

History, Classics and Archaeology Subject Centre

Evaluation Report

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The remit

The evaluation focused on academics who had engaged with the subject centre over the last few years. Four main areas of enquiry were identified:

The place of the individual academic who has contact with the HCA.

To what extent are individuals participating in Subject Centre's activities acting as individuals or as representatives of their departments/subject group? Do they report back to the wider group? What motivates them to attend a Subject Centre event?

The value of the Subject Centre's activities to the individual in relation to their own institution and/or subject organisation

Do the services provided by the HCA supplement what is on offer within the institution (i.e. does it address issues that institutions don't)? Do the services provided by the HCA supplement what is on offer from their subject organisation? Or are the subject centre services/events duplicating, or are they in conflict at all with, institutional or subject organisation activities?

Relationship with educational development units/teaching and learning centres

How does the institutional Learning Development Unit (LDU) view the work of the Subject Centre(s)? Do LDUs believe that Subject Centres complement their own work, or do they see any areas of tension or conflict? Do they see the Subject Centres as natural allies and partners?

Are there ways in which that partnership could be better fostered? What kind of contact/dialogue would the institutional Learning Development Unit want to have with the Subject Centre?

Perceptions of the HE Academy and its relationship with the Subject Centre.

How are perceptions of the HE Academy influencing attitudes towards the Subject Centre? Are staff aware of developments at the HE Academy?

2. Statistics

29 interviews were conducted between March 16th and April 11th 2006. The respondents were comprised of 9 historians, 5 archaeologists, 7 classicists and 8 from learning development units. Each interview was conducted by telephone, was normally between twenty and thirty minutes long, and was recorded and later transcribed. The transcriptions were analysed using NVivo to code the responses using 28 categories (see Appendix 1).

3. Sample

Each of the chairs of the subject advisory boards was asked to nominate 12 individuals who had contact with the subject centres. These were contacted by e-mail and invited to

take part in the evaluation. After three weeks, everyone who had not replied was contacted again by e-mail.

Non-respondents were accounted for as follows: No response or non-functioning e-mail (7); on leave (4); late responses (2); refused interview (2).

In the case of LDU's an invitation was issued on the Heads of Educational Development group (HEDG) jisc-mail list. Those interested in the relationship between subject centres and institutional units were asked to contact the evaluator. Three respondents in institutions with all three subject represented were contacted directly by the evaluator.

The extent to which the respondents had engaged with the Subject centres varied quite considerably. Of the subject respondents (i.e. excluding the LDUs), about half had received development grants, a few were (or had been) on their respective advisory panel, and a few ran regional networks. Four were National Teaching Fellows; two more had received institutional teaching fellowship awards; at least five were at professorial level and 4 were heads of department (these are not exclusive categories).

12 respondents were female and 17 male. 10 were from 'new' universities (post-1992) and 19 from 'old' universities.

Note: An annex to the report relating to Subject Organisations was submitted, but is not for publication.

Findings and discussion

1. The place of the individual academic who has contact with the HCA.

In this section the key questions addressed are: To what extent are individuals participating in Subject Centre events acting as individuals or as representatives of their departments/subject group? Do they report back to the wider group? What motivates them to attend a Subject Centre event?

1.1 What motivated individuals to become involved in their Subject Centre?

It was clear that the principal reason that individuals involve themselves with the Subject Centre was their 'personal interest' in pedagogy. This personal interest shows itself in a variety of ways

Firstly, there were those who saw it as a way of stimulating their own thinking about the teaching of the subject and the role of the teacher:

we could think about the role of academics in actually teaching people and what we are teaching at University. So it was about thinking about what we are doing and not just producing graduates for the sake of it, but actually thinking about the people that are going to be graduating and how we benefited them.(20AMO)¹

Or it might relate to their perception of the development needs of their department:

It was more my own interest, but my interest coincided with things that we needed to do within the department, but I wasn't directed there, it was very much an initiative of my own, but I thought that this was a good way to go forward that would benefit our department. (4HMN)

¹ In this report respondents are identified by their subject (H for history, C for classics, A for archaeology and L for Learning Development), by their gender (M or F) and by type of institution (O for old, i.e. pre 1992 universities and N for new i.e. post-1992 universities).

For some their interest in teaching was conceptualised as a personal commitment, a mission almost, to counter the emphasis on research which they considered to be over-dominant in their university, or in the sector as a whole.

Purely an interest in learning and teaching matters and you know the feeling we all have I think, those of us who are particularly interested in the learning and teaching side of all this, that there's been a massive overemphasis on the importance of research in higher education as opposed to the importance of the learning and teaching dimension.(8HMN)

The second reason for becoming involved was the availability of funding. In this first example, contact was made because the Subject Centre offered an opportunity for the respondent to pursue a particular project in which she was interested by providing funding.

It was my personal interest. I mean I got interested in Study Skills problems because the department was already interested in it and was trying to run something to deal with it and I saw an opportunity... which led me then to...I don't know somebody may have pointed me in the direction of the LTSN money offer as it were.(15CFO)

The role of funding as a motivator to get involved was also demonstrated by those whose introduction to the Subject Centre was through a desire to bid for FDTL funding.

I was asked to make contact because one of our former professors here - he sort of urged me to look into them, particularly thinking about this FDTL 5 grant....(18AMO)

Thirdly, the interest to become involved derived from personal contact with the director(s) of the Subject Centre. This was particularly the case where individuals had developed an interest in pedagogy through the History 2000 project.

I was interested in pedagogic issues before I became Head of Department and my contacts with people who have been involved in the work of the Subject Centre pre date that appointment so as I said I was involved in History 2000 and I was already writing/publishing work related to learning and teaching. (7HMN)

But contact with the Director was an important factor in other the HCA subjects.

I wouldn't say I was representing my department at all. I would have said it was purely because I knew the chair, Lorna Hardwick, probably and I had been involved with the OU in the development of classical Greek language course.(13CMO)

In a few cases respondents were actually invited to get involved by a subject director.

For me, the original concept was coming very much out of my own teaching project and a direct expression of interest from the Director of the Centre, Lorna Hardwick, who just contacted me and said, 'I heard you were doing x and y, and would you like to link with someone else who's doing similar things in Newcastle, and have you thought of doing x and y?(10CFO)

Fourthly, as we have already seen, some were recommended to contact the Centre by their Head of Department/School or other influential person. For example, in this person's case, it was..

as a result really I think of the Head of School. She encouraged the historians to take an interest in the more pedagogical aspects of the discipline, and it was through her indirect encouragement that I attended my first history subject LTSN conference at Oxford four years ago.(9HMN)

For this respondent, his interest had been encouraged by a previous Head of Department who was an influential figure in the teaching of the subject:

I would describe it very much as a personal interest because it goes back many years. I was lucky enough to work in a department headed by Professor John Fines - he instilled in me and in all my friends and colleagues here a very strong interest in trying to be better teachers.(5HMN)

However, in one case the respondent was directed to get involved with the Subject Centre by the Head of Department in order that she could fulfil a responsibility which had been allocated to her.

If I am brutally honest I was asked by my line manager to go to the regional work placements meeting because I am the placement officer for archaeology....(17AFN)

In conclusion, it seems that overwhelmingly individuals take the initiative to become involved in the work of the Subject Centre as a result of their own interest in teaching and learning. Some have been prompted to make contact by the prospect of acquiring funding and this prospect may have been pointed out to them by their Head of Department/School. Directors of the Subject Centres have been successful in recruiting people to join the work of the Centre where that person already has a strong interest in pedagogy. In rare cases Heads of Departments may actually require a person to join a working group where the remit of that group relates directly to the responsibilities of the individual staff member.

1.2 How did the individual's interest in the Subject Centre impact on their department?

Although in some cases individuals saw themselves as acting on behalf of their department, in most cases the respondents were clear that they were not 'representing their department' in any formal way. Nevertheless most, with some exceptions, felt that there were means by which they could contribute to their department's work more effectively as a result of their contact with the Subject Centre.

Responses largely fell into four categories:

1. those who were enthusiastic and keen to communicate ideas they have picked up from the Subject Centre and for whom there were structured opportunities for them to do so.
2. those who formally reported back to their department or ran staff development events as part of their role within their department
3. those who did not see it as part of their role to feedback but who did nevertheless feel that the Subject Centre had some influence on their department through informal channels of communication
4. those who did not communicate their ideas and felt the Subject Centre had little influence.

