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Strategic learning and teaching enhancement through funded teaching interventions

A case study from the University of Glasgow

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1. Introduction

1.1 History and context

The University of Glasgow is the fourth oldest in the English-speaking world. It is a member of the elite Russell Group of 24 major UK research universities and a founding member of the Universitas 21 group, one of whose aims is to foster research-inspired teaching and learning.

Glasgow currently has over 18,000 undergraduates and over 7,000 postgraduates enrolled across four Colleges:

- > Arts
- > Science and Engineering
- > Social Sciences
- > Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences

In order to maintain the pace of learning and teaching development in line with recent changes in the student population (such as demographics, numbers, technological skill level and expectations) it is important for institutions such as Glasgow to support excellent and innovative learning and teaching at strategic levels. Strategic initiatives must be meaningful to encourage the appropriate changes in learning and teaching practices. The University of Glasgow has, since 2000-01, implemented several initiatives to specifically enhance learning and teaching.

One of the longest-standing of these is the Learning and Teaching Development Fund (the LTDF). Annual bids are invited from members of staff for projects that aim to enhance learning and teaching and that align with key strategic aims.

However, the LTDF is only one of several strategic initiatives; others include: the Learning and Teaching Strategy, first formulated in 2005-6 (currently in its third iteration); the establishment of a Learning and Teaching Centre (comprising the Academic Development Unit (who provide pedagogical support to staff), the Student Learning Service (who support students) and the Learning Technology Unit (responsible for the Moodle VLE, among other tools)); the creation of the role of Deans of Learning and Teaching (one in each of the four Colleges); and the creation of a new academic contract type – University Teacher. This category is equivalent to the role of Lecturer in pay, conditions, and promotion up to professorial level, but differs in that only those on the Lecturer track have an obligation to actively engage in research, while University Teachers are instead expected to engage in scholarship.

Bids to the fund are currently invited in one of three categories: small (up to £3,000), medium (£3,000 – 30,000) and large (over £30,000), and projects may be carried out over one or two years. The allocated funding has changed over the years; in 2014-15 approximately £90,0000 was awarded and the combined bids always far exceed the amount available; that is, bidding is a competitive process. The LTDF primarily provides funds for the development of courses, resources and teaching innovations, which must be evaluated within the life of the project. It is not normally to be used for the purchase of equipment, nor does it fund research projects per se. (Full details of the bidding process can be found online:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/resourcesforstaff/awardsandfunds/developmentfund/> .)

A review panel consisting of the University's Learning and Teaching Committee members awards funding on the basis of several criteria including alignment with current strategic priorities and sustainability of the outputs beyond the funded duration of the project. Successful bidders are assigned a contact from the Academic Development Unit and a contact from the Student Learning Service who are then available throughout the project to provide pedagogical advice and support where needed. Award holders submit interim and final reports to the Learning and Teaching Committee. The final reports are made publicly available online (see:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/resourcesforstaff/awardsandfunds/developmentfund/themegrid/>).

Dissemination is usually also carried out at the University's annual Learning and Teaching Conference or through Learning and Teaching Centre seminars, and fund holders are encouraged to disseminate as widely as is relevant outside of the institution.

Examples of the types of past projects include: the trialing of new course structures and teaching techniques which later become embedded into individual courses; the development of virtual-learning-environment based (VLE-

based) resources to support distance students or students with disabilities; and the development of learning support packages to develop particular skills. Such projects often related to an individual course or subject area; however, other projects that have had wider impact. These include a project entitled the: 'Engineering First Year Interest Groups', the outcomes of which resulted in a change to the entire first year Engineering curriculum, and the 'Science Advisers' Early Warning System' which has now been adopted across the institution to gather retention data for all first year students.

This case study takes the Learning and Teaching Development Fund as an example of a strategic teaching intervention, and examines the ways in which its existence since 2000-01 has contributed to changes in teaching practices, the student experience, and to the ethos of teaching at the University of Glasgow.

We start by summarising the somewhat limited literature on the impact of funded teaching enhancements. We then present the methodology adopted in the production of this case study which used the experiences and beliefs of fund holders as a major data source to explore two key areas:

1. the factors that influence the success, and particularly the sustainability, of the LTDF projects;
2. the impact that the existence of the LTDF has on University of Glasgow staff in terms of their understanding of the institution and their role in student learning. We also present three particular 'success stories': projects piloted through the LTDF, which have now become established practices to enhance the student experience. Finally, we then go onto explore how funded teaching enhancements can best be supported and encouraged to maximise their impact before reaching some conclusions and recommendations that we hope other institutions will find useful.

1.2 Research into funded teaching enhancement

In response to changes in the size and diversity of the student body and their educational needs, the UK government-commissioned Dearing Report, published in 1997, recommended that all higher education institutions (HEIs) prioritise learning and teaching by, among other things, providing training programmes for teaching staff and developing and implementing learning and teaching strategies. The establishment and subsequent development of the LTDF can be considered in relation to this drive to enhance learning and teaching.

The University of Glasgow is not unique in providing funding to support its staff to enhance and innovate learning and teaching. A Google search for "learning/teaching/enhancement/development/innovation/fund" produces many hits from individual HEIs; however, this is very much an under-researched area – little has been said about funded projects related to learning and teaching in the scholarly literature.

What has been written about funded learning and teaching enhancement tends to relate to the recognition and reward of teaching where winning of teaching grants may contribute to promotion (Vardi and Quinn 2011), and the now defunct Australian Learning and Teaching Council's national award recognised grants for teaching as evidence of educational leadership (Gunn and Fisk 2013).

Of course, the outcomes of many teaching development projects, whether funded or not, can be found in the research literature but what is absent from that literature is first, a clear sense of the extent of funded projects to enhance, for example, how common are they and how much does the sector invest? And second, what impact are these funded projects having?

