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Considering teaching excellence in higher education: 2007-2013

A literature review since the CHERI report 2007

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Foreword

Teaching excellence is at the centre of national and international higher education policy discourse. In the UK, the four national higher education strategies all place a significant emphasis on excellent teaching in higher education; students are being encouraged to make better use of information to make decisions about where and what they study; and higher education providers are increasingly seeking to demonstrate their excellence in teaching, as well as research. Internationally the term ‘excellence in teaching’ is widely found in most countries’ policy documents. Yet, in the UK and across the globe, there is little narrative around what is meant by ‘teaching excellence’ and no country has defined an agreed concept of excellence in teaching.

In response to this, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) has initiated a programme of research to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes teaching excellence. This report, a much-needed and wide-ranging review of literature, is the first stage of that research, and is intended to act as a springboard for developing a framework for teaching excellence. Such a framework could have many uses: the report highlights, for example, the inherent problems in reward and recognition schemes for teaching staff in HEIs that the lack of a consistent definition of teaching excellence presents.

The HEA has led on initiatives to promote excellence in teaching, for example the development of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), which can be used in the process of developing excellence criteria for those who teach and support learning in HE. In the course of this programme of research, we will build on this and on learning from other HEA initiatives focused on rewarding teaching excellence, such as the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme and the highly successful HEA/NUS Student-Led Teaching Awards, as well as from global initiatives from across the sector. We have also published extensive research on reward and recognition for teaching staff including three reports by Professor Annette Cashmore from the University of Leicester’s Genetics Education Networking for Innovation and Excellence (GENIE) CETL¹. This will inform ongoing research.

The report usefully offers next-step recommendations for research and policy, including analysing the links between teaching excellence and student learning outcomes. In his research into ‘dimensions of quality’ in higher education², Graham Gibbs has already established that the teacher who is delivering a course or module is one of the key factors that affect student outcomes, and we must now build on this to address, as Gunn notes, ‘the significant gap between teaching excellence as practice and educational theory concerning the emergence of the discourse of teaching excellence.’

In terms of policy, Gunn suggests that, as well as developing a framework (or ‘taxonomy’) for teaching excellence, a focus on developing ‘a shared repertoire around teaching *and* teacher excellence is needed which recognises that teaching excellence embraces but is not confined to teacher excellence’. This consideration is at the heart of the HEA’s work in this area.

Much has changed in the sector in recent years, and this makes defining notions of teaching excellence a key priority. Government initiatives have placed an increasing focus on the importance of teaching in universities and on the professionalisation of university teaching. The report notes that academic roles within institutions have changed too, and may now encompass many different roles, which may necessitate a more sophisticated understanding of teaching excellence. For these reasons and many more, this report, and the ongoing research that it anticipates, is very timely.

Professor Stephanie Marshall
Chief Executive, Higher Education Academy
October, 2013

¹ For an analysis of reward and recognition of teaching approaches to promotions see: Cashmore & Scott, 2009; Cashmore & Ramsden, 2009; Cashmore Cane & Cane, 2013.

² Gibbs, G. (2010), *Dimensions of Quality*. Higher Education Academy.

Executive summary

The study and its background

In December 2012 the Higher Education Academy commissioned a literature review exploring both the research and the grey material on university teaching excellence with a specific remit of updating an earlier review: Little, B., Locke, W., Parker, J. & Richardson, J. (2007) *Excellence in Teaching and Learning: a review of literature for the Higher Education Academy*. This earlier document was produced by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information at the Open University and is referred to here as the CHERI report.

The need to revisit the CHERI report reflects the growing complexity and lack of consensus in attending to teaching excellence in the academy, particularly in terms of:

- 1 the relationships between teaching excellence and excellent learning in general;
- 2 the relationships between the criteria of teacher excellence and the changing nature/diversification of academic roles and profiles as well as across a career long span;
- 3 the relationships between, and efficacy of, reward and recognition systems for teaching and research.

It is also a sign of the, at times, seemingly fluid educational demands on universities from both external and internal environments:

- *external*: particularly countries questioning the resourcing of higher education within a significant period of economic turbulence, as well as the growing economies looking to assert their position on the global stage as excellent higher education providers;
- *internal*: changing dynamics of the academic career within increasingly differentiated institutional environments, with a clear escalation of demands and roles expected of academics at different stages of their careers being concretised into reward and recognition systems.

This study presents a literature review with these complexities in mind. It also recognises that while some changes have occurred since the CHERI report, predominantly related to an increased awareness of the importance of student-oriented learning and teaching, many of the observations made in the CHERI report are still relevant, particularly:

- ambiguities and contention around the definitions of teaching excellence, teacher excellence and their relationship to excellent student learning;
- the presence of a tension between perceptions of managerialist performativity versus collegial accountability as underlying the discourse of teaching excellence.

Method overview

The review was desk-based, dependent on a search process that used web-based search engines, BERA research abstracts as a bibliographic database, and the intellectual networks of the authors. From these an initial literature grid was developed and populated to enable both the quick categorisation of the material and the submission of an interim report to the HEA. The headings that emerged as part of this process form the structure of the final report.

Overall findings

What is clear in the research and grey literature since the CHERI report is:

- 1 there is a lack of articulation around the differences between threshold quality and teaching excellence;
- 2 there is a lack of sophistication in conceptualisation of university teaching excellence both generally but more particularly in terms of changing expectations and roles over an academic career;
- 3 in terms of the differentiated nature of the HE sector, there is a lack of representatively diverse conceptualisations of teaching excellence. Where teaching excellence is discussed, while noting that it is essentially a contingent concept, necessarily assessed from 'within', there is very little to distinguish teaching excellence in teaching-oriented and research-oriented institutions, which suggests a normative universalising of teaching excellence;
- 4 at least in the research literature, there is a significant gap between teaching excellence as practice and educational theory concerning the emergence of the discourse of teaching excellence.

Summary of recommendations for research and policy

In terms of research there is a clear need for:

- 1 the development of robust methodologies for analysing the links between teaching excellence and student learning outcomes;
- 2 an analysis of the relationships and intersections between *vocational service virtues as excellence* identified in educational research (also implied in some teaching excellence awards) and the *ethics and ethos of the disciplines* (including both *implicit and explicit virtues and vices*) represented in universities and through which teaching excellence is manifested. This needs to be done to properly identify the dissonances between the two and how in turn these dissonances impact on the success of educational endeavours;
- 3 theorising which challenges the universalising (and culturally predicated) tendencies around teaching excellence;
- 4 rigorous analysis of the dialectic between external needs and internal institutional dynamics in how excellence comes to be defined, perceived, incentivised, and measured;
- 5 research on the definition and operationalisation of teaching excellence and teacher excellence in the areas of inter-professional activity, transnational education, learning analytics and disruptive innovations.

In terms of policy, the over-riding focus needs to be on developing a shared repertoire around teaching *and* teacher excellence. This recognises that teaching excellence embraces but is not confined to teacher excellence and needs to fulfil the requirements of the range of internal and external groups invested in facilitating excellent learning outcomes. Key to this are:

- 1 at a national or sector-wide level, the development of a practical and convincing, academic career-oriented teaching excellence taxonomy is required;
- 2 the need for strategic direction to be reached concerning the ethical use of learning analytics to facilitate teaching excellence (as well as individual teacher's enhanced teaching) and demonstrate excellent student learning outcomes.

How to read this report

This report endeavours to achieve two aims for its readers:

- to provide a scholarly summary and, where possible, critique of the available literature and grey material produced on teaching excellence since the CHERI report in 2007, which enables the consideration of further areas of research requiring attention;
- to offer pragmatic suggestions as to the way forward for the higher education sector in terms of considering teaching excellence, teacher excellence and excellent student learning and, through this, suggesting areas requiring policy development.

The report is presented in six core sections which follow an introduction. The core sections comprise:

- 1 a review of the research literature related to theoretical conceptions of teaching excellence;
- 2 a synthesis and analysis of practical approaches to teacher excellence;
- 3 an outline of key strategic considerations relating to student, alumni, disciplinary and institutional perceptions and practices of teaching excellence as well as an identification of the need for a sector-wide engagement with teaching excellence in a manner that reflects the pragmatics of contemporary academic careers;
- 4 a review of the literature concerning excellence in teaching leadership;
- 5 conclusions and recommendations for further research and policy;
- 6 a bibliography.

In addition to the text there are different forms of visualisation included in the sections to aid reading. These are represented as follows:

- **diagrammatic summaries** synthesising, where possible, key points;
- **dimensions of excellence quadrants**, symbolising the areas associated with approaches to teaching excellence as represented in the literature. These subsequently form the basis of suggested elements of architecture necessary for the development of a robust taxonomy of teaching excellence.

I. Introduction

“A teaching mission necessarily embraces both a concern for teaching and a concern for the end product of the teaching process that is: the student learning experience.”

(Little & Locke 2011, 19)

Concepts of excellence, like concepts of quality, are subject to debate. How excellence is defined, operationalised, and measured in relation to teaching and learning still lacks a clear consensus. This was illustrated by the CHERI report and remains a valid observation. The conversation is made more difficult because of the need, as identified by Little and Locke above, to address both a concern for the sector-wide, institutional, disciplinary and individual philosophies and practice/s of teaching and the impact of those philosophies and practices in terms of ‘excellent’ learning. How different components of the sector *think about* and *do* teaching excellence (and the broader influences which impact on those ways of thinking and doing) are necessary to consider from the outset and are introduced here. It is clear that there is a need for fuller recognition of the different educational orientations being manifested at a disciplinary/profession level and their influence on appropriate ‘excellent’ outcomes for student learning.

Throughout the text it is assumed that the different players in teaching excellence (senior academic management, disciplinary academics with a heavy research focus, disciplinary academics with a substantial teaching focus, clinical academics, generalist academics who want to be all-rounders, technicians, student services’ providers, students, alumni, government bodies, and employers) come with different assumptions and expectations about necessary and desirable learning outcomes of university programmes. Related to these assumptions are orientations (or leanings) towards and/or away from teaching and these orientations play a significant role in how each group of players come to define excellence. As well as providing a brief summary of how the sector is thinking about and operationalising teaching excellence, this introduction explores the notion of orientations-to-teaching further. Additionally, the method behind the literature review is set out, including its relationship to the CHERI report.

I.1 Thinking about and operationalising teaching excellence

As discussions concerning teaching excellence have grown, arguably the relationship between concepts of excellence and their impact on student learning has become more abstract. In part this is a result of the difficulties of evaluating how excellence in teaching actually affects student learning. Research (Trigwell 2010) indicates that authentic, deep approaches to teaching on the part of the academics have a knock-on impact on students, making them more likely to engage deeply, but this is dependent on phenomenographic approaches to data, and is not without its detractors (Haggis 2004). Quantitative measurements directly showing the cause and effect of teaching excellence on student learning have yet to be robustly articulated in the research literature explored as part of this review. As a sector, higher education seems to have remained dependent on qualitative data and apparent correlations. This is all exacerbated by the inability of the sector to come to some regularised consensus about what constitutes teaching excellence, teacher excellence, excellent teaching as well as excellent student learning.

The abstraction of excellence from student learning experience is also arising as a result of the pressure on institutions to recognise excellence in teaching using paradigms more suited to research excellence. This is particularly the case, for example, in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Here pressures on academics to publish (in order to demonstrate merit in terms of reward and recognition) can shift the focus and methods of SoTL, aligning them more with the requirements of educational research as identified in research excellence frameworks. Arguably, the excellent teaching practice SoTL embodies from a student-inclusive action research perspective can, in such circumstances, be devalued, so that excellent teachers opt not to undertake it.

Globally institutions continue to tackle questions of excellence in university teaching. As identified by the CHERI report and reiterated in Little & Locke (2011: 120), the notions employed to assist this process persist:

- excellence as a ‘positive for students’;
- aspirational targets for quality enhancement;
- reputational advantage for ‘competing’ institutions in a given national or trans-national context;
- means of achieving governmental goals, particularly social inclusion and workforce impact.

However, as well as continued operationalising of these contentious concepts since 2007, added urgency has arisen around engagement with notions of excellence in university teaching, especially in areas of the globe particularly affected by the economic downturn: Australia, US, Europe. In the first two, the focus has been on restructuring quality processes with threshold standards becoming more fashionable at a national level and excellence being focused in terms of institutional concepts. Within Europe there has been a re-emergence of the discourse around excellence in teaching to rebalance what has been a dominant rhetoric of excellence in research. Additionally, as city higher education hubs in Turkey and the Caucasus and regional higher education hubs in the Middle East and Far East (particularly: Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Special Administrative Zone of Hong Kong, Malaysia: Knight 2011) emerge, they too are adopting and transforming approaches to excellence in teaching, particularly in their reward and recognition systems. (See diagram 1 for a list of the key reports.)

Diagram 1: Key reports since CHERI re-focusing on teaching excellence & quality

Australia & US	UK & Europe
<p>TEQSA Australia: Threshold standards: http://www.teqsa.gov.au/higher-education-threshold-standards</p> <p>Devlin, M. et al (2012) <i>Leading sustainable improvement in university teaching and learning: Lessons from the sector: (Australian)</i>. www.olt.gov.au/</p> <p>Lumina Foundation (USA) degree qualifications profile: http://degreeprofile.org/</p> <p>White paper prepared by the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy's 2008-2009 Task Force for the Recognition of Teaching Excellence. <i>American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education</i>, 2010. 74 (9) Article 164.</p>	<p>Gibbs, G. (2010) <i>Dimensions of Quality</i>. HEA.</p> <p>European Teaching Excellence Award (Humanities & Social Sciences): http://20.ceu.hu/teaching-award</p> <p>European Commission approaches (Sept 2012): http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20120918b_en.htm</p> <p>Hénard, F. & Roseveare, D. (2012) <i>Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices: An Institutional Management Guide for Higher Education Institutions</i>. Paris, OECD.</p> <p>Pleschová, G., Simon, E., Quinlan, K., Murphy, J., Roxa, T. & Szabó, M. (2012) <i>The Professionalisation of Academics as Teachers in Higher Education</i>. Standing Committee for Social Sciences: European Science Foundation: http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/professionalisation_academics.pdf</p>
<p>Caucasus, Middle & Far East</p> <p>Hubs: http://www.globalhighered.org/edhubs.php</p> <p>China too is embracing notions of excellence, see for example: http://www.yzu.edu.tw/admin/aa/index.php/content/view/full/146/367/lang/en/</p>	<p>High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education (June 2013) Report to the European Commission: <i>Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions</i>. http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/modernisation_en.pdf</p>

In terms of academic performance management, however, excellence is used to differentiate *threshold* quality teaching and *higher-level* quality teaching in order to clarify reward and recognition pathways. The practice of criteria mapping has been diverse, with institutions:

- using research pathways' criteria and translating the phrasing to suit teaching (eg Uppsala University, Sweden);
- applying a Boyer model of scholarship in learning and teaching which is then variably valued, particularly in research intensives (eg University of New South Wales, Australia);
- developing criteria under a rubric of pedagogical research (eg University College Dublin).

From a quality assurance and benchmarking perspective this lack of standardisation presents difficulties, leaving promotions panels with institutionally subjective criteria rather than quality controlled approaches that map appropriately to other institutions within the same mission group. Currently, there are three obvious clusters of initiatives that have responded to the needs generated by an apparent lack of standardisation concerning the identification of excellence in teaching, particularly as related to academic career progression:

- UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF).³ This framework is a general description of the main dimensions of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within higher education. Divided into descriptors which focus professional recognition of teaching into four categories as well as providing the dimensions of activity, core knowledge and professional values related to these categories, it should assist in a process of excellence criteria development for those in higher education with teaching responsibilities (Laws, 2011). (See further p. 46 of this review);
- An HEA funded international benchmarking project: A collaboration between the University of Tasmania, Newcastle University, the University of Leicester, the University of Wollongong which considers reward and recognition processes for teaching;⁴
- A range of activities within institutions across the globe focused on identifying teaching practices which are qualitatively outstanding as part of the development of appropriate Teaching Excellence Awards (TEAs) as well as promotions criteria.⁵

1.2 The broader context of teaching excellence

“Differing perspectives on excellence create a range of different and sometimes conflicting demands on higher education institutions.”