These four 'types' may be represented as four quadrants where one axis is the degree of formality and availability of communication processes that exist within the department

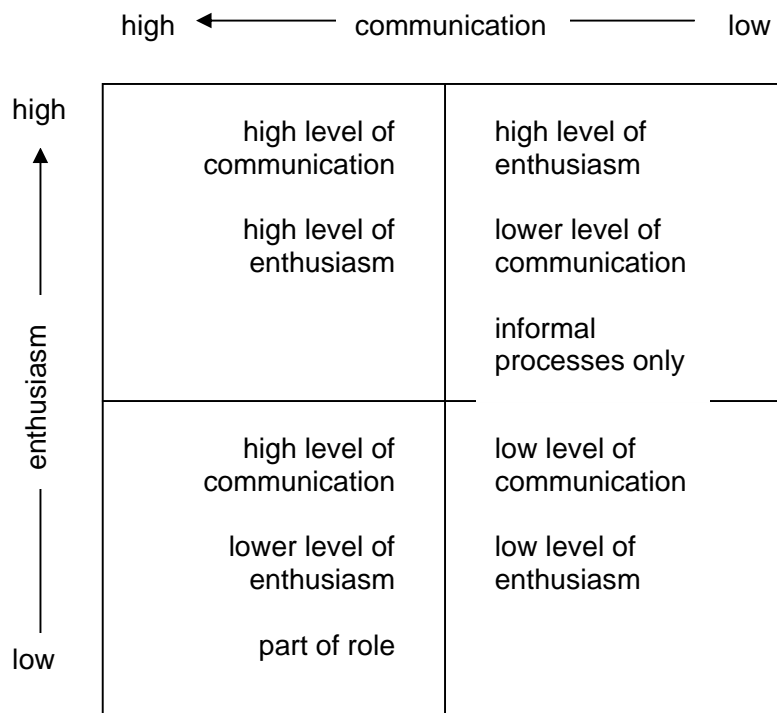
and the other axis is the level of enthusiasm the individual feels to make use of these channels. (see following page).

Although like all models, this representation over simplifies a complex reality, we can broadly perceive these categories in the responses of those interviewed.

1. In this first category there are individuals who were clearly strongly motivated to communicate ideas to their colleagues and there were structured opportunities for them to do so :

I think I have a responsibility to try and share what I think is the good practice. I mean I come away from the Oxford conferences full of ideas and enthused and I try and feed that in if we're discussing something that's relevant. (10CFO)

So I go every year to the Oxford conference; I come back with lots of ideas; I write a full report and I circulate that to the upcoming School meeting, and then my Head of School and I sit down and we table a series of things that we think of, you know important Teaching & Learning issues that we can then highlight at the Teaching & Learning away-day every year.((3HMN)



2. In the second quadrant we have individuals who were willing to feedback ideas from the Subject Centre to their department, but this only occurred informally through conversations with colleagues:

Only in as far as things I pick up, these are passed onto colleagues informally - nothing more sort of developed than that.(12CMO)

This was because, in this department, 'there isn't really a culture of reporting back from that kind of external authority'. But influence on the department can occur in a variety

ways other than through formal report writing or through training events, as this respondent recognised: 'you go for inspiration rather than necessarily the training'. But he went on to say that he does sometimes choose to feedback ideas through...

...conversations, or it is up to me if I wish to do so, we have an e-mail network system, so I will report back stuff that I think is of interest or relevance to them (6HMN).

Another also believed that his involvement with the Centre had not been influential on others in his department, but that there had been gains which had been principally personal through the impact on his teaching:

I don't think, certainly not at a formal level, had my involvement fed back in. I mean I don't have to report back to the Head of School...whatever I gain is not necessarily lost too, but I think more of the gains come in personal terms I think and they kind of feed out into the way I teach rather than me instructing other people. (9HMN)

3. But, for some individuals the work with the Centre was used more directly and formally in staff development activity. For example:

As Head of Department I have drawn on the expertise of the Centre to organise learning and teaching workshops within the department. I was anxious that the department itself should be aware of what was happening nationally in some of the initiatives that were taking place at the pedagogy level. (7HMN)

Others take advantage of existing departmental meetings to feed into ideas from the Subject Centre.

I mean we have a monthly meeting of the history team where issues to do with the curriculum can be raised as well as sort of general administrative matters, but also there are periodic away days where we will discuss issues that are current.(8HMN)

And some write formal reports which get fed into structures such as Learning and Teaching meetings and away days:

Any reports that we make on those workshops which we do, feed back up into our Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee, and then back up into our main Teaching & Learning Committee so it really does feed through and plays an important role in developing teaching and learning more widely (1HFO)

This form of communication occurs particularly when individuals have a defined responsibility within their department, and they are expected to report back on matters relating to their specific role:

To do with placements I report back on stuff that has gone on and I disseminate that with my colleagues.(17AFN)

It is not just full-time staff who benefit.

we have part time staff and hourly paid staff and if I think something is relevant I will pass it onto them. I do pass things onto my PHD students as well.(21AFN)

A particularly powerful way in which colleagues were drawn in to have engagement with the individual's work with the Centre was when they part of a project that the SC had funded.

In my experience it was very easy to feed it back to the department because that was the way the unit (study skills unit) was set up. It was set up in such a way that every member of Faculty was teaching a tutorial group on this unit, so the entire department was involved. They all had to get their heads round what was going on because every week they met their group of students and had to take them through the things that the students were having to do on the unit at that time, so they had to read up on it. So everybody was involved and the result was that everybody was having to address the problem in a sense, and were feeding back into the evaluation of it. So it was a shared project in that sense, although it came from me it actually involved everybody, and everybody was physically engaged in it.(15CFO)

4. Despite these encouraging examples of individuals influencing their departments, there remains a general feeling that in many departments the enthusiast for teaching and learning is relatively isolated and the influence of the Subject Centre is weak. Some academics simply do not see it as part of their responsibility to inform colleagues about the activities of the Subject Centre:

But I don't see it as my responsibility to be the conduit of information from the Centre necessarily because the faculty as a whole is circulated with information about the website, or was at one stage.(13CMO)

It is important to distinguish between those who are keen to communicate ideas and those who are in a position to directly effect change. The level of impact is sometimes hard to evaluate as this respondent recognised:

I try to share it and disseminate it across the Department, how successful that is, is really anyone's guess. ((10 CFO)

So individuals who fall into the first quadrant of being enthusiastic to communicate ideas and who also have the means to do so, do not necessarily succeed in influencing colleagues, as this account clearly illustrates.

there are a whole bunch of colleagues who will sort of nod and smile encouragingly whenever we come back from a conference and talk about things that need doing, but you only realise sort of six months later that they haven't really done anything about it..... You know, I mean it's a general thing, three or four people have very innovative and exciting and restructuring sort of ideas, and you take them to a School meeting and you could easily get them carried, but that's because the people who aren't interested are, just as I said not going to implement it, they'll just sit back and nod and wait until the tea break. I suppose this is what happens with things like on-line learning in particular, which is, I think its, you know, every time I go to a Teaching & Learning conference, anything to do with the HE Academy, anything Subject Centre, there's always something to do with on-line learning, this is the sexy thing at the moment, and we all got very inspired by this a few years ago and decided we were going to put all of our first year modules, would have a heavy pro-active on-line presence and then we'd be doing the same with our Year Two core module, and we'd try

to get all the special subject and dissertation modules online as well, not just reproducing the handbook, but doing other things online and then we'd discover that, just when we think we're all doing that it turns out that some colleagues are just not doing it. So that's quite difficult. ((3HMN)

There seem to be two sorts of barriers. The first is that there are no structures within the department to enable discussion on teaching and learning to take place, as is hinted at here:

I wonder how much that actually feeds into departments generally, I think there is a little bit of a problem there depending on the structures inside the departments. (11CFO)

The second barrier is more about the culture of the subject and the department. In some cases the culture of the departments is such that there is little or no attention given to issues of teaching and learning.

There is a separate issue which is the interest and willingness and engagement of the faculty of classics in particularI will put it another way, they are never as deaf as them that won't hear. And there is a huge cultural differenceand when you have a five star rating and so on and so forth teaching and learning does not come on the register of interest at all.(13CMO)

In other cases, there may be excellent practice in the department, but no history of discussing teaching with anyone outside of their own department.