While not specifically related to teaching enhancement, a study by Bovill et al. (2013) examined an overlapping area: pedagogic research. Fewer than 50% of their 120 survey respondents from Scottish HEIs reported that their pedagogic research was funded and more than half of those who were funded had secured external funding, that is, only 18 of the 120 respondents had secured institutional funding. Few HEIs returned pedagogic research in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and, therefore, unsurprisingly favour more lucrative disciplinary research. Bovill and her colleagues (2013) argue that: "research into learning and teaching has a key role to play in enhancing the quality of teaching within universities" (p. 9), and clearly the same is true for funded teaching enhancement.

2. Case study methodology

The case study examines the 15-year existence of the Learning and Teaching Development Fund. We adopted a descriptive, exploratory and evaluative approach to research, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in a mixed-method framework. Electronic records of final reports are available for all years of the fund, except 2002-3 to 2004-5, and the bids for 2014-15 have been excluded due to their status as ongoing.

While many of the LTDF projects are collaborative in nature, sometimes involving colleagues from different Schools or Colleges, that has not been examined in this case study. Instead we have focused on individual grant holders as a major source of data. In total, 106 projects were identified in the time under examination. The project reports were analysed to identify which themes the projects had been associated with and the location of grant holders and the category of contract they held.

We identified 87 individual grant holders across the 106 projects as several had been awarded more than one grant. All 87 were contacted by email and invited to complete a web-based survey. The survey was designed and implemented using the web-based service, Survey Monkey™, and included a number of quantitative questions, designed to help categorise the projects as well as questions related to the fund-holder's perception of the relative success of their projects and their rationale for applying for funding (see Appendix 1). We also asked respondents whether they would be willing to be interviewed for this research.

We received 35 completed surveys and 32 of those who completed the survey indicated they were willing to be interviewed, 13 of whom were later interviewed. The completed surveys were analysed to establish the area of the university in which the grant holder worked (one of the four colleges or University Services) and the nature of their contract. The open text answers were also analysed in light of the themes derived from analysis of the interview, described below, and quotes from the survey responses have been incorporated into our thematic analysis.

The surveys and final reports were also explored to identify particularly successful projects that we knew had had institutional impact that we might use to illustrate this case study. Three 'success stories' are presented below at appropriate points in the text; each consists of a description of the project or projects, and reflections from the grant holder.

We also used our analysis of both reports and surveys to purposefully select interviewees from different areas of the University and who, we believed, would enable us to have the broadest range of perspectives.

We employed a mainly semi-structured interview process with a number of closed questions to enable interviewees to confirm the nature of their project. The remaining questions were designed to elicit detailed responses regarding the interviewees' experiences. We undertook 13 interviews, which ranged from 9 to 38 minutes in length. The interviews were analysed using an adaptation of the general inductive method (Thomas 2006). Briefly, a researcher actively listened to each recording several times comparing them with associated notes taken during interview and initial themes were identified and noted. Each interview was analysed independently by two researchers. The researchers then met to discuss and focus on these initial themes refining them where necessary and returning to relative parts of the interview for clarification and to identify illustrative quotes. The themes resulting from this analysis are described below.

3. Distribution of funded projects

The priorities identified in calls for bids to the LTDF vary each year. Early calls were general, aimed at the enhancement of learning and teaching in the University whereas recent calls have specified topics aligned to the Learning and Teaching Strategy's priorities. The most recent topics are as follows:

- assessment and feedback;
- graduate attributes;
- personalised learning;
- student mobility;
- technology enabled learning and teaching (TELT);
- retention.

The most frequently cited priorities over the time under investigation were: assessment and feedback; graduate attributes (previously employability); retention and success; and TELT. The 106 available final LTDF project reports were examined to identify the strategic theme they had originally been associated with. The distribution of projects by theme is shown in Figure 1.

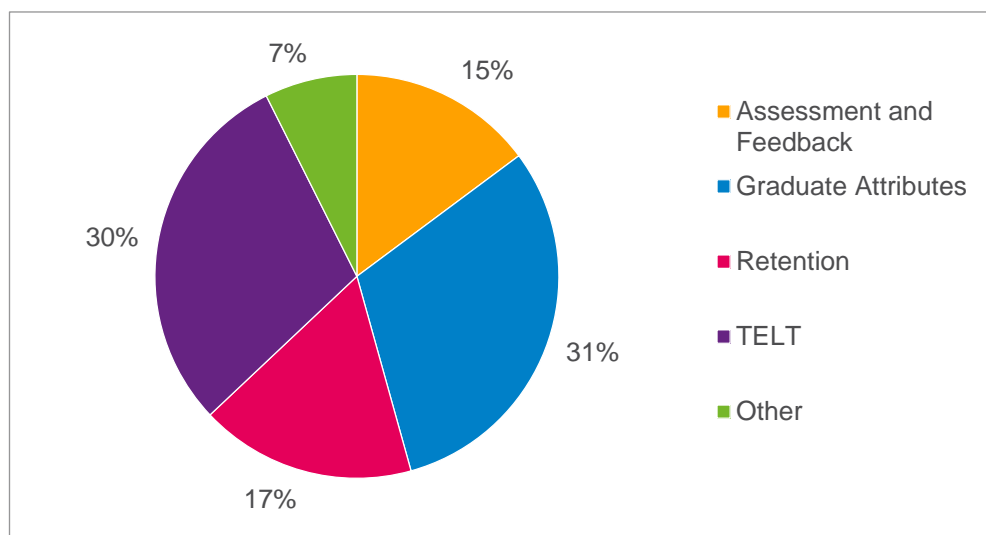


FIGURE 1: THEMATIC DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTS

The distribution in each round of funding round has varied substantially across the history of the LTDF, with TELT and graduate attributes being the most frequently cited (Figure 2). However, previous research has indicated that there is much overlap in themes. Of the 45 retention-related projects identified in a previous institutional examination of the LTDF projects, only 11 were explicitly categorised under the retention and success theme (MacKenzie 2011, unpublished). So it is fair to assume that many of the projects attributed to either TELT or graduate attributes may also relate to retention and/or assessment and feedback.

