of comments between mission groups.

Of the 53 surveyed institutions that have previously supported applications for the NTFS, 17 (32%) commented that the dissemination and promotion of excellent practice was a benefit of participating (see Figure 4: Dissemination and promotion of innovative practice). A further eight institutions (15%) reported that a positive consequence of taking part in the NTFS was the development of networks and communities of practice dedicated to teaching and learning (see Figure 4: Networks/Communities of practice).

### Impact on teaching and learning and the student learning experience

All survey respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which NTFS winners have had an influence on learning and teaching projects in their institution (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Frequency of themes from the analysis of survey responses to the open-ended question ‘Have NTFS winners had any influence on teaching and learning projects in your institution? If so, please describe how. If not, please state why not’**



Of the 66 respondents that commented, 28 (42%) implied that NTFS winners have had a notable and positive impact on learning and teaching projects. The majority of these institutions stated that individual award winners have led on institution-wide or local-level projects, with inclusive practice, student-led enquiry, and assessment and feedback featuring among the examples that were raised. Other respondents stated that NTFS winners have contributed to institutional strategy on teaching and learning, such as by informing policies via working committees, leading on projects of strategic importance and inputting into teacher education programmes:

*The university featured a number of NTFS winners in our TEF submission and across our Education Strategy pages. NTFS winners are also regularly asked to lead on aspects of our Education Strategy and to lead aspects of certain work being undertaken across the university.*

A further 17 respondents (26%) indicated that the influence of NTFS winners on learning and teaching projects has been limited. From these perspectives, the impact of award winners was not considered to have been systematic, strategic or wide scale and their activities were largely focused on sharing excellent practice and findings from projects, such as by delivering workshops and presentations.

However, 10 institutions (15%) felt that NTFS winners have not had any impact and a range of reasons were provided: a lack of a strategic role for award winners; no awareness of award winners; and perceptions that the impact of the NTFS is *in the run up to the award rather than post-award*. There were 11 respondents (17%) that stated that they were unable to comment on the question. In terms of differences between mission groups, institutions

that identified themselves as Unaffiliated were more favourable about the impact of award winners on teaching and learning projects compared with institutions from other mission groups.

In response to a separate question on the impact of the NTFS on the student learning experience, a significant proportion of respondents argued that a direct link cannot be established. These institutions highlighted the difficulty of isolating the impact of the NTFS from other factors, commenting that many award winners are committed to improving the student learning experience within their existing roles. Others stated that award winners had to demonstrate such an impact as part of their application but the notion that the NTFS has been the driver for any improvements was disputed:

*It would be hard to disentangle the NTFS from the work that was already taking place (i.e. the NTFS itself may not have influenced the student learning experience, but the work that was used to support the claim of excellence in the first place would have done so).*

This perception was challenged by several institutions that argued that students inevitably benefit to some extent by innovations that are informed by NTFS winners, albeit this impact was considered to be largely indirect. It was acknowledged that activities that involve supporting or engaging colleagues with new ideas, which can be embedded into their own practice, have the potential to benefit students.

### **National recognition and external validation**

The 53 surveyed institutions that currently support applications for the NTFS were asked to describe the main factors underlying their decision to participate in the scheme. National recognition and external validation was cited by 32 surveyed institutions (60%), the most widely reported reason for supporting applications to the NTFS (see Figure 3: National recognition and external validation). In response to another open-ended question on the benefits of participating, 21 institutions (40%) commented on enhancements to institutional reputation and profile as a result of taking part (see Figure 4: National recognition and external validation). The NTFS provided these institutions and their staff with opportunities to validate their own teaching and learning as excellent and to demonstrate areas of best practice to the sector:

*Institutional support for NTFS applications is driven by a desire to seek external recognition for innovation and excellence in learning and teaching.*

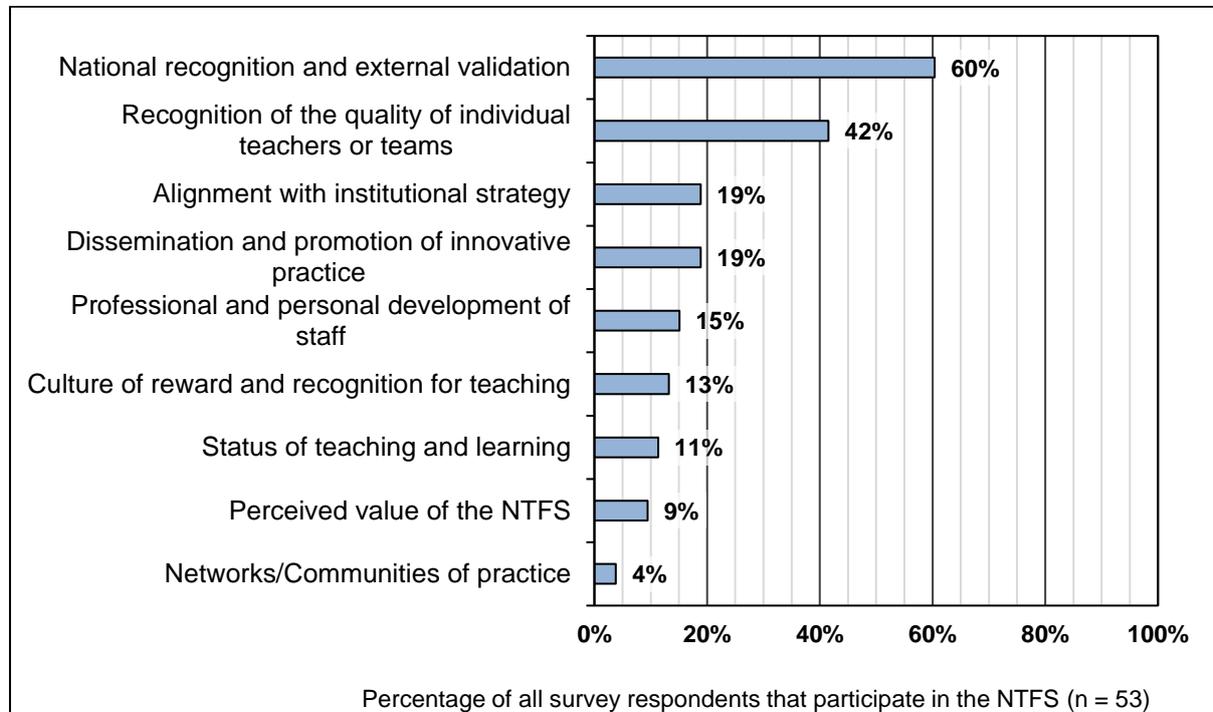
The prestige acquired from winning the award led several institutions to cite the NTFS as a useful marketing tool for attracting students and staff. For two survey respondents, the potential advantages of the NTFS were recognised but not maximised:

*I think that there could be many benefits, but I am not convinced that the institution fully recognises or takes advantage of them. For example, recruitment could be boosted by the presence of NTFS Fellows. However, these are not included in marketing materials or websites.*

All eight respondents that identified themselves as NTFS-participating institutions from the University Alliance mission group mentioned national recognition as a reason for

participating. Aside from this observation, there were no other notable differences in responses between the mission groups.

**Figure 3: Frequency of themes from the analysis of survey responses to the open-ended question 'Please describe the main factors underlying your institution's decision to support individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS'**



**Figure 4: Frequency of themes from the analysis of survey responses to the open-ended question 'Please describe any benefits to your institution in supporting individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS'**



## **Culture of reward and recognition for teaching**

Seven respondents (13% of all survey respondents that participate in the NTFS) commented that they support applications as the NTFS acts as a mechanism for embedding teaching excellence into the culture of the institution (see Figure 3: Culture of reward and recognition for teaching). In terms of the reported benefits of participating, 11 institutions (21%) indicated that the NTFS has helped to build a collective sense of responsibility in enhancement and create an ethos that values teaching excellence (see Figure 4: Culture of reward and recognition for teaching). Several of these institutions noted that rewarding individual commitment to teaching has helped to motivate staff:

*Good for individuals to be recognised internally and selected to be put forward. Good for peers in the university to see peers winning national awards. Good for peers in the university to see celebration of winners of national awards. Award winners are often keen to contribute to the teaching development community.*

## **The status of teaching and learning**

Raising the status of teaching and learning was an aim of the NTFS at inception. However, the survey responses imply that this has not yet been widely achieved across the sample of institutions in the sample. Six of the 53 surveyed institutions that participate in the NTFS (11%) specifically mentioned that they support applications in order to enhance the internal profile of teaching and learning (see Figure 3: Status of teaching and learning). A further six institutions (11%) reported that a benefit of participating in the NTFS was the raised status of teaching excellence (see Figure 4: Status of teaching and learning). Some of these respondents were particularly research-focused and aimed to use the NTFS, in conjunction with other approaches, to achieve greater parity of esteem between research and teaching:

*It raises individuals' profiles, as well as the profile of teaching in general. There is now a body of people at the institution who are recognised as sector leading and who lead the transformation of teaching.*

## **Perceived value of the NTFS**

The reputation of the NTFS was specifically mentioned as a driver for participation by five institutions (9%) (see Figure 3: Perceived value of the NTFS). Across other questions, several survey respondents described the NTFS as the pinnacle of reward and recognition in teaching and learning. Furthermore, the NTFS was perceived to be unique but complementary to other award schemes available in the sector.

In response to a closed-ended question, 41 of the 53 NTFS-participating respondents (77%) in the survey stated that they would 'recommend the NTFS to institutions that currently do not participate'. Two institutions (4%) responded that they would not recommend the scheme, while 10 institutions (19%) were not sure. Of the nine eligible non-participating institutions that responded to the survey, six commented that they would explore the possibility of engaging with the NTFS in the near future.

The reputation of the NTFS was less favourable among some respondents that deemed the scheme to be irrelevant to their own institution. Three respondents stated that they had stopped participating in the NTFS, with claims that the scheme was not regarded as

prestigious and that the criteria were incongruous and too far removed from everyday teaching roles. Others reported that there was little awareness of the NTFS or the award winners within their institution.

### **Provision of support and cost to staff time**

Institutions provide an array of internal support to help individuals or teams to apply for the NTFS (see Table 8).

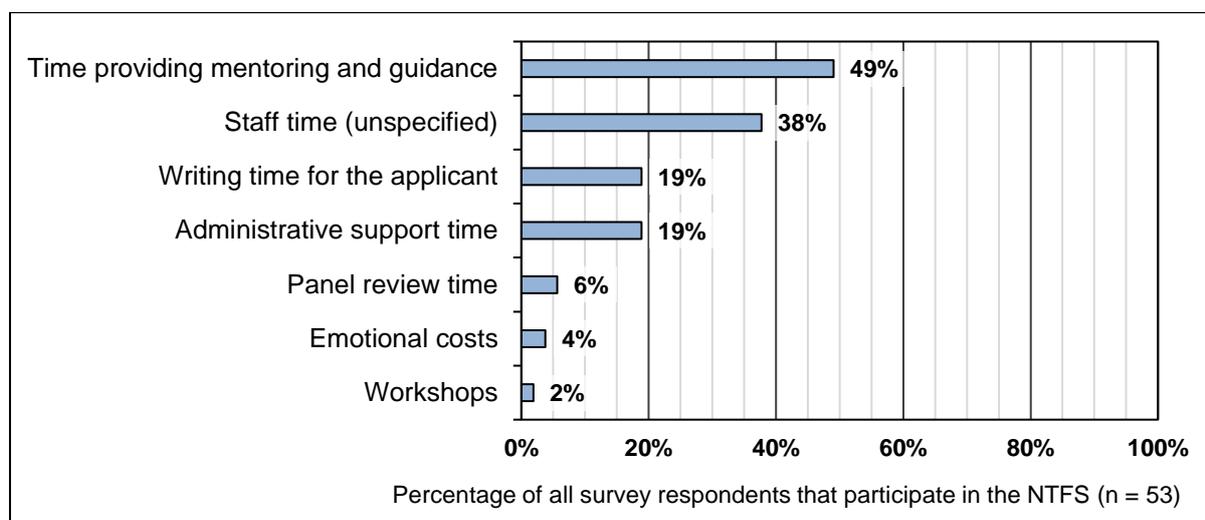
**Table 8: Breakdown of responses to the closed-ended question 'What types of support are in place in your institution to help individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS? Please tick all that apply'**

<b>Type of support</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents (n = 53)</b>
Application writing	37	70%
Mentoring	37	70%
Administrative	27	51%
CPD workshops	23	43%
Other	9	17%
Financial/time support	4	8%

The capacity of institutions to provide internal support to help individuals or teams to apply for the NTFS was a defining factor in their engagement with the scheme. The majority of comments made about the costs of participation and the reasons for non-participation were in relation to institutional resources, in particular staff time.

Of the 53 NTFS-participating institutions surveyed, 26 (49%) commented that time providing guidance and mentoring for applicants was a cost (see Figure 5: Time providing mentoring and guidance). A total of 20 institutions (38%) cited staff time in general as another cost, while other respondents focused on writing time for the applicant (19%) and administrative support (19%)

**Figure 5: Frequency of themes from the analysis of survey responses to the open-ended question 'Please describe any costs to your institution in supporting individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS'**



Several respondents described the provision of support as a necessary cost to ensure that applications are developed to a sufficient standard, with many having internal academic development teams to alleviate the pressure on individual applicants:

*In addition to the annual HEA subscription, the only other costs are the costs of resourcing the support for individual applicants. However, such support is derived directly from the institutional academic development unit.*

Conversely, other institutions with fewer resources reported having less capacity to provide support, making the application process far more problematic as it came at the expense of other competing priorities. This was a perception shared by many eligible non-participating institutions. In response to an open-ended question, five of the nine surveyed institutions that are eligible for the NTFS but have not previously supported applications cited a lack of resource as a reason for non-participation:

*We decided not to submit this year as there was no time to offer support to turn applications around so rapidly, especially as many involved were busy with the TEF. We do not expressly have a budget or named staff responsible for supporting applications, and this tends to come from other budgets.*

## Individual context

### Recognition of the quality of individual teachers or teams

An important driver for participating in the NTFS, as identified by 22 of the surveyed institutions (42%), was the need to acknowledge and reward individuals or teams for demonstrating teaching excellence (see Figure 3: Recognition of the quality of individual teachers or teams). A total of 17 institutions (32%) alluded to benefits relating to the role of the NTFS in helping staff recognise their own excellence (see Figure 4: Recognition of the quality of individual teachers or teams). There were not any significant differences in the nature of responses between mission groups.