(Brew 2007, p.84)

In addressing teaching excellence a particular emphasis needs to be placed on headlines which have continued to be generated as part of the changes in higher education over the last decade. These include:

- *diversification of academic role profiles* as represented by the range of academic contracts within an institution and often related to how the institution is placed in terms of increasing stratification within the sector (eg research-intensive comprehensive; research-intensive specialist; teaching-oriented with pockets of research excellence; teaching-oriented);
- *the rebalancing of educational demands on universities* in which orientations to teaching are played out. Thus the demands range from purely disciplinary focused through to the broader socialisation of students for a democratic society and/or knowledge economy. Within this report the following assumption is made: how academics identify with these demands is one of the key loci of their orientation to teaching (which in turn influences how they define excellence);
- *growing awareness of the paradox* of being caught between two co-existing dominant discourses when attempting to discuss teaching excellence in the sector.

1.2.1 Diversification of academic role profiles

Parker (2008) noted that the range of academic role profiles as demonstrated in promotions applications and decisions was diverse and how teaching excellence was weighted within them varied. The role profiles included the all-rounder, who was judged equally in all three categories (research, teaching, administration); the all-rounder with a specialism (minimum performance in all areas with excellence in one or two); the specialist (excellence in one or two areas); the well-rounded teacher (excellence in teaching, satisfactory performance in other categories); the researcher (with other areas of excellence taken into account); pure researcher (for whom the possibilities of demonstrating large-scale teaching excellence is curtailed by the limited time spent with students). The trouble with much of the literature is that

³ <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>

⁴ For further details of this see the project report:

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/publications/Reward_and_Recognition_Resource2

⁵ For an analysis of reward and recognition of teaching approaches to promotions see: Cashmore & Scott, 2009; Cashmore & Ramsden, 2009; Cashmore Cane & Cane, 2013.

it seems to operate from an assumption that teaching excellence in such a context has an absolute, normative set of criteria. What is clear, however, is that variable weightings for 'excellent teaching' in each role profile need to be addressed, thereby challenging any dependence on a single, undifferentiated, or horizontal set of criteria.

Moreover, as academic roles are increasingly 'professionalised', the categories within a given role are being further defined. This process is particularly well illustrated in the UK through the researcher development framework developed under the auspices of *Vitae* (Vitae 2010; Lee et al 2010; Bray & Boon 2011), with the research category being divided further into four headings: knowledge and intellectual abilities; personal effectiveness; research governance and organisation; engagement, influence and impact. This is important as the notion of the excellent all-rounder, with excellence in all three clusters (research, teaching, and administration), becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. Indeed, as summarised in Debowski (2012, 8) escalating expectations and a widening range of responsibilities for academics means their success now tends to be judged in terms of: a strong research track record, educational excellence, international and national collaborations and leadership. Added to these variables is the possibility that increasingly stratified missions within the university sector will further impact on how teaching is weighted and defined as excellent, with pedagogical stratification generating differential emphases around concepts of excellence.⁶ In practice institutions, through the restructuring of promotions tracks or pathways, are already grappling with the organisational development difficulties inherent in the diversification of roles (Cashmore, Cane & Cane, 2013).

It may be that there is a need now to engage with a taxonomy of excellence that covers:

- expertise (across stages of the career, within relevant academic profile, and evidenced appropriately);
- enhancement and innovation;
- outstanding approach and impact through enhancement and/or innovation and level of expertise.

Without it there is a vacuum in terms of how we build a systematic map of what activity, approaches and dispositions are required to demonstrate that excellence rather than threshold or good quality has been achieved. The most obvious result of this vacuum is that methods for rewarding and recognising teaching excellence emerge locally (discipline, school, college) which do not necessarily articulate with criteria for promotion as established centrally and interpreted through college discipline-focused promotions' committees (for this latter process see: Shephard, Kerry, Harland, Stein & Tidswell 2011).

What this means for teaching is yet to be seen, but it signifies a need for teaching excellence not to be developed in isolation of other academic responsibilities but rather as an integral, yet weighted, aspect of an academic's overall performance. To do this, in the UK at least, the separation of the researcher development framework and the UKPSF descriptors may become increasingly untenable in respect to some (if not most) academic profiles. This is already recognised in *Vitae's* document: *A Teaching Lens on the Early Career Researcher Development Framework*.⁷ As the links between teacher development and researcher development emerge more fully, a taxonomy of teaching excellence over the stages of an academic career may need to be mapped in a manner that allows for *different orientations towards teaching* as expressed by the different role profiles.

1.2.2 Educational demands on institutions in terms of outcomes

The educational demands on universities are multifaceted. Government, employer, academe, and disciplinary educational goals, values and norms are not necessarily equivalent. Indeed, the intersections between them, as well as the balance of power of them in a given institution, all impacts on how teaching excellence is perceived. For the purposes of this report, four key demands are assumed, each one of which plays a role in how academics and students come to view teaching and, thus, how excellence in teaching may be defined. Simply put the four key demands can be described as the need to provide an educational environment in which:

- 1 *Students achieve an appropriate level of disciplinary mastery.* The limits of the concept of such mastery are associated closely with the needs of the disciplines and definitions of staff-student collaboration. In the literature these are quite often defined through research-teaching nexus enhancements with excellence being related to enhancements or actual shifts in how the ways of acquiring such mastery is undertaken (Huber 2003; Brew 2007, p. 81; Jenkins & Healey 2007, 117 ff). From a practical perspective, outcomes briefly divide into two main categories: firstly,

⁶ This is the subject of a HEA commissioned research project by Jacqueline Stevenson and Penny-Jane Burke: *Pedagogic stratification and the shifting landscape of higher education*.

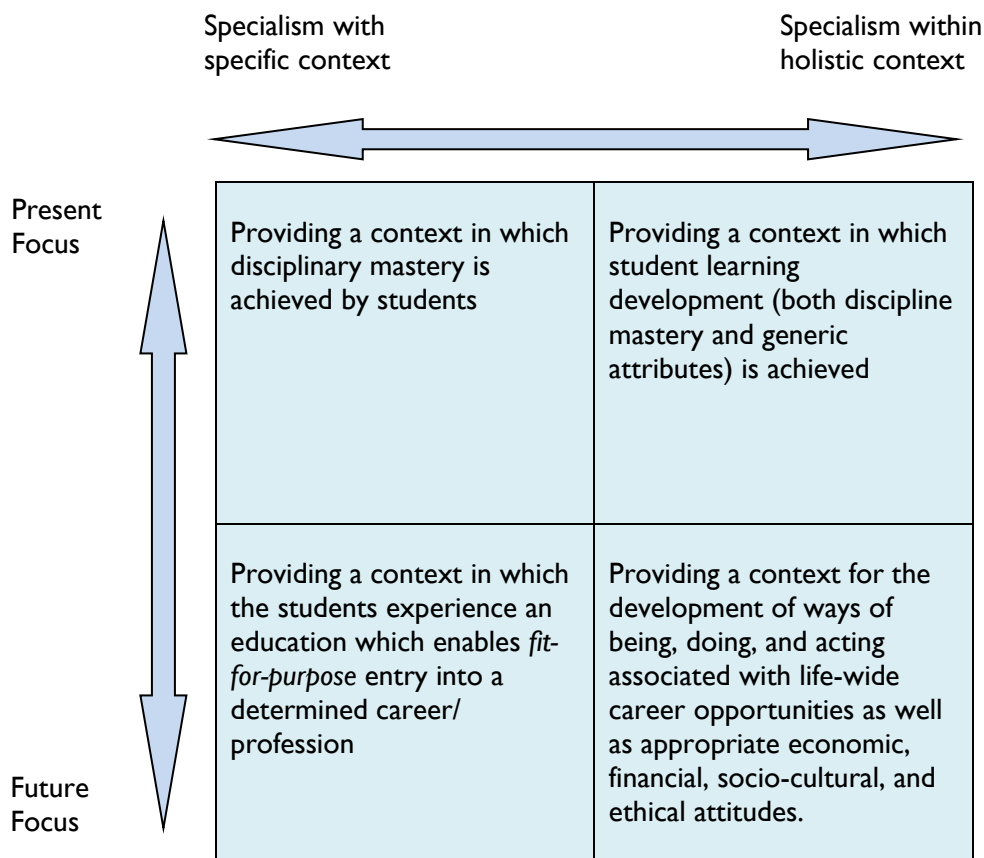
⁷ http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae_Teaching_Lens_on_the_RDF_Apr_2013.pdf

educationalist driven models that operate at the primary level of holistic curriculum re-design across a range of disciplines, often with a generalist assumption around ‘inquiry-led’ learning and teaching; secondly, discipline-oriented models that focus on approaches particular to given subject ‘fields’ and cultures, with this latter category being viewed as most effective (For a useful summary see: Schapper & Mayson 2010). Both essentially realign the research-teaching nexus from a focus on syllabus content to an emphasis on the processes of *becoming* either able to simulate researcher-like attributes or be an actual researcher. In this context the research-teaching nexus can be not just a place of discrete disciplinary specialism but also a location of more generalist attributes relevant to a range of subsequent (post-graduation) circumstances and aligns with demand 2.

- 2 *Mastery of the discipline and the development of an appropriate level of transferable (discipline and generic) attributes are both achieved.* The limits of the concept of such mastery are associated with needs of the discipline, mission statement of the institution, and student engagement. Again, excellence is quite often defined by approaches which enhance student learning and development through shifts in the teaching processes from predominantly transmission modes to those which emphasise active participation. Excellence in the fostering of graduate attributes has been a particular theme in response to these demands (eg Barrie 2012).
- 3 *Students are enabled to enter fit-for-purpose into a profession.* The limits of this are related to professional bodies and their need to maintain standards as well as academic perceptions of their disciplines within the professions. Changes in external accreditation standards, professional needs, and availability of employment within the professions may influence how this orientation plays out within a given university or part of a university.
- 4 *Students’ awareness of and engagement with issues relating to local and global knowledge economy, social justice, or political needs is facilitated.* The limits of this in the educational research literature seem drawn from an assumption that these are externally imposed and overly relate to the needs of local and global workforce rather than on social justice and democracy. Tied into this is an underlying theoretical worldview that there is a need to move, ‘away from the acquisition of excellent knowledge, and towards notions of personalised learning that will enable students to deal with troublesome knowledge, contested knowledge bases and the complexities inherent in ‘uncertain situations’ (Little & Locke 2011, 133). This assumption is often in parallel with a sentiment that excellence is related to performativity rather than recognising the dynamic but fairly consistent dialectic between academic mastery and external environmental needs. Debates concerning how to achieve these divides into two dominant discourses: one focused on expanding students’ situated and contextual understanding (eg Jackson 2011), the other on the importance of access to abstract knowledge (eg Wheelahan 2010: 1).

These core demands are summarised in the table below: Dimensions of excellence 1.

Dimensions of excellence I: Educational demands on universities



How excellence is perceived thus depends on: how an institution places itself in terms of mission, the disciplines' approach to undergraduate education collectively, as well as the identification with these demands on the part of the academics teaching on the programmes. Each one incorporates a slightly different orientation to education and provides a sense of the matrix in which teaching excellence comes to be defined. One needs, therefore, to look at the balance in statements around teaching excellence between:

- excellence in content and processes which foster maturity in disciplinary ways of thinking and doing;
- excellence in teaching processes which foster maturity in disciplinary ways of thinking and doing at the same time as development of attributes of use for the future;
- excellence in developing neophyte professionals (particularly Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Engineering, Allied Healthcare, Education);
- excellence in providing an environment for the development of ways of being, doing and acting associated with life-wide career opportunities as well as appropriate economic, financial, socio-cultural, and ethical attitudes.

None of these demands are necessarily exclusive of one another. Indeed, one of the contemporary paradoxes for universities is how to manage the various orientations to education represented in these demands appropriately in the face of resource reductions and economic concerns. Concepts of teaching excellence in terms of excellent student learning, if they are to be convincing enough for universities and their wider environments, need to be more robustly defined in ways that capture this variation.

1.2.3 Paradox of two co-existing dominant discourses or just a gap?

Arguments related to teaching excellence in the research literature tend to fall into two key discourses:

- the importance of recognition and reward of teaching in a manner that implicitly acts as a catalyst, motivating academics towards excellent practices as well as increasing its parity of esteem with research; normally centred on individual performance and with a strong emphasis on dynamic engagement;
- the contention that concepts of excellence currently being generated and manifested within organisational structures in universities are primarily part of a culture of performance management and measurement.

Consequently concepts of excellence trivialise excellent teaching and as such are a problematic aspect of a neoliberal agenda (Layton & Brown 2011, 164).

Though the existence of these two discourses seems paradoxical, it is also perhaps representative of a gap between theoretically-based critical education research, strategic thinking concerning teaching excellence, and what academics do. What is clear is that the systems to enable the demonstration of teaching excellence do embody certain 'loaded' assumptions about what a university is for and these assumptions are not value-neutral. Much less clear is whether or not the reward and recognition structures for teaching excellence have enabled parity of esteem with research. For example, one Israeli study, which tracked the impact of reward and recognition based on teaching excellence criteria, found that teaching was still second to research, but that it had increasingly been accorded 'a decent second place' (Davidovitch, Soen, & Sinuani-Stern 2011). Such a view may represent the broader pattern within higher education. If so, further research on changes to the status of teaching is needed.

It might also be the case, however, that the emergence of a discourse which directly compares research and teaching as the 'same equal things' (and, therefore, how they are rewarded as simplistically operating within an unfair hierarchy around status) is becoming increasingly problematic.⁸ A shift in the way we discuss research and teaching to recognise that *researching* and *teaching* are *equally important but different aspects* of the educational environment might be beneficial in such a context. It would hopefully facilitate a discussion of teaching excellence less preoccupied with competing against research's apparent status and more on how to deliver educational outcomes through the interaction of staff with different strengths. This is neither to belittle any strides made in reward and recognition of teaching to date, nor to assume that the status of teaching has been high enough (outlined in Cashmore, Cane & Cane, 2013). Rather it is to challenge the uneasy research and teaching binary, acknowledging that what we do as researchers and teachers all plays a role in educational outcomes and teaching excellence should embrace this as well as focusing on individual teacher excellence. It might also enable the development of structures to identify teaching excellence independent of research excellence concepts and categories (themselves highly problematic).

What is also observable from the practice-based literature, however, is that this should not be allowed to detract from acknowledgement that outstanding teachers and teaching environments do exist and that the students' perspective of them is positive.

1.3 Method behind this report

1.3.1 Focus

The focus of this work has been twofold:

- I To scope the research literature since the *CHERI* report.** In part, this is to examine where *CHERI* report recommendations are taken up in the research. It was also, however, to establish whether sophisticated theorising and resultant strategic planning about teaching excellence was being generated as a response to accelerating changes in higher education and consequentially materialising in the research literature which concentrates on these changes. On occasion texts which were published earlier than *CHERI* have been referenced. In general these are ones which were not included in the *CHERI* report but deemed relevant to this current review. (The two key texts are: De Corte 2003 which gives an added European dimension to the discussion on teaching excellence and is useful when read in conjunction with Rostan & Vaira 2011; Gibbs, Knapper & Picinnin 2006 on leadership in higher education.)

In order to enable a rapid identification of the key themes as well as noting emerging trends, a literature search grid was derived from the initial project proposal and populated as an on-going task with summaries of the key literature (Appendix 1). From early on in this process, the following topics emerged:

- pragmatic conceptions of teaching excellence;
- theoretical concepts of teaching excellence;
- what makes institutions stand out as having cultures of teaching excellence?
- what makes individuals stand out as excellent teachers in higher education at different stages of their careers?
- strategic approaches to curriculum reform;

⁸ For a useful summary of the discourse related to difference in status see: Cashmore & Scott (2009); Cashmore & Ramsden, (2009).

- have conceptualisations of excellence in teaching in higher education changed since 2007 (divided into: a. UK, b. US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, c. Non-English speaking rest of the world)?
- how does student experience relate to conceptions of excellence?
- possible indicators of excellence?

These topics were used to inform the subsequent structure of the final report.

- 2 To scope the grey literature as relevant to teaching excellence, particularly materials available on the Internet relating to teaching excellence awards, but also reports on higher education teaching excellence and quality more generally. Thus, the review draws on findings reported in the Gibbs (2008) report on conceptions of excellence underlying teaching award schemes, as well as how such concepts are operationalised in practice. It compares criteria used for National Teaching Fellowships (NTFs)/National/Institutional Teaching Excellence Awards (TEAs) from a range of different countries (eg Australia, UK, Ireland & Carnegie Foundation in US) to identify key themes in teaching excellence currently.