Some of the individual academic staff just get on and do it and they think that's what everybody does, and they just think that's how you teach, you know being incredibly thoughtful about your students, using lots of different strategies, being incredibly creative, and they just think, well it's all in a day's work, whereas we know perfectly well that that's not all in a day's work.(23LFO)

Although structures and culture are important factors influencing the behaviour of academics, it is also important not to forget the role of 'agency' - that is the determination of individuals to subvert or to ignore structural features of their working lives.

Nevertheless, change is more likely to occur where the enthusiasm of staff for teaching and learning is matched by structural opportunities provided by their departments to convert that enthusiasm into actions. In this respect the role of Heads of Departments is very important in sponsoring change and giving 'space' for the influence of the Subject Centre to occur as this Head of Department illustrates:

I think it has been useful to draw that network as Head of Department, and as I have said particularly in the context of QAA, not just for that,.....So there has been the sort of concrete evidence of impact and change. (7HMN)

In this instance, there is a person who is an enthusiastic participant in the work of the Centres who is also in a position to effect change. The result is 'concrete evidence of impact and change'.

1.3 How has involvement with the Centre influenced respondents' approaches to teaching and learning

There is clear evidence from the respondents that in most cases their involvement with the Subject Centre had led to development of their teaching. In some cases this was a fairly general influence which encouraged them to develop their teaching and to be more thoughtful about what they were doing.

I think more of the gains come in personal terms I think and they kind of feed out into the way I teach. (9HMN)

So I think that it is not so much something that I do independently and put time to, it is more like it kind of infiltrates my planning and my thoughts towards the forthcoming season of work so see as something that improves something that I am already doing. (20AMO)

For some respondents the benefit was in achieving a better understanding of the wider context of teaching and learning through meeting with other subject specialists through the Subject Centre.

So I choose to get involved with the Subject Centre because I get a lot out of it and I see lots of historians in different institutions, I've got a much better idea of what's going on in my subject nationally now. I know where we fit into the broader picture, it just gives you a new perspective, especially when you're doing a lot of work in terms of curriculum development as I've done in the past, and now I'm involved at university level with teaching and learning, it just gives you a whole new perspective on those kinds of issues, which is very useful otherwise you've got a very blinkered view of both your discipline and teaching and learning in general. (1HFO)

For this respondent attendance at Subject Centre events was essential for her to feel that she is at the forefront of developments in her subject 'so we can be leaders not followers'.

For work it is fantastic because, its really useful to know what everyone else is up to and also to try to discuss placements in a wider context and it is good to keep the University and the group on top of the game really - be aware of what is going on - so we can be leaders rather than followers. Also from that on a personal point of view I have been trying to develop a lot of practical base archaeology teaching and learning. I have been getting involved in the Subject Centre with that and that is where the grant came from. Of course you get to meet some of the other people doing some of the things, it is just a good ideas network.(17AFN)

On the other hand some were more circumspect about the influence on their own professional development. Whilst it was recognised that benefits had been gained from specific events held by the Subject Centre the impact on their broader professional development was less clear.

The training session that I went to which was about material culture that was useful, it sort of - I knew the subject already but it was helpful to make contact with others in particular. So that has been helpful professionally, for sure, and helping me gauge where I am at with my understanding of the subject and helping in teaching it, that was useful for sure, but I can't say that the Centre has had a major or even significant impact on my professional life.(18AMO)

Where respondents had received small development grants from the Centre, these were seen as a very positive influence on the respondent's own personal development and on their teaching.

I have a great kick out of doing both and I think it has benefited both my teaching and my research because you can learn from teaching as I keep on trying to tell people. It certainly helped in terms of being able to provide things for students here as part of the program. Never for all of them but we are able to advise far more on web resources, computing, project work that we couldn't have done if we hadn't had the time to develop those.(6HMN)

The findings that we had from our interviews with students and from the data we got from other universities as well made me much more critical of my approach to lectures. (2HFO)

And since then, since I ran, since I got that money, I've been running that kind of assessment, not every year and not with every class but I've been running that fairly consistently since. (9HMN)

And we're already teaching courses and lessons, we've developed some materials, we put them there and also we're going to accompany them with notes to teachers about how they can use them...(11CFO)

what I wanted to do was to develop online seminars and to give me a bit of space from teaching to do that, and then the grant came in very helpful. So I now do asynchronous online seminars with them, which I haven't done before basically.(8HMN)

Where several individuals within a department have been involved in projects funded by the Centre, the cumulative effect, even within a research-orientated department, was evident.

I think it has made a difference because two, hang on, three, after I started getting involved with them, three colleagues got small grants for projects that they were doing. Now you can still say this was individuals taking things up, but it's sort of gathering a certain mass, and there are conversations going on about teaching projects.(11CFO)

Perhaps understandably respondents were rather less clear whether their projects were achieving the wider impact on the subject community that they hoped for.

Already in St. Andrews and in London, people are unofficially asking to have access to these materials. I think some people will use them. I don't know how many, but I think I would say, you know I can imagine three or four departments doing it straight away and then, depending on need I suppose.(11CFO)

I thought that it wasn't really having much effect. Quite good for the students there that we had the opportunity to do it, but what did it do? Most people haven't got time to read up on other people's work, and it's not drawn to their attention anyway.(15CFO)

The issue here seems to be some uncertainty about how project outcomes are disseminated and whether the Centre is doing enough to bring projects to the attention of those who could possibly make use of the materials that had been developed.

1.4 What were the features of the wider national context which influenced involvement in the Subject Centre?

Several respondents felt that there had been a general change in the sector which meant that the Subject Centre was working in a more favourable environment that might have been the case a few years ago. Even in a relatively traditional 'ancient' university it was said that

as a department we are more aware of teaching and learning issues than we ever have been on so many different levels, we understand, we allow, well we're more open I think to talking about development that the Subject Centre highlights, and it seeps in much more than it ever, ever did, even, I mean I've only been there six years, but the transformation is huge, just in those six years, and not in a negative sense either, but in a positive sense, we're thinking much more about how we teach (1HFO)

This view is echoed from another 'old' university.

If you look at the way that we teach now and the way we assess now and the way we generally get our students in and out according to the strategies that we have to play, then that has changed dramatically since - well in the last 10 years. Group assessments, teaching presentations, teaching methodology, they have all changed.(19AMO)

The respondents who took this view attributed the change in the national environment to a number of high profile initiatives of the funding councils and, in a different way, to that of QAA and the impact of Subject Review.

The Subject Centre is kind of symptomatic of so many things going on, you know, because we have Teaching & Learning Assessment now, QAA Teaching & Learning Assessment now I think the institution, and us as individuals, are slightly more sensitive to the way we teach.(9HMN)

Clearly some saw these changes in a positive light and were willing to adapt and accommodate the new policy agenda.

It was coming broadly on a national level, but also from the institution, trying to work towards the QAA and our Quality Enhancement, the Quality Enhancement agenda. So I think in that way it's come nationally, through the institution, but beyond that, so it's, we can actually understand what those agendas are now thanks to our engagement both at an institutional level but also with the Subject Centre.(1HFO)

These staff see the policy of promoting teaching and learning as an opportunity to be grasped:

resources are being pumped into learning and teaching in higher education by HEFCE both through the CETLs and through the NTFS schemes, and what we really need to do is take advantage of it to the best effect that we can (8HMN)

The fact that among the respondents there were four NTFS holders, one involved in a CETL and one in an FDTL 5 project shows how some had taken advantage of the funding opportunities on offer.

And yet there was also a feeling that while the opportunities for support for learning and teaching were undoubtedly available, departments were not yet taking full advantage of them.

I think there is a sense that we can't just continue to do what we do and not change our practice and not reflect on what we are doing, we are in a different environment from even 5 years ago. There are places where support is available, where it wasn't before - it is not just a case of thinking what can the teaching and learning services in X University do for me which do things at quite a specific level but you know there is a kind of national focus on something which is there and opportunities which should be taken up more but which probably aren't within a department. (8HMN)

But for all those who saw the national environment in a favourable light, there were an equal number who were pessimistic about the impact of these policy changes. In some departments, particularly amongst those staff members who have not had direct contact with the Subject Centre, there continues to be suspicion of initiatives which appear to be promoting a government agenda.

there's a kind of fear of things with initials that come out from the Government and the expectation that it's something like the QAA and it's trying to influence over something that you don't want. (15CMO)

Several respondents blamed the research culture and the RAE in particular for the lowly status of teaching and learning. This affects not only academic full-time staff, but PhD students as well, looking for a post in HE.