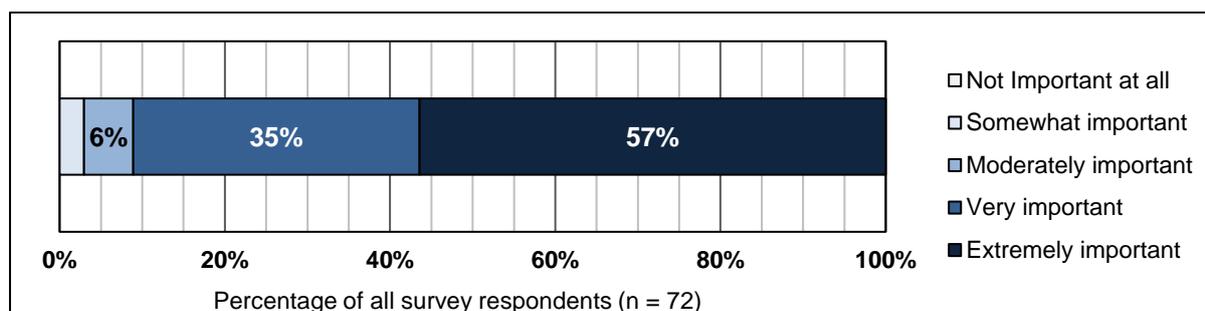
Many of these respondents perceived the NTFS as an opportunity for staff to be acknowledged for their contributions to teaching and learning, within and beyond the institution. Without procedures in place to reward staff, some institutions felt that it would be more difficult to create a culture that embraces teaching excellence:

*The NTFS focuses our attention, above and beyond our own professional recognition schemes, on the excellence of our academics. It also provides a focus for their personal aspirations in terms of being recognised.*

*Applying for NTFS helps the individual recognise their own excellence. The individual, whether they are successful or not, is then also recognised as excellent and can become a beacon for others to use.*

In response to a closed-ended question, the importance of recognising and rewarding individual teaching excellence was apparent for the majority of all the institutions that participated in the survey (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Survey responses to the closed-ended question 'How important is it to your institution to recognise and reward individual teaching excellence?'**



### Professional and personal development

There were eight surveyed institutions (15%) that commented that a reason for participating in the NTFS was the opportunity to support the professional and personal development of staff (see Figure 3: Professional and personal development of staff). In terms of the reported benefits of participating in the Scheme, 16 institutions (30%) commented on the professional growth of members of staff (see Figure 4: Professional and personal development of staff). Several respondents described the application process as a valuable exercise for self-evaluation and reflection:

*As a reflective activity the NTFS application process, a bit like fellowship of the HEA, really does force you to ask yourself what you are about and what you have been up to all these years.*

A range of other examples were provided in the ways in which the NTFS has impacted positively on the development of individual award winners: promotion to senior strategic and leadership positions within their respective institution; instilled confidence to attempt new ideas; in bidding for teaching and learning grants and projects; and networking with other NTFS winners that has led to collaborative opportunities. In contrast, a couple of respondents argued that the award and prize money had made no difference to the professional development of individual winners.

## Sector context

### Utilisation of external NTFS winners

The contribution of NTFS winners in promoting excellent practice in teaching and learning beyond their own institutions was recognised by several respondents, including a few institutions without any internal winners:

*We have used some NTFS winners to present to our own HE staff at internal conferences.*

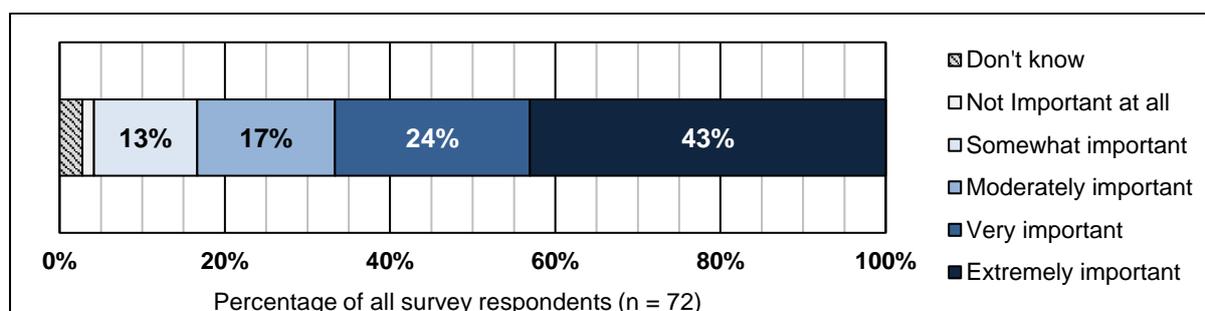
*Our own NTFS Fellows have been in demand elsewhere too. NTFS holders are across a fantastic range of areas and form a group of colleagues we have invited in at different times to talk about their different areas of work. The huge benefit being that is always rooted in changes to practice.*

A small number of respondents commented on the benefits of being connected to the wider network of NTFS winners, which enabled the institution to be exposed to innovative ideas from across the sector.

### Other schemes

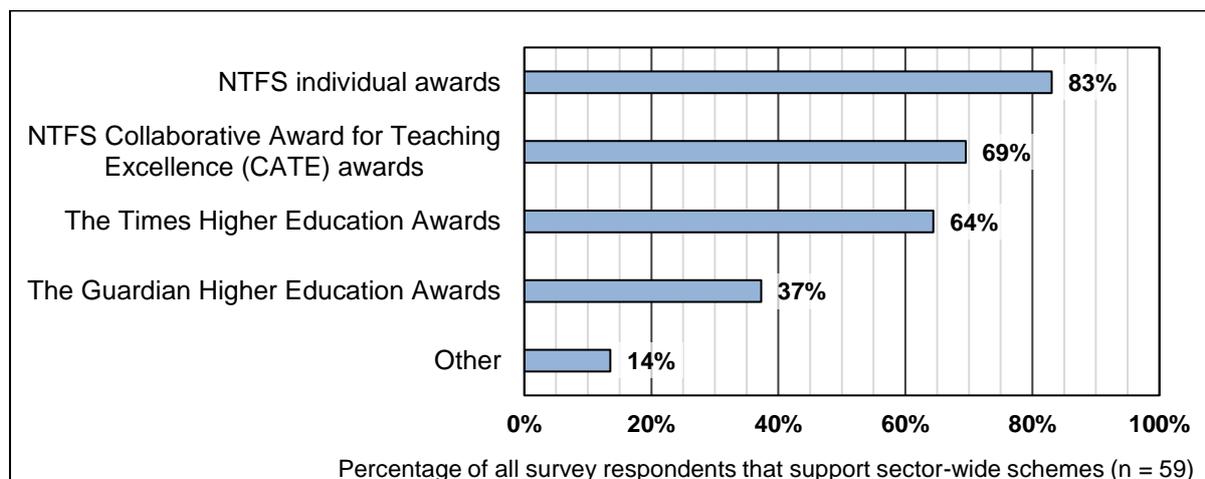
A total of 31 of the 72 surveyed institutions (43%) responded that it was extremely important to take part in a sector-wide scheme that recognises and rewards individual or team-based teaching excellence (see Figure 7). There were 17 institutions (24%) that stated that it was very important to take part.

**Figure 7: Survey responses to the closed-ended question 'How important is it to your institution to participate in a sector-wide scheme that recognises and rewards individual or team-based teaching excellence?'**



Of the 72 survey respondents, 59 institutions stated that they currently support applications for sector-wide award schemes. The first follow-up question asked these 59 institutions to select the schemes that they engage with (see Figure 8). The NTFS individual awards scheme had the highest level of participation, with 49 institutions taking part (83%). This was followed by the NTFS Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) scheme with 41 institutions (69%), The Times Higher Education Awards with 38 institutions (64%) and The Guardian Higher Education Awards, as reported by 22 institutions (37%).

**Figure 8: Survey responses to the closed-ended question 'Which sector-wide award schemes that recognise teaching excellence does your institution support? Please tick all that apply'**



The second follow-up question asked institutions to comment on the extent to which the NTFS overlaps with other sector-wide award schemes in the UK. A total of 47 survey respondents commented, with 31 (66%) expressing the view that there was no overlap. Six institutions (13%) perceived there to be a small degree of overlap but no additional explanations were provided, while 10 respondents (21%) stated that they were not sure or unable to comment on this question.

## Considerations for the future of the NTFS

### Design of the NTFS

All survey respondents were asked to respond to a series of closed-ended questions, which contained statements relating to the NTFS (see Figure 9), and propose any changes that would improve the scheme in the future.

A total of 48 institutions provided a comment on future recommendations for change, with 14 survey respondents (29%) identifying timescales and the communication of key information about the process as areas for improvement. It was argued that publishing deadlines and clarifying changes at an earlier stage would enable institutions to support and engage staff with the NTFS to greater effect: *longer lead times, 2-3 months notice is just not enough, really would like 12 months notice so staff know it is worthwhile spending their time on the exercise.*

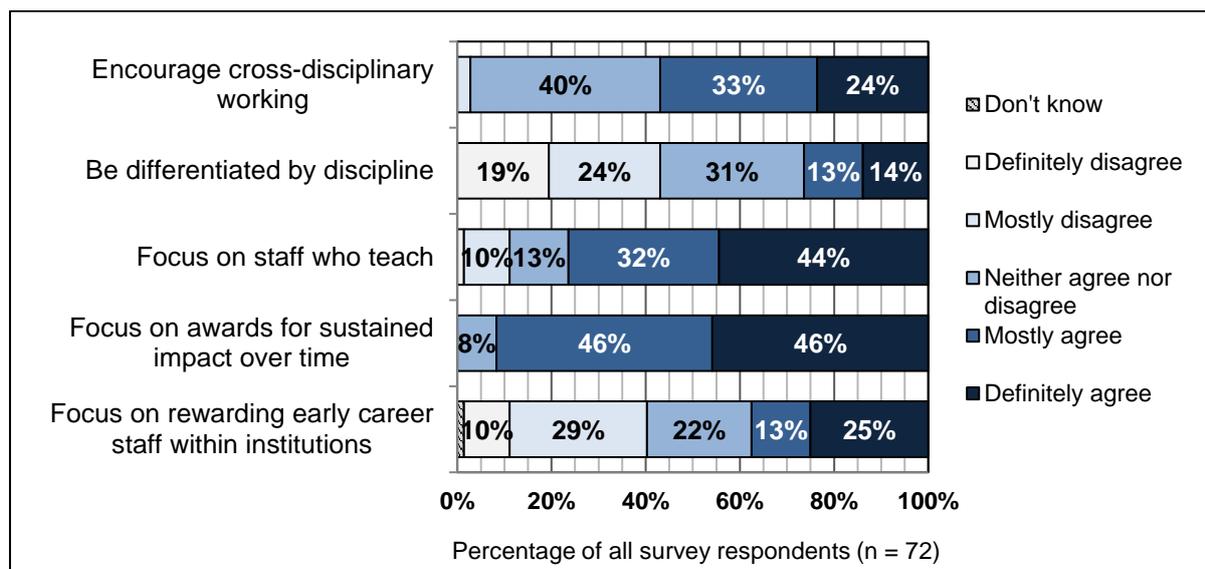
Another change recommended by 15 survey respondents (31%) focused on the structure and categories of the NTFS. Several of these institutions, predominantly non-participating FE and HE colleges, questioned the suitability of the NTFS for different types of institutions and called for changes to be made to the structure:

*Set up a working group to review categories and questions so that FE staff and teams could be recognised. The benefits for our part of the sector would be significant as there would be sharing of practice that is applicable to college-based HE.*

A range of recommendations were proposed by several institutions to maximise the impact of NTFS winners within institutions, specifically: greater clarity about the expectations of winners after receiving the award; more guidance for institutions on the ways in which winners can be utilised; and greater focus on the future plans of award winners.

In terms of the responses to the closed-ended questions (see Figure 9), the majority of institutions were agreement with the statements that the NTFS should 'focus on staff who teach', 'focus on awards for sustained impact over time' and 'encourage cross-disciplinary working'.

**Figure 9: Survey responses to closed-ended questions on perceptions of the NTFS**



### The value of the financial award

A very small number of institutions commented on the prize money awarded to NTFS winners. A couple of survey respondents felt that the reduction in prize money since the inception of the NTFS had been detrimental to the impact and reputation of the scheme, citing the negligible difference the money had made to individual winners and their own institutions. Conversely, a few institutions stated that the funds awarded to individual award winners had benefitted their institution.

### HEA awards data

Throughout the history of the NTFS the award has combined a traditional prize, a fellowship scheme and a development grant (using Warren and Plumb's 1999 award criteria), with significant variation in the number of awards, expectations of input and output of awardees, and the monetary value of the award. This inherent diversity creates difficulties in systematically evaluating the scheme over its 17-year lifecycle. The following analysis of nominations and awards data 2000-2016 (HEA records) show change over time, including

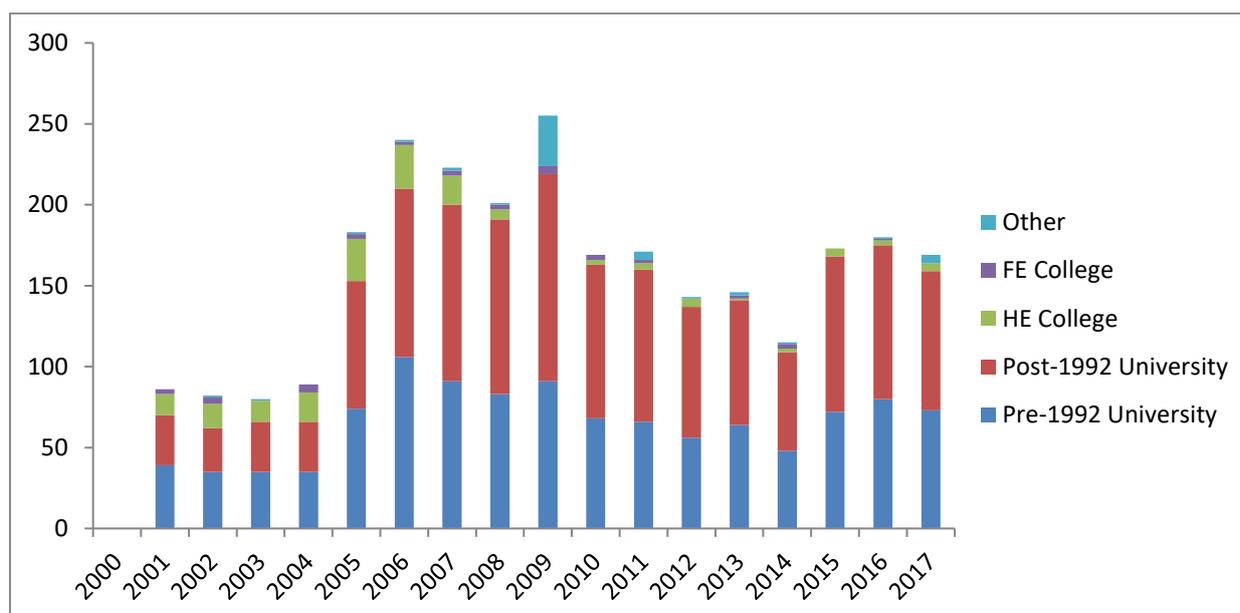
changes since 2012 which have not been previously reported<sup>5</sup>. Note that while HEFCE does not use the pre-1992/post-1992 demarcation for HE institutions, this is the way that HEA has recorded nominations and winner data. All available data has been included in this report.