1.3.2 Search method

The basic search method was as follows:

- Google Scholar: search using phrases such as teaching excellence universities; teaching excellence higher education; leadership in teaching excellence;
- use of bibliographical detail from findings of this search;
- use of intellectual networks in academic and educational development in both the UK and abroad for identification of materials unlikely to turn up in a Google Scholar search;
- identification of relevant articles from analysis of BERA Abstracts (2008-2013);
- the identification of teaching excellence awards criteria was conducted by Internet searches using key terms such as 'university teaching awards', and the criteria of a selection of these were copied into a database. To overcome the language limitations of Internet searches, and thus have a more international focus, a selection of the websites of the institutions ranked on the *Times Higher Education* world listing were visited and searched for details of teaching awards. Those with some degree of detail or explicit criteria were also copied into the database. The award criteria were then analysed and coded according to the main themes that emerged.

Recognition of failings of this search method:

- 1 Google Scholar is a limited search engine;
- 2 the project team's intellectual networks are predominantly working with materials in English language;
- 3 using key phrases limits and binds the search and does not necessarily link into creative approaches to teaching that could be defined (but have not been so) as illustrative of excellence;
- 4 it is recognised that the TEA criteria search method potentially distorts the outcomes of the analysis towards elite institutions. This is not to detract from TEAs exemplified across all the different types of institutions involved in the delivery of higher education. It is just that time precluded a fuller analysis. The evidence identified does, nonetheless, provide areas of commonality that have emerged from within institutions around teaching excellence.

1.4 Relationship with CHERI report

In 2007 the CHERI report, centred primarily on the English higher education sector within the UK, focused on three questions:

- 1 how is the term 'excellence' used in the context of teaching and the student learning experience?
- 2 what are the conceptualisations of excellence?
- 3 what are the implications of the answers to these questions for policy focused on promoting or developing excellence?

This literature review expands the emphasis. Firstly, it draws on evidence from a wider UK and geographical spread, including Scotland and Wales as well as literature from Australia, America and Europe. It also recognises changes to the HE sector's relationship with teaching excellence since 2007. Drawing on themes that emerged from the research literature review it asks:

- how is teaching excellence defined, critiqued, and operationalised within the HE sector?
- what are the key themes present in the practical expressions of teaching excellence?
- how are cultures of teaching excellence fostered?
- what is excellent leadership in teaching?
- how does this relate to student learning?

In this, the current review, unlike the CHERI report, focuses much more on ‘concern for teaching’ than on a concern for how we may define excellence in student learning. Thus here the emphasis is on how teaching excellence has come to be practically expressed and what these expressions imply is now needed in UK policy and research. The shift in the questions represents the strides made towards emphasising student learning and student-focused teaching (Trigwell 2010) since Little, Locke, Parker and Richardson completed their report. There are, however, still considerable difficulties in conclusively articulating the links between individual teacher and systemic teaching excellence with student learning outcomes. Indeed, there is as much to be gained from reading the two reports in conjunction as in viewing them as completely independent of one another. This new review is complementary to rather than an overwriting of the CHERI report.

The authors recognised emerging themes in the literature on teaching excellence as relevant to student learning since the CHERI report, however, and these are summarised in diagram 2.

Diagram 2: Key themes in CHERI report compared with emerging trends in the literature since 2007

CHERI report (2007) themes	Emerging themes in the literature since 2007
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellence in student learning may or may not require excellent teaching. 2. Disciplinary boundaries as impeding student learning. 3. Excellence as involving a critical understanding of pedagogical and epistemological theory. 4. Excellence and intended learning outcomes. 5. An emphasis on student experience. 6. The need for impartial appraisal of government initiatives. 7. A focus on how students learn rather than the what of teaching excellence. 	<p>Teaching excellence being about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Active research-teaching activities (Brew 2007, p.74: importance of progressively integrating research and teaching as an aspect of excellence and encouraging a culture of inquiry; Jenkins & Healey 2007) to improve student outcomes and experience. This was particularly captured in QAA Scotland's Enhancement Themes work: http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes-outcomes-guide/staying-there/research-teaching-linkages (2008), as well as in Ireland evidenced in: Murphy, Griffen & Higgs (2010). 2. Dynamic student engagement including facilitation of peer-peer work and notions of partnership. 3. Assessment regime change towards assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning. <p>(1-3 were explicitly represented in the analysis of Welsh university learning & teaching strategies: Colley & Healey 2012.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Flexibility of provision and access to provision (Nichol, Hunter, Yaseen & Prescott-Clements 2012) 5. SoTL and the need to be evidence-based in some way with a recognition that the process of undertaking SoTL has the potential to change the academic in terms of quality of teaching even if this SoTL is not then widely disseminated (Gibbs 2007; Kreber 2013: 107); that SoTL which has students as co-investigators is particularly 'excellent' (Gale 2007) 6. Leadership, both hierarchical and distributed
<p>Another publication: Skelton, A., ed. (2007) <i>International Perspectives on Teaching Excellence in Higher Education: Improving Knowledge and Practice</i>. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, came out the same year and additionally looked at:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integration of teaching and research 2. Limits of 'performative' approach 3. Promotion of a 'critical approach' 4. Definitions of excellence need to ask questions about the role of the university in society 5. Definitions of excellence need to take context into account 	

I.5 Definitions

Definitions outlined from the literature review

Emerging from the literature and for the purpose of clarity in this review, the following provisional definitions have been used to differentiate between teaching excellence, teacher excellence, and excellent learning:

- *teaching excellence* – overall, system-wide conceptions of excellence (with the systems relating to sector, institutions, and disciplines);
- *teacher excellence* – conceptions of excellence related to individual philosophies and practices that are rewarded and recognised as excellent teaching;
- *excellent learning* – qualitatively higher levels of understanding and meaning-making from forms of abstract, contextual, and situational knowledge intrinsically linked to both the disciplines studied and the environments in which they are studied.

These definitions are provisional because there is actually little consensus in the literature concerning whether the focus is on teaching excellence or teacher excellence and what is meant by excellent learning when considering teaching/er excellence. It is hard to determine any significant sense of a shared repertoire (Tsui 2013) concerning these categories, the result of which is ambiguity and ambivalence across the sector as to what constitutes excellence.

2. Theoretical approaches to teaching excellence

To date, theoretical approaches to teaching excellence across the disciplines has been minimal. In the main, theorising has been left to educationalists. On one level this is appropriate. Teaching should no longer be seen as a craft based purely on an informal apprenticeship and reiterative experience but rather as an evidence-based professional activity in which we can achieve levels of expertise and, as such, should be informed by specialists. On another level, however, it is problematic. Educational researchers, while expert practitioners and often published representatives of their own field of study, do not necessarily integrate their holistic prioritising and theorising of excellence in teaching with that of cultures where different disciplinary orientations play a dominant role (with teaching excellence being only one of many other competing orientations that make up the whole). Indeed, a high level of expertise in one's subject area is a more common paradigm for understanding teaching excellence among academics, with content thus being integral to teaching (Yarkova & Cherp 2013). Arguably, the clashes between educational research and disciplinary priorities occur when educational theorising about the nature of the university and its place in society does not quite align with dominant disciplinary concepts about the nature and role of expertise within the discipline.

Another key dissonance that has emerged is the tension between three discourses:

- a discourse of cynicism in the educational research (teaching excellence is just a facet of neoliberalism and part of an agenda to move towards a consumerist model of higher education);
- a discourse of pragmatism in the focus of policy (how can we best do and demonstrate teaching excellence in a manner that convinces all stakeholders);
- a discourse of aspirationalism in the apparent integrity and authenticity of teaching enhancement as evidenced in the practice-based literature (and through the growth in student and staff led teaching excellence awards).

Thus, within the educational research literature, there is a sense in which methods for supporting and developing teaching excellence are viewed sceptically as being fundamentally agency-less or creativity-lite. This happens at the same time that the research reflecting on application of practice is illustrative of the sheer amount of energy and time devoted to improving student learning experiences. This is increasingly problematic when educational researchers (tied to notions of anti-neoliberalism) accept that their research on the various mechanisms of teaching excellence seem to be having positive impacts on both staff and students but remain firmly wedded to the possibility that excellence still may be being constrained by these mechanisms (as in: Shephard, Kerry, Harland, Stein & Tidswell 2011).

Arguably, this tension is further exacerbated because of a lack of engagement in the process of conceptualising teaching excellence in relation to the balance of educational demands present in higher education in general and institutions variably (as outlined in the introduction). What is needed is conceptualisation that avoids standardising teaching excellence into one harmonious category. Rather a process is needed that brings abstract theorising from one or two parts of the academy (education and educational development), policy, and disciplinary practice together. This would have to include much fuller recognition of the possible different educational orientations being manifested at a disciplinary/profession level and their influence on appropriate 'excellent' outcomes for student learning.

The last element concerning the ambiguities in the conceptualisation of teaching excellence is: the difference between objective methods and techniques (related to *potential replication* and *measuring the impact of identified teaching interventions*) and the subjective and qualitative judgement elements of teaching (relating to *ways of being* – both qualities and dispositions - and the promotion of *ways of thinking, acting, doing and making* in a given context). The identification of this in the literature since CHERI is outlined in diagram 3.

Diagram 3: Objective methods and techniques or subjective and relative aspects?

Methods and techniques	Subjective and relative aspects of excellence in teaching
Identified by Fitzmaurice, 2010 as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competences • technical frameworks • instrumental theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting critical thinking relevant to context and questioning the role of Higher Education in society (Skelton 2007) • Teaching excellence is a moral category (Skelton 2009) • Excellence only achieved through participation in that practice (not transferable but context bound). Therefore, excellence is an unstable concept dependent on evaluation from within) (Fitzmaurice 2010)

Having acknowledged these dissonances, Alan Skelton (2009) provides one of the clearest expressions of what teaching excellence is when viewed from the subjective and relative side of the equation. Thus teaching excellence:

- 1 involves the considered and reflexive development of a personal philosophy of teaching;
- 2 concerns engagement with ‘the enduring human struggle to ‘live out’ educational values in practice’, values which must inevitably be modified in response to ‘concrete material circumstances’. Thus excellence is ‘dynamic’, a ‘force’ that motivates teachers not only at the heights of their work but also in difficult circumstances and choices (2009, 109);
- 3 is a moral category – not about ‘what works’ but about what is ‘good’ (2009, 110);
- 4 involves, at an institutional level, ‘vibrant, deliberative cultures’ (2009, 110) in which intellectual curiosity is supported and ideas and practices are shared and discussed rather than held to a fixed set of criteria;
- 5 is found in the concrete circumstances that underpin teaching and learning, rather than in brilliant or ‘heroic’ individuals. In pragmatic terms: ‘Staff-student ratios; general infrastructure; conditions of work and secure contracts; time to reflect within the working day; and professional development opportunities’ (2009, 110);
- 6 should be conceived as part of excellence in the whole of the academic life, and not in rivalry with or in distraction from research excellence.

What Alan Skelton eloquently achieves here is a clarification of how teaching as a vocational service operates. In this, he perhaps aligns with Bruce Macfarlane’s definition of service as an objective of higher education professionals. Thus, for MacFarlane, the concept of service underpinning *The Academic Citizen*, is about, ‘values such as dedication to one’s discipline, a love of one’s students, a desire to communicate and a willingness to continually learn’ (2007: 2-3). What both Macfarlane and Skelton appear to be attempting to achieve is the sense that teaching excellence is part of a bigger, moral, nominal culture underpinned by academic altruism and, in Skelton’s case, supported through institutional systems.

Yet, regarding overall academic culture, the evidence from Australia (Bexley, James & Arkoudis 2011: 13) suggests that academics have as their primary desires, the opportunity for intellectually stimulating work, a genuine passion for their field of study, and the opportunity to contribute to developing new knowledge. It is in these arguably, that academic moral, nominal culture is expressed. The opportunity to teach, on the other hand, is an important but secondary desire for many and thus a subsidiary of the broader moral academic culture. To strengthen any sense of teaching excellence as being represented by vocational service, the tension inherent between the primary and secondary desires needs to be understood and it needs to be understood in terms of both those who lean predominantly towards research as well as those who lean predominantly towards teaching. We require a stronger comprehension of the relationships and intersections between the ethics and ethos (and attendant virtues and vices) of different disciplines and the ethics and ethos of higher education, as well as the ethics and ethos of institutions in which these are played out. These relationships and intersections are, after all, where dominant educational orientations get expressed and influence how teaching excellence is perceived.

Areas requiring consideration:

From the literature search in particular, the absence of considered debate and empirical research into the concept of teaching excellence in terms of challenging universalising tendencies and acknowledging the impact of globalisation is observable. This leaves a series of unanswered questions which are listed below.

Universal concepts of teaching excellence

1 Can university teaching excellence be universalised given the:

- increasingly differentiated nature of the sector in the UK and the already differentiated nature of higher education sectors elsewhere in the globe?
- substantially different needs within diverse disciplines?

This literature review suggests not, but to develop a more nuanced approach which meets the needs of the range of players (academics, students, external interests) will require substantive research.

- 2 Are teaching excellence awards within the elite institutions (as identified and used within this report) encouraging enhancement of practices that, in other contexts, would just be considered part of essential quality standards?
- 3 If excellence is a 'positional status' within a marketised higher education, how will teaching excellence evolve as each institution attempts to place itself as excellent in teaching? Essentially, what use will 'excellence' be as a rhetorical device within university mission statements when we have all become excellent?
- 4 How might increasingly internationalised quality and enhancement processes be managed? How will global and national notions of excellence in university teaching (additional to the threshold quality established by national quality and accrediting agencies) influence what is judged as 'excellent teaching'?
- 5 What systems of enhancement are best to raise the professionalism and status of teaching in universities in developing economies in non-English speaking contexts? While the advice from the European commission suggests a method of teaching enhancement similar to that in the UK, the effective functioning of this may require institutionally centralised systems of quality assurance to enable successful implementation. Such systems cannot be assumed to be either in place or of benefit universally. Are there alternative approaches to teaching excellence which are less culturally universalising?

Impact of globalisation on concepts and practices relating to teaching excellence

Are definitions of teaching excellence emerging primarily as a result of accelerating pressures generated:

- 1 externally by globalisation, financial restrictions, technology, and increased differentiation of institutions within their national sectors?
- 2 internally because there is a growing consensus that teaching excellence through enhancement is a good thing for the future of the disciplines?
- 3 or, more paradoxically, both simultaneously?
- 4 what do these definitions imply about the future of higher education and how can policy best be designed to assist in the management of the paradoxes being generated?

3. Practical approaches to teaching excellence: ‘Going the extra mile’

3.1 Dynamic engagement

From the teaching perspective, key themes reoccur in the literature concerning individual teaching excellence, all of which have two core conditions: being dynamically engaged in teaching practice and inspiring and practically scaffolding the potential dynamic engagement of one’s students.

Being dynamically engaged in teaching practice is generally divided into:

- 1 a commitment to career-wide learning about teaching practice, evidenced through credentials, SoTL (Gale 2007) and approaches to enhancing teaching;
- 2 affective characteristics, evidenced by forms of psycho-social interaction in the teaching spaces with students.

The assumed outcome of such approaches is understanding and active participation by students in the learning environment (and has been variously represented in initiatives concerning research-teaching linkages enhancements; students as producers; students as co-creators of the curriculum).

In terms of teaching practice, Devlin & Samarawickrema (2010) provide an argument for updating the criteria of the erstwhile Australian Learning and Teaching Council (closed 2011), which would reshape the themes of teaching excellence for individual academics as:

- facilitating student engagement;
- developing curriculum that demonstrates mastery of the field and anticipates students’ future needs;
- fostering independent learning through approaches to assessment and feedback;
- being respectful of both individual student needs and broader equality and diversity agendas;
- undertaking SoTL as ‘active evaluation’ for enhancing practice;
- engaging with changing technologies (although this is a subsection of facilitating student engagement – and seems ill placed in the article).