Well, it is clear, we all know that the financial drivers in higher education are the RAE at present and to that extent it gets priority - not only - it has a backwash effect because it - I work with graduates quite a bit, I run a graduate training session, rather, a series of seminars last year, and for those people who are heading towards their PHD's, their priority are the papers that they are producing, because that is what is going to get them a job. (13CMO)

The dominance of the RAE in traditional universities is principally because of its financial significance. However, as this respondent points out this does not imply a lack of interest in teaching, only that staff are unlikely to devote additional time to involvement with the Academy or the Subject Centres:

The Academy, I would very much doubt if many people know about it - its not high on the agenda. If you look at the RAE, where it makes a difference of £100 million to us, that is the sort of figures we are looking at with a turnover of half a billion. That is the reality of it - it just brings in the money. What that doesn't mean is that we do bad teaching or that people are not interested in teaching. I think the teaching is excellent and people are very dedicated to it. (24LFO)

One respondent recognised that there had been a number of initiatives to raise the status of teaching, but felt that research was still very much the stronger motivator for staff.

I think academics still unfortunately see research as being the key to their career progression and so often I think you feel you are fighting something

of a long battle - but some of the things have been encouraging - but they are on the margins. (7HMN)

In another case, even though this was a person involved in an FDTL project, he felt that this work was perceived as having less importance than 'front-line research'.

at the moment the priority here is research and so that funding that I got is not front line research work, it is enhancing teaching and learning.

(DG So you are saying it is not given the same value).

I don't think so - particularly not at the moment with RAE - research assessment exercise coming up where that is absolute number 1 priority at the moment. (18AMO)

An example was given where a contact at an institution was warned that he should not be devoting time to teaching-related development.

we had a very good contact at X university but he was basically told by his Head of Department, 'Look it's the RAE that sustains this place' and 'Look if you want to...' , in fact he had a fractional appointment there, a permanent fractional appointment, 'If you want to get a full-time appointment there, it's the RAE is your goal.' So he kind of drifted out and then he's left and gone elsewhere (9HMN)

On a more a more positive note, several respondents spoke of their commitment to break down the teaching/research divide, both in their own careers and also through their role in their department.

I am committed to that agenda as well and sort of breaking up this kind of divide that occurs between research and teaching. (5HMN)

They (research and teaching) feed into each other because obviously the Subject Centre grants will help me develop teaching skills which I can, not only use in the lecture theatre or outside or within the course and programmes, but I can also use when I have got to think about doing research. It all feeds round and I mean I expect you have probably heard this from a lot of people, but I mean the old sort of teaching and research - it just feeds into each other. (17AFN)

One specific aspect of the national environment is the influence of the subject associations. The Subject Centre has established a clear reputation for its specific focus on teaching and learning in higher education. This is clear and uncontested. As a consequence there appears to be no conflict or tension between the Subject Centre and the myriad of subject associations that exist, many of which have a research-orientation. The Subject Centre has attempted to establish close working relationship with these associations, for example by inviting representatives onto the Advisory Boards, and by sponsoring joint projects and meetings. The success of these examples of joint-working seems to have been variable across the three subjects, reflecting the difficulties of collaboration between organisations with a wide range of histories and cultures.

2. The value of the Subject Centres activities to the individual in relation to their own institution.

In this section the report explores several lines of enquiry relating to the respondents' institution: In what ways do individual's interaction with the subject impact on their role within the broader institution (i.e. beyond their department)? Do the services provided by

the HCA supplement what is on offer within the institution? (i.e. does it address issues that institutions don't). Do the services provided by the HCA supplement what is on offer from their subject organisation? Or are the Subject Centre services/events duplicating, or are they in conflict at all with, institutional or subject organisation activities?

2. 1 Impact of Subject Centre activities on the respondents' institutions.

Where respondents have valued engagement with the Subject Centre and they have an institutional role to support teaching, they spoke positively about the way in which the Subject Centre had contributed to their development.

It's very enlightening in that way and in that way I feel it's a form of development for me both as a teacher but also as someone who is looking at teaching and learning policy for my institution as well. (1HFO)

Examples were given where individuals had either picked up ideas from their contact with colleagues at Subject Centre events, or had developed ideas through a project funded by the Subject Centre, and then, through their institutional role, had been able to implement these ideas across the whole institution.

I came back from the Oxford conference and we instituted an entitlement charter for all our post-graduates here across the board for entitlement relating to all of them regarding teaching, any teaching they do at this University. (5HMN)

Well the project itself is actually involving four of us in the Department..., but we also report regularly at our Board of Studies, and it feeds into the preparation of our workshops, and not just at departmental level as well, but we're actually quite active across the whole university (1HFO)

In some cases, engagement with the Subject Centre had enabled individuals to develop the confidence to take on specific institutional roles in which they could make use of what they had learned.

I think partly because of this voyage that I've taken over the last few years, and LTSN is part of that, I was asked to apply for that post, and I got it, so I now teach within the department .5 of my time, and the other .5 is outside the department co-ordinating the activities of these lecturers who were promoted for teaching excellence. (9HMN)

As a result this person felt that the expertise developed partly through his Subject Centre work was now being made available to colleagues in a wide range of departments.

Where does this knowledge that you're gaining from LTSN or indeed from anywhere else, where's it all going? In a sense it's partly going to my colleagues within the department, but it's also, I think, feeding in to how I relate to these people, right throughout the university in Science departments, in Technology departments, in the School of Health, Business etcetera, I now talk to them and I think my expertise feeds that way.(9HMN)

In another case a respondent found himself being put onto a variety of institutional committees because of his acknowledged interest and expertise in teaching and learning.

I then became Chair of the Faculty's Learning and Teaching Committee and in that role I was then on the University's Learning and Teaching Committee and then I was also put forward by the faculty for membership of another University body which was a staff development forum which was to find ways of taking forward, not just teaching and learning issues but other aspects. (7HMN)

Or respondents have become teaching and learning co-ordinators and in that role feed into the organisation and development of provision for pedagogy within their institution.

As a teaching and learning coordinator I am on the [Centre for Teaching and Learning] academic committee which in a sense is a steering committee of it.(12CMO)

In other cases the specific work undertaken through a Subject Centre grant was recognised to be of value to the whole university and as a result individuals have been invited to contribute to annual teaching and learning conferences or to staff development sessions. In a number of cases recognition of work that has been stimulated by, or sponsored by the Subject Centre has led to the award of fellowships at both institutional and national level.

However, the difference between the subject-specific remit of the Subject Centre and the generic role of the institutional provision means that at least for some, they keep the two parts of their professional role separate.

The Subject Centre is about history whereas CELT tends to be more enhancement of learning and teaching - it is much more of a general pedagogy across all departments - training of new staff - so I tend to view them in separate boxes (6HMN)

Though it was acknowledged that where this separation occurred there was room to explore the connections more than was currently happening.

It would be worth exploiting more, I don't think it exists very much at the moment, certainly not in our case. My involvement in the Subject Centre is fairly distinct from the other initiatives in the university, but it could be worthwhile thinking of some development there.(4HMN)

2.2 Relationship between Subject Centre provision and institutional provision

One area where the separation of institutional provision and the Subject Centre was seen in a positive light related to initial training for new teachers and general staff development relating to teaching. A number of respondents contrasted the value they derived from the Subject Centre compared with the more generic training provided by their institution which they were much less impressed by. Respondents generally found the subject-specific nature of Subject Centre events more relevant to their needs and interests than institutional events. The following are typical comments:

I'd found that the days I was attending (organised by the Subject Centre) were particularly helpful, not just with dealing with language teaching, though those were the main ones I attended, but because, unlike a lot of the staff training one gets at one's own institution, it was very much practitioner-based focussed and coming from practical experience, which was of huge benefit. (10CF)

*On the whole the Subject Centre is more relevant actually to developing one sort of subject specific teaching than the kind of things that they offer in ***** (15CFO)*

I appreciate about the Subject Centre is the fact that it's not just interested in pedagogy, but it's interested in pedagogy in History and I really appreciate that. ((2HF0)

Some were more blunt in expressing their scepticism about the generic training provided by their institution:

I can tell you what the practical realities are and that is that there is every year - it is not so much in service training - as provision for people who are becoming supervisors, becoming lecturers, there are sessions run in the summer. The feedback that I have back from graduates on those is that they are worse than useless because they are generic and do not address subject specific issues.(13CMO)

Others simply saw the two kinds of provision not as being better or worse, but quite simply 'very separate things' and further there was no expectation that they should link – '*I don't think there is any crossover there really*' (21AFN)

But, on the whole, this did not mean that the Subject Centre was seen to be in conflict with institutional provision. On the contrary, the two were seen to be complementary.