**Table 9: Nominations and winners by institution type 2000-2016**

	Total Number of Institutions	Total Nominations 2000-2017	Total Wins 2000-2016	2000-2016 Collective % Success
<b>Pre-1992</b>	38	923	253	27.41
<b>Post-1992</b>	65	1606	446	27.77
<b>HE colleges</b>	18	212	55	25.94
<b>FE</b>	32	195	2	1.03
<b>Other</b>	3	7	4	57.14
<b>Total</b>	156	2943	760	

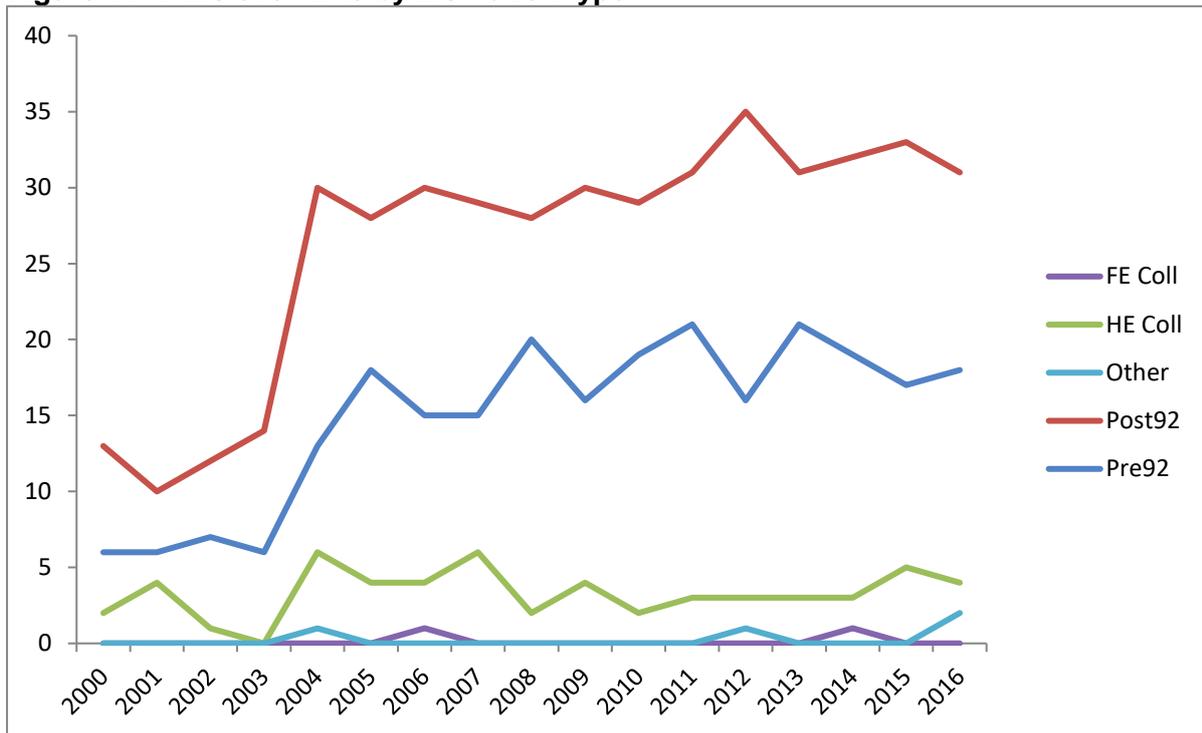
Institutions can provide up to three nominations per year. The number of awards has risen from 20 in 2000, to 50 in 2004 and then 55 since 2010.

**Figure 10: Nominations over time by institution type**



<sup>5</sup> Previous quantitative overviews were provided in the 2012 review of the NTFS produced by the HEA. Rickinson *et al* (2012). NTFS review 2012: Report on findings, York, Higher Education Academy and Spencer, R. (2013) National Teaching Fellowship Scheme 2013 Data Report, York, Higher Education Academy.

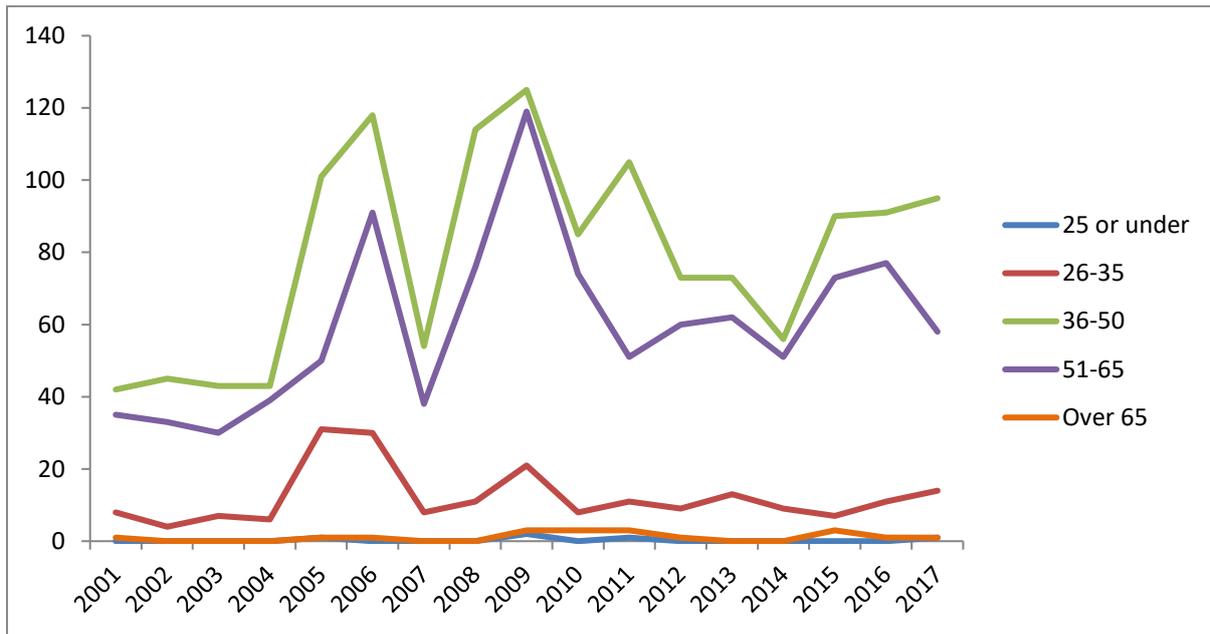
**Figure 11: Wins over time by institution type**



Eligible institutions include those funded by sector bodies (HEFCE, HEFCW, DfENI) including FE institutions which have 100 or more full-time equivalent students on HE programmes with comparable funding.

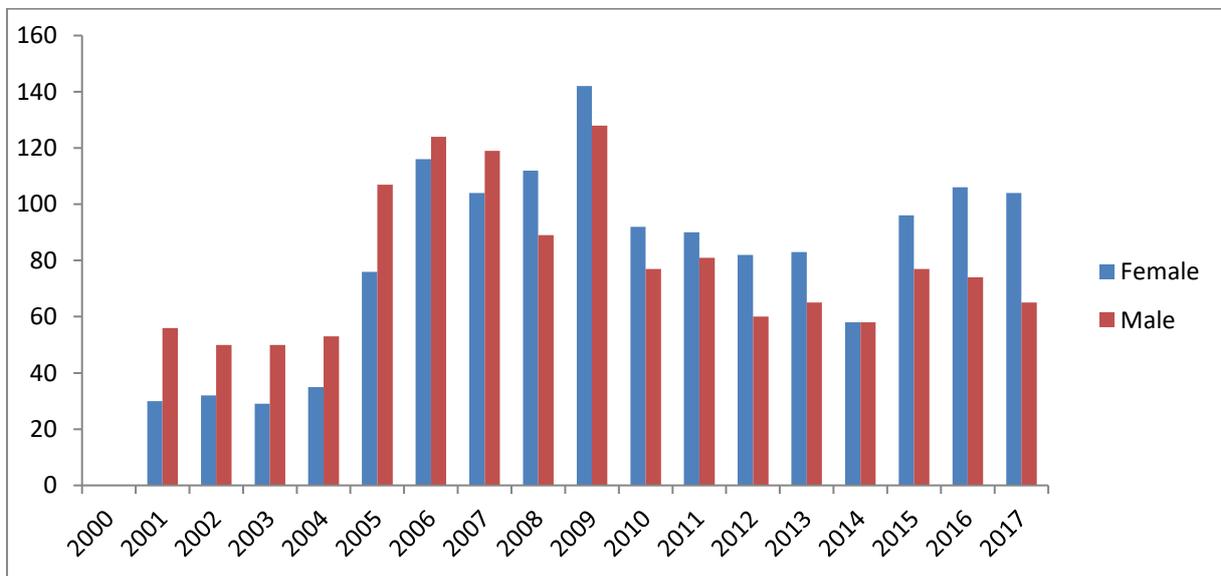
There has been noticeable variation in the number of nominations by age. Figure 12 shows three spikes in the number of nominations with sharp increases in 2005, 2008 and 2015 for the 36-40 age group and in 2006, 2009 and 2016 for the 51-65 group. Some of this may be explained by the introduction from 2004 of different categories of award. Experienced staff, who have been teaching for more than six years, were allocated 30 awards, and 'Rising Stars' (relatively new to teaching) received 10 awards and a further 10 awards became available for Learning Support staff.

**Figure 12: Nominations over time by age category**



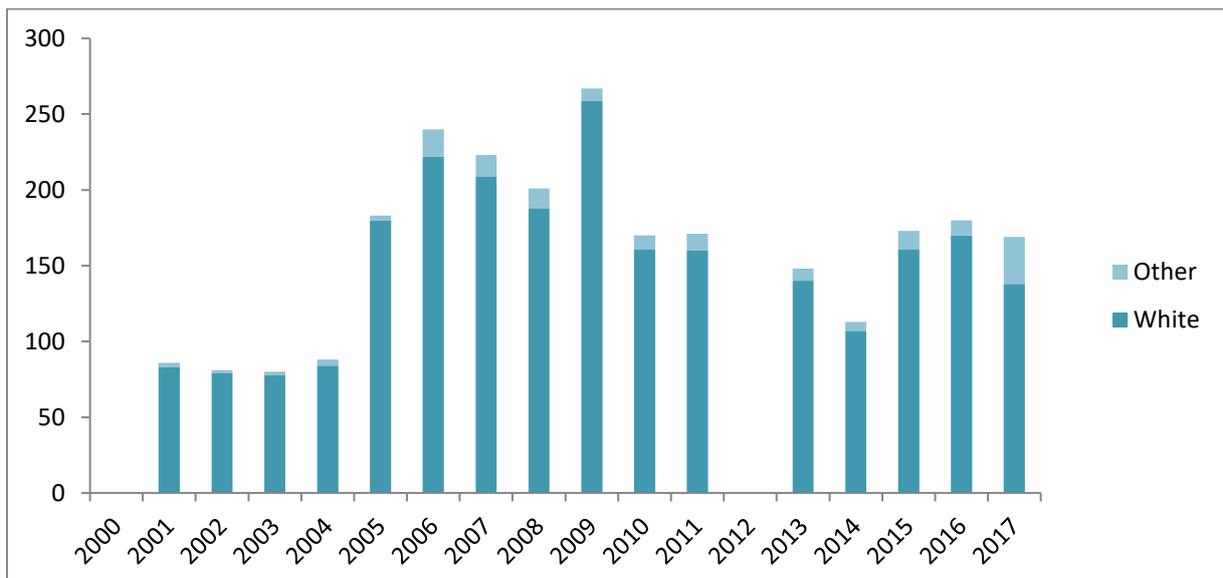
Nominations vary by gender over time, with females overtaking male nominations for the first time in 2008 and the proportionate gap increasing particularly in recent years (see Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Nominations over time by gender**



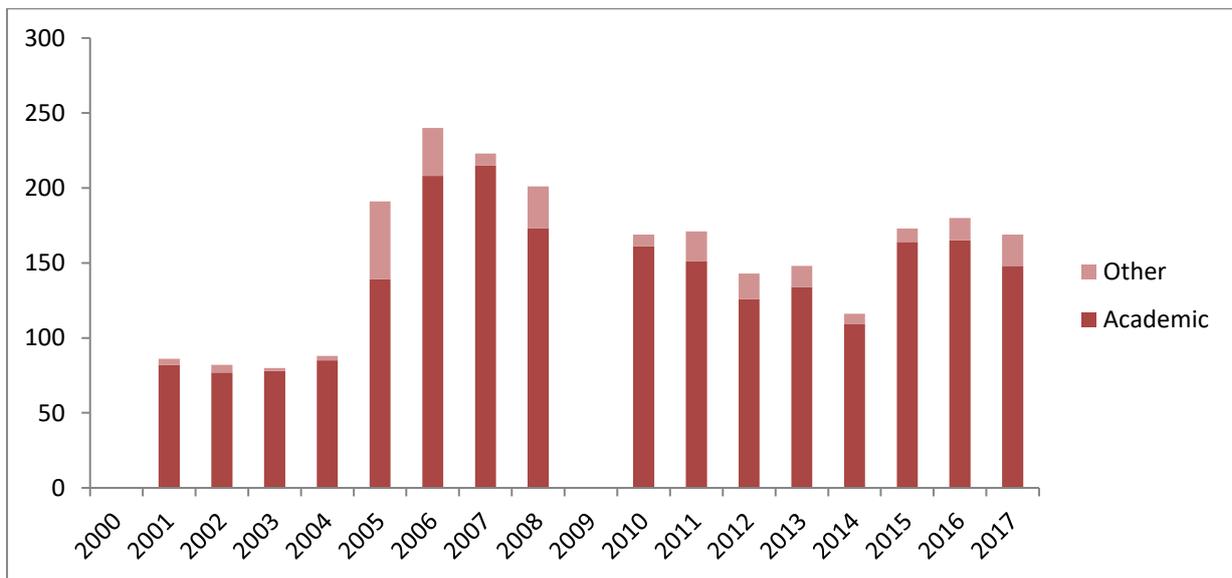
Nominations by ethnicity also vary over time, with the proportion of non-white staff only becoming significant in 2006 and peaking in 2017 (see Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Nominations over time by ethnicity**



As noted previously, awards for Learning Support staff were introduced in 2004. Figure 15 shows that the largest proportion of Learning Support nominations occurred in 2005. All available data has been analysed and the gaps in the graph existed at source.

**Figure 15: Nominations over time by employment role**



## Qualitative findings

A large proportion of the tender objectives were addressed by the survey, secondary data analyses of awards data and project reports, and our review of the existing literature. The second phase of data collection addressed the remaining tender objectives, namely those that require a more detailed discussion of complex concepts (e.g. value for money), or require responses from those not included in the survey (e.g. sector stakeholders).