The literature, however, does not attempt to develop a taxonomy with respect to these core conditions in a manner that would allow us to access levels of excellence at different stages of the academic career. The implication of much of the applied research literature on teaching excellence suggests that an excellent teacher is one who is both *dynamically engaged* in practice and inspires *dynamic engagement* by their students, more or less permanently (or at least consistently over a period of a career). From a professional programme perspective, one of the clearest examples of this was expressed in Johnson-Framer and Frenn (2009) (Nursing). This notion of permanence and consistency is problematic as priorities at different stages within an academic career may change the level to which someone can demonstrate the core conditions. Nor does it address questions relating to how academics’ orientations towards and associated energy around teaching fluctuate in relation to identity shifts and growth.

3.2 Teaching Excellence Awards: General approaches

Trigwell asserts that to judge teaching quality we need to recognise that good teaching is the convergence of a combination of elements: student-centred focus, drawing on teacher’s strategies, planning, knowledge, conceptions and reflection, as well as their interaction with the learning and teaching context (Trigwell 2010, 67).

The question relevant to this literature review, however, is how do we differentiate between good and excellent? In Sweden, for example, the concept of teaching excellence is often used to describe what academic developers may call pedagogical competence (Tågerud 2010, 61). Thus, the three basic components of pedagogical competence outlined (Ryegård, Apelgren, Olsson 2010, 11) are that it:

- shall be based on that which supports the students’ learning;
- shall include the teacher’s ability to develop with the support of theory and to make public their practice – *Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*;
- shall make it possible to describe a threshold value (a lowest level) and a progression of pedagogical competence.

Even in this example there has yet to emerge a distinction between 'good' and 'excellent' teaching. Neither the Swedish case nor others referred to necessarily distinguish between what is 'effective' in achieving the aims of higher education, and what is 'outstanding', ie what goes another step further.

Arguably, it is in the sphere of teaching awards that a clearer sense of what constitutes this distinction – the 'extra mile' – begins to emerge. In looking at the criteria of national and institutional teaching awards, and at the real-life individuals and teams who have received such awards, we may discern what 'excellence' (beyond 'quality' or 'effectiveness') looks like in practice. In outlining how teaching excellence awards demonstrate what is valued as teaching excellence, this section draws on the criteria of various teaching awards around the world, and on scholarly literature written by and about award holders.

3.3 Purposes and processes of teaching excellence awards

There are wide divergences in the purposes and processes of teaching awards, as demonstrated by the award documentation and scholarly literature (see D'Andrea 2007; Devlin & Samarawickrema 2010; Gibbs 2008; Hammer et al 2010; Leibowitz et al 2012; Layton & Brown 2011; Olsson & Roxa 2008; Shephard et al 2010). Many awards state their purpose simply as the recognition and celebration of excellent teachers, whereas others assert the aim of promoting teaching excellence and enabling the dissemination of excellent teaching practice. Within an American context it was also assumed that they would facilitate academic staff retention, though this is not proven (Hammer et al 2010).

The effectiveness of teaching awards for the enhancement of teaching (and redress of the imbalance of research/teaching status in higher education) is contested and debated in the literature. Some argue that award schemes create a competitive culture that rewards star teachers without contributing to the improvement of teaching standards more widely. However, research illustrates how support of applications for teaching excellence awards changed the way applicants engaged with conceptualising how their practice was illustrative of excellence (Shephard et al 2011; Layton & Brown 2011). Analysis of records of applicant consultations at the University of Wollongong shows that over the four year period there has been a conceptual shift in the advice given, as well as in the workshops and the awards themselves. In 2006 the focus was the structural elements of the application; in 2007 this moved towards helping academics reflect and find a language to explain their practice; by 2008 most applicants began the process with a well thought out draft application, thus the consultations focused on refinement (Layton & Brown 2011, 168).

It has also been noted that award applications often include a large amount of work for the nominee, and may become an added burden rather than a reward (although the reflective process of application can, given the right support, prove to be intrinsically rewarding (Layton & Brown 2011).

Student-led awards, based on nominations and votes from students, or calculated on the basis of course evaluation questionnaires (eg Harvard University's award scheme) may be particularly gratifying for the teachers who receive them. However, such awards have been criticised as being little more than a popularity contest, demonstrating charisma and likeability rather than the facilitation of effective learning, and are reflective of the increasing commodification of higher education, in which the student is treated as a consumer reporting on their 'customer satisfaction'. While it is contestable that the student is the best assessor of the quality of their education, it is still fair to say that students are adept at recognising the teachers who 'go the extra mile', whose efforts and innovations are demonstrative of excellence, even if the students are not yet fully cognisant of what excellence in learning involves.

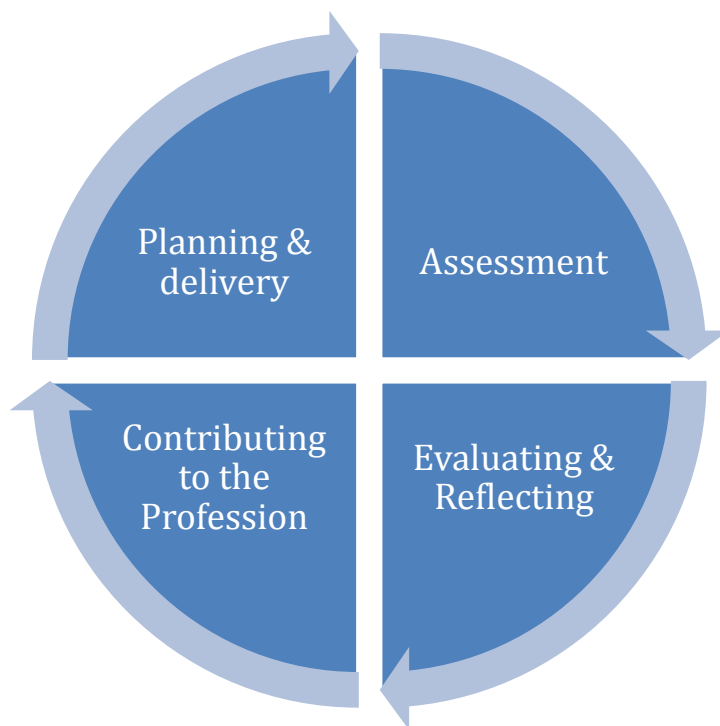
Many teaching awards have a student-led component that is combined with an application process that requires the provision of information and evidence. This often includes, particularly in the US, a statement of teaching philosophy, letters or feedback forms from students, student grades, and a detailed curriculum vitae. Other awards may have a clear set of criteria that the application must explicitly meet, including the above elements but also reflective statements and examples of innovations and scholarly publications of teaching. The award criteria tend to be suggested indicators (requiring a preponderance of achievement) rather than mandatory criteria: it is widely acknowledged that it is not possible to meet *all* of the detailed indicators of excellence (although excellence that touches on each of the broad headings of the award criteria is required for some awards).

3.4 Practical elements of teacher excellence

The criteria of the New Zealand national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards are structured in terms of the practical areas of teaching and learning in higher education: planning, delivery, assessment, evaluation, and professional

development, and these operate as a useful thematic scheme for the criteria of the teaching excellence awards we addressed. The national and institutional awards around the world identified in the literature research refer to some or all of these aspects of teaching and learning in higher education. A characteristic of excellence (beyond effectiveness) threaded through these practical aspects of teaching and learning in higher education is that of 'going the extra mile' – efforts and achievement a step beyond similar activities that enable effective learning. The central themes of the teaching excellence awards are summarised below:

Diagram 4: Central themes of teaching excellence awards



Each of these themes is addressed below:

3.4.1 Planning and delivery

A number of the award criteria do seem to value what Bruce Macfarlane (2011) has characterised as the 'performance' approach to teaching excellence, in which the focus is on the teacher's ability to capture students' attention through personal charisma and rhetorical ability. However, there is a strong emphasis on excellent course delivery as that facilitates students becoming autonomous, critical and responsible learners. There is increasing emphasis on the use of technological innovations, both in the 'face-to-face' classroom and in online resources and interfaces.

Curriculum design

Some of the award criteria (eg South African national award, University of Sydney, University of Utrecht, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology) demonstrate the importance in contemporary HE of the elucidation of intended learning outcomes, clearly communicated to the students and delivered throughout the course in a well-structured way. This is arguably part of the threshold quality of teaching in higher education; however, excellence may be discerned in the design of curricula that is up to date with current scholarship, identifying the learning outcomes most significant for the discipline and for the needs of the particular students. Such excellence in curriculum design will require some considerable degree of 'command of the field'.

Knowledge of the subject

The notion that excellent teaching requires expertise in the subject being taught is one that is common, but not readily defined in practical terms beyond the specific disciplines, and not emphasised at length in the award criteria. For example, the University of Alberta's Rutherford Award's first criterion is 'exhibits a consistently superior command of the subject matter'; Nanyang requires 'specialist subject knowledge'.

More prevalent in the award criteria is the ability to develop certain modes of thinking in students, rather than the content of that thinking, and thus an education expanded beyond disciplinary knowledge. This is expounded by the award criteria of the National University of Singapore:

“The OEA/ATEA identifies teachers who qualify as educators who facilitate learning that is of value even outside the boundaries of their specific disciplines and professions. Such teachers help learners to acquire not only discipline-/profession-specific knowledge and abilities, but also the ideas, mental capacities, mindsets and habits we expect every university graduate to have, regardless of their areas of specialisation.”

Ability to inspire and motivate

On the basis of award criteria, less important to excellent teaching than exhaustive knowledge of the subject is the ability to make that subject interesting to the students. This can be through presentation skills, creative use of resources and a passion for teaching the discipline that is frequently referred to in the award criteria as ‘enthusiasm’ (eg Nanyang, New Zealand and Australian national awards), and/or the ability to inspire students in their learning (eg UK NTFS, Indian National Science Academy, New York University, Stockholm University, University of Utrecht, University of Warwick, UK, University of Washington). The national Australian Teaching Excellence Awards criterion of ‘influencing, motivating and inspiring students to learn’ includes ‘encouraging student engagement through the enthusiasm shown for learning and teaching; inspiring and motivating students through high-level communication, presentation and interpersonal skills’, but the emphasis is not on personal charisma as a performer, rather in ‘stimulating curiosity and independence in learning’.

In general terms, the teaching awards criteria make it clear that motivating and inspiring students through making learning ‘relevant’ is not about pandering to the whims of students’ current interests. Rather making learning relevant is about identifying the learning that is necessary and meaningful for their lives in the world, in both the present and the future, and communicating this relevance clearly to the students. For example, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology rewards teaching that ‘draws on students’ life and work experiences in teaching, makes the subject relevant to students’ career goals, and links theory with professional practice and societal concerns’.

A number of the award-winning teachers’ reflections on their practice (Hay 2011) reveals their excellent teaching lies not in accomplished and polished performances, but in a certain ‘being present’ in the classroom. The National Teaching Fellow Ursula Lucas (2011) describes her awareness that teaching is a ‘daily exercise in vulnerability’, and how she responds to ‘dead’ classroom situations by taking new risks – ‘playful, non-threatening moments’ that challenge the students’ presuppositions, and these are able to arise when the teacher is relaxed and open to the possibilities of the moment. Excellent nursing teachers deploy ‘affective’ strategies such as the honest ‘sharing of humour, sadness, mistakes; not being afraid to say that they did not know’ (Johnson-Farmer & Frenn 2009). One of the award-winning teachers interviewed by Shephard et al (2011) stressed their ‘teacher-honesty’ as an important aspect of their practice. Michael Wesch (2011) states that an important pedagogical principle is ‘love’: learning is ‘not simple information gathering, but opening up to something other and connecting with it. To learn to love is to learn to learn’.

Respect, care, and kindness for students as individuals; equality and diversity

Inter-related to a genuine ‘being present’ in the classroom is another significant theme of the various award criteria: enhancement of the student experience that involves respecting and supporting students as persons. Both the criteria of teaching awards and the views of awards’ recipients attend to the presence of kindness, care and respect. Indeed, the examples we analysed gave a practical voice to Clegg & Rowland’s (2010) assertion that this presence accounts to more than just empathy. Rather it represents forms of unsentimental, intellectual judgement centred on affect that enables students to recognise that their lecturers, though not the same as them in terms of needs and desires, are interested in them despite these differences. What are being asked for in the awards are therefore not just random acts of compassion and sympathy, but something much more akin to a service *virtue* around teaching within the academic profession. Thus, the criteria for the national Teaching Excellence Awards in Australia includes, ‘respect and support for the development of students as individuals’. The excellent teacher will respect and support students as individuals, with diverse learning needs, who come to their learning from particular socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

In terms of care for students and their intrinsic worth as human beings, Nanyang University stipulates that excellent teachers have ‘care and close rapport’ with their students; the South African national award includes the criterion that ‘students believe that the lecturer respects them as human beings’, and Florida State University defines an excellent teacher as one who is ‘available to students’, ‘helpful to and takes a personal interest in students’, and ‘receptive to students’ viewpoints and ideas’. Canada’s 3M Fellowship asks that applications demonstrate ‘a real personality [...] a teacher in three dimensions, more than a human doing - a human being. Does the candidate think like a teacher, live like a teacher?’ Lisa Emerson (2011), winner of the Prime Minister’s Supreme Award of the 2008 New Zealand National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards, has ‘attending to student uniqueness’ as a guiding principle. 3M Teaching Fellow

Dennis Krebs (2011) takes care to make clear to his students that he takes their education very seriously, and will expect the same from them. Krebs engages with his students as individuals by, for example, learning students' names, their interests and what is important to them.

An international agenda of respect for equality and diversity in terms of ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, and so on, is discernible in the teaching awards criteria. For example:

- the Technical University of Munich's teaching award includes the criteria of 'meeting the requirements of a heterogeneous student body and contributing in various ways to diversity justice';
- the University of Glasgow similarly honours teachers 'recognising and providing inclusive support for the learning needs of our diverse student community';
- the South African national award criteria features the words 'embraces their diversity and their different viewpoints';
- the national awards of Australia and New Zealand have clear concern for widening participation, asking that their award-winning teachers 'assist students from equity and other demographic subgroups to participate and achieve success in their courses' (Australia) and have 'strategies for acknowledging and addressing the diversity of students from different backgrounds and with different needs' (New Zealand). The award-winning New Zealand teacher, Roger Moltzen (2011), takes particular care to be aware of cultural differences. He allows students a choice and the option for creativity in what they submit for some assignments: for example a Maori mature student submitted a knitted cardigan which featured symbols of her culture's approach to human development.

Differences in ways of learning are both connected to and independent from social and cultural differences, and an important aspect of excellent teaching is recognition of and response to the diverse ways that students learn most effectively. Thus Trinity College, Dublin asks that award applicants demonstrate 'flexibility and variety in your teaching methods to accommodate diverse backgrounds and learning preferences', and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology's Michael G. Gale award specifically promotes 'a variety of teaching and learning activities in classes suited to the needs of different students'. The use of multiple strategies, such as storytelling, videos, humour, reflection, role playing, and so on, was a key theme of Johnson-Farmer and Frenn's (2009) interviews with award-winning nursing teachers. The need for a variety of methods recurs in Iain Hay's edited (2011) collection of excellent teachers' descriptions of their practice:

- Jane Dahlstrom's (2011) awareness that different students learn best in different ways means that she mixes up the modalities of her classes, using various styles and methods of instruction;
- Susan Wurtele (2011) stresses the importance of creating space for students' diverse life circumstances and ways of learning;
- Carl Wieman (2011) describes a key pedagogical principle as 'addressing learners' prior knowledge and experiences'. His Introduction to Physics course for engineering students goes the extra mile in addressing individual students' prior knowledge. Instructors on the course looked at students' grades and prior courses, and also observed the students in person during homework help sessions, in order to identify where there were significant knowledge gaps;
- Kathleen Regan (2011), at the beginning of a course, interviews each student to ascertain their learning objectives.

Active and group learning

However important the recognition that different people learn in different ways, in higher education learning and teaching discourse there is a widespread sense that the best learning is active learning, and this is reflected in the award criteria:

- the national teaching award in South Africa includes the criterion, 'creates rich environments for active learning';
- Trinity College Dublin asks applicants how they, 'include students as active contributors to teaching and learning processes';
- Hong Kong University of Science and Technology's award has the criteria, 'engages students in active discussion and involvement in teaching and learning' and 'provides students with opportunities to be involved in the structuring of their own learning experiences'.
- in Sweden, Uppsala University's award's 2013 prioritised field is, 'active student participation'.