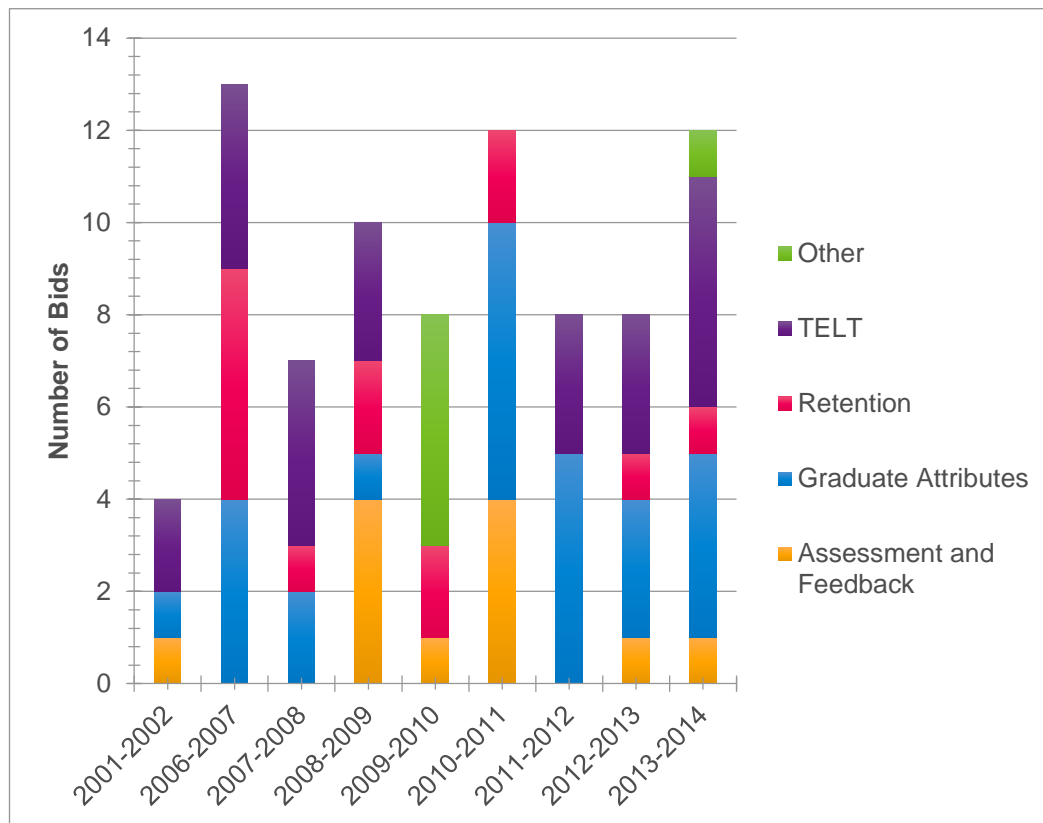


FIGURE 2: THEMATIC DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTS BY YEAR

The distribution of LTDF grant holders' main affiliation is shown in Figure 3. All four colleges as well as University Services are represented with the Colleges of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, Science and Engineering, and Social Sciences having been awarded approximately equal numbers of grants. The College of Arts has substantially fewer grants but is the smallest of the four colleges. A significant number of grant holders resided within University Services, mainly the Learning and Teaching Centre.

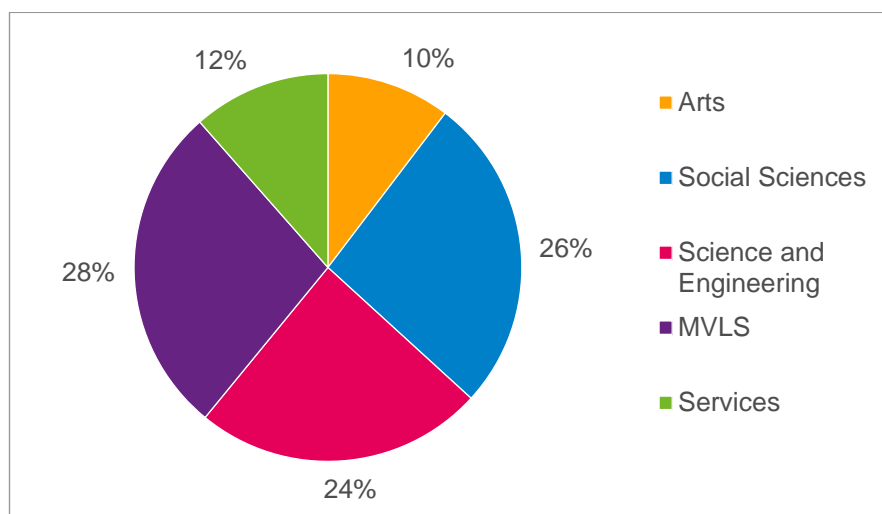


FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTS BY AFFILIATION

Analysis of the reports revealed the distribution of the different employment categories grant holders belong to, as shown in Figure 4. Funds were more commonly held by academic members of staff than those on non-academic contracts; only 16% of grant holders are non-academics. Forty-seven per cent of grant holders were on the lecturing career track (including Senior Lecturer and Professor) while only 36% are on the University Teacher track (including Senior University Teacher and Professor). However, University Teachers are outnumbered by those on Lecturer contracts, representing only approximately 15% of all academic staff (Michael McEwan, personal communication). Therefore, relatively speaking University Teachers are over-represented in the grant holder group.