They're not in conflict. Ideally they should be complementary, I think, but often there could be more dialogue (11CFO)

There has not been any sense that its been hijacked by the national body, or that there is a problem. It has been a natural development of a kind of, trying to reflect on field-work development, so I wouldn't say there has been any problem, or any tension at all.(20AMO).

*I don't think I find any discordance - on the whole **** is fairly busy with the basic task of driving the Pg Cert training, so I think the teaching, learning forum complements what is done elsewhere. It is obviously not particularly classically focused so there doesn't seem to be a conflict, there doesn't seem to be a great deal of coordination either but I wouldn't expect that.(12CMO)*

One respondent described the difference in terms of aims. The Subject Centre was there to stimulate discussion about teaching, whereas the aim of the institution was to ensure quality of provision to students.

the Subject Centre also steps back and looks at much broader issues, so it's slightly more, for me, what I get out of it it's slightly more theoretical, it's slightly more stepping back and asking how you retain passion for what you're doing, whereas the CELT tells you how to set up a virtual living environment.(2HF0)

In conclusion, there is evidence that learning through contact with the Subject Centre contributes to the career paths of individuals within their institution. They often have received awards for their development work, taken on teaching and learning roles, attended institutional events, training and committees, but, on the other hand, respondents saw the work of the Centre and that of the Institution as being quite separate. So there are instances where individuals had, for example,

undertaken pedagogic research within their discipline who went on to make a contribution to institutional training events based directly on their subject-based research, but conversely many were sceptical about, and less likely to become engaged with, institutional 'generic' provision.

3. Learning development units/teaching and learning centres (LDUs) and the Subject Centre(s)

In this section of the report I explore some of the issues relating to the relationship between Learning Development Units and the Subject Centres. In some cases the comments relate specifically to the HCA, but in most cases respondents spoke more generally about their ideas for the ways in which they saw their relationship with Subject Centres.

3.1 The relationship between LDUs and Subject Centres

LDUs recognise the strong role that disciplines play in most academic's identity and the value that academics placed on talking to others from the same discipline. They acknowledge that this is the principal strength of the Subject Centres. They are also aware that sometimes academics view their institutional provision with some suspicion because of the generic nature of their role.

The Subject Centres are in fact much the stronger because academics are discipline orientated so they (academic staff) are much more sympathetic towards Subject Centres than to general units in institutions that are trying to improve teaching and learning. Now I believe that it is absolutely essential to bring the two together. (26LMO)

I think one of the key things that I've pulled out is simply the fact that because they're talking with history colleagues, they're a lot more receptive to any of the ideas than they would've been had they come from me or anybody else essentially who wasn't an historian.(27LFO)

But LDUs do not see any conflict with Subject Centres. On the contrary they look to achieve collaboration with them to achieve what they see as a common goal – the improvement in learning and teaching within teaching departments.

so I believe that a partnership between the central unit, the appropriate department within the institution and the Subject Centre is the only way forward.(26LMO)

A good example of a productive collaboration was provided by one LDU. In her view a visit from the Subject Centre had played a pivotal role in enabling the staff to make progress on an area that the university had been promoting.

Well I certainly know that the Department had the History Centre in to talk about e-learning, online learning, sometime ago, and since then they've certainly taken on board and done a lot more work in that area. I realise obviously there are also links within the University - they've made with our own Learning Development Unit - but I think the contact that they had with the History Subject Centre possibly gave them the confidence to take those things forward and also gave them, you know, the discipline specific knowledge that they required as well as how to produce e-learning in their own subject.(27LFO)

Another example of a productive collaboration cited by an LDU related to a major TLRP research project which included history as one of the subjects for the research. The research team approached the Subject Centre and a close working relationship was established. This has enabled the research team to make presentations to the annual conference explaining the research project and more recently to report its findings. The Subject Centre was able to provide invaluable advice to the research team on how to approach the study of teaching history.

LDUs recognize that through a variety of funding council initiatives (FDTL, NTFS and CETLs – HEFCE funded, and the LTSN/HE Academy - HEFCE and SHEFC funded) there has been a trend towards working with the culture of the disciplines. But there is a view that as a result of this trend, the importance of generic understanding of learning and teaching has been given less credence than it deserves.

Interestingly the debates 5 years ago they were very strongly saying that everything had to be discipline based and I hear this still from the Academy, but going round academics and educational developers people are starting to swing the other way and say you have gone too far down the subject base and we should be starting to think in terms of generic things again. Not forgetting the subject aspect, but equally not forgetting many of the things are very similar or are in common.(28LMO)

Most seem to take the view that the important thing is to get the balance right between the 'generic' and the 'subject specific'.

the Subject Centres and the disciplinary staff are on one side, they do not often see the need for anything generic. They are quite wrong in my opinion, but on the other hand so are the generic people if they think they can do it without the disciplinary.(26LMO)

LDUs do not see themselves in conflict with Subject Centres. On the contrary, they concur with the views we cited in the previous section from academic staff that the roles of the two organisations are, or should be, complementary. In the following example the Subject Centre was seen to be having a role that was complementary to the institutional central department promoting e-learning:

I certainly wouldn't have said there was any conflict because our E-learning Department is more technically based and probably doesn't have so much of the pedagogic knowledge as is coming from the History Subject Centre.(27LFO)

One area where the Subject Centres might be seen to contribute more directly to institutional provision relates to the training of new staff. There has been useful co-operation in identifying subject resources through the Supporting New Academic Staff (SNAS) project, but there is support for further developments along these lines.

So it is to my mind again quite essential that there should be a cooperation between the generic centre and the disciplinary Subject Centre in providing the training which after all is now invariably provided within an institution. (26LMO)

3.2 How LDU activities impact on the Subject Centre(s)

3.2.1 Supporting academic staff

LDUs are often called upon to provide some advice or support to members of academic staff. They clearly cannot have specialist expertise in teaching every subject across the whole institution and so they see the Subject Centres as one of the places to whom they might turn to get advice, or alternatively they might suggest that the staff member should get in touch with the SC.

Certainly where for example someone says I am having difficulty teaching this particular subject I would advocate the Subject Centre as being the first point of call. I might make that enquiry to the Subject Centre myself on the individual's behalf the teaching learning and assessment office does have cash to sort of pass around a bit. (28LMO)

In particular, where institutional LDUs are small – in this case, just one person – the significance of the Subject Centres was amplified:

They're really important to me because there's just no way in which I could provide the support to all the academic departments on my own, so the Subject Centres are extremely important because they provide a lot of the things I can't,

The first port of call for many LDSU staff when supporting subject teachers is to go to the relevant Subject Centre web-site.

The first thing I would say to them is 'Do you use your Subject Centre website?' And the majority of people go, 'No'. And then if we were in their office, I would automatically put it on to their Favourites straight away for them, and if I'm not in their office I show them the website and say right, let's go and have a look at what's there. (23LFO)

However, whether the staff do then go on to use the Subject Centre web-site is unknown:

Because I'm operating generically, I can say 'Well look, if there's a specific area, check out the Subject Centre you know, see what's there, what's available, whom you might contact, who you might bring in', that sort of thing, really, but I'm not sure if they do it. (25LMO)

An issue raised by one respondent was whether she could contact the Subject Centre directly to received advice or assistance. She felt that it would be helpful to have this point clarified:

I wouldn't really think of ringing them up and asking them anything, I'd just look on the website... it would be useful to know how easy it is, how welcome you are to contact people. (23LFO)

3.2.2 Role in raising awareness of the Subject Centre(s)

Heads of LDUs were unanimous in saying that they saw it as part of their role to inform staff about the relevant Subject Centres and what they could offer.

I think it's my role to ensure that departments are aware of them (SCs), aware of what's available to them. I don't feel that my role is to tell them they have to engage with them if you like. (27LFO)

What I try to do with all the departments with which I work, is point them in the direction of the Subject Centre for help, support and guidance in subject specific matters, and in fact I have a website which has a good practice

section and that good practice section directs every department in the university toward the relevant bits on the HE Academy website.(25LMO)

LDUs feel they need to undertake this awareness-raising because there continues to be a problem about the level of awareness of the Subject Centre(s) among teaching staff.