The thematic analysis is designed to be deductive and grounded in social reality, drawing not only on the interview and survey questions designed from our theoretical understanding of the sector, but also from the experiences and perspectives reported to us in semi-structured interview conditions. Five main thematic areas have been identified and are presented below. They are secondarily analysed by institution and by role of the interviewee.

In the following narrative the attribution is as follows:

**Institutional attributions:** pre92 (pre-1992 institutions, generally high tariff); post92 (post-1992 institutions, generally low tariff); AP (alternative provider, low tariff); FE colleges with HE (college, generally low tariff); Non-participants (non-participant Scottish or non-participant college); Stakeholders. In cases where there is more than one kind of institution, they are labelled a, b, c and so on.

**Role attributions:** strategic leaders; academic developers; academics; student representatives. In cases where there is more than one of each role in an institution they are labelled 1, 2, 3 and so on.

In cases where more than one of each category is represented at the institution they are numbered, so for example an interviewee will be characterised as post92a academic 2 or pre92b academic developer 1.

This analysis combines data from across 16 institutions (seven detailed case studies) and nine distinct sector stakeholders.

### Institutional context

This section introduces the institutional context and considers the following questions: What does excellence mean to you and your institution? How do you reward it? What has been the effect on the institution of engaging with NTFS and any other internal or external reward and recognition schemes? To what extent has the NTFS impacted the development of internal schemes?

#### **The relative importance of 'teaching excellence' within the strategic aims/priorities of institutions**

Responses to this question broadly fell into two main categories: those that reflected variations in institutional ethos and mission; and those that reflected individual motivations, for example considerations of staff promotions and professional recognition. There was a general sense of a shifting balance between research and teaching due to the increasing emphasis on student engagement, student success and the introduction of the TEF, and its

use of National Student Survey data in its metrics. All institutions engaged with the HEA fellowship scheme to some extent and the majority of institutions had internal reward and recognition schemes (this was less prevalent among smaller FE colleges with HE provision) modelled on the HEA's Professional Standards Framework to recognise excellence and to provide a trajectory of potential NTFS nominees where they were eligible to engage with the scheme. Those Scottish non-participants that were consulted in this research were not supported by their funding council to participate.

There was a clear – though not universal – difference in the balance of responses by institution type.

For pre-1992 interviewees, teaching was generally seen as less important than research, although the majority of our interviewees reported a sense that teaching is more likely to be rewarded and more likely to be a criteria for promotion than it had been in the past (for example, pre92b academic developer; post92b academic). The lower profile of teaching in some cases led to the need to make the most of publicity surrounding the awards as institutions have become more aware that reward and recognition needs to become more balanced. It was generally felt among our interviewees that the NTFS enabled a more holistic view of what it means to be a successful academic. This has the dual benefit to students of celebrating teaching excellence (and in many cases student-led awards schemes were a vehicle for this, for example by identifying potential NTFS applicants) and also as a way of including students in their own learning experience, for example by fostering a greater awareness of the excellence of the teaching they received (student representative pre92a; student representative pre92b).

There was a palpable sense from across the majority of our pre-1992 interviewees – at strategic lead, academic developer and academic levels – that teaching is becoming increasingly central to the strategic aims of the institutions. This was helping to rebalance what has often been seen as an uneven commitment to teaching, given the more output-driven reward and recognition process for research excellence.

This imbalance, however, meant that those staff members who were 'early adopters' of teaching reward strategies may have lacked competition; there was a perception from some that teaching excellence awards were not necessarily a clear guide to excellence within the institution because many academics choose not to participate (pre92a academic developer 3; post92a academic developer). This was often differentiated by discipline; in some disciplines (e.g. medicine, engineering) the main focus has always been on award schemes run by learned societies and professional bodies, rather than institutional schemes. These can provide benefits to the institution by raising the profile of the rewards for teaching, even if they do not exist in other disciplines (education, humanities and social sciences for example) or departments/faculties (pre92c academic developer).

Discipline-level markers of excellence, such as faculty-level awards, also served a wider purpose in raising the profile of teaching excellence in general and rewarding outstanding individuals. Some respondents noted how this often manifested in competition, further raising awareness across the institution and creating models which other disciplines can see as beneficial (post92b strategic lead).

The emphases were to some degree altered among our post-1992 respondents. Several respondents highlighted the importance of enhancing the student experience as the driver; the emphasis on teaching excellence often meant that all academics had to be working towards PG Certificates in HE and HEA fellowship awards. As one interviewee noted:

*Teaching is bread and butter so, you know, it is very central to the kind of mission of the university really.... Teaching excellence is the strap-line of the institution, it is embedded in our mission as a teaching-focused institution.* (post92c strategic lead)

Another noted that within the institution's reward and recognition scheme, teaching and learning are mandatory competences for promotions, while research and knowledge exchange (KE) are non-mandatory (although considered depending on an applicant's core role) (post92a academic developer). One post-1992 interviewee reported a recent emphasis on research-informed excellent teaching in internal reward schemes; this was seen as a conscious decision to reward those with research track records in the context of a post-1992 institution (post92a academic).

This reflected general post-1992 concerns with developing national impact in a teaching-intensive role; some noted that it is usually through research (pedagogic or other) that external influence is visible. There was a feeling that just being a good or excellent teacher is not enough for specific recognition *because you don't have that external evidence that excellence is being consistently demonstrated* (post92 academic developer 3) and this was endorsed by others from across the sector (for example post92b academic developer; pre92c academic developer).

Another post-1992 interviewee noted that while the NTFS is designed to improve the perception and value of teaching and pedagogy across the sector *in some instances it remains an uphill battle doesn't it?* This was in recognition that *it's a sector in which research is the premium really, particularly with... sciences... where there is a kind of residual resistance to, you know* (post92c strategic lead). This perception recognised that while many academics see themselves as experts in their field *they don't always engage fully with the idea that that's not really enough to be an effective teacher. Teaching isn't just about what you know.... It's about what the students learn.* (post92c strategic lead)

There was little specific awareness of the NTFS among student representatives but those we interviewed were all aware of the TEF and the student led award schemes that were common across our case study sample. They are believed to both help students and staff better engage with the learning process, and *hold academics to account* (post92b student representative) as well as rewarding good performance (pre92b student representative; post92a student representative).

Several stakeholders noted that nearly all institutional TEF submissions spoke about promotion processes and this is a way in which they demonstrate how teaching excellence is valued in relation to research excellence. While there was clearly recognition that there is no direct connection between TEF and NTFS, as part of the wider consumerist directive they are both seen by the majority of stakeholder organisations as helping to reward and recognise excellence in teaching. As one noted, TEF sends an *important message to parents and young people that, yes, HE does take the teaching seriously* (stakeholder).

Whilst many of the stakeholders represented views critical of the NTFS to a greater or lesser degree, they all continue to see the NTFS as a valuable entity that adds to the emphasis on teaching quality. One interviewee summarised the benefits of a high profile scheme rewarding teaching excellence:

*Teaching excellence is definitely in the spotlight both in the UK and internationally, so it's important that we are seen to do something about it, not least in terms of our international competitiveness. We know that institutions regularly wrestle with the issue of promotion of staff into roles that are specifically teaching and learning related, so while it's easy on the research citations etc., to aid promotion, it's very difficult to have the same sort of level of externality on teaching and learning and the award schemes support that kind of externality. I think... what we often underestimate is that it's an aspirational thing, in that what we're doing is we're trying to encourage others to aspire to the same sort of higher levels of teaching and recognition, and to learn from those people who have already achieved those things, so there's a wider systemic benefit I think from award schemes more broadly.*  
(stakeholder)

### **The role of internal reward and recognition schemes**

The NTFS clearly influences the various institutional schemes that were highlighted by our interviewees. As one suggested, anyone nominated for a NTFS award *will have been rewarded internally long before they get national recognition* (pre-92c academic developer1). Awards at any level are good for sharing new or innovative practice that may not be visible across disciplinary boundaries or even between departments: both institution-wide and sectoral reward and recognition schemes can thus have a beneficial effect. A clear message from the majority of our interviewees is that a national scheme at the apex of institution-level awards remains highly valued:

*I think [NTFS] is more effective because it has that national recognition to it, so I think as far as that goes, it's... worth more. Having read internal applications, there's very often the beginning of what would be an NTFS application, but there's no way they'd get that far. But you can sort of see the seeds of it. So internally for us that works really well, it then encourages people to do more, but there's not [the] depth to our internal scheme that there would be to NTFS.* (pre-92a academic developer 3)

The presence within key institutional roles of NTFS Fellows as exemplars was highlighted by some:

*I think probably there is an influence because [a Pro-VC], who is an NTFS Fellow, has been heavily involved in the development of [institutional teaching-informed professorial] roles. We have [academic developers] that are trying very hard to raise the profile of NTFS Fellows, so my view is that I think that we're almost at starting points with it.... Because of the systems we've got in place, we've got an overview of the people, the staff, colleagues, who perhaps are in the right position to move forward with it....* (post92a strategic lead)

One interviewee noted the knock-on effect can be indirect rather than direct:

*... sometimes when a member of staff has a success that gets shared around their colleagues... you often get a run of applications from people within that school. So it's not a direct impact necessarily but it is an indirect impact. Inevitably it can have an impact directly depending on the individual who gets it and how their school responds to that, because then it can be a real opportunity to highlight practice within that particular school or subject area. But the primary impact is indirect. (pre92a academic developer 2)*

The majority of institutions across the interview samples reported that they used the NTFS guidelines and the UKPSF when designing internal awards and that these internal awards were used to identify potential NTFS nominees. Strategic leads highlighted this alignment and in some cases wished to see it enhanced (pre92a; pre92b; post92a and post92b). Some interviewees highlighted the disappointment felt by those that had been nominated but had not won (post92c strategic lead; post92a academic a and academic b) but it was generally felt that alignment between the internal and national schemes fostered a greater awareness among colleagues that the institutions were able and willing to support colleagues demonstrating excellence in teaching and learning.

Non-participating institutions fall into two categories – those that have elected not to engage with NTFS (often due to lack of success or the perception that the award was unattainable e.g. for smaller colleges with HE provision) and Scottish institutions that were not supported by the SFC to engage with the scheme. The majority (five out of seven) of non-participants did not feel the absence of the NTFS had an effect on their institution. This was mainly due to a lack of institutional awareness or a sense that alternative enhancement initiatives filled the gap.

*There's no rhetoric at present within college and HE that I've come across that celebrates the accolade of being a national teaching fellow. (non-participant college b)*

Those who felt that their institution had missed out discussed this particularly in terms of rewarding and sharing outstanding practice: *being exceptional and being able to celebrate that. I think we do miss out a bit on that (non-participant alternative provider).*

Smaller institutions tended to define teaching excellence in relation to their strengths, for example as a function of their more intimate relationship with students. Size and scale also set the context for the level of commitment to institutional goals for colleges with HE provision:

*What we'd like to happen... ideally, we would want the Fellows to be leading on CPD and research in some small scale with regard to learning and teaching. So, there is a recognition, a financial remuneration for being a Fellow and also the opportunity to sort of engage in research specific to learning and teaching and share that with the academic community at [this institution].*

Scottish non-participants tended to emphasise the collective, collaborative learning more typical in the Scottish sector:

*It's not perhaps seen in the same way that perhaps it is in England as being a very individual thing; [teaching excellence] is more likely to be recognised as sort of*

*excellent teaching across a course or a programme or a subject. So, in our periodic subject reviews, we will look at the teaching across the subject and we may well and do commend excellent teaching at subject level, but we're less likely to say but it's Dr X or Professor Y, in the way that the NTFS would do. (non-participant Scottish)*

This does not mean that Scottish staff members are unrewarded for individual commitment to teaching excellence. One of our respondents noted that the institution has its own schemes mapped onto the UKPSF to ensure the portability of awards should they wish to work outside of Scotland. In relation to individual excellence (ie above the mapped principle fellowship level):

*I think it's fair to say that we are probably not as active in recognising individual outstanding excellence in the sort of NTFS way, as other institutions are. (non-participant Scottish)*

Another non-participating Scottish institution is fully engaged with the HEA fellowship scheme and the UKPSF:

*We've increased significantly the number of staff in the university with HEA recognition. We sit now at around 60% or thereabouts. A lot of people that go through the CPD scheme are going for senior fellowship because we have a postgraduate certificate in HE teaching that aligns with descriptor one and descriptor two, so people will get associate fellow or most of our staff are getting fellowship with that. (non-participant Scottish)*

These sit alongside awards from a Teaching Learning Enhancement Fund for individuals who wish to undertake pedagogic research. The UKPSF and internal schemes are fully recognised as references for promotions, evidenced by their impact on the student experience in much the same way as within the English sector and among NTFS participants.

## **Summary**

There is evidence that broad notion of teaching excellence is embedded across the UK HE sector, and for those interviewed institutions the NTFS plays an important role in that endeavour, albeit differently across institution types. This is particularly the case for external recognition but also for internal promotions and overall staff retention. The wider context for the relatively recent focus on teaching excellence is seen to be more important than the NTFS; the TEF and institutional competition for students are seen by the majority of respondents as the key drivers. However, the NTFS is seen by those in this evaluation as contributing to an important rebalancing of prestige and profile for teaching in relation to research, and internal reward and recognition schemes, linked to the criteria of the UKPSF and the NTFS, play a key role in this. This is necessary because of the perception that it has been easier to secure national and international recognition for research (including pedagogic research) than it has to secure equivalent external recognition for teaching excellence *per se*. In summary, the impact of the NTFS is difficult to untangle from wider teaching excellence agendas which have moved all institutions towards this market driver. It could be easier to see what non-participants miss out on, although the majority had their own institutional (FE/HE) or sector (Scotland) initiatives which focused on recognising and rewarding teaching excellence and note limited adverse effects of their non-participation.

## Individual context

This section considers the individual context in relation to the reward and recognition of teaching excellence, with particular focus on the impact of the NTFS on individual members of staff compared with the institutional effect.

### The recognition of teaching excellence

The majority of interviewees from case study institutions recognised the need to reward and acknowledge individual teaching excellence. Participation in the NTFS provided these institutions with a mechanism to celebrate the contributions of staff in teaching and learning. One student representative from a pre-1992 case study institution described the NTFS as *a way to kind of highlight the very small level and to say this individual is exceptional, this project in particular was exceptional* (pre92b student). In response to a question about the absence of the NTFS, one eligible non-participating institution felt that they had missed an opportunity to recognise individual teaching excellence:

*Guess what we miss out on is really being able to celebrate an individual's contribution to learning and teaching in the institution, and I think that is important. We're very hot on improving teaching and improving what's going on in the classroom, and we monitor it very closely. But we don't have anywhere, where we can say, you know so and so is... being exceptional and being able to celebrate that.* (non-participant alternative provider)

In contrast, one interviewee from a case study institution and two stakeholders considered the recognition of individual teaching excellence to be potentially divisive. A small number of interviewees expressed a preference for the Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence (CATE). Two Scottish institutions challenged the value of a scheme that rewards individual excellence by perceiving teaching enhancement to be a collaborative approach.