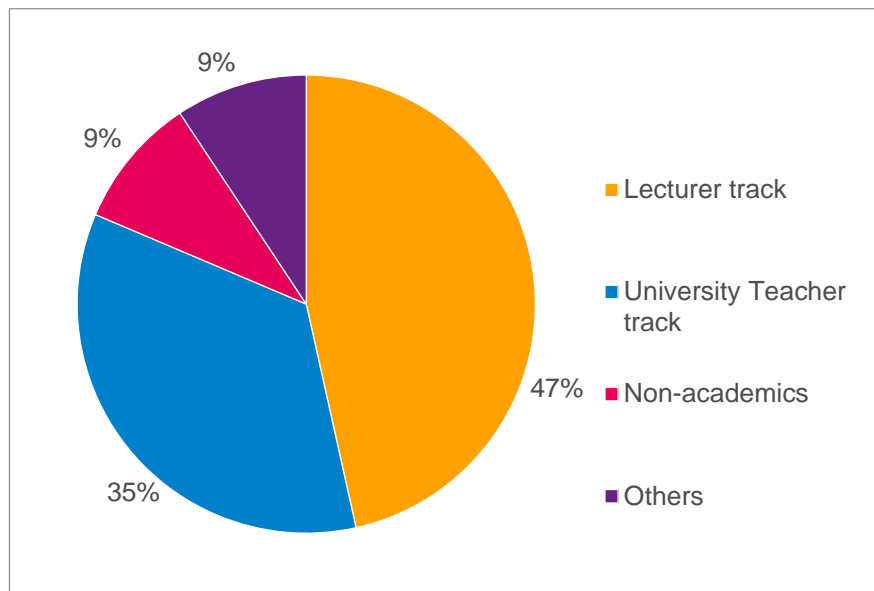


FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTS BY GRANT HOLDERS' ROLES

4. Sustainability and Impact

One of the principal goals of this case study was to explore, from the perspective of the LTDF grant holders, what factors influence the ways that projects can move from being one-off interventions or investigations to becoming integrated into institutional practices. Sixteen of the 35 respondents reported that they had held one grant in the period under investigation, the remainder multiple grants with five claiming they had held five or more. However, examination of the reports indicate that this is an over-estimate; perhaps some respondents misinterpreted the question and while being involved in multiple grants they were not always the grant holder. It is clear that many of the people responding to our survey have been successful in securing repeated funding and it is likely that the respondents represent a cross-section of the LTDF grants that have been particularly effective.

With this in mind, it is likely the 33 of 35 responses (94%) that indicated that the initiative or the resources produced from their LTDF project extended beyond the life of the project is also an over-estimate. In previously unpublished research only 76% of grant holders reported that project outcomes were still in use (MacKenzie 2011). More research is required to identify and target those projects (and their grant holders) that were not as successful or sustained.

It appears that many the LTDF projects result in prolonged changes to practice. Examples include: changes to assessment strategies that have “now been adopted across School ... and [are] being considered by other UK HEIs”; the development of the University’s Writing Centre; and the development of new support for international students:

we’ve appointed a member of staff as an outcome of the project and developed a transitions support programme for students that is being embedded within their studies ... These are long term resources.

In keeping with the high proportion of survey respondents (94%) who reported their projects had extended beyond the funding period described above, many interviewees reported that even when projects exceeded their expectations sustainability remained a challenge, particularly given the limited time period of the funding.

Thirteen of the LTDF grant holders were interviewed for the project. The interviews were designed primarily to explore grant holders’ perceptions of factors that either contributed to the success of these projects or played a part in limiting their sustained impact. A number of themes related to sustainability were identified. These are: ongoing resourcing, and institution-wide and local support and infrastructure.

This aligns with previous research into LTDF longevity where a lack of ongoing funding and changes in personnel, curriculum and year structure were identified as negatively impacting project outcomes (MacKenzie 2011).

4.1 Ongoing resourcing

Interviewees felt that provision should be made to help identify and, where appropriate, continue successful projects, but it was acknowledged that the LTDF should not be the source of ongoing funding. Suggested sources of funding included School or College along with strategically focused, institutional funds with one interviewing remarking on a preference for local dedicated funds:

It’s very positive that a small amount of central funding is allocated to this. It would of course be much better if this is embedded and ring fenced within each of the Schools’ teaching budget.

However, a perception voiced by some interviewees was that it is easier for more established members of staff to secure additional funding to keep the project and/or its outcomes going. More junior staff did not feel able to advocate for continued funding locally or institutionally, having neither influence nor access to those with influence. Certainly, one senior colleague whose the LTDF work has resulted in major institutional changed did talk in terms of “knocking on [the VP Learning and Teaching]’s door.”

One project that we have identified as a marked success of the LTDF is the development of the Writing Centre, which offers academic writing support to undergraduate students across all four colleges. It is so central to the University’s teaching enhancement work that it was selected as one of three case studies presented as part of the University’s submission to its most recent Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). It illustrates the theme of the necessity and challenges of securing ongoing funding perfectly.

LTDF Success story I: The development of the Writing Centre

"The overall success of the Writing Centre and its constituent parts reflects the fact that at each stage, bottom-up initiatives have demonstrated their effectiveness and scalability, and been adopted by a wider segment of the University."

The University of Glasgow (2014, p. 6)

The Writing Centre is a well-established and successful organisational unit operating from within the Student Learning Service (SLS), with dedicated staff members who deliver workshops, training and tailored one-to-one support for students across all subject areas and levels. The development of the Writing Centre was featured as a case study in the 2013-14 Enhancement-led Institutional Review as an example of the University's commitment to improving and enhancing student support provision.