Many of them don't know about the Subject Centres and even where they don't know about the Subject Centre it has never penetrated their consciousness that these are people who can help them. They know that something exists, but they think, probably it is nothing to do with them. (28LMO)

One way in which LDU's raise awareness of the Subject Centre(s) is by creating links to their web-sites from the institution's web-pages. But they are only likely to do this if the web-site is, in their view, a good one and is relevant to subjects taught at their university. Just as LDUs believe that Subject Centres are of variable quality, so they also judge web-sites to be better than others.

Some are much better than others, in some cases we are able to make links from our web site to them, where they have relevant resources to give any aspect of learning and teaching . You have got to be quite selective I think. We are looking for things like assessment or work based learning - it varies quite a lot. (22LFN)

3.2.3 Sponsoring attendance at Subject Centre events

LDUs often have funds, sometimes derived from specific HEFCE initiatives, such as Rewarding and Developing Staff, which can be used to sponsor attendance at SC events.

the teaching learning and assessment office does have cash to sort of pass around a bit.(28LMO)

3.3 Contact between LDUs and the Subject Centre(s)

3.3.1 Direct contact

In a number of cases, LDUs referred to the invitations they had issued to Subject Centres to come to their institution. They clearly appreciated what they perceived as the support which Subject Centres could give to their own work.

LDUs value the contacts they have with personnel from the Subject Centres though participation in joint projects (such as the SNAS project). Once some personal contact has been established it is then easier for the developers to ring up an individual to seek their advice or to put them in contact with a member of academic staff.

So I know some of the people from some of the Subject Centres from having those links, so I am prepared to pick up the phone and say can you help me with this Nigel or whatever.((28LMO)

3.3.2 Subject Centre support for Teaching and Learning Conferences

Many LDUs now hold annual teaching and learning conferences. These can be difficult to organize and to get good quality contributions. LDUs therefore very much appreciate the attendance of Subject Centres at such events, when they it is possible.

I've done Teaching and Learning conferences here, then I've always found that Subject Centres are very good at sending resources and in some cases people along to those, to actually contribute to them as well. And I

know that History is one of those that send resources to me, that can then be made available so that, again there can be discipline specific resources at a general conference essentially being run internally as well. And again, I was able therefore to promote the Subject Centres by displaying resources. (27LFO)

3.3.3 Subject Centre publications

LDUs said that they wanted to receive literature from Subject Centres. This would serve several purposes:

- 1 so that they would know what Subject Centres were doing and be able to make recommendations to staff about how they could use the Centre
2. so that they can pass this information to departments
3. to look out for good ideas that the LDU can make use of.

To some extent it is probably useful for me to see or at least have all of it to hand, so if there is a query somewhere I can data it and say have you seen this? Probably useful about educating schools about what the Subject Centre can do.(28LMO)

You have to be quite pro active about getting them to send things to you or be in touch with you as a central educational development unit.

We did a mailing out - I did mail shots for newsletters and whatever we get in we scan, I suppose we look for ideas. (22LFN)

3.3.4 Contact about Subject Centre work with departments

Heads of LDUs would like to be informed of contact that the Subject Centre has with departments within their institution.

Possibly (it) would be helpful from my perspective is simply to, in my Education Development role, to be almost just sort of cc'd in communications just in terms of so I know that they visited and what they visited about etcetera because it helps me then to get a feel for where the department's going and what it's actually engaging with them on,(27LFO)

It was argued that this would not simply be to the advantage of the institutional LDU. Firstly it was suggested that often the LDU can advise the Subject Centre on who is the best person to contact within a department.

I would expect them to (get in contact with the staff development unit) if they really want to get into Universities and departments. I know it is time intensive but to actually have some sort of person in contact, like a phone call, because if they were to contact me I could then give them advice about the best way of them getting any sort of literature into those departments so that would be the benefit for them contacting me. If they were to go in blind and send it to the secretary or the head of department that can be binned so easily and quickly and also if they were to say we are thinking of this would this be of interest I can say, you are not going to get anywhere with that or yes that might be of interest.

DG So it is kind of insider information -

Absolutely - also because of our own personal contact with various departments and faculties then in one of department the head might be quite positive towards staff development and we could say yes the contact

is through that head of department whereas in another one it might be don't bother with the head of department but do go to the secretary or administrator of the department. (24LFO)

The Subject Centre would also gain by getting a better steer on what the institutional priorities are and therefore where they might get a better response from departments, by being seen to be pushing in the same direction.

they might actually find it helpful to engage with me in terms of the fact that I have the institutional knowledge in terms of where the institution is going with certain developments like PDP and things like that...(27LFO)

Such exchange of information would prevent the possibility of the Subject Centre and the institution working at cross-purposes.

we've got a code of practice coming out on assessment for example, and along with that will come guidelines on good practice. ... obviously they could have been working with the Subject Centre quite happily on assessment not realising this is coming; that potentially there are things in there that might run counter to some of the things they've been discussing. (27LFO)

LDUs may also be able to advise on whether a particular approach is likely to be successful

The other aspect is that they could touch base with me on ideas or issues that they have got of whether it would be useful. There are some things that would just bomb so badly whereas there would be other things that would be OK. (24LFO)

It was also pointed out that a Subject Centre that is actively in touch with institutional LDUs would therefore have another route for dissemination of their 'products' via the LDU's web-site.

They would get more publicity, more dissemination as I said, we are setting up a generic teaching and learning website and you can be quite selective about which Subject Centres you point people to for different areas. (22LFN)

However, it was recognized that the main lines of communication has to be between the Subject Centre and the department, and that the LDU cannot compensate for the lack of interest in a department.

Let me say first of all they cannot come through a generic contact. In other words if there is no interest in the department, then a contact between the generic centre in the institution and the Subject Centres outside will not work. So certainly it has got to be within the Subject Centre and disciplinary people in the institutions. (26LMO)

3.4 Impact of the Subject Centres

LDUs believe that the Subject Centres have played a useful role in supporting the development of teaching and learning across the country, but they also believe that their success has been somewhat variable. This is a typical comment:

I think they have(made a contribution nationally). I think it has been patch,y some have contributed more than others. Some have established themselves better than others and there is still a long way to go. (28LMO)

GEES is commonly cited as a successful Subject Centre, but there is recognition that success depends on a variety of factors, some of which relate to the nature of the subject community rather than the activity of the Centre itself. Among the factors which LDUs think are important to contributing to the success of the SC, is attendance at institutions:

I think one of the things is simply that they have been out there visiting the department and they're visible in the department and the department know who they are; and I think that's been a key thing, simply for kids to know who they actually are, and to put a name to a face. And I think that's important as to whether they then come back and want to engage again. And they've been very respectful, very positive, very helpful.(27LFO)

Another factor is the quality of the web-site, to which reference has already been made.

4. Perceptions of the HE Academy and its relationship with the SC.

Except in the case of those respondents who had direct contact with the HE Academy, either because of being a National Teaching Fellow or because of involvement in FDTL, few had any clear idea about what the Academy does or how it might be different from the ILT. The recent attempts to reposition the HE Academy seem to have passed most academics by. No-one was aware of the recent work on a national standards framework for teaching and learning.

Several respondents compared the discipline-specific work of the Subject Centre favourably with the more generic work of the HE Academy. Almost all spoke in terms of the more direct relevance of the Subject Centre compared with what was seen as the more theory driven position of the HE Academy. The following are representative views:

I think my relationship with the Academy is more remote as it were than it is with the Subject Centre. I mean the Subject Centre has an immediacy in the sense that it's my discipline, and that's where I come from, that's what I'm most interested in rightly or wrongly. And I feel very guilty at times that I don't sort of involve myself more in the activities of a more general nature that the Higher Education Academy is involved with....(8HMN)

So the Academy exists obviously but it doesn't really have a major impact on me, I think if anything the Subject Centre has the most impact because it's the most relevant.(1HFO)

The contrast was drawn between the Subject Centre which was seen as run by 'active practitioners' and the HE Academy which was perceived to be pushing government agendas.

in my mind I think that the Subject Centre, because, I feel, it is run by active practitioners, they know the pressures that you're under, they know the sort of things you're looking to do and the sort of things that you are able to do and there's an understanding, an empathy there....And I like that, and I like being involved with people who understand the practicalities. I don't think the Higher Education Academy does, and I don't have the perception that it is run by people who are themselves practitioners. Do you see what I mean?They feel slightly more dictatorial, it doesn't feel as open and it

feels as if they're pushing agendas. And I don't really like that..... I don't think that the Academy recognises that academics have multiple roles outside the teaching and learning as well, whereas I think the Subject Centre does, it's much more flexible, it's much more understanding and it's much more open. (1HFO)

However some, a minority, were more sympathetic to the idea that there needed to be an input into the discipline-specific work from the wider literature in teaching and learning and that the HE Academy could fulfil this more generic function.

but my personal, completely personal view is that it's very, very important for you know for subjects to think about teaching, so the Subject Centres, in my personal understanding, have a big role to play, because it is true that people teaching classics have a lot to talk to one another about, but at the same time, obviously it's important that they should be aware of what's happening in research in teaching and learning (11CFO)

Concern was expressed that the Academy appeared to be making little attempt to provide services to individual members (in contrast to the ILT).