There was a general consensus across many interviews from case study institutions that the NTFS has provided individual award winners and institutions with the mutual benefit of national recognition. Nevertheless, the survey comments indicate that potential reputational gain was a stronger driver for participation in the NTFS for pre-1992 case study institutions than for their post-1992 counterparts. Interviewees across three pre-1992 case study institutions emphasised the need to engage in national schemes and to demonstrate the importance of teaching and learning to the sector. However, the importance of allowing staff to achieve national recognition was equally as apparent:

*It has a particular impact for the individual that is very valuable. The profile that NTFS Fellows gain for their discipline of the university is helpful, if they're doing things nationally obviously it can help them develop that national profile. The university is quite happy just to remind the students that there are excellent members of staff in the university who are achieving national recognition. Also, other members of staff might want to come to the university if they see that. It provides a reputation for the university.* (pre-92c academic developer 2)

External recognition was identified as an incentive by post-1992 case study institutions, however fewer references were made about the potential reputational benefits to the institution. One interviewee from an eligible non-participating institution expressed the view

that their external profile had not been disadvantaged as a result of not taking part in the NTFS. The majority of other interviewees from the sample of non-participating institutions did not raise the topic of national recognition.

### **Personal and professional development**

There was general agreement that the NTFS has provided individual award winners with numerous benefits in terms of professional and personal development. A number of interviewees – comprised of academic developers, strategic leads, academics and stakeholders – shared the perception that the NTFS has been transformative for the professional self-concept of some award winners. One academic stated that achieving the recognition of an NTFS Fellow has changed their view about their teaching role:

*I always valued my own teaching but my promotions were all on the basis of research, research was what was valued. It made a huge difference getting it, suddenly to be recognised for something that you valued over the years and that seems to have been taken for granted. I think it actually changed the way I looked at myself as an academic. (post92b academic 1)*

Seven interviewees, of which four were from case study institutions and three were stakeholders, expressed the view that the NTFS has been partially responsible for helping the career development of individual teaching staff. One interviewee described the scheme as *a value in terms of providing people with a promotion route* (stakeholder), while others perceived the NTFS as a mechanism to demonstrate individual teaching excellence within applications for senior positions:

*The university has several professors now who have secured professorships on the basis of excellence in teaching and learning. Well partly on that basis. Some of those are NTFS Fellows. It certainly has helped in their promotions, or at least for some of them, who have been able to demonstrate their excellence in teaching. So the rewards have been linked to the NTFS in the promotion case. (pre-92c academic developer 2)*

Four academics and academic developers commented on the benefits of using the NTFS application process as an opportunity to reflect on individual teaching practice. This was a perception that was shared by a stakeholder that felt that the NTFS reinforces the importance of reflective practice and identifying professional strengths and areas for improvement. One interviewee described the application process as *a cost that actually comes with benefit* as a result of using the time for self-evaluation purposes, further adding:

*I do find it useful to be able to think back about and actually try and articulate how the way you're approaching teaching and learning is impacting on the way we teach and actually helps you think about wider career goals. (pre-92b academic)*

The confidence instilled in individual award winners was identified as a benefit of participating in the NTFS by four interviewees, one of which was a stakeholder and the other three were based at separate case study institutions. From these perspectives, the experience of winning the NTFS enabled award winners to approach their roles with greater self-belief, with one stakeholder commenting *if you're confident, you're going to do your job*

*better* (stakeholder). An academic developer stated that the confidence that the NTFS instils in award winners was in itself sufficient reason to participate.

Conversely, the distress caused by submitting an unsuccessful nomination to the NTFS was identified as a potential cost to individuals by seven interviewees from five case study institutions. The emotional investment of applicants in the NTFS was widely mentioned, with one interviewee stating that the process *requires you to share a lot of your inner self* (post92a academic developer). A range of strategic leads and academic developers viewed the process as being potentially harmful to the confidence of unsuccessful applicants if further support was not provided. For some, the disappointment was further compounded by feedback that was regarded as insufficient and contradictory:

*I have had two people who've applied twice and who've had very conflicting feedback from each of the two applications, and certainly one of them is really distressed about the whole thing, so I think that's a difficult thing.* (pre92a academic developer 3)

This was challenged by two interviewees who commented that unsuccessful members of staff within their institutions had not felt deterred from submitting future applications.

As a result of winning the award, several interviewees felt that the profile of individual award winners has been significantly enhanced within their institutions. The credibility associated with the NTFS, which was labelled as a *gold star* and a *badge*, enabled NTFS winners to undertake new responsibilities, such as joining committees, mentoring and leading projects. One stakeholder described the NTFS as:

*The gift that keeps on taking, because the moment that you become an NTFS Fellow or a Principal Fellow you suddenly get earmarked to go and do extra stuff within the institution.* (stakeholder)

The perspective of other stakeholders was markedly different who noted that there is significant variation in institutions' engagement with teaching excellence, with many lacking the necessary internal procedures and 'champions' to utilise their NTFS Fellows sufficiently. Interviewees from two case study institutions admitted that there was room for improvement in utilising individual award winners more strategically.

### **Collaborative work and networking**

The impact of accessing the wider network of NTFS award winners on individuals and institutions was highlighted by eight interviewees. The perspectives of four case study institution interviewees and two stakeholder interviewees were largely consistent in illustrating the mutual benefit of connecting with like-minded peers and sharing excellent practice across the sector. The wider NTFS network was described by an academic developer as *where the richness of becoming an NTFS Fellow and the value for an institution of having NTFS Fellows really does come into play* (post92b academic developer). One academic also highlighted the gains of being exposed to innovative ideas beyond the *small pool* within their institution (pre92b academic).

There was no disparity in viewpoints between the post-1992 and pre-1992 case study institutions. Within the sample of non-participating institutions, two interviewees felt that there was a degree of loss in not having access to the collective *expertise and resources* of

NTFS Fellows. One of these interviewees requested that the network of NTFS winners should be more accessible for those institutions that do not participate in the scheme.

## Summary

In summary, the majority of institutions and stakeholders recognise the need to acknowledge and reward teaching excellence. The potentially divisive nature of celebrating individual contributions in teaching is raised by a few interviewees. There is a general consensus that individuals and institutions mutually benefit from the national recognition of the NTFS, although reputational gain is a particularly strong driver for pre-1992 case study institutions. At an individual level, award winners are perceived to benefit professionally and personally but an unsuccessful nomination is identified as a potential cost. One of the most widely cited benefits of the scheme is the network of NTFS winners.

## Sector context

This section explores the role of the NTFS within the wider sector and comments on the celebration and dissemination of excellent practice in teaching and the creation of communities of practice within an institution and across the sector. A number of sector stakeholders were unable to provide organisational contacts with enough knowledge of the NTFS to participate in this research.

### NTFS as a celebration of practice

Amongst the strategic leads interviewed from across the sector, there was general consensus that the NTFS had contributed to raising the profile of teaching and learning and provided an opportunity for reward and recognition which matched those associated with the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and other duties. The opportunity for staff to gain recognition at national rather than just local level was perceived as the added value of the NTFS: *I think having a national scheme like this that says hang on a minute, actually there's some people doing some really good work here, it's really important* (post92b strategic lead).

Internal schemes do not appear as valued as an external sector-wide scheme. Comparing an internal scheme with the NTFS, another participant from a post-1992 explained that:

*[The NTFS is] more effective in the sense that the NTFS provides national recognition for individual winners and it is seen as the pinnacle of reward and recognition.* (post92c strategic lead)

Many interviewees considered that the credibility of the NTFS made it easier for award holders to influence teaching and learning practice within their own institutions. Strategic leads also commented on the small numbers involved and the difficulty in gaining the award which may limit the impact institutionally although a number acknowledge that this added to the prestige and credibility of the award holders.

The individual nature of the scheme gave rise to some concerns as a number of interviewees highlighted the collaborative nature of teaching. The new collaborative award was cited as a positive way forward: *that's why the CATE scheme is very good because it provides another way of doing that [rewarding collaboration]* (pre92c strategic lead).

Another interviewee highlighted the need for a sector-wide approach to foster innovation and sharing practice:

*I think innovation is actually just doing stuff how we probably did it about ten years ago but maybe just thinking about it more carefully. But I think that that comes about from mixing of disciplines and backgrounds, so therefore sector wide, things like networks and awards like this just allows you to be exposed to something more broad than perhaps the stuff you would live and breathe on a more daily basis.*  
(pre92b academic)

The benefits of raising the profile of the work within specific disciplines were noted more than once. There was however some concern expressed in relation to the competitive nature of the schemes and the perceived difficulty for instance from staff on teaching only contracts who had fewer opportunities to impact beyond their courses and cohorts. Other interviewees offered examples of alternatives either internally or externally run by professional bodies (post92a academic). Student representatives generally displayed little awareness of the scheme (if any), being more familiar with Student Union run schemes around inspirational teachers.

Stakeholder views range from strong support for the scheme as essential for celebrating and enhancing practice to the consideration of suitable alternatives: *so I'm mindful of the swing towards, not just national schemes but potentially discipline schemes and institutional schemes are now flourishing* (stakeholder).

### **NTFS and the dissemination of excellent practice**

Strategic Leads generally agreed that the NTFS Fellows had contributed to the dissemination of excellent practice within their institution and across the sector, although some acknowledged that this was more apparent at a local level i.e. closer to the practice of the NTFS award holder:

*Probably if I wanted to be critical of ourselves we should probably use them more. You know, we really, really should use them more* (pre92a strategic lead). One strategic leader noted that: *there is a need to draw upon their expertise more widely, such as in working groups. NTFS winners have had more impact at department level than at institutional level* (post92c strategic lead).

The main reasons offered for this was the fact that they were not making the best of their expertise. Other participants offered examples of how they integrated their NTFS Fellows within their formal and informal structures to ensure impact:

*Our most recent national teaching fellow has been involved in the design of what we're calling an incubator for pedagogic innovation and she's supported me in thinking through what that looks like, how we set criteria for success for that, for that incubator.* (pre92b strategic lead)

*Fellows would automatically come and sit on our learning development advisory board and then be involved in conversations about learning and teaching, we'd be getting them to mentor people through the scheme.* (post92x strategic lead)

Mentoring and using NTFS Fellows as role models are also frequently cited by the interviewees: *well, just in so much that they do become – they become role models for us* (pre92a strategic lead). Some of the other institutional interviewees also agree that NTFS Fellows contributed to learning and teaching within their institution:

*I think from my experience the winners that we've had at our institution have been certainly involved in developing various teaching and learning activities within the institution and have taken active roles within some of our internal promotion activities. [...] I think there's definite evidence of that sort of level of collegiality and support and sharing of experience. So I believe that there's been an impact there.* (pre92b academic)

However, the interviewees tended to look at the impact in relation to their own experience, focusing primarily on the value to individuals rather than considering teaching and learning in a broader context. There was no direct mention of dissemination by NTFS Fellows and their role within the sector in these groups' interviews, beyond the celebration and accountability/quality guarantees (students) made possible by the NTFS or equivalent national schemes.

### **A community of practice**

A number of the strategic leads referred to the existence of networks to promote and develop teaching and learning within the institution and beyond as one of the benefits of NTFS, whilst recognising that this is an aim rather than a reality for some, as the quote below illustrates.

*We're trying to make sure that we encourage the successful teaching NTFS Fellows to come back to the university and bring additional insight across the university particularly as they can so that we benefit from their networking with other NTFS Fellows.* (pre92b strategic lead)

It is the links with NTFS Fellows outside of their own institution which appear to be particularly valued. Several interviewees highlight the dynamic nature of these communities of practice and their energy in promoting creativity and innovation. However, one interviewee expresses some concern about the cost or risk to collaboration of a scheme which is essentially competitive:

*In my mind education and higher education is about collaboration and development of knowledge and fellowship schemes may sometimes feel like a competition.* (pre92b academic)

### **The different levels of contribution – local institution versus sector**

According to the interviewees, the impact can be evident locally as mentioned above but it is much more difficult to measure and/or observe at institutional level unless specific roles are assigned to NTFS Fellows such as the pedagogic incubator mentioned in an earlier example, as the quote below illustrates.

*I think what's probably less [clear]... is the influence through other existing fora in which somebody may be present in a normal role as a director of education or a director of a group and is bringing that insight but they're not there as an NTFS*

*Fellow, they're there in their normal university role and I'm sure we're getting benefit from that but it's not quite as clear. It's more difficult to record. (pre92b strategic lead)*

However, other interviewees ascribe the progress made since 2000 to the various initiatives focusing on enhancing teaching and learning, especially in the context of rapid changes (pre92c strategic lead) and the need to signify sector-wide engagement with teaching excellence (post92c strategic leaders)

From a student perspective, national schemes can act as guarantee of quality and emphasise the importance of teaching and the development of practice, as the quote below illustrates.

*I guess it is genuinely extremely reassuring that things like this are going on. I think, you know, students, as I mentioned, are aware of it but I think it can be promoted on a national level to a further extent, because especially as we've mentioned, the climate is changing towards very specific teaching... I think there's a... split within this generation of knowledge and teaching and I think within the internet age, especially within my field of humanities and the social sciences... it's extremely easy to acquire knowledge for free on the internet but teaching is what really separates it. (pre92b student)*

Stakeholders highlight the sector-wide impact rather than the local. Some express the desirability for a national scheme but one that may be operated differently:

*So I think there is an appetite and an interest in something that has prestige that is at a national level, and is actually measuring something about excellence over and above individual competence and professional standards as it were. Whether or not it needs to be configured and operated in quite the same way.... (stakeholder)*

Stakeholder interviewees generally favour the NTFS as a way of building a sector-wide community of practice in teaching and learning and raising the profile of teaching and learning nation-wide: *I think having NTFS as a national scheme, having something which is over and above institution recognition, gives really powerful messages. (stakeholder)*

Non-participants broadly agree with the stakeholders in relation to the contribution and importance of a sector-wide scheme although one of the FE interviewees wondered whether FE colleges should not have their own scheme.

### **Other sector-wide schemes**

Sector stakeholders were also asked for their views on how the NTFS complements or overlaps with other sector-wide award schemes in the UK. Overall, the scheme was seen as broader, deeper and more academically robust than other national awards (e.g. Times Higher, Guardian), although not as easy to utilise strategically without an accompanying league table. The NTFS was seen as distinct from the HEA fellowship categories and the UKPSF (although the similarities in name was cited as a cause of confusion), and the CATE award was very much seen as a welcome development in the sector and fills an important gap in teaching excellence awards.