Between 2006 and 2009 the LTDF supported several pilot schemes in the Faculty (now College) of Arts that aimed to highlight the importance of academic writing skills and provide much needed student support and resources. The proven success of these initiatives, including the Academic Writing Skills Programme (AWSP) and the Advancing Academic Writing project (AAW), resulted in extensions in their remits and funding from the Faculty of Arts and the Vice Principal Learning and Teaching. In response to the strategic drive to provide this type of support university-wide in 2012, the Writing Centre was established and was based in SLS part of the Learning and Teaching Centre. This repositioning provided centralised writing support that could cater to the needs of students across all levels and academic disciplines.

The ELIR case studies document also notes that the embedding of the Writing Centre within the SLS allowed the university to "consolidate and mainstream Learning and Teaching Development Fund-funded initiatives which had proved their effectiveness and their capacity to be scaled up" (University of Glasgow, 2014, p. 2).

Following a detailed review of the Centre's performance and development potential conducted by a Learning and Teaching Committee Advisory Board, open-ended funding has been secured as of June 2015. Professor Alice Jenkins, grant holder of the original AWSP project, said this about her rationale for the original project:

"I just saw that masses of convenors were writing about writing skills, and there wasn't really anything going on in the faculty, as it then was, to support writing skills. So, the aim of my initial bid ... was to put together kind of an experimental ... two-year project, to get a writing skills course up and running."

When asked about factors that impacted on the projects sustainability Professor Jenkins identified financial support from senior management as key:

"A massive factor in the survival of the AWSP was the support from ... who was then Vice Principal for Learning and Teaching. I went along to her ... a year or so after the end of the first project, and said 'This is too good to let it die', and she agreed, and she provided funding from her personal allowance ... to continue the project. That lasted I think for a couple of years ... I think in the interim we'd also had support from the Faculty too – and when I say 'support' I mean just money."

She also identified support from across the institution as important:

"The fact that other bits of the university very quickly got behind it and wanted to be involved – it was perfectly obvious that the need was felt much more widely than we had first anticipated, so I think that there was a sort of general appetite among staff involved with learning and teaching to see the project survive."

Further information on the process and aims of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review, including the 2013-14 full report can be found at: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/enhancement-ledinstitutionalreview/>

4.2 Local banking

It became apparent in interviews that a culture of teaching development exists in some schools where there was a track record of successful engagement with the LTDF to bring about enhancements. In other areas this engagement is less apparent. Such a culture was seen as highly effective both in terms of securing funding and ensuring the successful outcomes of projects. A number of interviewees also pondered how engaging in teaching development or enhancement could become a more mainstream activity within their school or college. This is discussed in more detail below in relation to encouraging and supporting engagement with teaching enhancement.

4.3 Infrastructure

The impact of a continually developing infrastructure typical of any large organisation had negatively impacted some projects, and interviewees felt frustrated and powerless in this regard – the “broader infrastructure makes a difference.”

The introduction of new and the upgrading of existing systems sometimes resulted in insurmountable issues related to sustainability, particularly the institution’s VLE. Moodle was adopted as the University’s VLE shortly after the introduction of the LTDF. The move to Moodle 2.0 was phased in over several years; however, the previous iteration was made unavailable in the current academic year (2014-15) and might therefore have been at the forefront of interviewees’ minds.

The need for co-operation with other areas of the University was sometimes seen as a challenge. One particular project was almost rendered “unworkable” because of a perceived lack of co-operation from the University’s Estates and Buildings department who were challenged by the project’s need to position large rocks in various places on an ancient university campus (see LTDF Success Story II).

LTDF Success story II: The Rock Around the University

The ‘Rock Around the University’ project, led by Tim Dempster and Christina Persano in the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, was funded by the LTDF in 2011-12. The project involved strategically placing a number of large rocks in various locations around the Gilmorehill campus, creating an artificial geological fieldwork resource for undergraduate students within Earth Science and Geography programmes. The project was designed and developed in response to a number of issues and demands from within the staff and student body, and among prospective employers. The School has a growing number of undergraduate students and fieldwork is one of the most popular aspects of their studies; the logistics and cost of taking large cohorts of students on fieldwork trips required a creative response. Furthermore, the project leaders were responding to calls from industry and employers who were keen to receive students with a higher level of fieldwork experience and the deep learning which accompanies these skills.

The resulting resource currently consists of sixteen blocks of Scottish rocks donated by industry partners, which are placed around the campus and mimic real-world rock exposures. The project is now embedded within all levels of the Earth Sciences undergraduate teaching programmes and has proven to be extremely popular among teaching staff and students. In his interview, Dr Dempster explained:

"The aims were to provide an on-campus field-teaching resource for geologists. Many unis had bits of rock to get students looking at, but the idea of our system – which I think is unique ... was to create a resource that students could map, measure, record ... all the standard geographical fieldwork ... In part that was driven by large class sizes and the need to get first year students out doing ... something that doesn't involve us bussing large groups of people into the highlands."

"I think that overall it has certainly done exactly what I was expecting it to do. We've embedded it within numerous courses. The students are all really enthusiastic about it, because they can just go out and use it at any time. From an academic view, it's been fantastic ... Certainly with our field classes now, we get our students to a much more advanced level."

5. The impact of the LTDF of staff

The second purpose of this case study was to explore the impact that the existence of the LTDF has on University staff in terms of their understanding of the institution and their role within it. Two themes related to this emerged from analysis of interviews and survey. These are: perceptions of the scope and purpose of LTDF funding, and the role that funded teaching development has on the development of staff, particularly those on teaching-focused contracts.

Almost universally, interviewees and survey respondents said that the existence of the LTDF is a positive thing (e.g. "it's heartening to know that the institution puts its money where its mouth is in terms valuing teaching generally.") However, a number of survey respondents voiced concern about the purpose, amount of funding and scope of the LTDF, believing it to be others were concerned about the scope and size of the LTDF:

I think that the LTDF is a bit of a farce. It's meant to be about sustainable and transferable teaching, but I don't think that a lot of projects fulfill that remit.