I don't think the HE Academy has got any interest in registered practitioners, I mean I think the stance from the Centre is that they're funding depends on institutions and they will therefore play according to institutions. (23LFO)

There seems to be a little bit of unclarity at the moment about what membership means, because the ILT had a fairly clear vision for members, although they had problems in implementing it; whereas the Academy doesn't seem to have a vision for what they call Registered Practitioners (11CFO)

Consistent with this concern was the view that the impact of the Academy, at the present time, was more likely to be at senior levels within the university than on individual academics or even staff developers:

In terms of the impact, it hasn't had a huge impact on me but then I'm not particularly high up in the food chain and I don't you know, it would have more impact on X (the Head of the LDU) than it would on me, and presumably also on our senior academic staff. So I'm imagining, I would expect it to have more impact on our Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching & Learning at the moment..... They seem to me to be a little bit more concerned with the connections they have with the JISC and perhaps HEFCE and other large bodies, and people with importance and lots of money, than they do with making connections with staff on the ground. (23LFO)

Even when individual practitioners have been invited to contribute to the HE Academy, there is scepticism about the sincerity of the consultation process.

although again I get the emails and I do look through them and I kind of get a little bit exasperated with the way its going, and I think we were asked to get ourselves involved in some sort of poll of opinion when it was clear that the poll was just meant to endorse I think changes that had been, I think from what I could gather, already agreed. ((9HMN)

The HE Academy's endorsement of the teaching/research links was appreciated by at least one respondent, but most did not have any clear view about the role of the Academy.

When asked about whether they felt their perception of the Subject Centre was in any way affected by the reputation of the HE Academy, the answer was a unanimous 'no'. All the respondents felt that the Subject Centre's identity was clearly established during the time it was part of the LTSN and that recent changes which led to the creation of the Academy has, so far at least, had no impact on how they thought of the Subject Centre. Indeed many still referred to the LTSN as if it continued to exist. The following is typical of the responses on this topic:

So the Academy exists obviously but it doesn't really have a major impact on me, I think if anything the Subject Centre has the most impact because it's the most relevant. (1HFO)

if the Higher Education Academy, bluntly put, didn't exist and the Subject Centre did, I don't think it would affect what I did. (6HMN)

I would say relatively independent - I don't think enough people know about the Academy really - it being relatively recent - at least in name.((18AMO)

The Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology seems more or less to have taken over where LTSN left off and I've been aware there's this what they call the Higher Education Academy, I haven't to be honest, been too aware of what the larger thing does ((10CFO)

For the few respondents who had been involved in CETL bids there was a keener awareness of the issues around the relationship between the Subject Centres, the HE Academy and the CETLs. The respondent quoted below was aware of the view of HEFCE that seemed to suggest that the role of the HE Academy and the Subject Centres is to disseminate the findings from the CETLs.

*I was heavily involved in a classics related/modern language focused bid under the CETL scheme and there - it was when the HE Academy was being invented - and it wasn't clear to me then that the Subject Centres really quite knew how they fitted into this. We were expected to make use of them for dissemination and I think they were in a sense - we got the impression partly looking to the CETLs partly to provide them with a *raison d'être* and something to disseminate almost. So I felt then that HEFCE - this was when things had just started - there could have been a clearer steer on what the role of the HE Academy was. I still don't feel that has been totally corrected. The *raison d'être* of the Subject Centres is a bit more clear than the *raison d'être* of the rest of the HE Academy.(12CMO)*

Because LDUs are very involved in issues of dissemination, they tend to be more acutely aware of the issues about the functions of different organisations within the quality enhancement field. One of the LDU respondents was very clear that the Subject Centres could not simply have a dissemination function for the CETLs because this idea is based on a false model of what is involved in disseminating outputs from projects.

This is a very old fashioned and inadequate view of dissemination. Dissemination is not a process by which you pick up from A and you hand over to B. It is a collaborative process, which is circular - goes round and round - and therefore involves both sides at all times. I have written a

paper on that one some years ago actually. So I think the old fashioned attitude tell us, what you are doing and then we will disseminate it – (26LMO)

There was some concern that the arrival of CETLs was complicating matters and causing confusion for both LDUs and academic staff.

I think people have a confused view of how they all mix together, I probably have a confused view and I probably know better than most people put together. (28LMO)

The concern was that no-one will know whether to be contacting a CETL or a Subject Centre for support. One Head of an LDU spoke of the need for collaboration between CETLs and the relevant Subject Centre, but could foresee the potential for conflict if this was not achieved effectively.

There is scope for collaboration and also scope for conflict if you don't get it right. Conflict not in the sense of having fisticuffs, but in the sense that people will not know which one to turn to. (28LMO)

5. Comments on the work of the Subject Centre

The respondents were offered the opportunity to make any suggestions to the Subject Centre. In some cases, suggestions to or comments about the Subject Centre emerged spontaneously from respondents in the course of the interview. This section reflects some of the views expressed.

5.1 Recognising that many academics are resistant to becoming engaged with the Subject Centre, one respondent suggested that the Subject Centre needs to.....

support what is already happening, so that one actually feels a little bit of relief coming from the Subject Centre as opposed to extra obligations and senses of guilt that one isn't doing enough, because in practice one would want to support what is happening and come up with new suggestions, but also link up people so not everyone reinvents the wheel, that kind of thing.

5.2 Small grants for projects were approved as a useful aspect of the Centre's work.

Well, I thought it was, I thought the features about development grants was a good idea, because they actually made it worthwhile trying to do something that could be described under that scheme. You know, just because there's money for it is always an incentive to actually put things together and make it look professional. (15CFO)

5.3 Departments have particularly appreciated visits from members of the Subject Centre as a way of stimulating further debate.

For teaching purposes, and, up to a point, for research purposes but particularly for teaching purposes, and I think the Subject Centre's a great resource for all those kind of things. I think when we started out about four years ago, we had Sonja Cameron come down from the Subject Centre to talk to the historians, and I think that got us kind of kick-started and since then I sort of, our paths, or my path kind of crosses at sort of fairly regular intervals.(9HMN)

Where there had not been a visit to the department, there was a strong recommendation that this was the best way of making contact.

Because we get bombarded with so much information the only way in which impact is going to be felt I think is if they get out and come around the departments and have a seminar on which they present information rather than just shove stuff on the back of an e-mail.(18AMO)

5.4 The web-site is regarded by many staff as the first point of contact. For these people the web-site is regarded as a valuable resource. On the other hand there are others who hardly ever look at the web-site.

One view of the HCA web-site is that it is too dominated by one subject.

My personal view is that where they've bundled subjects into three or four whatever, then the classic thing has been for one subject to emerge as dominant and the others to be curtailed on that basis.

DG: *Do you think HCA suffers from that?*

Yes, very badly. It's dominated by one particular interest at the moment.(13CMO)

This respondent was particularly critical of the quality of the resources available for classics.

the resources for Classics are very, very poor and it's an embarrassment trying to point colleagues at them. They are trying to do something now....(13CMO)

5.5 One criticism that was voiced concerned the way in which projects are reported on Subject Centre web-sites. This respondent felt that the web-site could be clearer about the outcomes of projects and how users of the web-site can make best use of them:

although I know that on the Subject Centre networks they tend to have lists of resources and lists of projects, it always seems to just be kind of like 'This is the project that we're doing'. And you never find a final report, and sometimes it's difficult to know whether the people would want to be contacted or not.(23LFO)

5.6 Another issue raised was the way in which the Subject Centre makes contact with departments and individual members of staff within it. There was a strong feeling that e-mail contact needs to be directly with individual members of staff and not simply with Heads of Department

At the moment it is just going out to Heads of Departments, with the new Director that's all he's done, contacted Heads of Departments, and, but he's planning to contact all Classicists by email to say there is funding available for x, y and z. And I think that's important.(11CFO)

Well I think at the moment there is a more fundamental problem with the subject centre which is to do with its profile. I don't get e-mail shots - that is one of the ways which I expect to be communicated with. Block e-mails which come through from the faculty of classics saying that there is a lecture coming up. I get no sense of that type of that communication (13CMO)

There was a strong sense that the Subject Centre need to be active, or 'pro-active', in seeking out individuals via e-mails.