## Summary

The perspectives of strategic leads and other academics have a different focus, the institutional for the former and the personal for the latter, as might be expected from their roles within their institutions. The academic interviewees with Faculty/School leaders also provide some useful insight into the importance of staff development and the perceived imbalance between recognition and rewards for research and teaching. The strategic leads interviewed are generally supportive of the NTFS although the impact of individual Fellows at institutional level can vary. Academic interviewees were mixed in relation to the benefits of the NTFS as a scheme, although academic developers tend to have a positive view overall, and there is a general recognition of the benefits and importance of a sector-wide scheme with a few reservations from a small number of interviewees. Within the broader community, students have limited awareness of the scheme overall and are generally more aware of student-led schemes around inspirational teachers, although they value the quality guarantees and accountability offered by the NTFS or similar national schemes. Sector stakeholders reinforced the evidence for these themes, especially surrounding the value of a national scheme.

In general there is consensus that the scheme contributes (alongside institutional approaches to reward and recognition) to celebrating success, developing practice and raising the profile of teaching and learning both within institutions and across the UK sector.

## Value for money/return on investment

The benefits of the NTFS are inherently social and require an assessment of public value. The evaluation methodology used here acknowledges this, whilst also incorporating core questions around the financial elements and implications of NTFS awards. In order to address value for money (VFM) and wider social/public impact, this evaluation makes effective use of counterfactual comparisons and qualitative criteria – economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity (National Audit Office 2017).

## Economy

The first criterion discusses the reduction in (HEFCE) spending over time and the minimisation of the cost for the same intended outcome. Guiding questions include: what has been the impact of decreased spending? and what evidence is there to suggest that the aims<sup>6</sup> would not be met if the spending was decreased further to zero?

### The value of the financial award

There was a lack of consensus surrounding the inclusion and value of the financial award for NTFS winners, which remains the most expensive part of the NTFS. Case study institutions and sector stakeholders did note that the gradual reduction in monetary value now inhibits opportunities for substantial change. Stakeholder views did vary but, as expected, discussed the broader funding implications for the sector. Two participants clearly stated that they

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<sup>6</sup> To raise the status of teaching and learning; to recognise and celebrate excellent teachers; to provide national focus for teaching and learning

would like the award to be increased to enable winners to impact at national and international levels and to symbolise the importance of teaching and learning. Others were more cautious, recounting instances where award money had not been fully spent by winners. There was a realistic appraisal of the value of the award (and that £50,000 rewards were now unsustainable), but a concern that teaching and learning investment (from the sector and within institutions) remains low in comparison to other HE priorities. Stakeholders also noted that impact was possible without a financial sum, and an inventive use of social media and virtual communities of practice was one way of keeping costs to a minimum.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the financial award was not viewed as the most attractive element of the NTFS. The monetary value was described as both *significant* (especially in comparison to internal funding) and *insignificant* but, across the sample, the benefits of the NTFS were viewed more holistically. The kudos and status for individuals, the recognition of teaching within HE, and the collective activity across the national/international sector, were noted as important. These areas clearly align with the original aims of the NTFS and support the notion that these could be achieved more economically in the future.

Those interviewees who were responding on behalf of non-participating institutions had no strong views on the declining value of the monetary reward. A general lack of awareness, or lack of institutional readiness to nominate individuals, meant that it was often difficult to fully consider such implications.

### **Reward spending**

One of the other ways in which the economic dimension of VFM can be assessed is by an exploration of how the financial award has been spent. The evidence suggests that money has been spent on individual professional development, including significant international travel, which would not have been supported by institutional funding. The wider impact is stated as a 'ripple effect' arising from this initial investment in the individual. Examples of project work and the employment of research assistants were also cited, acknowledging that not all spending has a direct benefit on the individual. Some confusion and contradictory practice was also noted in how institutions perceive the award and attempt to govern how it is spent.

### **Future funding of the NTFS**

The case study participants were asked directly for their perspective on the perceived costs and benefits of future funding of a national award scheme. There was no obvious distinction in viewpoint by institutional type, although post-1992 institutions and smaller, specialist institutions (and/or those with limited institutional resources) were keen to stress the potential impact of asking institutions to pay to engage with the NTFS. The potential impact on UK institutional engagement – e.g. choosing the UKPSF for institutional investment of resources over the NTFS, and the identification of the 'nice' and the 'essential' investments – was also a common concern. One institution clearly located the responsibility to fund the NTFS with the public purse stating that *the government, since they set up TEF, need to support it with the NTFS* (post92a academic 3), with a colleague noting *if you just put it to the sector, the government is absolving itself of its responsibility* (post92a academic 2).

On the whole, case study and non-participant interviewees were not in favour of institutional payment for the NTFS if public funding was removed. Those that suggested that their

institutions would be unlikely to fund participation in a national scheme tended to have specific financial restrictions on their budgets. These comments were made predominately by strategic leads and academic developers. Those who did not discuss financial concerns still remarked that engagement via payment would be unlikely:

*I'd almost prefer that [the prize] went and we didn't pay [to participate].... I think if we got asked to pay for it, depending on the fee, our registrar would say no. (pre-92a academic developer 1)*

It is important to consider the institutional views on the HEA subscription in relation to this point. There was a reluctance to pay more, given that HEA subscriptions are already paid by the institution. The value for money and usefulness of this wider resource were common considerations for all types of institution. It may be that the efficiency of the NTFS, in comparison to the HEA more broadly, needs to be clarified:

*There may be other parts of elements of HEA that we're not quite so sure about but this sort of recognition [NTFS] and the fellowship schemes [UKPSF]... as we said before... is worth paying for. (post92b strategic lead).*

However, the perceived failure of the HEA to promote the work of the NTFS winners, and support those who might want to apply, were examples provided by non-participants and stakeholders, suggesting that the custodian role offered by the HEA may require further investigation.

A minority of participants from all levels said that institutions would be willing to cover the costs of participation in the NTFS, but the most prevalent response was that this decision was dependant on a number of factors, including: wider enhancement activities offered within the ECU/HEA/LFHE; wider sector support for the scheme; clear identification of demonstrable impact; how large the financial cost would be to the institution; and how a guarantee of institutional return on investment in the scheme would be achieved:

*Not that you would expect something every year for your money, but if you went four or five years and you got nothing, I think as a senior manager I would be thinking well is this a worthwhile use of my money, I've got better things I can spend it on that I can guarantee a return on. (non-participant Scottish)*

This raises ethical concerns about how awards (peer reviewed using robust criteria) can ensure return on financial investment.

Few participants in the interviews were able to speculate on the future implications of the emerging Office for Students. For those that did, the distinction between promoting excellence (through funding) and ensuring standards (through regulation) was a useful overview. Other models of funding discussed by stakeholders were sponsorship (similar to the Canadian 3M model) and a competitive tendering process for the scheme. Stakeholders were also the most vocal in calling for change, by asking funders to stop questioning the value of learning and teaching initiatives (in a way that does not happen with other HE priorities), to start demanding more accountable evidence of impact, and to focus on creating opportunities rather than simply providing financial incentives. There was also a call for restrictions on *wasted* spending of public money, including the amount spent on the NTFS

awards dinner. Non-participants in the scheme found it difficult to comment on future funding as they had not been recipients of funding to date.

## Efficiency

The second criterion is 'efficiency' and the relationship between outputs (NTFS winners) and the good/resources needed to produce them. Guiding questions include: how does NTFS spending compare to other teaching excellence schemes or teaching enhancement initiatives? and what goods/services are being provided beyond the ring fenced-funding to enable success in the NTFS?

### Comparative funding/spending

Other funding models were used to highlight the effectiveness of the NTFS. The Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund is one example, and interviewees specifically discussed the impact on teaching and learning strategies (of which support for the NTFS may be part) through targeted institutional funding. Internal awards, where they were apparent, were described as *quite small in comparison*, although one stakeholder was aware of an internal scheme which was offering a higher monetary award than the NTFS. Caution was raised in relation to the introduction of multiple awards on the individual workloads and the opportunity costs to the sector.

The HEA fellowship scheme based on the UKPSF (available at the cost of subscription) was the most widely cited comparative teaching and learning scheme, noting that this framework does not propose to award teaching excellence per se. The institutions that did not participate in the NTFS, or had alternative excellence schemes, were all committed to the UKPSF and this framework was noted as influential in guiding the creation of their internal schemes. The non-competitive function of the UKPSF, and its focus on criteria-based standards, was offered as an explanation.

Within non-participating institutions, funding tended to be linked to pay progression, bonuses or the provision of CPD activities. Within the wider sample, the NTFS was described as a *catalyst in developing other [internal] schemes* (stakeholder) and was often labelled as the pinnacle of recognition due to its national significance, competitive nature, depth of criteria and robust peer review. The CATE was also discussed positively in this research, although, due to its infancy, this was not deliberated in financial or resourcing terms.

### Non-funded support for the NTFS

The evidence suggests that there is a considerable amount of institutional and sector support invested in the NTFS which is not directly funded by HEFCE. This includes pro-bono work by NTFS assessors and judging panels. Strategic leads and academic developers working within the case study institutions (while noting the absence of this discussion by Faculty/School Academics) engaged in detailed discussions about the institutional resources required to support the NTFS. In an assessment of VFM, this signifies the value placed on the scheme and highlights efficiencies for the funder (i.e. this resource is not being provided at a cost, but helps to achieve the original aims of the scheme).

For example, academic developers stressed that support for the application process was *significant*, lacking money and that the administration was *fairly heavy*. In contrast, strategic

leads from a range of institutions did not consider this support to be burdensome or unachievable, but an expected institutional cost. When discussing individual mentors or reviewers, strategic leads noted that those investing time do so willingly. An issue with the administration of the scheme by the HEA was frequently cited as a reason for a lack of efficiency. This will be discussed in the 'effectiveness' section below. Worryingly, more than one interviewee indicated that some institutions were providing too much help to nominees during the construction of personal applications.

These comments highlight the value of the scheme to the participating institutions and bring to the foreground the notion of institutional return on investment, captured quite clearly by the quote below.

*I suppose the question is whether or not if we put more in we may see more successes.... I think the question that we have still to resolve is whether or not we would significantly increase our investment in this area to support a larger number and possibly an increase in success rate. (pre92b strategic lead)*

In contrast, this comment from a stakeholder creates some perspective:

*You can't immediately say, you know, if we at XXX put in 20 hours supporting NTFS applications and then none of them got Fellowship at the end, does that mean that that time is wasted? You could say yes because they didn't get the prize but then, you know, would we do the same for research bids? (stakeholder)*

The non-financial costs to the institution/individual should also be briefly noted here. These have been discussed in full in the previous sections.

## **Effectiveness**

The third criterion is 'effectiveness' and the relationship between intended and actual results of the spending (impact). Guiding questions include: what evidence is there to suggest that the intended original aims of the NTFS have been met? and how likely is future participation?

### **Impact**

The evidence used to determine whether the intended original aims of the NTFS have been met is contained within the interview data pertaining to the institutional, individual and sector context (above). Within this qualitative data, the stakeholders compared the financial cost of the NTFS to other sector priorities, namely the REF and the TEF, concluding that the spending is significantly smaller. The issue, and perceived driver behind value-for-money evaluations, was the inability to measure impact and a lack of accountability for the award spending. Tightening institutional obligations around the funding was suggested as one way to address this to make the NTFS more effective. Stakeholders also dominated the discussions around impact, whilst institutional interviewees tended to discuss the benefits and cost to the institution and the individual. The difficulties in quantifying impact and the need to be systematic in measurement, was discussed, alongside questions around how the benefits move beyond the individual and the institution towards 'public benefit', and 'student benefit' especially if the funding comes from public investment.

## Future participation

There was overwhelming agreement across all levels and types of institution that the case study institutions would continue to nominate individuals for the NTFS in the future. Academic developers were generally willing to support applications and saw the NTFS as an important part of their job. Strategic leads were willing to continue to invest the current level of institutional resources. There was no evidence to suggest that institutions are planning to increase their investment in the application process, and interviewees were keen to stress that there may not be three nominations, or even one nomination, in any given year.

Minor concerns over future participation were expressed by a number of pre-1992 institutions who cited the pressures on institutional resources to support teaching and research excellence as a factor. The previous track record shown by successful applications was also mentioned, highlighting how institutional effectiveness plays a part in future participation:

*I would say it has good value and given our track record in securing NTFS fellowships it would certainly be worth our while encouraging the scheme to continue and even providing funds to support it.... If we weren't winning and securing awards at the same rate, we might... be more reluctant to invest... that would certainly be part of the calculation of the university. (pre92c academic developer 2)*

The non-participants were asked about barriers to future participation. Here there was a distinction between active and passive non-participation. The FE/HE colleges and alternative providers were passive in their non-participation. They cited the lack of NTFS awareness as the more prominent factor, including: limited awareness of eligibility by academic developers; limited institutional awareness with no strategic drivers; and limited staff awareness resulting in few potential nominations. All non-participating institutions were establishing a stronger relationship with the HEA, and the UKPSF and internal schemes were often the priority, although the NTFS was seen as a future possibility. The CATE stream of the NTFS was seen as the most suitable part of the NTFS. The only structural barrier is expressed below, which overlaps with the 'equity' criterion:

*The way that the questions and the scheme are designed and devised doesn't suit staff teaching in a college, HE in a college. So, there's the issue of working your way through the forms... in terms of what have you done that is suited to be nominated. There's also the language in which it's couched which can put some people off. Also, HE and FE staff frequently don't have the time to put themselves forward. (non-participant college d)*

The non-participant sample also included Scottish institutions who all considered their non-participation as an active rejection of the need for institutional funding due to Funding Council restrictions.

## Limitations to effectiveness

There was a sense across the sample that poor administration of the NTFS had a significant impact on the effectiveness of the scheme. Evidence includes: a lack of stability in

communication; changing deadlines and timescales; and the quality of the feedback provided. It appears that the NTFS could increase its effectiveness by creating a stable annual timeline for applicants as weaknesses in administration can impact on institutional engagement and potential impact.

## Equity

The final criterion is equity – spending fairly. Guiding questions include: what evidence is there to suggest that the NTFS (and access to any benefits of the NTFS) is available equally to all institutions? and is there equity of experience across the HE sector?

There was a perceived lack of equity in access to the NTFS from Scottish institutions, supported by stakeholders who have worked with and within them. Disciplinary distinctions in NTFS participations varied. Sector stakeholders could see the reach of the NTFS across disciplinary boundaries:

*You've actually got a community, quite a sizable community now, that has been able to come together to work cross discipline, cross institution and internationally working together to bring about change, to share, to disseminate. (stakeholder)*

However, they also pointed out that the NTFS application process was perceived as favourable to some subject areas and educational development in particular. Disciplines such as Arts and Engineering were cited as examples of subjects who would be less likely to engage in written reflective accounts. A subject-level NTFS, to bring more nuance to the criteria, was suggested by two interviewees as a means of addressing issues of equity.

Institution type was also cited as evidence of inequity by stakeholders and the non-participating (college) providers themselves, both in terms of having the experience and time to meet the criteria and access to any outputs (e.g. the network of Fellows) of the scheme itself. In this sense, equity is seen primarily in terms of access to the scheme and its benefits, rather than inequity in success. Table 9 illustrates the relative lack of inequity in success rates (nominations to winners) across institution type (pre-92, post-92 and HE colleges), with 'Other' categorised institutions affording the most return on investment. FE colleges do have a significantly lower level of success in the NTFS which supports the findings above.