Conversely, some interviewees saw the existence of small-project funding as a particular positive. It enabled them to "risk" smaller pilot projects to explore subject-specific innovations that might then be expanded if successful. Although writing specifically about teaching and excellence, Gunn and Fisk (2013) argue that, "Experimentation, imagination and innovation are areas of excellence that need time and space" (p. 52).

Others saw the fund as an opportunity for reflection: "[it's] a chance to stop and look at what we [are] doing." There was also a sense that the annual call for bids acted as a catalyst to think about teaching enhancement: "it inspires me and my colleagues to think long and hard about what we can do to enhance teaching and learning."

A number of interviewees expressed concern about the strategic focus of the LTDF. There was a general belief that bids had to link directly to annually identified themes. In fact the current guidance, while highlighting priority themes and areas, specifically states: "This is not an exhaustive list." Some interviewees argued that although it was understandable that the fund had such a strong strategic focus, this might be discouraging more innovative teaching enhancements. Others wanted a clearer rationale for the themes chosen each year: why a particular theme in a particular year? They believed that more information would allow them to approach the application process more successfully. There was also a perception that there had been an increasing drive towards TELT-related bids in recent years; this was our analysis of funded projects by theme (see Figure 2). Some felt that if their bid did not have a technological focus, its chance of being funded was reduced.

Several interviewees remarked that they were unaware of whether Glasgow was unusual in making funding available to staff for teaching enhancement but the general perception was that Glasgow was doing better than many in terms of teaching enhancement. It was felt that the existence of the LTDF was a positive addition to the ethos and environment of the university. There was a general sense of pride in the institution afforded at least in part because of the LTDF: "I am proud of us as an institution that we show that we value this work." Interviewees and survey respondents remarked about the impact of the LTDF projects on their motivation and job satisfaction: "the ability to bid for funding to support this helps keep me motivated in my job." Interviewees believed that the LTDF should be promoted more effectively.

One surprising outcome from this research was that the LTDF was also seen as a way of fostering links between different parts of the University. Some projects were relevant to multiple Schools/Colleges and were able to grow beyond the initial scope. Interviewees highlighted their appreciation of this capacity for cross-College initiatives: "It is the best source of funding to facilitate new cross University [learning and teaching] initiatives. It encourages and enables new partnerships." Such collaborations were seen as universally positive: "Collaboration with colleagues from other Schools has been a good experience which has resulted in sharing of good practice."

The LTDF focuses on teaching development rather research or the purchase of equipment or resources. Increasingly, funds are being used to employ assistants to undertake development and evaluation work or, more rarely, to allow grant holders to 'buy out' their teaching time to allow them to undertake the development work. However, this type of development work is normally done in addition to 'the day job'. A number of participants indicated this in their survey responses: "It is very difficult to get any time to develop or evaluate new teaching resources" but others indicated that despite the challenges: "[there was] considerable hassle associated with the [project], but huge satisfaction to see the students reaping the benefits."

As explained in the introduction, the University of Glasgow has a dual academic career track: the Lecturer track and the University Teacher track. For this latter group, the LTDF is seen as being significant as illustrated in this quote from a survey respondent in response to the question, "Would you apply for LTDF funding again?"

It depends on whether or not I continue on the Lecturer route or switch to the University Teacher route. If I stay on the Lecturer route then I wouldn't apply again, since the funding is not recognised in my experience as part of any funding that you bring in since it is not external. However it would be beneficial ... if I opt for a University Teacher route.

A number of interviews and survey respondents talked about the importance of LTDF in relation to their career progression as illustrated by this survey response from someone who:

is not involved in 'conventional/traditional' research, the LTDF affords the opportunity to undertake pedagogic research. This serves, first and foremost, to enhance teaching practices as well as meeting the criteria for promotion and [the University's appraisal system] which is very research-driven.

Similarly, the LTDF is a major route to continuing professional development for some colleagues in non-academic roles whose primary function relates to learning and teaching. LTDF Success Story III is about one such individual, who has used multiple bids to the LTDF to enhance her practice.

LTDF Success story III: The development of a repeated grant holder

Dr Gayle Pringle Barnes is the College of Social Sciences' International Student Learning Officer. She is an example of someone who has been successful in securing repeated funding from the LTDF, having been involved in more than five since she has been at the institution. Together these projects have resulted in sustained resources that have had, and are having, an impact across the College.

Dr Pringle Barnes' interview highlighted the impact of LTDF on her own development and on the development of College-wide practices. Her first bid to the LTDF was only a few months after she was appointed by the College and was prompted by a discussion with a colleague about trying to find out more about students' experience, and the desire to create an embedded and 'concrete' resource to orientate and benefit pre-arrival international postgraduate students. Their collaborative bid was successful and resulted in, among other things, a video resource for new international students about learning and teaching at Glasgow.

The success of this bid, and the support it offered to current and future groups of students, motivated her to apply for further grants. As she saw it the LTDF offered support for innovation in learning and teaching, and for the students' experience of higher education: "I think it's very, very positive."

The grants she has applied for have been relatively small but she does not see that as a limitation. The grants have provided a focus for working with colleagues from within the College and outside it and she has:

... really tried to develop communication between staff in different areas, knowing we wanted to continue monitoring the experience of that group.

She believes that that communication has contributed to the success of successive projects. She has disseminated the outcomes of successive projects in a number of ways, while the resources created, have now reached a point of obsolescence since the outcomes are now semi-embedded in learning and teaching practices across the colleges: "Down the line [we've] seen a lot of support measures implemented.""

6. Encouraging and supporting strategic learning and teaching enhancement and innovation through funded projects

While neither the survey or interviews implemented in this case study focused on ways of improving LTDF many participants did identify aspects of the institutional environment that could or should be improved to: first, better support teaching enhancement initiatives, and second, make such enhancement work a more mainstreamed activity.