I have to say I have lost contact with it and it doesn't have a high profile, it doesn't appear on my computer screen and I don't get e-mails from it - I know it exists but to me it is not pro active. Maybe I am looking in the wrong place, it is not finding me, or I am hiding! It doesn't have a high profile in my life.(19AMO)

There is no guarantee that if you e-mail something to a department it ever gets circulated, it really should be person by person.(19AMO).

5.7 The Regional Networks in History were well thought of where they are active, though it was recognised that it is difficult to keep up the momentum of the meetings and also to manage contact between meetings. The success of the Regional Networks reflects the level of commitment of the co-ordinator.

(The Regional Network) has been a success and also an area of profound not disappointment, not profound disappointment, but disappointment because it's been difficult to sustain and it's been difficult to sustain for several reasons, but the upside has been it's brought me and colleagues here into contact with a range of people and a range of situations that we wouldn't otherwise have been involved in. (9HMN)

It was argued that regional meetings allowed staff who would never attend a national conference to become engaged in Subject Centre activities.

I think it's a way of sustaining things on the basis that many people can't get to conferences or feel themselves honour-bound to attend their particular discipline based conferences perhaps over Easter, but they're perfectly willing to be, indeed want to be, involved with pedagogic aspects connected with their disciplines, and I think the networks, the regional networks, are in some ways the way forward, but they are very difficult to sustain.(9HMN)

But there seems to be a difference in take-up between the new universities and the old.....

It's very easy to get the newer universities involved in it; it's very difficult to get the older universities to even reply to messages, never mind turn up to events we run. I suppose it's been a bit difficult trying to think of things to do between events. It's easy to put an event on, and people will come to that, I find the take-up is pretty good; we had one on Saturday, the Saturday just gone, and representatives from about six or seven different institutions sent people along, and about 25 people.(3HMN)

The Subject Centre is active in exploring these issues and attempting to find solutions

We looked at how the regional organisations were originally set up, and were set up by committed individuals. We looked at how the publicity could be improved; how the small grants could be directed at departments more than individuals. We came to some general conclusions, and I think at Oxford in a couple of weeks time, we'll all come together and move that forward as much as we can.(4HMN).

Conclusions and discussion points

Individual academics and their relationship with the Subject Centre and their department

Four kinds of motivation to become involved with the subject were found (1) personal interest in teaching and learning, (2) in order to seek funding, (3) direct contact from the Subject Centre, (4) asked to make contact by head of department or professor.

Discussion point: are there different ways that the Subject Centre can motivate staff to engage with its activities?

The ways in which the respondents related Subject Centre activity to their departments fell into four broad categories:

5. those who were enthusiastic and keen to communicate ideas they have picked up from the Subject Centre and for whom there were structured opportunities for them to do so,
6. those who formally reported back to their department or ran staff development events as part of their role within their department,
7. those who did not see it as part of their role to feedback but who did nevertheless feel that the Subject Centre had some influence on their department through informal channels of communication,
8. those who did not communicate their ideas and felt the Subject Centre had little influence.

In general terms it is possible to understand the responses along two axes – the level of enthusiasm that individuals have for the activity they have been engaged in and the extent to which there are lines of communication that they can exploit to bring these matters to the attention of their colleagues.

Discussion point: Can the Subject Centre be more active in assisting individuals who attend events to communicate with the wider constituency of academics in their department?

Involvement with the Subject Centre was positively received by the respondents and several clear benefits were named:

1. contact/networking with other academics in the same subject area as themselves or with a similar interest (such as work-placements or e-learning),
2. personal professional development – influence on how they think about teaching, becoming more critical about their own teaching,
3. having an overview of developments in the subject outside their own department,
4. acquiring specialist knowledge - for example use of web-based resources,
5. development of new learning materials, or researching new understandings through development grants,
6. inspiration and 'new ideas'.

Discussion point: how can these clear benefits be communicated more successfully to staff who have not engaged with the subject centre?

National context

Whilst there was a recognition that the interest in teaching and learning had increased considerably over the last ten years, attributable to a variety of factors including QAA, HEFCE initiatives as well as the activities of the Subject Centres, there was a continuing

sense that research is the dominant concern of the majority of academics. However there was evidence that some respondents were dedicated to breaking down the teaching/research divide and had been successful in doing so within their own professional lives.

Discussion point: how can the divide between teaching and research be broken-down?

Impact on respondents' institutions

Among the respondents interviewed, there was clear evidence of an impact on their institution which has gone beyond their own department. Examples include:

1. actively pursuing a particular interest developed with the subject centre within their institution (e.g. postgraduate training, use of visual images in lectures),
2. involvement with teaching and learning issues across the institution (e.g. through committee membership, or taking up a teaching and learning development role),
3. winning institutional recognition (e.g. fellowship),
4. participation in institutional teaching and learning conferences.

There was a strong view that the respondents preferred working in their subject specialist areas to engaging with the 'generic' issues of institutional LDUs. But while some were dismissive of their LDU, or disengaged from it, others worked closely with it and recognised that LDUs had a different role and agenda from that of the Subject Centre's.

There was no evidence of any conflict between the Subject Centre's work and that of LDUs.

Discussion point: how can the impact of Subject Centres on institutional developments be better recorded and communicated?

Relationship with Subject Associations

The landscape of Subject Associations is different for each subject, although in all cases there were complicated and competing interests being served by the organisations. It was also generally the case that the Subject Centre's focus on teaching and learning was seen as being distinctive and complementary to the subject associations which tended to be either more research-focused or sometimes more interested in schools than universities.

LDU and Subject Centre Relationship

Respondents from the LDUs recognised the importance of academics' subject identity and argued that the work of the Subject Centre should be complementary to their own role. However they felt there could be better co-operation than currently exists.

The importance of the LDUs to the Subject Centre was clearly evidenced:

1. LDUs recommend academics to contact (or use the web-site) the Subject Centre for subject specialist advice.
2. LDUs see it as part of their role to raise awareness of the Subject Centres – although they believe the quality of Subject Centres is 'variable'.
3. Some LDUs have funds to sponsor attendance at Subject Centre events.

Contact between LDUs and Subject Centres happens in a variety of ways:

1. direct personal contact and personal knowledge,
2. Subject Centre attendance at Teaching and Learning Conferences, or other invited events, or provision of materials,
3. by receiving publications – but most interviewed would like to have more regular mailings,
4. by use of the web-site – though web-sites are thought to be of variable quality.

LDUs believed that it was in the interest of the Subject Centres to make more use of institutional LDUs than they currently do.

Discussion point: how can LDUs be better exploited to serve the interests of the Subject Centre?

Perceptions of the HE Academy

Overwhelmingly respondents felt that their interests are being addressed by the Subject Centre and not by the HE Academy. Those who are familiar with the HE Academy felt that it has given very little attention to individual academics ('practitioners'), but the majority have little or no awareness of the HE Academy's activities or its wider mission. It is perceived as at best an unknown quantity, or, at worst, as being too theoretical and removed from the concerns of the average teacher in higher education.

However, the identity of the Subject Centre seems to be very secure and its reputation is perceived to be quite independent of the HE Academy.

The arrival of the CETLs was seen by those who knew about the issue as being potentially problematic for the Subject Centre.

Discussion point: should the Subject Centre be concerned about the poor visibility and low opinion of the HE Academy at the current time?

Specific Issues raised

1. quality of the web-site,
2. communication of outcomes of projects,
3. direct contact with individual academics,
4. support for regional networks,
5. role of Glasgow centre compared with each of the subject-specific centres.

Conclusions

Because the interviews were conducted with academics who have been to some extent actively engaged with the subject centre, no conclusions can be drawn about the views of the majority of historians, classicists and archaeologists of the Subject Centre.

Generally, views of the Subject Centre and its activities were positive and there was clear evidence of the influence it has had on individuals, departments and institutions.

While the respondents believed the national environment was now more favourable towards teaching and learning development, they also thought that many academics continued to be unaware of the Subject Centre's work and not engaged with it.

The Subject Centre was seen to have a distinctive mission and to work in a complementary way with institutional provision and with subject associations.