There was also some concern expressed in relation to the competitive nature of the schemes and the perceived difficulty for instance from staff on teaching only contracts who had fewer opportunities to impact beyond their courses and cohorts.

## Summary

There is evidence to suggest that spending (award monies) should be re-considered in light of the aims on the scheme. However, this is countered by the overwhelming response from institutions stating that they would be unlikely to carry any additional resource costs (other than opportunity costs) if the sector required financial payment for participation and award. The cost of supporting NTFS nominations is covered by each institution and is effective in that this keeps costs low for the funder. The fact that almost all institutions suggested that they would look to continue or begin to participate in the future is also evidence of

effectiveness. The range of benefits at individual, institutional and sector level adds weight to claims of effectiveness, although it is clear that this is unequally weighted and favours individual rather than strategic institutional benefit. Finally, evidence of perceived inequity should be carefully considered.

## Considerations for the future of the NTFS

This section considers the future of the scheme. It covers three main thematic areas: firstly, whether the NTFS still has a purpose for institutions and sector stakeholders; secondly, where the NTFS fits in with other support for and recognition of teaching excellence (such as the TEF and collaborative awards such as CATE); and thirdly, considerations of how the scheme could be reformed.

### Purpose and value

This section looks in detail at institutional views about the purpose and value of the NTFS. These considerations are focused on the importance of such a scheme to rebalancing teaching and research and of the equally important relationship between reward and recognition schemes for individuals and the competitive drivers for institutional excellence such as the TEF. Overwhelmingly our interviewees were positive about the presence of the scheme, both as an exemplar or 'pinnacle' award for some institutional staff members to seek to attain, and as an agent of 'balance' between research and teaching, even though they often had strong views on how it could be reformed. For some interviewees the value of the scheme was its role in spreading innovative practice and a framework for identifying excellence:

*I think it's very valuable and if we hadn't had the NTFS, the sector would not have seen anywhere near as many initiatives, anywhere near as much shifting, as it has, because teaching has moved significantly in the last ten years, the past 20 years even. It is increasingly providing as these things feed into the promotion criteria of universities... a rationale for people to invest their energy in developing excellent teaching in the universities. That is hard to measure. (pre92b academic developer)*

Another highlighted that the value of the NTFS is networking, including the ability to speak and work with international colleagues (the biggest accounted spend of NTFS award money), information from which can be cascaded down to their institutional peers (post92 academic developer). NTFS awards add to the capacity of institutions to think differently: *perhaps what the NTFS award gives is a little bit of freedom and flexibility that is different from the constraints that you would have from an organisation for CPD as well (post92a strategic lead).*

One pre-1992 interviewee thought that the value of the scheme would be contingent on whether the institution was research or teaching intensive:

*I think it very much depends on the type of institution. By and large our students don't come to [this institution] because of the teaching excellence, even if we can demonstrate teaching excellence, that's not the reason for being here. They're not flocking here because of teaching excellence; they're flocking here because of research excellence. (pre92a strategic lead)*

It should be noted that, while others may have held this view, none expressed it so starkly. However, the role of the NTFS in rebalancing teaching and research (one of its original purposes) does not only appear in the context of divisions between research and teaching intensive institutions. Other factors make it an important consideration for all institutions:

*There is so much competition in the sector now and there is so much pressure around student fees and ensuring that the student experience is excellent, that acknowledging that and finding a redress or a balance to research... is quite important. Both are essential. But you have to find a way to acknowledge and balance them in a university environment. I think as universities become more under pressure and more corporate and the fees go up and the students are more of a customer, it does become important to acknowledge these things. The students want to know they've got a great teacher as well as a great researcher teaching them.* (pre92a academic developer)

The need to rebalance research and teaching also has importance for individual academics, regardless of institution type, as noted by several of our interviewee sample. Even those working in non-participating institutions viewed the NTFS as a valuable 'beacon of excellence', standing above HEA fellowships and internal awards, and an exemplar that junior academics can aim for from the start of their careers (post92c academic developer; post92b strategic lead). No other schemes were believed to have the recognition of the NTFS:

*It has a real badge to it in terms of being a marker of prestige and excellence in terms of learning and teaching doesn't it. I think there are pockets of it happening at an institutional level and other awards.... [but] I can't imagine we'd have got to the point where we have a Teaching Excellence Framework and we don't have something like the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme, I think there would have been a gap there.* (non-participating college b)

*... if [NTFS] wasn't there, it would be quite difficult to gauge what institutions do and what it means for that institution to be an expert.* (non-participating college c)

The NTFS was also generally held to have value in the sector because it is evidence of sustained impact over time rather than a criterion-referenced award based on reaching a threshold. The NTFS requires evidence of sustained excellence and national/international recognition: *the thing about the NTFS is generally it's not a snapshot, because you've got this level of sustained impact* (post92a academic developer2).

It should be noted that other academic respondents – i.e. those in positions other than strategic leader or academic developer – were more likely to view the scheme's processes negatively. Some had been through the nomination process unsuccessfully and cited other discipline-focused award schemes that have at least as much impact, for example learned societies awards (post92a academic1; academic2).

### **NTFS, the TEF and other aspects of teaching excellence**

Responses to interview questions around the relationship between the NTFS and other measures of teaching excellence focus on the additional emphasis of the scheme provided. This is seen as to be in contrast to the TEF which rewards the

institution (even in later iterations which focus on the subject discipline at each institution). The NTFS also enables better collaboration with those external to the winners' employer, and that can take the form of sector-wide impact. While the TEF feeds into the policy regime of competitive differentiation between institutions and helps the new Office for Students (OfS) ensure high minimum standards (DfE 2017, para 63<sup>7</sup>), for some strategic leaders the NTFS exists to stretch the definition of quality.

*Unlike the TEF it does recognise excellent teaching and supports the development of individuals; that is not what the TEF is about, so we need to retain the NTFS to close the loop and complete the emphasis on teaching excellence. (post92a strategic lead)*

*I think to not have a scheme that achieves that in education would be very strange at the moment. Well, it would be strange anyway but it would be particularly strange at the moment with the focus on 'what have universities ever done for students', you know? (pre92b strategic lead)*

Given these differences between two aspects of the 'quality agenda', the advent of the TEF and the new emphasis on teaching excellence could be taken to mean that the NTFS is more valuable than hitherto: all 18 strategic leads we interviewed agreed it was essential or at least necessary, and often (as above) citing the competitive environment as well as creating a reward structure to match that for research (highlighted by the Universities Minister Jo Johnson MP in his Foreword to the 2016 White Paper (BIS 2016)).

Aside from its relationship with the TEF and other aspects of the competitive environment, the NTFS was often spoken of as offering some additionality, something over and above what would have happened without its presence:

*I think there is value in something that's slightly more sector wide because I think it actually helps to breed potential innovation. Innovation's a big word that we like to mention quite a lot at the moment and sometimes I think innovation is actually just doing stuff how we probably did it about ten years ago but maybe just thinking about it more carefully. But I think that that comes about from mixing of disciplines and backgrounds, so therefore sector wide, things like networks and awards like this just allows you to be exposed to something more broad than perhaps the stuff you would live and breathe on a more daily basis. (pre92b academic)*

Another interviewee spoke about the NTFS as a constant in an age of change in the HE sector with the introduction of an institutional TEF, a subject-level TEF and the mooted Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF):

*The more chaotic everything gets, something like the NTFS, it's very clear, it's very obvious what it stands for and what it represents.... You know, if you can have some things that are there and they're coming in... year after year, everybody knows what they mean and everybody knows what they represent, I think that's kind of crucial*

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<sup>7</sup> Paragraph 63 of the regulatory consultation guidance for OfS makes it clear that 'the OfS will not use registration conditions to directly drive continuous improvement above the baseline'. DfE (2017) *Securing student success: risk-based regulation for teaching excellence, social mobility and informed choice in higher education: Government consultation on behalf of the Office for Students*

*that we retain them and that they're there because there's so much other stuff moving.* (pre92b academic developer)

Other comments from interviewees included references to other national systems such as the United States of America, Canada and some European states which were more likely to celebrate teaching excellence. It was noted by one post-92 academic developer that in this area the UK is late to recognise teaching excellence and this is borne out by low levels of English academics attending the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL) and its European equivalent EuroSoTL.

### **Suggested changes to the NTFS**

Each of our interviewees were asked to nominate aspects of the NTFS scheme that they would like to see changed. The two largest categories of response related to the way that the scheme is run by HEA (cited by 11 of our 46 interviewees). Five of these referred to the timing of awards information, two complained that the peer-review system was non-transparent and four complained about insensitive or ill-timed feedback to nominees. Eight interviewees thought that the wider sector should 'get more back' from NTFS Fellows in terms of their impact on colleagues, either within their host institutions or across the sector. Other key concerns highlighted (by more than three interviewees) were that the NTFS was perceived to reward mainly those that already had status in the sector; the need for different category awards for institutional type (e.g. for FE colleges, alternative providers) and the monetary value of awards (seen as less of an incentive as they have declined). Other suggested changes to the scheme (mentioned by one or two) were that the focus of any such scheme should be team, rather than individual; that the scheme should, like the TEF, be oriented more towards institutional competitiveness; that the scheme should be awarded on the basis of closeness of fit to annual or biannual 'themes' (issues of perennial concern to the sector); that awards should reflect subject knowledge, rather than knowledge of educational theory (of concern from the perspective of vocational disciplines such as medicine); and that too many awards went to academic developers rather than teaching academics.

### **Summary**

This section looked in detail at the purpose and future of the NTFS from the point of view of senior strategic leaders, academic developers, teaching academics and stakeholders, representing the views of all institutional types. It is clear that the NTFS is still highly valued by the sector and many see this to be particularly the case in the context of competition within the sector based around the notions of teaching quality and excellence. The majority of interviewees are less concerned about the monetary value of the awards than they are about the prestige and status (and this is equally valid from the individual and institutional perspective); there is a perception that receiving the award provides a degree of intellectual 'freedom to think'. It is also generally held that the NTFS is qualitatively different to other awards, based as it is on sustained sector-wide impact recognised by peers (even while the peer review system leaves something to be desired for some respondents), rather than being a criterion-referenced award attainable by anyone that achieves a benchmark. There is, however, a clear perception that the wider sector could get more 'back' from the NTFS and there is a view that the HEA could do more to incentivise more dissemination activity

from the large pool of NTFS Fellows, to both increase the visibility of the scheme and to help spread innovative practice and ideas.

## 4. Analysis

The mixed methodology employed in this evaluation has led to extensive data collection and analysis. A mixed methodology can improve the validity of findings and provide an opportunity to contrast and corroborate the findings of one method against another. The aim is to provide more complete findings than simply using one method or level of analysis. The triangulated finding analysis has been separated into the following key themes and summarised:

### Institutional context

The NTFS contributes to the recognition of teaching excellence in two main ways: by rewarding excellence in teaching at institutional, sector-wide and in some cases international levels; and by raising the profile and status of teaching in relation to research, albeit to a greater or lesser degree depending on institution type. Both these are consistent with the original aims of the scheme<sup>8</sup> and are directly relevant in the context of the TEF. The NTFS and the TEF can be seen as complementary in the wider context of competition, which is becoming increasingly driven by indicators of teaching excellence. While the TEF is seen as rewarding institutions and ensuring *baseline requirements* are met (DfE 2017 para 63), the NTFS is better suited to meet the requirements of OfS *to enable and create space for innovation, including in teaching and learning* (DfE 2017 ES xv c.) through a competitive process among autonomous institutions. The competition for NTFS awards has the added benefit of providing a staff development pathway and thus a career structure in a consistent way across the sector via the UKPSF and HEA fellowships. The importance of retaining and strengthening this is recognised across the sector, including among some non-participating institutions in Scotland.

### Individual context

The majority of institutions in the survey and the interviews acknowledged the importance of recognising and rewarding individual teaching excellence. The data from the literature review, survey and interviews shows that the NTFS has had a positive impact on the individual receiving an award, most notably in relation to personal and professional development, credibility and confidence. Nevertheless, the potential benefits for individual award winners and institutions have not been fully maximised. There was an apparent disconnection across many institutions between their motives for participating in the scheme and their engagement with NTFS winners post-award, which appeared to limit the contribution of these individuals. Many institutions that recognised the importance of participating in the NTFS also reported a lack of procedures in place to utilise individual award winners and expressed the view that there was significant room for improvement. In spite of the benefits for individuals, it is doubtful that the sector would be willing to commit greater resource towards the NTFS in the future unless the benefits for institutions are more clearly understood and more tangible.

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<sup>8</sup> To raise the status of teaching and learning; to recognise and celebrate excellent teachers; to provide national focus for teaching and learning

## Sector context

The qualitative interview evidence indicates that the sector, individuals and institutions benefit from successful participation in a sector wide reward scheme, although the impact for institutions is the weakest. This conclusion is in line with the survey responses where the most frequently identified driver for the NTFS was the national recognition and external validation for institutions as well as individuals. This is also supported by the literature where reward and recognition across the sector is frequently cited (e.g. Skelton 2004), particularly as a means to redress the perceived imbalance between teaching and research.

There is a reciprocal relationship between institutions and the sector; for example, the sector benefits through the work of institutions to align NTFS criteria with internal schemes and institutions benefit by utilising winners through participation in sector-wide communities of practice. Although the majority of non-participating institutions cited no adverse effects of their status, some felt that there was a degree of loss in not having access to the collective expertise and resources of NTFS Fellows which operates across the sector.

The data suggests that there is little perceived overlap between the NTFS and other sector schemes, with the NTFS viewed as more academically robust than some alternative awards. The CATE award was frequently mentioned as a welcome addition to the range of teaching excellence awards on offer within the sector, and the collaborative (rather than individual) approach to reward and recognition was cited as preferable within the Scottish Higher Education context.

## Value for money/return on investment

There is some qualitative evidence from the interviews to suggest that since inception the NTFS has made progress towards achieving its aims in the sector, although at institutional level, survey data showed that there were only 21% of NTFS-participating respondents who stated the NTFS had helped to develop a culture that values teaching excellence and 11% that referred to an enhanced status of teaching excellence as a result of participating.

The scheme is described as partially effective, and this has been achieved economically through a reduction in funding over time. However, there is corroborated evidence to suggest that the decreasing value of the financial award has had a negative effect on the outputs of NTFS winners. The triangulated data consistently makes reference to issues of impact, with the literature citing the focus on spending on individual professional development rather than pedagogic inquiry (on an individual or collective basis) and a lack of accountability for post award activity, as significant.

The scheme is valued by those that will continue to participate and by those who are looking to engage in the future. The high level of institutional support for applications, which is embedded into institutional academic development at a cost, is an important example of how the scheme is valued. However, value does not equate to investment, and there is little evidence to suggest that participation would continue in the future if the funding for the administration of the scheme was removed.