6.1 Supporting teaching enhancement

Local networks or collaborations were identified as important especially in larger school or institution-wider projects: often a co-applicant on one project would become the lead on later bids. Interviewees recognised that LTDF projects in schools or subject areas with a track record of teaching enhancement were more likely to result in successful and long-term outcomes, especially if local management actively encourages such activities. There was also recognition that successful bidding for funds and projects with positive outcomes bred confidence among colleagues. One particular interviewee who had bid successfully on several occasions talked about finessing their application process with increased confidence and success; such an individual clearly had much to offer less experienced colleagues. Meanwhile a fairly junior grant holder explicitly mentioned a more senior colleague as being helpful to the production of their successful bid. One interviewee suggested that a mentorship scheme would be useful.

Others suggested that the introduction of formal networks of successful LTDF grant holders, who could maintain a blog about project development and provide support for novice project holders, would be effective. Similarly, fostering opportunities for potential bidders to meet with past grant holders in advance of funding deadlines with opportunities for advice and guidance would likely be advantageous. It was that these forms of support would be particularly helpful for new bidders, particularly where these bidders were non-academic staff or more junior University Teachers with less experience of competitive bidding for research funding than lecturing staff. It is essential that better communication networks are created that will enable higher educational researchers to learn from each other, collaborate, build larger scale coherent research studies and disseminate their findings in order to build capacity.”

Only two of our survey respondents mentioned published articles or conference papers as additional outcomes from their funded project, but since we did not ask this question directly, it is likely to be an under-estimate. Previous unpublished research found that 52% of LTDF grant holders, who responded to a survey, had either published articles or presented at conferences (MacKenzie 2011). However, more institutional support and encouragement could be provided to grant holders in order that they are better able to disseminate the outcomes.

6.2 Mainstreaming teaching enhancement work

All of those interviewed for this study were positive about the LTDF, with one arguing that:

It is a valuable resource that supports development and implementation of novel strategies to enhance our teaching provision and improve the student experience. These teaching developments can then be applied to develop research and commercial collaborations that support our aspirations to deliver research led teaching.

Certainly, since the LTDF is open to both academic staff (Lecturers and University Teachers) and to non-academic staff, particularly in student-facing University Services, it provides those staff who are not on research-active contracts with an opportunity to apply for funding and develop their practice in a way that complements Glasgow’s position as a research-intensive institution with an emphasis on research-led teaching. Another interviewee believed that:

The LTDF has been absolutely fundamental in engaging ... staff in teaching and learning developments ... encouraging academics not just in their research area but also their teaching.

However some of those interviewed did not think teaching enhancement work is positioned as centrally or valued as sufficiently as it could be. Certainly in their consideration of promoting teaching excellence, Gibbs and Habeshaw (2002) argue that:

Excellent teaching is more likely to be encouraged if individual mechanisms for recognition and reward (for example, teaching awards and fellowships, promotion, development funds ...) are integrated within a system that reflects an institution's values, goals and culture, and linked with the institution's strategies on learning and teaching, staffing and even research. (Gibbs and Habeshaw 2002; cited in Little et al. 2007, p. 20)

At present, while outputs from LTDF projects are likely to be recognised within promotion processes, winning the funding is not; the focus in promotion criteria is on external funding. However, LTDF is explicitly mentioned in the criteria for the University's Teaching Excellence Award. Our interviewees argued that teaching enhancement projects should be seen as a central academic activity, valued alongside other forms of academic work. An analysis the nature and extent of pedagogical research in Scottish HEIs suggested that it is, "often taking place underground and is undervalued" Bovill et al. (2013, p. 9). It is likely that the same is true of teaching enhancement.

Several University Teachers who were interviewed commented that the University of Glasgow's strategic focus on 'research led teaching' seems not to apply to them. One in particular discussed the line in their contract that explicitly mentioned that research was not part of their professional remit. Every University Teacher interviewed mentioned a frustration with their contractual requirement to engage in scholarship. The LTDF and the Chancellor's Fund (donor funded scheme aimed at developing excellence in research and teaching) were mentioned as the only sources of scholarship funding available to them. Overall, there was a sense from University Teachers that the LTDF offers them scholarship avenues, but is insufficient for their developmental needs – and the needs of their students.

Some interviewees spoke evangelically about the LTDF, wanting to get others involved in applying. One interviewee thought it should be mentioned in job advertisement/interview information or relevant jobs as indicative of the University's commitment to learning and teaching. Only seven of the 32 respondents who answered the question "Did the existence of the LTDF influence your decision to apply for a position at the University of Glasgow?" indicated that they knew of the Fund's existence when they applied. One answered that it had influenced their decision.

There was also a general feeling among those interviewed that the LTDF was neither sufficiently widely promoted nor the outcomes from it disseminated or sufficiently celebrated. Interviewees felt there was a need for the outcomes of successful projects to be actively promoted at local and institutional level rather than being "buried on the university's website."

In the initial years of the LTDF's existence, grant holders were required to present a lunchtime seminar on the outcomes of their projects. In more recent years, while grant holders are encouraged to present at the annual Learning and Teaching Conference, the minimal requirement is the production of a final project report which is placed on the Learning and Teaching Centre's website. One survey respondent argued that:

... perhaps more singing and dancing should be done around these projects to heighten the value. Many things make me think teaching is often not really valued by GU, so the one thing that does reward clever thinking in teaching and learning is a good thing.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

I think [the LTDF] is crucial. I think that at a time when we're, more than in the last decade, looking at the importance of teaching in colleagues' careers, and to the University and its public profile, I think that the more that we can support innovation from colleagues who are actually at the coal face, the better things have to be. I believe in strategic vision, but I also think that there is a time and a place where you just put the money where the work is actually being done.