A core theme of Johnson-Farmer and Frenn's (2009) interviews with excellent nursing teachers was 'the ability to draw all students into active questioning and learning so that the process of discovery is enjoyable'. Award-winning teachers' reflections on their practice demonstrates the various practical ways that actively engaged student learning is

encouraged by excellent teachers. These include assessment techniques (see below), but a core theme is group/peer learning strategies. On the principle that ‘students learn best as partners in learning’, Rhona Free (2011) replaced lecture time with in-class group problem-solving exercises, analysis and simple experiments about economic behaviour. This kind of approach takes up a lot of time and so requires careful thought about which elements of the subject are important for the students to learn. On Wendy Rogers’ (2011) medical ethics course, the first year took the form of group-based research work rather than lectures, with paired groups producing ‘for’ and ‘against’ presentations and posters. Jerusha Detweiler-Bedell and Brian Detweiler-Bedell (2011) stress the importance of ‘[c]arefully crafted, well-supervised, team-based learning experiences’, based on the three key principles of ‘teamwork, laddering of experiences and ownership’. They argue that successful group learning requires that teachers be ‘deliberate in their formation and support of teams’, and ‘create a culture of positive interdependence’. The importance of group and problem-based learning is strongly reflected in the award criteria (eg Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, University of Glasgow, University of Alberta, Central European University).

Critical and scholarly

Donna C. Boyd and Fred Singer (2011) explain that they use group-learning activities because this enables students to ‘continually practise the art of asking questions and finding methods to answer them’. Excellent teaching ‘contributing to the development of students’ critical thinking skills, analytical skills and scholarly values’ (Australian Teaching Excellence Award) is a core and recurrent theme of both the award criteria and award-winning teachers’ description of their practice. The higher education ideal is discussed at some length in the award criteria of the National University of Singapore:

“An excellent teacher is not merely one who excels at communication, has a firm grasp of the subject, a passion for teaching, cares for students or is sensitive to their needs; nor is excellence guaranteed by the teaching methodologies he or she uses. At the heart of teaching excellence lies the teacher’s ability to inculcate and strengthen intellectual qualities such as independent learning, thinking, and inquiry; critical thinking, creative problem solving, intellectual curiosity, intellectual scepticism, making informed judgments and articulateness.”

Other awards that emphasise the development of students’ critical and analytical faculties include Florida State University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, New York University, University of Alberta, University of Sydney, University of Utrecht. Welby Ings (2011) discusses how he fosters a critical attitude in his students: his course delivery is processed through individual and group inquisitive tutorials – students are asked questions to help clarify their thinking. Ings tries not to criticise, believing that constructive criticism from another can hinder critical analysis from the learner.

The fundamental pedagogical principle of facilitating critical thinking must, according to Boyd and Singer (2011) be taught explicitly, and in the context of the course content; for this they used methods such as teaching students various learning theories and asking them to apply them to their own learning; students on this course were also provided with ‘Guides to evaluating information’. Boyd and Singer also regard it as important for students to have an awareness of the nature of scholarship: that knowledge is created through building on existing knowledge, but that the research process is messy and complicated rather than smooth and linear. Their course aimed to teach this through having the students design and implement a research plan, the outcomes of which were printed in a book for all the students on the course and the university library. Other award-winning teachers whose teaching imparts to students the research ideals of higher education, and attempts to integrate research and teaching, are:

- Rhona Free (2011): an economist who involved students on advanced courses in a long-term large-scale research project of hers, thus gaining experience of being part of a large research team;
- Jerusha Detweiler-Bedell and Brian Detweiler-Bedell (2011): at their Behavioural Health and Social Psychology lab, students are treated as practitioners and researchers in their own right, as they take part in an immersive research experience as undergraduate student collaborators.

In an international context in which teaching and research are separated and stratified in higher education (see Boughey 2012), the integration of teaching and research is recognised in the criteria of the teaching awards of Central European University, Hungary; Hong Kong University of Science and Technology; McMaster University, Canada; Nanyang University, Singapore; Trinity College Dublin, Ireland; University of Glasgow; University of Sydney; University of Toronto.

The role of higher education in society, and the importance of critical thinking and research skills in a wider social sense, is a pervasive theme of the literature on concepts of teaching excellence. It is echoed in some of the reflections on

practice of award-winning teachers; for example, Susan Wurtele regards education as improving the world through enabling students to see themselves as citizens. This features in some of the award criteria:

- University of Utrecht stipulates that ‘the teacher has an integrated vision of the relationship between education, research and society and translates it in his/her teaching’;
- Florida State University emphasises that excellent teachers ‘help students make discriminating judgments among competing options’, ‘challenge students’ thinking and assumptions’ and ‘provide a positive role model to students regarding the value of a university education’ and ‘emphasise the importance of values and standards in both academic and non-academic life’.

Assessment

A number of the teaching awards stress the importance of assessment for learning (eg New Zealand Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards; Trinity College, Dublin, University of Auckland; South Africa National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards; University of Wollongong, Australia). Indeed, it seems that excellence involves conscientious use of formative assessment, and creative and innovative approaches to feedback. While the provision of timely feedback that contributes to students learning may be a threshold standard, a facet of excellence is the use of a variety of different methods of assessment of learning and provision of feedback, which are adapted to according to context and student need. A number of award-winning teachers contributing to Hay (2011) describe at length their various creative approaches to assessment of students’ learning:

- Carl Wieman (2011) maintains that assessment can be used to motivate learning through providing a sense of achievement that comes from seeing progress in learning. He puts considerable effort into the creation of homework problems, and, to ensure that assessment leads to learning, one question on every assignment is to pick a question answered incorrectly on the previous assignment and explain the error;
- Welby Ings (2011) claims that assessment should not measure performance, but learning, and this is best measured by learners themselves. Thus Ings designs assessment formats that provide three layers of reflection: personal self-critique by the learner, in-class peer critique, and then these are submitted to the teacher for consideration and comment, to which he responds with his feedback. Ings keeps formal assessment to a minimum, so that assignments lead into each other to create ‘cumulative bodies of thinking’. Final grading is on a portfolio of work and a reflective statement. In assessment, Ings asks questions such as ‘what is effective and why?’ or ‘if you had half the time again, what would you change and why?’ It is better to enable students to leave education with the ability to analyse and criticise their own work, rather than acquiesce to external evaluation;
- Susan Wurtele’s (2011) course design involves allowing students a range of choices in how they access the course material and how their mastery of this is assessed. Material is available online and (for one year, enabled by a grant) in audio format. Engagement with the material is encouraged through the students preparing a summary of the assigned reading in order to be eligible for a grade for each week’s seminar. Assignments include a concept map, a letter (from ‘concerned citizen’) explaining an issue in plain language, and a personal reflection on a particular reading. Wurtele assesses through student conferences, which can allow for different presentation styles and independent research projects, disseminated to peers as well as staff. Her exams allow students to answer questions from three of six equally weighted sections each containing a different kind of question: multiple choice or true/false; definitions; short answers; a concept map; discussion of a quotation of their choosing; traditional essay question. Students are presented with the options at the beginning of the course and during the revision period, thus encouraging them to think about their learning styles. The diversity of questions and the need for fairness (ie making multiple choice answers comparable with an essay answer) means that preparing exams requires a great deal of careful work.

Diagram 5: Summary of planning and delivery categories articulated in TEAs

Category	Explanation
Curriculum design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-to-date knowledge and understanding of discipline • Ability to design intended learning outcomes most suited to both discipline and needs of students undertaking the discipline
Knowledge of the subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superior command of the subject matter • Ability to facilitate development of understanding and knowledge of relevance outside the discipline as well as within • Challenging students' presuppositions
Ability to inspire and motivate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiring through one's affect, enthusiasm and presence in the classroom • Motivating students to become intellectually independent through identifying learning that is necessary and meaningful for students in the present and the future
Respect and care for students as individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising diverse learning needs and having the capacity to personalise the teaching environment in the light of these • Respect for equality and diversity • Addressing learners' prior knowledge and experiences
Active and group Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using methods which promote interaction • Fostering student engagement and participation • Group, problem-based and peer-to-peer learning
Critical and scholarly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing to students' critical thinking and scholarly attitude • Raising awareness among the students of the nature of scholarship including links between research and teaching • Fostering understanding of critical thinking and research skills in a wider social sense
Engagement in assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscientious use of formative feedback • Creative and innovative approaches to feedback • Offering students a range of assessments to assess their mastery

In discussing how teaching quality could be assessed, Trigwell (2010: 71) has commented that most judgements of teaching quality are made using evidence based on teaching strategies. In the context of this report, this relates to both planning and delivery outlined above. Trigwell notes that judgements are made using measures, such as assessment scores and evaluation ratings, to assess how well these strategies are conducted. The key categories used to make judgements around planning and delivery as evidenced through teaching excellence award criteria are summarised in diagram 5 above.

3.4.2 Evaluation and reflective practice

An aspect of teaching that seems particularly demonstrative of excellence as opposed to threshold quality is the degree to which teachers reflect on their own teaching practice and attend to and respond to students' evaluative feedback. Evidence of responding to peer and student feedback is listed in criteria of the award schemes of, for example, University of Glasgow, University of Auckland, University of Sydney, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. A theme of most of the contributions to Iain Hay's *Inspiring Academics* (2011) is that of realising the inadequacies of their teaching, and thinking deeply about how it could be improved. This involves focus on student learning rather than delivery of content and thus:

- attempting to enter into the students' perspective;
- paying close attention to student feedback, and acting on it;
- becoming familiar with the literature on pedagogical strategies and effective learning.

Implicitly, this aligns with Trigwell's (2010: 72) argument that the qualitative dimension of judging teaching quality needs to be viewed as a range from teacher-focused to student-focused, with a higher value being placed on student-focused.

While these significant shifts in thinking and teaching practice are important as a mark of *good* teaching, what seems to distinguish *excellent* teachers is that this process continues throughout their career: they never stop thinking in detail about how to be better teachers, and listening and responding to their students:

- Jane Dahlstrom (2011) continually thinks about her practice, for example by observing lecturing style whenever she attends a lecture. Her pathology course for medical students uses a meticulous system of feedback in which, during years one and two, student feedback is sought for each lecture. She also elicits feedback on the teaching of all instructors on the course (which is made available to them should they want it) and she gathers feedback from the teachers by meeting with them for half an hour every couple of weeks, and by having a longer, structured meeting four times a year. The academic developer Gerlese Akerlind comments that what distinguishes Dahlstrom's teaching as excellent is her commitment and diligence in gathering and acting on feedback;
- Rhona Free (2011) follows a structured approach to improving instruction: developing awareness of one's own teaching, comparing this with the feedback of others, making choices about what to change and how to change it, implementing those changes, then assessing the effectiveness of the changes;
- Kathleen Regan (2011) calls each class an ongoing experiment, where what does and doesn't work is a matter of continual scrutiny;
- the interviewees of Leibowitz et al (2012) also describe taking time to reflect on and analyse each class they teach.

Student feedback questionnaires are an increasingly ubiquitous element of the life of the higher education professional, but excellent teachers treat these not (only) as a necessary hoop to be jumped through due to managerial demands, but as a means for the improvement of student learning. This is through both suggesting to the teacher what areas are in need of improvement, but also as a way of encouraging the students to think about their own learning.

Additionally, engagement with peer observation and review of teaching is a critical aspect of both developing and evidencing engagement in evaluation and reflective practice. There are three common threads in approaches to this:

- *undertaking and documenting evidence of developmental processes* which bring academics together with disciplinary peers, learning and teaching expert peers and students to record perceptions of a teaching observation and discuss possible enhancements. For example, at Griffith University, (Drew & Klopper 2013);
- *doing and reporting Peer Review of Teaching*: staff paired with member of the subject teaching team, not necessarily reciprocal (audit or developmental focused dependent on scheme/perception of academics). For example, in the physiotherapy department at Cardiff University (Kell & Annetts 2009);
- *engaging in summative assessment of teaching practice* (as a peer review process) focussed on core criteria. For example at National University of Ireland, Galway (Murphy, MacLaren, & Flynn 2009).

Dimensions of excellence 2: Evidencing individual teacher excellence

As Little & Locke (2011: 135) make quite clear: ‘claims for excellence must be supported by evidence’. Engagement with reflection and evaluation provide the core components for demonstrating excellence within submissions for TEAs. The table below reflects the key types of evidence used in the judging of teaching identified as part of this literature review.

<p>Peer observation/review of teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence of peer-involved developmental processes • Report of peer review of teaching • Summative assessment of teaching practice through certificated programmes 	<p>Pedagogical competences portfolio</p> <p>Focus on personal philosophy of teaching, evidencing how this is then operationalised in a variety of ways. (It is likely to include evidence from the three other quadrants.)</p>
<p>Scholarship of Teaching & Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of dissemination of outcomes from learning and teaching projects • Publication of outcomes of initiatives (with a recognition that this does not equate primarily with peer review international journals as required in research excellence frameworks) 	<p>Evaluations and letters of support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Alumni • Learning analytics – this particular data-revolution can allow for rapid performance management and may come to play a significant role in the assessment of academics’ teaching quality

3.5 Contributing to the profession

Continual reflection and development of practice of one’s own teaching for the whole of one’s career is an indicator of excellence; even more so is significant contribution to the enhancement of the profession as a whole. For example, Canada’s 3M Fellowship has only two explicit criteria, the second one being ‘commitment to the improvement of university teaching’. This may take the form of innovation – the development of new practices that lead to more effective learning – or it may be through the sharing of best practice, either in (formal or informal) mentoring/leadership roles, or through the scholarship of teaching and learning.

3.5.1 Innovation

‘Innovation’ is mentioned in the award documentation of the following institutional schemes: California Institute of Technology, Florida State University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, McMaster University, Ohio State University, New York University, Technische Universität München, Trinity College Dublin, University of Auckland, University of Ghent, University of Glasgow, University of Oxford, University of Sydney, University of Toronto, University of Utrecht, University of Washington, University of Wisconsin, and University of Wollongong. Innovation is among the criteria of Central European University’s Europe-wide award, and the national schemes of the UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the US. Thus ‘innovation’ is arguably the aspect of ‘excellence’ (rather than quality) that is most internationally common, at least in the countries identified within this review.

The award criteria variously emphasise teachers’ innovations in delivery, assessment and feedback, and evaluation (see above for examples of innovation in each). Some (eg Ohio State) pay particular attention to technological innovations and online learning, and this is perhaps the area of teaching and learning in higher education where change is the most rapid.

Related to ‘innovation’ but not synonymous with it, is making a ‘significant contribution’ (South African national award) to teaching materials and curricula; also characterised by the Australian national awards as ‘contributing professional expertise to enhance curriculum or resources’.

It may be that ‘innovation’ is so widespread a criterion not because it is fundamental to the concept of excellent teaching: after all, there is no need to reinvent the wheel every semester and there are a limited number of innovations

in teaching and learning, just as in anything else. Rather, innovation is a demonstrable sign of continuous, creative (original) and dynamic engagement, and one that coheres more readily with research models of evidencing excellence.

3.5.2 Sharing of best practice (and leading as a facet of this)

As well as devising new methods of facilitating learning, another aspect of teaching excellence based on the wider improvement of teaching in general is that of helping others to become better teachers, through peer support and mentoring and through the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). While this is not perhaps a requisite of effective teaching, the excellent teacher does not practice excellence in isolation.

Many teaching awards emphasise the sharing of best practice in terms of peer support, mentoring, collaboration and leadership. Awards that explicitly recognise support and mentoring at the departmental, institutional and disciplinary level include:

- South Africa ('shares experiences of teaching in a variety of 'fora' and 'collaborates with others within the discipline/field, university or with other universities');
- Hong Kong University of Science and Technology's award criteria contains the category heading, 'Contribution to the development of other teachers', under the umbrella of which is included 'leadership in faculty development activities' and 'mentoring to junior faculty members';
- University of Alberta awards teachers who, 'promote and contribute to excellence in teaching by collaborating with others within the university and/or with communities at large'.