Critically, there is evidence of inequity of access to the scheme and its benefits across the UK sector, which is a component of the value for money assessment. Using the National Audit Office's (2017) consideration of equity in value for money assessments, this evaluation

suggests that the limitations encountered by FE/HE and Scottish institutions are the most inequitable.

## **Considerations for the future**

As with considerations of the value for money/return on investment, this summary analysis indicates a high level of corroboratory overlap between the findings from each of our sources. Consideration for the future of the scheme covers three main thematic areas that explore non-financial value: firstly, whether the NTFS remains fit for purpose; secondly, where the NTFS fits in with other support for and recognition of teaching excellence (such as the TEF and collaborative awards such as CATE) and more generally with the renewed emphasis on the value of teaching quality in a competitive climate; and thirdly, how the scheme could be reformed. Our analysis shows that the scheme retains value as an exemplar or 'pinnacle' award for some institutional staff members, providing a career ladder and potentially providing the sector with new insights drawn from the exceptional work of NTFS Fellows. The scheme is also valued because it creates a sense of status equivalence with research excellence; however, it is clear that the scheme does not always fully act to further those values. Much of our evidence shows that the NTFS can appear exclusive: excluding teaching staff (as opposed to academic developers); excluding HE teaching staff in colleges of further education and among alternative providers; excluding those with specialist subject knowledge rather than educational theory; and more generally excluding staff that are not already exalted in other ways. Overall our analysis shows that the scheme remains valued and should be continued, albeit reformed in such a way that the wider sector feel the impact of the work of NTFS Fellows and that the scheme is administered on a more effective and transparent basis so that all sections of the diverse HE community can experience a sense of ownership.

## 5. Conclusions

Our aims in this research were to: evaluate the impact and current relevance of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) across the sector, including in relation to those providers who have not participated in the scheme; and inform decisions on the future format of the scheme, including the approach to its financing. Wider objectives were: to establish the extent to which the NTFS has achieved its aims across the HE sector in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and to set out considerations and options for funders with regard to the format of the scheme, approach to delivery, and its funding in the new regulatory regime.

### The policy context: NTFS as part of the market

The evaluation data suggests that the NTFS has played a part in **enhancing teaching and learning** in line with the original aims of the scheme. However, much of the evidence presented within this report suggests that many institutions would be **reluctant to subscribe to a reward and recognition scheme for teaching excellence if public investment was removed**; in this case the market (represented by a combination of new alternative schemes and existing ones such as those operated by the Guardian and Times Higher Education newspapers, which are generally held in lower esteem than the NTFS) would not operate with the same level of system-wide engagement, leading to dis-utility and possible disengagement. In short, **our evidence suggests that the market would fail to provide incentives that the state could otherwise provide in the absence of a national scheme such as the NTFS.**

It could equally be argued that whilst institutions value the scheme, they are unwilling to contribute to its funding. The NTFS was introduced in part to address ‘market failure’ because of the perceived lack of reward and recognition for teaching within institutions; this research shows that **there is now a considerable amount of internal reward and recognition across the sector**, bringing into question the need for a national recognition scheme.

However, such national incentives are central to continuous improvement, as is competitive differentiation between institutions: *...the OfS would rely on the market incentives to improve teaching quality; the provider’s TEF rating might be affected in its next assessment, and in any case the provider would likely seek to remain competitive by improving their offer to students* (ibid, para 39). The NTFS – as a marker of teaching excellence – is and could remain a publicly funded market incentive within the definition used by DfE in the OfS consultation.

This evaluation leads us to conclude that the **NTFS and the TEF can be seen as complementary to the wider context of competition within higher education (HE), which is becoming increasingly driven by indicators of teaching excellence.** While the TEF is seen as rewarding institutions and ensuring *baseline requirements* are met (DfE 2017 para 63), the NTFS is better suited to meet the OfS requirement *to enable and create space for innovation, including in teaching and learning* (DfE 2017 ES xv c.) through a competitive process among autonomous institutions.

## Other concluding remarks

The NTFS was valued by the representative sample of institutions that participated in this evaluation (which included all types of HE provider and non-participating institutions). The survey data suggests that **sampled institutions would recommend the scheme to non-participants**; the survey and case studies provide **evidence of positive benefits to individuals**; the survey highlighted the **NTFS as a national measure of teaching excellence in a competitive market**; the majority of institutions across the interview samples reported that they **used the NTFS guidelines when designing internal awards** and that these internal awards were used to identify potential NTFS nominees; the sample of non-participating institutions valued the scheme but were **limited by eligibility (funding) and resource**; and case study (participating) institutions were also in agreement that they would **continue to invest resource to support NTFS** applications in its current format.

The use of the NTFS as an indicator of national reputation was a common theme across the sample alongside the benefits of the Scheme for promoting individual excellence. However, there was a **lack of consensus that the NTFS has successfully raised the profile of teaching and learning** in the survey data due to difficulties in assessing impact, although across the qualitative data, respondents noted that the NTFS has contributed to raising the status of teaching and learning within a changing policy context.

The triangulated analysis shows that the **NTFS also retains value as an exemplar or 'pinnacle' award for institutional staff**, providing a career ladder and potentially providing the sector with new insights drawn from the exceptional work of the NTFS Fellows. **However, the benefits and impact for the individual need to better align with the benefits and impact for the institution**, with some institutions needing to raise their awareness of NTFS winners and be more instrumental in how they are used to directly enhance the student experience (for example, to influence institutional policy, and to share excellent and/or innovative practice). **This is particularly pertinent if institutions are asked to cover any further costs of participation.**

Careful consideration of a return on (NTFS) investment for institutions is also necessary. The high level of institutional support currently provided to nominate individuals is a cost to institutions, and this evaluation found overwhelmingly that institutions would continue to provide this. Whilst this indicates the level of value placed on the award, **there was little evidence to suggest that institutions would cover any additional resource costs to participate in the NTFS, either to an alternative administrator, or in addition to their subscription costs to the HEA.**

Overall the analysis shows that, from the perspective of our representative sample, the **NTFS remains valued and should be continued** in some way, **albeit reformed so that the wider sector feel the impact of the work of Fellows and that the scheme is administered on a more effective and transparent basis** so that all sections of the diverse HE sector can experience a sense of ownership. The evidence from this evaluation suggested a number of **necessary changes to the structure and administration** of the NTFS which would make it more effective (including greater clarity about the expectations of winners after receiving the award; more guidance for institutions on the ways in which winners can be utilised; and greater focus on the future plans of award winners). This includes specific considerations for the HEA as custodians of the scheme.

The majority of institutions in this evaluation who did not participate in the NTFS did not feel that they had been adversely affected by this absence. However, a lack of institutional awareness at all levels, and a lack of institutional readiness to nominate individuals, meant that they were often unable to fully consider the benefits or costs of non-participation. Those who felt that their institution had missed out discussed this particularly in terms of rewarding and sharing outstanding practice and access to the associated community of practice.

**Limited awareness or institutional resource to support the NTFS does limit the impact of the scheme for non-participating institutions, though that in itself should not obviate its value to all HE providers. Alternative providers and FE colleges consulted in our evaluation argued for a more equitable approach, with awards reserved for those provider types.**

The data analysis demonstrates that, whilst respondents highlight many limitations in the way the scheme is operated/used by institutions and the sector as a whole, the scheme is generally perceived as valuable by successful applicants and by institutions as a way of 'benchmarking' for innovation and teaching excellence, across the sector.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. Please state whether your institution belongs to any of the following mission groups:

- Cathedrals Group
- GuildHE
- Million+ Group
- Russell Group
- University Alliance
- Unaffiliated
- FE and HE college
- Other

1.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

2. How important is it to your institution to recognise and reward individual teaching excellence?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Somewhat important
- Not important at all
- Don't know

2.a. Please provide an explanation for your response to Question 2.

3. Does your institution have any approaches for recognising and rewarding teaching excellence (e.g. internal award scheme, promotions criteria and so on)?

- Yes (Routed to Question 4)
- No (Routed to Question 6)
- Don't know (Routed to Question 6)

4. Please provide a short description of your institution's approaches for recognising and rewarding teaching excellence.

5. Has the NTFS influenced your institution's approaches for recognising and rewarding teaching excellence? If so, please describe how. If not, please state why not.

6. How important is it to your institution to participate in a sector-wide scheme that recognises and rewards individual or team-based teaching excellence (for example, National Teaching Fellowship Scheme, The Guardian Higher Education Awards, The Times Higher Education Awards)?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Somewhat important
- Not important at all
- Don't know

6.a. Please provide an explanation for your response to Question 6.

7. Does your institution support applications for sector-wide individual or team-based award schemes that recognise teaching excellence?

- Yes (Routed to Question 8)
- No (Routed to Question 10)
- Don't know (Routed to Question 10)

8. Which sector-wide award schemes that recognise teaching excellence does your institution support? Please tick all that apply.

- NTFS individual awards
- NTFS Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) awards
- The Guardian Higher Education Awards
- The Times Higher Education Awards
- Other

8.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

9. Do you think the NTFS overlaps other award schemes in the UK? If so, please state why.

10. Which of the following scenarios apply currently to your institution and to your involvement in the NTFS?

- My institution is eligible for the NTFS and we have supported individuals or teams to apply (Routed to Question 12)

- My institution is eligible for the NTFS, but we have never supported individuals or teams to apply (Routed to Question 18)
- My institution is not eligible for the NTFS (for example, Scottish Higher Education Institutions) (Routed to Question 11)
- Don't know (Routed to Question 20)

11. Has your institution ever expressed an interest in supporting individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

11.a. Please provide further information about your response to Question 11. (Routed to Question 20)

12. Please describe the main factors underlying your institution's decision to support individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS.

13. What types of support are in place in your institution to help individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS? Please tick all that apply.

- Admin support
- Application writing support
- CPD workshops
- Financial/Time support
- Mentoring
- Other

13.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

14. Please describe any benefits to your institution in supporting individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS.

15. Please describe any costs to your institution in supporting individuals or teams to apply to the NTFS.

16. In consideration of the benefits and costs, would you recommend the NTFS to institutions that do not currently participate?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

17. Are there any targets for the number of staff holding National Teaching Fellowships in your institution? (Routed to Question 20)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

18. Please describe any factors that have influenced your decision not to participate in the NTFS.

19. Has the absence of the NTFS at your institution had any effect? If so, please describe how. (Routed to Question 20)

20. Has the NTFS promoted innovative learning and teaching in your institution? If so, please describe how. If not, please state why not.

21. Have NTFS winners had any influence on teaching and learning projects in your institution? If so, please describe how. If not, please state why not.

22. Has the NTFS influenced the student learning experience in your institution? If so, please describe how. If not, please state why not.

23. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the NTFS should:

	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know
Focus on rewarding early career staff within institutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Focus on awards for sustained impact over time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Focus on staff who teach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be differentiated by discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage cross-disciplinary working	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. Please describe any changes that could be made to the NTFS to improve the scheme in the future.

25. Please indicate whether your institution would be willing to participate in a follow-up case study as part of the research project to evaluate the impact and current relevance of the NTFS across the sector.

- Yes (Routed to Question 26)
- No (Routed to Question 27)

26. You have stated that your institution would be willing to participate in a follow-up case study. Please provide an appropriate email address which will be used as the point of contact for your institution.

27. Please provide any additional comments that you have about the NTFS.

## Appendix B: Project Timeline – August to November 2017

Task, deadlines, team	June		July		August		September		October		November
<b>Project Management</b>											
<i>Oversight Group meet</i>											
<b>Literature review</b>											
<i>Protocol agreed</i>											
<i>Initial data extraction</i>											
<i>Initial themes</i>											
<i>Continued data extraction</i>											
<i>Final themes</i>											
<b>Survey design</b>											
<i>Draft send to HEFCE</i>											
<i>Draft sent to pilot</i>											
<i>Survey set up</i>											
<i>Pilot again</i>											
<b>Survey administration</b>											
<i>Interim report writing</i>											
<i>Case study design</i>											
<i>Case study interviews</i>											
<i>Student focus groups</i>											
<i>Stakeholder interviews</i>											
<i>Non-participants' interviews</i>											
<i>Data analysis</i>											
<i>Survey analysis</i>											
<i>Final report writing</i>											
<i>Dissemination</i>											

## Appendix C: Literature Review Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

<b>Include</b>	<b>Exclude</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
1997-present	Pre-1997	From Dearing Report
Higher Education, Further Education, Tertiary Education	Primary, Secondary	NTFS applicability
UK, North America, Australasia	Rest of World	To align with other schemes within similar HE contexts
Written in English		Dominance in geographical scope
Conceptual, academic critique, policy (non-empirical), research studies (including case studies, frameworks based on evidence), institutional reports		Provides the widest scope for an evaluation of impact and current relevance (Aim1)
Specific reference to NTFS: supported and promoted innovation in learning and teaching		Linked to evaluation aims and objectives
Specific reference to NTFS: recognition of excellence in teaching and learning		Linked to evaluation aims and objectives
Specific reference to NTFS: comparisons with alternative award/reward and recognitions schemes		Linked to evaluation aims and objectives
Specific reference to NTFS: evidence of value for money		Linked to evaluation aims and objectives

## Appendix D: Data Extraction Form

NTFS Data Extraction – literature review

Article No:		Review Date:	
Title:			
Author(s):		Publication Date:	
Publisher:		Place of Publication:	
Journal:		Volume/No./pp:	
Keywords/definitions:			
Conceptual framework:			
Findings/argument:			
Author conclusions:			
Own notes:			
(IMPACT A1:O1) To what extent has the NTFS supported and promoted innovation in learning and teaching?			
(IMPACT A1:O1) To what extent has the NTFS provided recognition of excellence in teaching and learning?			
(CURRENT RELEVANCE A1:O2) How does the NTFS compare with alternative award/reward and recognitions schemes?			
(FINANCIAL A2:O2) Is there any evidence of NTFS value for money/ROI?			
Rating: Quality of Research		Rating: Relevance to My Study	
A		1	
B		2	
C		3	

Data Extraction Form, adapted from Saks, M. and Alsop, J. (2012) *Researching Health: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). London: Sage.

## Appendix E: Glossary of Abbreviations

AP	Alternative Provider
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BSA	British Sociological Association
CATE	Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence
CETL	Centres of Excellence for Teaching and Learning
CoP	Communities of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
DfENI	Department for the Economy Northern Ireland
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ECU	Equality Challenge Unit
EuroSoTL	European Society for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
ILTHE	Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
ISSoTL	International Society for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
KE	Knowledge Exchange
KEF	Knowledge Exchange Framework
LFHE	Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
OfS	Office for Students
REF	Research Excellence Framework
ROI	Return on Investment
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
TESTA	Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment
TQEF	Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Framework
VFM	Value for Money

# Sheffield Hallam University

*Evaluation of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme*

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