(Case study interviewee)

In this case study we have presented one element of the University of Glasgow's strategic approach to enhancing teaching: the provision over the past 15 years of a dedicated fund, the Learning and Teaching Development Fund, to which members of staff can bid on an annual basis.

We have shown that the fund has supported projects on a range of themes with Graduate Attributes and TELT predominating. We have also shown that grant holders come from across the four colleges and service departments. While individuals in all relevant employment categories have held LTDF grants, those on University Teacher contracts predominate.

Our first aim in undertaking this work was to explore issues related to sustainability and impact. Ninety-four per cent of our survey respondents indicated that the outcomes of their project(s) continued in some form beyond the project period suggesting that issues related to the sustainability of LTDF projects are not significant. However, interviewees did report a number of challenges relating to sustainability: continuation of funding, local backing and working within existing and evolving infrastructure.

Our second aim was to explore how the existence of LTDF impacts staff in terms of their beliefs about the institution's commitment to teaching and their own role. Participants in this study were almost unanimously positive about the existence of LTDF, with several remarking that it made them proud of the University. It was seen as a catalyst for reflection and problem solving and made a positive contribution to grant holders' motivation and job satisfaction. LTDF was also seen as being significant in professional development and career progression, at least for those on University Teacher and non-academic contracts.

Our research also identified ways in which LTDF-related work could be better supported through the provision of networking opportunities and encouragement and structures to go public with the outcomes of projects through publication. However, there was also a call to make this type of work more mainstream in terms of academic practice. Institutional policy was not always seen to recognise the role of locally funded teaching development in terms of reward and recognition procedures. There was a sense that this type of work is not put front and centre and celebrated in the way that disciplinary research is.

Based on our findings we now outline our recommendations for those institutions that currently support teaching enhancement through the provision of competitive funding and those who are considering adopting such a process. These recommendations have been grouped in three main categories: sustainability and impact, support for the bidding and project implementation processes, and mainstreaming teaching enhancement. It should be pointed out that many of our recommendations have already been implemented in the University of Glasgow's LTDF.

Sustainability and impact

- Appoint a 'teaching enhancement' committee responsible for selecting projects, overseeing the dissemination and celebration of teaching enhancement funded project outcomes, and providing advocacy for successful projects to encourage college, service or senior management to support the project as an ongoing initiative;
- Ensure that teaching enhancement funding priorities link with strategic priorities in terms of student learning; however, in order to maximise potential impact, consider funding a mixture of strategically well-aligned and riskier more speculative projects;
- Provide teaching enhancement funds both for year-long projects and longer-term, institution-wide initiatives with potentially longer term impact;
- Require applicants to teaching enhancement funds to explicitly consider sustainability when applying and, where ongoing resources are required, a 'business plan' should be included identifying the sources of ongoing funding as part of the application;
- Ensure that all applicants to teaching enhancement funding have the support of their college/service head;
- Future proof teaching enhancement funded projects as far as possible by highlighting upcoming structural or infrastructural changes to potential applicants in application processes;
- Undertake regular audits of the teaching enhancement fund processes and outcomes particularly in terms of sustainability and impact;
- As TELT increasingly becomes a mainstream activity, funding priorities should focus on the enhancement of learning and teaching rather than TELT;
- Outcomes from previous projects in the form of reports and resources should be made available centrally and should be accurately catalogued to enable other members of the institution to access them to avoid, 'reinventing the wheel'.

Support for the bidding and project implementation processes:

- A clear rationale and context for the strategic priorities should be provided within the teaching enhancement funding application processes;
- Identify networking opportunities for those who have successfully undertaken teaching enhancement funded projects and those who are new to the process.

Mainstreaming teaching enhancement:

- Ensure that teaching enhancement funded work is aligned with reward and recognition processes, including promotion for all relevant staff not just those in teaching-focused roles;
- Promote teaching enhancement fund across all parts of the institution including student-facing services;
- Provide support and encouragement to ensure that successful outcomes of teaching enhancement funded projects are appropriately disseminated and celebrated by providing routes to dissemination (conference, seminars and blogs), and support for writing and publishing outcomes (writing classes and retreats).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey questions

1. What is your name?
2. What was the name of your project? (You do not need to remember the precise name – we simply need a good enough description to be able to match your answers here to the LTDF reports later.)
3. Which theme(s) did your project focus on? (Select all that apply.)
 - a. Assessment and feedback
 - b. Graduate attributes
 - c. Employability
 - d. Personalised learning
 - e. Retention
 - f. Student mobility
 - g. Technology enabled learning
 - h. Technology enhanced learning and teaching (TELT)
 - i. Other (please specify)
4. Are the initiatives/resources developed by the project still being used or were they used for some time after the project ended? YES/NO
 - a. Please explain your answer.
5. Have any other initiatives or outputs developed out of this project? YES/NO
 - a. If yes, please explain your answer.
6. Are you willing to be interviewed for this research project? (This would take 30 – 45 minutes at a mutually suitable time and place.) YES/NO

Appendix 2: Interview questions

1. Could you describe the aims of the project?
2. Did the project achieve what you hoped it would or were you disappointed in the project outcomes?
3. Were the initiatives or resources developed by the project used beyond the life of the funding?
4. Can you identify any factors or reasons that contributed to this longevity or any factors or reasons why the project finished at the end of the funding period?
5. Did the project impact on or influence any other teaching enhancements within the institution or further afield?
6. Can you identify any factors or reasons that contributed to this impact or any factors or reasons why the project had only limited impact?
7. Did the project result in any published outcomes?
8. Please describe what you think the existence of the LTDF says about the University's commitment to learning and teaching
9. Can you explain what influenced your decision to apply to the LTDF to fund this project?

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