Many award programmes feature an opportunity or requirement for winners to share their excellent practice, for example the University of Warwick award documentation states 'as part of our commitment to raising the profile of teaching excellence in the university winners and commendees will be expected to disseminate their teaching activities more widely [...] for example: a short video interview, articles, presentations at university events, facilitating workshops'. At the University of Sydney, awardees are asked to give a short presentation on their teaching at the presentation ceremony. The Carnegie/CASE US Professors of the Year scheme makes the winners' 'Passion for teaching' statements available on its website.

Further to this, some awards are set up as 'fellowships', or networks of excellent teachers who support and share practice with each other, and a forum for making their knowledge more widely available:

- Lund University in Sweden has a Pedagogical Academy, the members of which have been awarded the status of 'Excellent Teaching Practitioners', which has been the subject of research into the efficacy of reward and recognition schemes. Membership of the Academy requires the awardee to 'continue to contribute to the pedagogical development at the Faculty of Engineering (known as LTH). This may be realised through active participation in LTH's pedagogical debate and development, and by acting as mentors for younger teachers'. (See further: Olsson and Roxå 2013);
- the national Canadian 3M Fellows 'work individually and collaboratively to enhance teaching and learning at their own institutions and through larger collaborative initiatives supported by the Society'. An aspect of this is meeting together at the annual conference and residential retreat for 'free-flowing conversations about personal, professional, and scholarly issues in higher education [which] result in bonding at a deep level'.

The literature suggests that interpersonal sharing and support is very important for university teachers (see Roxa & Martensson 2009). Indeed, the 'communities of practice' approach to awarding teaching excellence is particularly enriching for award holders, and may well contribute to wider enhancement of teaching and learning (Jones 2010; Roxa, Martensson & Alveteg 2011; Shephard et al 2010).

The other mode of teaching excellence as commitment to enhancement of the profession is through research into learning and publication of that research: SoTL. The importance of SoTL for teaching excellence is a significant theme of the scholarly literature (see Gale 2007; Roxa, Olsson & Martensson 2008). Engagement in SoTL is a feature of institutional awards such as the University of Washington, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, University of Auckland and Trinity College Dublin, and national awards such as Australia, South Africa, the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS), and the Carnegie/CASE US Professors of the Year. SoTL may be the aspect of teaching excellence that students are least aware of, so plays little part in student-led awards. However, like 'innovation', SoTL demonstrates a continual commitment to improving practice that is commensurate with teaching excellence.

Award-winning teachers who are engaged in SoTL reflect on its significance on their teaching in different ways. Sally Fincher (2011) objects to an approach to SoTL that assumes that research on effective learning can be transferred from one subject to another: her own significant contribution to higher education is a model, devised with a colleague, of useful sharing called 'Disciplinary Commons'. In this model, educators teaching the same subject (even module) at different institutions meet every month to discuss their work. Sally Kift (2011) combines SoTL with a career plan of leadership activities; her own individual aims were aligned with institutional and sector-level priorities. After working as a project team member in first-year curriculum renewal, she won a large internal grant to assure the quality of assessment practices, and as both a team member and leader she sought to ensure that both students and staff benefit – the latter through scholarship outputs. For Kift, a sustainable academic career involves exploiting the 'synergies' of the academic workload of research, teaching and service provision. Less formally, Ursula Lucas (2011) frames SoTL as part of the fundamental nature of scholarship - to make knowledge public and able to be built on: '[s]ometimes we are great teachers and sometimes we are not, but as scholars we do not have to travel alone'.

In the national Australian award, formalised sharing of best practice constitutes 'educational leadership', evidence of which may be provided through:

- regular workshops on teaching and learning; assistance with the creation of teaching dossiers;
- services to an educational development centre; support of a teaching and learning committee; grants for teaching and learning projects.

While (formal and informal) mentoring and sharing of practice can be understood as aspects of 'leadership', the award criteria also emphasise leadership as the taking on of (formal and informal) roles of responsibility. For example, South Africa's national award criteria suggests that the applicant 'assumes responsibilities on departmental curriculum or teaching committees'; the New Zealand national award's kaupapa Māori criteria includes 'leadership, innovation and/or creativity; success in the context of care for team integrity; strategic development of teaching pathways; contribution to teaching which makes a significant contribution to the wider context of Māori progress'. (See section 5 for discussion of leadership in teaching.)

Drawing this material together, excellence in teaching practice is summarised in the table below.

Dimensions of excellence 3: Excellence in teaching practice

<p>Planning and delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum design • Knowledge of the subject • Ability to inspire and motivate • Respect, care and kindness for students as individuals • Active and group learning • Critical and scholarly 	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscientious use of formative feedback • Creative and innovative approaches to feedback • Offering students a range of assessments to assess their mastery
<p>Contributing to the profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation in delivery, assessment, feedback, evaluation, technology • Significant contribution to curriculum renewal and reform • SoTL • Participation in formal networks focused on teaching excellence • Broader leadership in teaching 	<p>Reflection and evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on inadequacies of own teaching • Degree of diligence in actively engaging with and responding to student and peer feedback and evaluations

3.6 Individuals and institutions

An aspect of excellent teaching that is discussed in the literature rather than the award criteria is the importance of teaching and learning as a corporate endeavour. While there are a number of teaching team awards, the emphasis remains on the individual; besides, giving awards to relatively small teaching teams does not address the issue that excellent teaching, be it by an individual or a team, cannot happen in any sustained way without institutional support and resources. The curriculum changes made by the award-winning individual teachers of *Inspiring Academics* (Hay 2011) would not have been possible without the permission and input of their institution, for example:

- David Kahane (2011) was able to ensure TAs' paid presence at lectures and weekly team meetings;
- the resources were available for Dahlstrom (2011) to utilise 'clickers' in her lectures;
- Wendy Rogers (2011) could take a degree-long approach to curricula design, a luxury denied most due to the increasing 'atomisation' of higher education courses.

For some of the award-winning teachers, their excellent practice was achieved *in spite of* their institutional context, in which the individual teacher has heroically gone against the institutional grain (eg Ings 2011 – and this echoes Juntrasook et al's (2013) analysis of those with leadership roles in HE as understanding themselves in narrative terms as both 'hero' and victim'). Award-winning Dennis Krebs (2011) makes the point that '[r]ecommending broadly-based changes designed to enhance the educational experiences of students and professors is one thing; persuading the university community to adopt and to support the changes necessary to bring them about is another'. Teacher excellence is thus only one (necessary) part of teaching excellence. Where teaching excellence is concerned, individual excellence needs to be equalled by the broader institutional context in which it is identified. The relationships between learning, teaching, resources, and infrastructure are inextricably linked.

3.7 Individuals and teaching excellence

Even with the range of initiatives witnessed since 2007, particularly the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), but also the Enhancement Themes approach in the Scottish sector, there is still a sense that the sector needs to fall back on the importance of the individual demonstration of excellence. This means we need more research exploring the relationships between objective methods, techniques, inter-subjectivities, affect, and understanding. This will be especially the case as more higher education is delivered virtually and where the affective aspects of the teaching relationship might be sought in different ways (through texts and multi-media images rather than body language for example).

Another area requiring further analysis relates to the prevalence of reward and recognition systems which are tied into pecuniary systems. At the moment, many teaching excellence awards as well as criteria for promotion effectively link pay to prestige. Where the financial resources exist to introduce or maintain such a structure, the motivational possibilities are clear. However, in economically developing countries or countries which have found themselves in financial difficulties, such systems become unable to function and can play a demotivating role (as promotion, for example, is curtailed by relative spend). There should be space for research into alternative forms of reward and recognition and how a culture of excellence can be fostered that is not necessarily dependent on financial incentives.

4. Teaching excellence: strategic considerations

From the literature search it became clear that there were a variety of strategic clusters that all had a claim on the definition and judgement of teaching excellence. Thus, members of the student body, disciplines, and institutions all generate explicit and implicit discourse relating to teaching quality and, within this, excellence as something outstanding. Some of the key themes in the literature are introduced below, as is one area where strategic consideration of excellence clearly needs development: sector-wide approaches.

4.1 Student and alumni concepts of excellence

Work undertaken by the Higher Education Academy and NUS Scotland on student-led teaching awards illustrated that student perceptions of teaching excellence divided into two main areas: the personal attributes and style of the lecturer or tutor, and the content, structure and delivery of sessions (Davies, Hope & Robertson 2012). Of importance to the students in these awards is having had the experience of an extraordinary level of dedication and responsiveness.

Alumni also provide a useful retrospective reflection on what constituted excellent teaching (Hammer et al 2010). Using qualitative feedback from one group of alumni at the University of Limerick, Moore & Kuol (2007) illustrated that approachability, interest in students, helpfulness and patience were the most recollected traits of academics considered as excellent teachers. Although a command over disciplinary areas was considered important by this group, it was viewed more as an outcome of an effective teacher-learner relationship than as the central ingredient in excellence (Moore & Kuol 2007: 140).

In terms of research, however, there is a need to gain a much more robust understanding of:

- the relationships between what students primarily value in terms of teacher excellence and the extent to which the affective traits can be received in such a way that they influence the students' levels of understanding and knowledge or just act as a proxy for understanding and knowledge (Gunn 2013);
- how students' perceptions of teaching excellence and teacher excellence change as a result of trends in educational development such as witnessed in the agendas towards 'students as co-creators' (Bovill 2013, 2014) and 'students as participants' (Gärdebo & Wiggberg 2012). Ultimately, these agendas have the potential to disrupt the way academics understand their classrooms and how best to achieve excellent learning. If they fulfil their promise, arguably, they will have the power to redefine teaching excellence within the university sector in part because they require a systematic reordering of the categories upon which teacher excellence is currently judged.

4.2 Disciplinary concepts of teaching excellence

Given the acknowledgement that the key loyalty for many academics is their discipline as well as the rapid growth of analysis of disciplinary cultures and their potential impact on learning (Kreber 2009; Välimä & Ylijoki 2010; Gunn 2013), it is surprising that there is little research literature on how excellence in teaching is defined and operationalised from disciplinary perspectives. (And, indeed, then how excellence in inter-disciplinary teaching might come to be defined, fostered, practiced, and evaluated.) The now erstwhile subject centres did provide some disciplinary-oriented national awards for teaching excellence in the UK, but these have all but disappeared since the closure of the subject centres. Yet, it is clear, for example, from Gibbs, Knapper and Piccinin (2008: 430-431) that within research-intensive institutions there are marked disciplinary differences in amount and type of identifiable teaching related 'problems'. Consequently these might call for variable forms of anticipation and problem solving as related to the disciplinary context, categories of teaching excellence significantly under researched (although it is touched on in passing in: Lanzendorf & Verburgh 2003: 218). A similar study is required on teaching-intensive institutions to enable comparison of:

- where and how disciplinary influences determine what is considered teaching excellence;
- how teaching-focused problem solving in different institutional contexts from within the disciplines is divergent or convergent (and what the implications of this may be for judging excellence in terms of, for example, innovation and creativity).

More broadly, the CHERI report noted a concern relating to the role that disciplinary cultures (and their integral academic literacies and power dynamics) could play in impeding excellent student learning outcomes. From the CHERI report one can infer that, to shift such barriers, excellent teaching in some way needs to critically disrupt the apparent nature of the discipline to enable fuller student engagement. The implication behind such a suggestion would be that teaching excellence from a disciplinary perspective would not only facilitate subject mastery, but also cultural awareness of disciplinary spaces and the capacity to challenge the political and intellectual power-play within the discipline.

There are two specific approaches to teaching in the disciplines in the literature that implicitly respond to the concern expressed in CHERI:

- 1 American material spotlighting ‘disciplinary signature pedagogies’ and their role in developing disciplinary ‘habits of mind’ (Gurung, Chick & Haynie 2009; Chick, Haynie, Garung 2012);
- 2 analysis of disciplines and their teaching and learning regimes (Trowler 2009; Fanghanel 2009; Roxå & Mårtensson 2009).

4.2.1 Gaps in the literature

There is clearly merit in both of these approaches in terms of excellence in student learning outcomes. Nonetheless, it is clear that the following require exploration before clear judgements about student learning outcomes as a result of disciplinary teaching excellence can be ascertained:

- how dominant educational orientations (see dimension I, p. 12) are both demanded of and expressed by the disciplines;
- how these influence the way in which academics problem solve and anticipate teaching needs;
- and how excellence can be variably defined in such a situation (dependent on institutional focus as well as disciplinary context).

4.3 Institutions and cultures of teaching excellence

It was noted at the end of the last section that the relationship between the individual and their institution is intrinsically linked in any discussion of teaching excellence. Defining and measuring institutional ‘culture’ and ‘climate’ is notoriously difficult and highly contested, though viewed as a core area in relation to learning, teaching and assessment (Bamber et al 2009). Thus, Fanghanel (2007) is right to point out that teaching excellence is as much about systematic concepts of excellence equating to ‘excellent environments’ as excellent (heroic even) individuals. It is also about agency in a context (and perhaps autonomy) as much as technical frameworks or instrumental structures. In this sense an understanding of cultures of teaching excellence needs to be viewed in terms of the various domains or subcultures in which perceptions of it exist: national, institutional, disciplinary and student.

For the purposes of this report and drawing on themes in the literature, we would define a culture of teaching excellence as an overall perception and lived experience of institutional structures materialising teaching excellence through both:

- *deliberate intention* (expressed in formal policy rhetoric and informally in daily communicative activities) and;
- provision of the practical *resources/opportunities/capacity* (financial strategies; time and workload plans etc) necessary to act effectively on that intention.

To date, the key areas of intention and capacity are:

- to recognise innovation and enhancement from local initiatives through mainstreaming within institutions (Southwell, Gannaway, Orrell, Chalmers & Abraham 2010). Five conditions were identified in this study as necessary for effective embedding and up-scaling:
 - effective leadership and management at a variety of levels: ie clear goals, a shared vision, stable and consistent leadership and a level of commitment to the success of the project (including role played by head of school/department in fostering a collegial approach);
 - climate of readiness for change: ie recognition of the need for change and the necessary skills to enact it, via reflective practice and engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning, and flexible and responsive policy systems;

- available resources: 'ongoing access to adequate human, financial and infrastructure resources from both their institutions and from external sources' (2010, 63);
- comprehensive systems in institutions and funding bodies for planning, communication and quality assurance;
- funding design.
- to formally support and recognise Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Brew & Ginns 2008);
- to provide and explicitly value inter-professional support in the process of supporting teaching excellence award applications (Layton & Brown 2011; Southwell, Gannaway, Orrell, Chalmers & Abraham 2010) and excellence in teaching practice (Bluteau & Krumins 2008);
- to support a range of significant social networks or communities of practice which interact through enforced intersections within the institution. These have an explicit role to assist individual teaching expertise development and ensure both sustainability and a variety of influences on enhancement (Jones 2010).

4.3.1 Gaps in the literature

There is a substantial lack of engagement around excellence in any meaningful way in four areas related to institutions and their cultures: inter-professionalism, transnational education, learning analytics, and disruptive innovations. They represent university engagement with educational development and institutional research on student learning activities that have firmly emerged over the last decade. Each one raises both research questions about the relationship between excellence in a given area and student learning excellence as well as policy issues (around decisions regarding deliberate intention and provision of resources).

Inter-professionalism and teaching excellence

One of the key gaps in the research literature in terms of institutions and cultures is how inter-professional collaboration is representative of teaching excellence. With respect to valuing inter-professional support in teaching excellent award applications and excellence in teaching practice, Southwell, Gannaway, Orrell, Chalmers & Abraham (2010: 65) make the point that, 'what is self-evident to those in the field of educational development, innovation and reform is not equally evident to many who seek funding to improve and innovate learning and teaching in universities'. It is argued that this is because discipline-based, would-be innovators do not necessarily come with backgrounds in the same skills and knowledge as educational developers, and can benefit from inter-professional exposure. If teaching excellence is best provided through inter-professional working between academics and educational developers or other expert groups, how can collaborative activity gain reward and recognition? Also, if there is a dissonance in terms of the educational orientations of different sets of professionals (as implied in the educational orientations outlined previously in the introduction), how can:

- appropriate status be given to all sets of professionals involved in enhancing teaching in such a way that a culture of excellence is fostered;
- different educational orientations be valued within this culture across *all* the groups?

Walsh & Kahn (2010) start to address this generally and more specifically Bamber and colleagues (Bamber 2013) explore it with respect to educational development, but there is clearly more to be done.

In this section it is also worth raising the absence of formal discussion of teaching excellence between those engaged in the 'built' learning environment and the academics that subsequently use the space. This is especially relevant where new physical spaces are being designed to afford universities material solutions to some of the issues associated with effective teaching as the opportunities of new technologies and new understandings of how students learn are realised.⁹

Transnational education

There is a big gap in the literature on teaching excellence here. As countries position themselves into higher education hubs, there is a real need to understand how teaching excellence can be defined in a manner that values the cultures of both the host state and international student clusters as well as the institutions from elsewhere that have branch campuses within the host state. Education hubs position themselves as centres for student recruitment, education and training, and in some cases research and innovation (Knight 2011: 222). Excellence in, as well as quality approaches to, teaching are key in terms of maintaining status, yet there is little in the research literature discussing this (details come mainly from 'grey' literature) (Knight 2011). For example, curriculum innovation is one of the threads within Singapore's Global Schoolhouse strategy (Knight 2011), but what this means in practice is unclear. From a different perspective,

⁹ For a thorough introduction to the issues of physical space and learning environments in the context of Dutch Universities, see Den Heijer 2011.

investment in innovative teaching in such hubs as a way to dominate the global market is a strategy that would challenge the current top global institutions (primarily in the UK and the US) to improve their own approaches to teaching.

Learning analytics

The use of learning analytics software and educational data mining of student course management systems is growing within institutions (Baepler & Murdoch 2010). Often associated with approaches to student retention and progression (see, for example, McCluckie 2013), such analysis has much to offer universities about how to define teaching excellence in a manner that brings concepts of outstanding teaching together with what students are actually doing. It can, however, also be seen as a form of student surveillance. There is a need for a clear policy steer in terms of how learning analytics can ethically be used by institutions, disciplines, and individual academics to evidence teaching quality, given their potential to employ methods of online surveillance in order to assess personalised needs of students (Ferguson 2012). The range of vehicles for articulating and evidencing excellence is significant, but some of these in their turn generate questions around probity of use, ethics, and student engagement (particularly student evaluations and learning analytics).

Disruptive innovations

Without a clearer sense of what constitutes teaching excellence it is difficult for institutions to make appropriate qualitative judgements about which innovations they should adopt and adapt and which have the potential to destabilise the quality of teaching. For example, there is not time to discuss the rapid growth in discourse around massive open online courses (MOOCs) and their relationships to teaching excellence (including how learning analytics used within the MOOCs comes to determine definitions of best practice and staff evaluation), yet from both a research and a policy perspective, these need to be addressed.

4.4 A UK sector-wide strategic consideration? Teaching excellence taxonomies

One of the most significant gaps in the literature, policy discourse, and to a certain extent practice, is the relationship between concepts of teaching excellence, CPD frameworks, and need for a sophisticated taxonomy of teaching excellence which recognises that academics have a range of roles and profiles (not just teaching) that change over their careers. Neither the CETL nor the QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes approaches to teaching quality have achieved this in the UK. Indeed, in both cases, difficulties in scaling up from local initiatives, establishing shared visions, and tensions around ring-fencing funding which was not subsequently mainstreamed by institutions have played a role in lowering their impact in the generation of clear concepts of teaching excellence (Turner & Gosling 2012; Land & Gordon 2013). Moreover, though recent research (Turner et al 2013) has demonstrated the potential impact of the UK Professional Standards Framework in influencing institutional engagement with teacher development - through shaping accredited programmes, influencing CPD frameworks, supporting reward and recognition, and influencing strategy - it was also recognised that a key challenge in using the UKPSF was its lack of clear alignment with career progression.

4.4.1 Taxonomy of teaching excellence

The UKPSF provides a useful normative structure for understanding the different areas in which academics undertake practices related to teaching. This is particularly the case with regard to the descriptors linked to Associate Fellow, Fellow and Senior Fellow status (Descriptors 1-3), which imply a career progression based on degrees of experience, if not a quantifiable demonstration of growing specialist or excellence-based expertise. Descriptor 4 addresses a qualitatively specific cluster of academics whose contribution to teaching is outstanding beyond the domain of their own universities and could be used to support the development of a teaching-centred professorial level, sector-wide academy. However, as the UKPSF stands it is difficult to align it to:

- how excellence would be defined at different stages of an academic career. At the moment the emphasis on overall excellence, as seen in the section on teaching excellence awards, focuses on a career-long demonstration of excellence. For example, how do expectations of excellence change in relation to neophyte, to experienced, to expert, to leader or even from 'player' through to 'coaches' (Shephard, Kerry, Harland, Stein & Tidswell 2011). Any taxonomy would need to address the gap related to excellence at different stages;
- how it would be weighted depending on the academic profile a member of staff has;
- how it can be used to support continuing career development in teaching excellence (as opposed to threshold quality);
- how it could be used to identify excellence as relevant to institutions with diverse missions, particularly in raising the status of teaching through, where relevant, an interconnection with research careers in research-intensives, but also in terms of enabling institutions to illustrate the uniqueness of their provision in a way that centres on teaching excellence.

It is clear that individual institutional CPD frameworks concerning teaching will address some of the taxonomic issues, but it is also clear that another taxonomy, the *Vitae* Early Career Researcher Development (ECRD) Framework, is effective in part because it was agreed at a sector-wide level (Bray & Boon 2011). This is true also of the UKPSF and suggests the potential of such an approach. Arguably, there is a need for the development of a taxonomy which aligns career development in research (as in early researcher development framework) with teaching, to enable benchmarking of teaching excellence for different academic roles and career stages and this needs sector-wide agreement. This would also hopefully facilitate management of the tensions being reproduced in the light of the siloing of research and teaching within institutions.

However, in terms of success of such an approach, perhaps more significant is that the *Vitae* ECRD Framework has been directly linked to a Concordat between research funders and institutions receiving research funding from them.¹⁰ For a teaching excellence taxonomy to become embedded across a sector rather than just emerging from within individual institutions, other forms of leverage may well be needed, possibly through the Concordat or a similar model depending on the type of institution, relevant to its mission and focus.

4.4.2 Sophisticated framework of teaching excellence behind such a taxonomy

There is a significant need for a sophisticated framework to be articulated which allows for:

- clarification of the difference between threshold quality and excellence;
- interpretation and evaluation of excellence;
- a structure for anticipating what can be defined as teaching excellence in rapidly changing environments or in the face of 'disruptive innovations'.

In addressing this, policy needs to be developed responding to the following questions:

- 1 what models and theoretical paradigms of large-scale, systematic (rather than personalised) excellence can we draw on to build a theory of teaching excellence in which academics and students alike have confidence and which can be presented to external interests (including the press, employers, parents and alumni) in a manner that is both acceptable to and invested in by them?
- 2 how can theoretical principles be established to assist the sector in evaluating teaching excellence in the face of rapidly changing technologies, architectural environments which claim to be student-centred, and collaborative approaches to teaching demanded through the direct association between student learning and student experience?
- 3 what models and theoretical paradigms can be adopted, adapted or created which enable clear direction on the identification, support and development of leaders of teaching excellence with an evidence base centred on robustly defined, convincing outcomes?

¹⁰ <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/505181/Concordat-to-Support-the-Career-Development-of-Researchers.html>

Dimension 4. Approaches of different domains promoting teaching excellence in universities

In summation, the practical fostering of teaching excellence (through definition, practice, evaluation and reward systems) in each of the domains (sector-wide, institutional, disciplinary, students) as articulated in the research and grey literature are briefly described as dimension 4 below.

<p>Sector-wide strategic approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National recognition schemes (D'Andrea 2007: 174)• Establishing national bodies to oversee teaching excellence Eg Higher Education Academy• Establishing national centres for teaching excellence (Turner & Gosling, 2012)• Enhancement approaches within quality assurance frameworks (Land & Gordon 2013; Bamber et al 2009)	<p>Institutional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching excellence awards• Linked top-down and bottom-up institutional-wide enhancement initiatives (and capacity for mainstreaming)
<p>Disciplinary</p> <p>There is a gap in the research literature here although:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• signature pedagogies (Gurung, Chick & Haynie 2009; Chick, Haynie, Garung 2012) and• teaching and learning regimes (Trowler 2009; Fanghanel 2009; Roxå & Mårtensson 2009) provide some models to enable interpretation	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student-led teaching excellence awards (see: Davies, Hope & Robertson 2012)• Students as co-creators (Bovill 2013, 2014)• Active student participation (Gärdebo & Wiggberg 2012)

5. Excellence in teaching leadership

The literature on higher education teaching leadership is woefully inadequate. In many respects this was the case before the CHERI report and has remained so since 2007. Scant research and some grey literature available concerning academic leadership in general are available (see particularly: Scott, Coates & Anderson 2008). There is significant scope and need, however, for research on specific attributes, practices, principles and impact as they relate to effective engagement in leading teaching and the student learning outcomes from this in a university setting.

In terms of the literature, Australia has provided two particularly useful reports. The first, by Scott, Coates & Anderson (2008) provides clear articulations of the differences between leadership (both transactional and transformational) and management as well as competences and capabilities. The tensions between general academic leadership, particularly in high profile senior management roles, and excellence in teaching leadership needs further exploration, however. Teaching leadership roles tend to be more localised, less formal, horizontal rather than hierarchical in organisational structural terms and temporary in nature (Cross & Goldenberg 2009). How legitimacy as an excellent teaching leader is achieved in these circumstances may well be different from more formal leadership roles within the academy and, indeed, may place individuals in dissonant situations between senior managers and colleagues.

The second compares school teaching leadership with leadership as head of department/school within university (Southwell & Morgan 2009). From the outset it noted, that unlike school education, there is a dearth of research on how leadership impacts directly on student learning experience in higher education (2009, p.26). The key conclusion of this literature review was to indicate the need for large-scale, longitudinal research to explore the nature and effects of leadership and leadership development on student learning (p.83).

In part, the lack of literature reflects a high degree of conceptual ambiguity around notions of leader, leadership and management, noted in Marshall et al (2011). To fill this vacuum, where university teaching-focused material exists, it tends to be descriptive of practices that have seemed to 'work' for certain individuals (Boyd 2008) and initiatives rather than generative of a range of scholarly and theoretically robust models adaptable to variable circumstances. This maintains the assumption that what is effective in one context can be unproblematically replicated in other contexts (Juntrasook, Nairn, Bond, & Spronken-Smith 2013). Such an approach tends to leave the available material describing the 'what' of leadership and associated management without necessarily addressing the 'how' of the relationships between excellent leadership and excellent student learning (although as Marshall et al 2011 notes these relationships are assumed). Thus, Marshall et al (2011, 91) have illustrated that for some academics, the responsibilities inherent in leadership and management concerning teaching are:

- establishing a direction or vision for learning and teaching;
- communicating that vision and aligning the various people, strategies and resources to that vision;
- enabling, motivating and inspiring the relevant people to participate in and realise that vision.

How does meeting these responsibilities impact on learning though? How we can achieve excellence in learning through excellence in teaching leadership is a critical research question conceptually and practically. This is particularly the case if one attempts to demonstrate the relationship between teaching leadership and excellent student learning in the terms of the educational demands on the university sector outlined in the introduction.

Furthermore, scholarship on leadership is concerned with 'official' positions of academic leadership, rather than those who take on more informal leadership of teaching roles. Two notable exceptions to this are represented through an extensive and nuanced article by Gibbs, Knapper and Piccinin (2008) and the work of Roxå & Mårtensson (2013). Gibbs, Knapper and Piccinin (2008) noted the lack of research on the influence of disciplinary differences and their related activity systems in terms of the operation and emergence of leadership of teaching. To address this, their study explored departmental leadership of teaching in research-intensive universities. It identified nine distinct categories of leadership activity: establishing credibility and trust; identifying teaching problems and turning them into opportunities; articulating a convincing rationale for change; dispersing leadership; building a community of practice; recognising and rewarding excellent teaching and teaching development effort; marketing the department as a teaching success; supporting change and innovation; involving students.

Roxå & Mårtensson (2013) have identified the overall conditions academic leaders in teaching need to understand if they wish to inspire and influence academics. In this discussion they identify the importance of the significant conversational networks that exist among academics around their teaching; the role these networks have in developing beliefs about

teaching; how leaders need to work with and enable the generation of such networks. They conclude (p.10) that there are three inter-related practices of this context which leaders need to employ:

- 1 engage the silent majority in open discussions;
- 2 let people discuss what they find meaningful but influence the conversations indirectly by feeding relevant material into the conversations;
- 3 influence the format of the conversations in a scholarly direction.

5.1 Key themes in the literature

In general, however, what literature on teaching leadership there is concentrates on five key themes: heroic individuals; leading curriculum reform; implicit leadership; Anglo-Australian-American socially and culturally predicated assumptions of leadership; distributed leadership approaches as 'better'. Summaries of these themes are outlined below:

- **heroic individuals** (Juntrasook, Nairn, Bond, & Spronken-Smith 2013) and their explicit recognition and resourcing, such as National Teaching Fellows and Deans of Learning and Teaching and their equivalents (Boyd 2008). There is at least one articulation that the personal qualities of an excellent university teacher are commensurate with many of the requirements for leadership (Akhter & Haque 2012). (Indeed, this formed the overall theme of the late 1980s research on American Community College teaching: Baker, Roueche & Gillett-Karam 1990.) If this is the case, the argument for a distributed leadership system looks stronger. Such an analysis, however, is dependent on a relatively high level of an 'heroic' sense of personal responsibility;
- **leading curriculum reform** (Blakemore & Kandiko 2012): over the last decade there has been a surge in interest and initiative implementation around curriculum reform, either at an institutional- or at a programme-level in higher education. How such a process is led is arguably one location for articulating what excellence in teaching leadership is.

As such it is an emergent topic in the literature since CHERI report. In their discussion of the role of leadership in curriculum change, Blakemore & Kandiko (2012) indicate that one of the necessary leadership characteristics is a thorough understanding of academic motivation at a local level (p.139) in terms of:

- the academic content of the discipline;
- the way in which individuals and groups engaged in curriculum change see themselves;
- the ways in which the capacity for changed behaviour can be facilitated through learning (at individual and group level);
- how the culture of a given department may place stronger values on some activities than others.

It was mentioned in the introduction that academic role profiles are increasingly differentiated. Arguably, the surge of discussion about research-teaching linkages over the last decade is evidence of internal institutional dynamics and resultant sector-wide reactions to the diversification of academic roles (as much as it is a consequence of a broader, externally-predicated political threat to the primacy of a research-based higher education). What the research-teaching nexus literature is attempting to achieve, therefore, is a more formal reintegration of the academic roles. Yet to achieve this now requires a sophisticated understanding of how academics in the different roles perceive teaching and what this means for their orientations towards excellence in teaching. Awareness of this is key for leadership in teaching excellence especially around curriculum renewal. What it implies is that leaders in teaching need to be able to operate in a manner that values different orientations to teaching within a given academic context. There has been some evidence to suggest that individuals focused on teaching leadership roles have an underlying operating philosophy that emphasises students' experience of studying rather than disciplinary content and practices (Gibbs, Knapper & Picinnin 2006). The potential of this, as an over-riding orientation, to obstruct the necessary demonstration of empathy with local academic motivation is important.

Additionally, it is also clear that academics with apparent leadership roles in overseeing courses and modules (implicit leadership roles), such as programme leaders, tend to focus on the management aspects rather than a leadership role in terms of pedagogy or content (Blakemore 2007). This is unsurprising given the autonomy underpinning academic freedom which ensures individual academics have the right to determine the content and methods of their teaching. It presents a tension, however, where a group, department or institution is attempting to shift approaches to pedagogy. Effectively, leadership in these cases is dependent on cooperation within collegiality. The co-operation in this case needs

to enable the generation of a consensus of what is 'right and appropriate' for the discipline in terms of which of the educational demands is given primacy. Reaching such a consensus is notoriously difficult in some disciplines and certainly across a whole institution. It is unsurprising, therefore, to find that programme leadership occupies an ambiguous position within institutions and, in one of the few studies on it, Murphy & Curtis (2013), is characterised as having:

- role confusion particularly being generated in the line between dealing with teaching staff and 'learning' students on the programme;
- a pull between accountability to one's colleagues and accountability to student's on the programme;
- management of others without formal authority, so that one is dependent on influencing capabilities at the same time as potentially experiencing alienation from one's colleagues because of the nature of the role;
- an absence of status in a role that nonetheless needs collaboration from within the academics teaching on the programme to be able to successfully run the programme;
- bureaucratic burdens.

It may well be that leaders, as Amy Tsui (Tsui 2013) notes, need to focus on developing a shared repertoire (rather than consensus) among colleagues, which is, in a sense a similar argument to that of Roxå & Mårtensson (2013).

- **Implicit leadership approaches** through enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment focused on themes or topics such as employability, assessment and feedback or graduate attributes. The implicit nature of enhancement leadership is implied in the extensive case studies generated as part of Scotland's Quality Enhancement Themes. In these cases institutional representatives and teams have been tasked with taking forward particular agendas quite often with their status within their institutions being left ambiguous. Nonetheless, achievements around the enhancement themes have clearly been facilitated through this structure and there is a real need to analyse the *what* and *how* of the effectiveness of relationships between nominated teams and individuals for the enhancement themes' work and other agents within their universities.
- **Socio-culturally predicated assumptions:** models, principles and criteria of teaching leadership seem dependent upon certain institutional systems closely associated with universities in English-speaking, developed economy contexts (including English-based private providers in non-English speaking countries such as those present in the Eurasian Caucasus) and thus not necessarily adoptable beyond those parameters.
- **Distributed approaches** are, on balance, viewed as 'better'. There is an underlying rhetorical assumption of the need for distributed rather than commandship models generated from within universities rather than the adoption of models from other, non-academic institutional contexts (Bolden, Petrov & Gosling 2009).

Gaps in the research literature

There are clearly significant areas around teaching leadership that urgently need robust research. These include:

- the professoriate as having a unique role in leadership in teaching *excellence* is largely absent, although one study showed that there was a perception that professors did have a role in leadership of teaching (Macfarlane 2011);
- relationship between leadership practices and processes (and levels of formality, informality) and outcomes in relation to both staff and students;
- mentoring as excellent leadership of teaching. Not only is there a dearth of literature on this, there also seems to be a disjuncture between the ideal of mentoring as a form of leadership and formal mechanisms to enable and foster it. For example, Gibbs 2008 illustrated that though TEA requirements assumed influencing others was a key criterion, the opportunities to do this subsequent to receipt of such an award were not forthcoming;
- dissonances between dominant assumptions in excellent leadership of teaching and how these intersect with a range of identities in terms of the equality and diversity agenda. UK research on the relationship between leadership approaches and gender has been undertaken (Morley 2013), but more is needed for all of the protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010);
- it is also clear that different types of leadership approaches are necessary in different circumstances, such as when there is a reduction in resources or specific timeframes for outcomes required by external bodies. However, there is, to date, little research on this in the university context with respect to excellence in teaching leadership.

5.2 Summary: defining the aspects of leadership in teaching

Defining the separate aspects of leadership in teaching is difficult because practices, position and subjective/relative aspects are arguably integrated. The ability to move between commandship and distributed engagement within an academic environment appears, from the literature, to be essential. In order to pull the material of this section together a diagrammatic representation of the aspects is offered below (diagram 6). The diagram is, nonetheless, an over simplification aimed at initiating critical reflection on the nature and practices of leadership for teaching excellence not a definitive statement about what leaders must do, be, and think.

Diagram 6: Excellence in leadership of teaching

Practical approaches	Subjective and relative principles
<p>'COMMANDERSHIP' MODELS - Gibbs, Knapper & Picinnin (2006; 2008); Boyd (2008); Hénard & Roseveare (2012), pp.25-28; Blakemore & Kandiko (2010; 2012); Bolden, Petrov & Gosling (2009) Conceptually associated with 'managerialism' (Bolden, Petrov & Gosling 2009)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish strategic vision/direction and impose an action plan for teaching reform • Appoint clearly defined individuals as leaders • Delegation, devolution and dispersal of leadership • Ensure leadership responsibilities are matched with appropriate resources and tools to deliver necessary results/impact including central provision of a unit to support teaching and learning • Develop/engage with leadership capacity professional development opportunities and programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish credibility and trust • Demonstrate understanding of academic motivation at a local level • Adapt 'professor as leader' roles. Act as a role model, mentor, advocate, guardian, acquirer and ambassador (Macfarlane 2011). What these mean in terms of teaching excellence still need to be defined for each academic career pathway • Long-termism • Operate in a manner that demonstrates the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → anticipate/identify teaching problems and turn them into opportunities → articulate a convincing rationale for change → build a community of practice → recognise and reward excellent teaching and teaching development effort → market teaching successes → support change and innovation → involve students
<p>DISTRIBUTED MODELS Southwell & Morgan (2009), pp.35-36; Roxå & Mårtensson (2013) Conceptually associated with 'collegiality' (Bolden, Petrov & Gosling 2009)</p>	
<p>Long-term emergent interactions across different hierarchical positions and role profiles result in a collaborative strategic vision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing and encouraging public engagement with conversations occurring in significant networks through: recognition of; support of; mutual interaction with expertise within the networks (Roxå & Mårtensson 2011; 2013) • Leading through reciprocal followership (Roxå & Mårtensson 2013) • Using discursive power wisely to influence what is viewed as important and what is seen as less important (Roxå & Mårtensson 2013) • Long-termism

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Perhaps the first thing to note in this conclusion is: the higher education sector has, through over a decade of initiatives, shifted significantly in terms of the professionalisation of university teaching. With regards to the UK specifically, this is clearly illustrated in the research literature but also from the evaluation of the high-level group on the modernisation of higher education which has just reported to the European Commission.¹¹ Indeed, from a European perspective, UK approaches to teaching development and enhancement are now deemed effective enough to be worthy of emulation. This does not mean, however, that there is space for complacency. The level of impact of these initiatives has been patchy in some places and finding ways of ensuring top-down and bottom-up engagement is critical.

Additionally, changes to academic roles represented within institutions demand continued attention in terms of implications for defining excellent teaching and its relation to student learning. These changes also require a level of sophisticated understanding of how the way academics inhabit their disciplinary spaces in terms of the roles and identities they construct for themselves (and increasingly have constructed for them) influences the way they engage with notions of teaching excellence.

What is clear in the research and grey literature since the CHERI report, however, is:

- 1 there is a lack of articulation around the differences between threshold quality and teaching excellence. Shared repertoires, if not consensus, around qualitatively variable concepts of threshold quality, good teaching, and excellence are largely absent. (And there is little evidence of engagement with Gibbs & Habershaw's distinctions between competency in basic tasks, excellence at new and more demanding tasks, and leadership and scholarship: as outlined in the CHERI report, p.20);
- 2 there is a lack of sophistication in conceptualisation of university teaching excellence both generally but more particularly in terms of changing expectations over a career. The absence of sophisticated theorising is particularly acute in terms of leadership in teaching excellence;
- 3 in terms of the differentiated nature of the HE sector, there is a lack of representatively diverse conceptualisation of how teaching excellence is defined and plays out (it tends to be portrayed as uniform), as well as little evidence-based discussion on the relationships between researcher and teacher excellence and how the status of each is balanced and recognised within differing clusters of institutions;
- 4 at least in the research literature, there is a significant gap between recognition of the *dynamic engagement* of academics and students in teaching enhancement and innovation, on the one hand, and some educational theorists who view teaching excellence as part of a neoliberal, inherently 'performative' agenda, on the other.

Overall, from the higher education research literature as it stands, it would still be hard for institutional teams, individual academics, and students to get a sense of the qualitative and quantitative differences between university teaching that is *satisfactory* and teaching that is *excellent*. What is demonstrated clearly by teaching excellence awards is that individual excellence has primarily been defined by initiatives and individuals which *have come to be recognised* as excellent, rather than as having been identified through theoretically robust, systematic or strategic models. Gibbs (2008) noted this and there has been little change. One of the difficulties this presents universities with, however, is that such a retrospective qualitative process does not necessarily allow for either a transfer of a readily adaptable framework to evaluate rapid changes in teaching practice (such as in the case of MOOCs) or mainstreaming approaches which take local activity and enhance practice beyond the locality. While the absence of systematic and transferable principles and conceptualisations has enabled or forced (depending on one's world view) institutionally-generated responses to excellence to emerge, it has not addressed how we might develop comparative mechanisms for exploring excellence that would allow:

- effective cross-institutional benchmarking as an enabling process in response to the need for some institutions to improve their engagement with teaching enhancement;

¹¹ High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education (June 2013) Report to the European Commission: *Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions*.
http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/modernisation_en.pdf

- internal benchmarking to ensure reward and recognition processes are perceived and experienced as fair and robust across the institution;
- research-informed, student development of teaching excellence criteria in reflection of their own generation of criteria for the student-led teaching excellence awards;
- clear messages to the external environment concerning levels of and engagement with teaching excellence within universities.

6.1 Recommendations for further research

In terms of research there is a clear need for:

- 1 the development of robust methodologies for analysing the links between teaching excellence and student learning outcomes, which are able to explore the impact of roles and stages within an academic career, including the links between excellent student learning and excellent leading in teaching;
- 2 an analysis of the relationships and intersections between vocational service virtues as excellence identified in educational research (also implied in some teaching excellence awards) and the ethics and ethos of the disciplines, including both implicit and explicit virtues and vices represented in universities and through which teaching excellence is manifested. This needs to be done to properly identify the dissonances between the two and how in turn these dissonances impact on the success of educational endeavours, including those related to enhancing student learning. Research is particularly needed on the impact of these relationships in terms of:
 - academic orientations to the various educational outcomes expected of university programmes of study and how they might move academics away or towards systematically imposed definitions of teaching excellence;
 - student learning outcomes. Excellence in student learning was the primary focus of the CHERI report and since 2007 there has been a growing literature on teaching and curricular redesigns aimed at enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. The headline initiatives responding to this have been: research-teaching linkages, employability, graduate attributes, student as co-producers, students as co-curricular designers. It is clear from the literature, however, that bigger questions are being asked regarding what an undergraduate education is for and whether there is a responsibility on the part of the university sector to play a more significant role in the socialisation of students. This is particularly seen in terms of citizenship (global and democratic) as well as approaches to learning which enable graduates in the future to respond to ‘worlds of constant change’. What this means for how teaching excellence comes to be defined needs to be analysed, as does how we would demonstrate a rigorous and defensible link between teaching excellence and excellent student learning in these areas;
- 3 theorising which challenges the universalising (and culturally predicated) tendencies around teaching excellence;
- 4 longitudinal projects which study the educational orientations, performance and impact of leadership as related to learning and teaching, particularly in terms of the impact on student learning, and their place within broader academic leadership and management;
- 5 rigorously analysing the dialectic between external needs and internal institutional dynamics in how excellence comes to be defined, incentivised, and measured;
- 6 research on the definition and operationalisation of teaching excellence and teacher excellence in the areas of inter-professional educational development activity, transnational education, learning analytics and disruptive innovations.

6.2 Recommendations for policy

In terms of policy, the over-riding focus needs to be on developing a shared repertoire around teaching and teacher excellence which fulfils the requirements of the range of internal and external groups invested in facilitating excellent learning outcomes.

- 1 At a national or sector-wide level, the development of a usable/convincing taxonomy which considers teaching excellence is required. This literature review suggests that such a taxonomy would need to address:
 - academic role profile;
 - career stages;
 - the relationship of these to the broader educational demands on universities in terms of learning outcomes; disciplinary needs; institutional missions.

The success of such a taxonomy may depend on its capacity to demonstrate alignment with/ integration of researcher excellence taxonomies and teaching quality processes.

To design the architecture of such a taxonomy is not easy but, in diagram 7, this literature review suggests elements drawn from the review process which might be useful for initiating a sector-wide discussion.

- 2 Finally, there is also a need for strategic direction to be reached concerning the ethical use of learning analytics to facilitate teaching excellence and demonstrate excellent student learning outcomes.

Diagram 7: Elements for developing the architecture of a teaching excellence taxonomy

<p>Conceptualising what lies behind the judgement of good teaching was undertaken by Trigwell 2010. His idea is adapted below to provide an introduction to the minimum components necessary for the composition of a taxonomy of teaching excellence. Thus the two underlying preoccupations in designing a taxonomy would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • qualitatively identifiable variation in approach (classified as excellent, recognisably different from threshold and good) and relevant to different types of academic career profile and stage of career; • how well an institution, discipline, individual academic informs, demonstrates, and judges that variation. <p>These would underlie four dimensions, with each dimension having four components.</p>	
<p>Dimension 1 Achieving educational demands on universities: extent to which excellent learning outcomes in response to the relevant educational demands are defined and illustrated by universities</p>	<p>Dimension 2 Excellent structures: level of quality of the approaches of different domains promoting teaching excellence in universities</p>
<p>Dimension 3 Demonstrating individual excellence: degrees of success in demonstrating excellence in teaching practice</p>	<p>Dimension 4 Quality of evidence: levels of quality of evidencing individual teacher excellence</p>

Dimension 1

Achieving educational demands on universities: extent to which excellent learning outcomes in response to the relevant educational demands are defined and illustrated.

<p>Providing context in which disciplinary mastery is achieved by students</p>	<p>Providing a context in which student learning development (both discipline mastery and generic attributes) is achieved</p>
<p>Providing a context in which the students experience an education which enables <i>fit-for-purpose</i> entry into a determined career/ profession</p>	<p>Providing a context for the development of ways of being, doing, and acting associated with life-wide career opportunities as well as appropriate economic, financial, socio-cultural, and ethical attitudes.</p>

Dimension 2

Excellent structures: level of quality of the approaches of different domains promoting teaching excellence in universities

National strategic approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National recognition schemes• Establishing national bodies to oversee teaching excellence• Establishing national centres for teaching excellence• Enhancement approaches within quality assurance frameworks	Institutional <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching excellence awards• Linked top-down and bottom-up institutional-wide enhancement initiatives
Disciplinary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signature pedagogies• Teaching and learning regimes	Students <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student-led teaching excellence awards• Active student participation

Dimension 3

Demonstrating individual excellence: degrees of success in demonstrating excellence in teaching practice

Planning and delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curriculum design• Knowledge of the subject• Ability to inspire and motivate• Respect, care and kindness for students as individuals• Active and group learning• Critical and scholarly	Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conscientious use of formative feedback• Creative and innovative approaches to feedback• Offering students a range of assessments to assess their mastery
Contributing to the profession <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovation in delivery, assessment, feedback, evaluation, technology• Significant contribution to curriculum renewal and reform• SoTL• Participation in formal networks focused on teaching excellence• Leadership in teaching	Reflection and evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflecting on inadequacies of own teaching• Degree of diligence in actively engaging with and responding to student and peer feedback and evaluations

Dimension 4

Quality of evidence: levels of quality of evidencing individual teacher excellence

Peer observation/review of teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documentary evidence of peer-involved developmental processes• Report of peer review of teaching• Summative assessment of teaching practice through certificated programmes	Pedagogical competences portfolio <p>Focus on personal philosophy of teaching, evidencing how this is then operationalised in a variety of ways. (It is likely to include evidence from the three other quadrants.)</p>
Scholarship of Teaching & Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process of, dissemination of outcomes from learning and teaching projects• Publication of outcomes of initiatives (with a recognition that this does not equate primarily with peer review international journals as required in research excellence frameworks)	Evaluations and letters of support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students• Alumni• Learning analytics – this particular data-revolution can allow for rapid performance management and might come to play a significant role in the assessment of academics' teaching quality

6.3 Final word

Both the literature and the grey material demonstrate that supplying a *quality* higher education for students is at the core of university identity (even though the notions of quality are themselves ambiguous and contestable). In this, providing a high standard of teaching is afforded the status of a threshold activity for most universities and by most scholars. The question increasingly, however, is how excellence can be singled out and is achieved in an organisational environment in which role diversification and associated specialisation means that:

- what it is 'to be an academic' is becoming increasingly contested and, in some cases, fluid over a career-span;
- the time to experiment, imagine and innovate in teaching is squeezed between other demands established by alternative research and quality focused taxonomies.

Managing both externally recommended and internally generated concepts of teaching excellence so that they do not become unsustainable burdens within an already stratified context is critical. Experimentation, imagination and innovation are areas of excellence that need time and space. Any framework of teaching excellence needs to address this as well as the professional virtues, strategies and practices excellent teaching academics in different disciplines, roles, and at different stages of the career bring to their institutions.

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