

HEFCE 01/37a

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Report

# Analysis of strategies for learning and teaching

**Research report by  
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## **Executive summary**

1. The Council has recently published two good practice guides: on widening participation (HEFCE 01/36) and learning and teaching (HEFCE 01/37). The guide for learning and teaching is based on the analysis carried out by Professor Graham Gibbs of the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund's National Co-ordination Team, on the learning and teaching strategies submitted in January 2000, and presents a series of case studies that illustrate the good practice that has been identified. This publication presents in full the findings of Professor Gibbs' research.

## **Summary conclusions of the analysis**

2. This publication describes the progress made by institutions in developing and implementing learning and teaching strategies since the HEFCE undertook a survey at the end of 1998. During this period, the HEFCE has implemented the learning and teaching strategy component of its Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF). All institutions were invited to submit their learning and teaching strategies, identifying specific activities to be funded using a common format (HEFCE 99/48 Annexe E). This publication is based primarily on analysis of the documentation submitted by institutions. It refers back to the features identified in 1998 as in need of development and identifies the extent of progress made in these areas.

3. Considerable progress has been made by institutions in developing and implementing learning and teaching strategies. In 1998 less than half of all institutions submitted learning and teaching strategy documentation of any kind. Three per cent reported no plans to develop a learning and teaching strategy. By June 2000, every English institution had a learning and teaching strategy. If progress had continued at the same rate as prior to 1998 then it would have taken at least six years to achieve this level of implementation.

4. Considerable progress has been made in terms of the completeness and sophistication of learning and teaching strategies. In 1998 the documentation submitted was very variable in content and quality. For example, some institutions submitted a collection of separate policy documents rather than a coherent strategy, or summarised achievements rather than setting out future plans. By June 2000 the documentation had improved almost beyond recognition. Of the 12 components of a comprehensive learning and teaching strategy identified in HEFCE 99/55, documentation contained an average of six components (compared with three components in 1998). Operational plans, largely absent in 1998, were particularly evident, often prompted by the format of Annexe E (which specified the uses to which HEFCE funding was to be put). Components of learning and teaching strategies which were largely missing in 1998, even from well established learning and teaching strategies, were very much more likely to be included in 2000. This is particularly important for those aspects of learning and teaching strategies that are essential to turning ideas into action: implementation plans, change mechanisms and monitoring procedures.

5. There are still significant weaknesses in some areas. Many strategies specify goals in ways which would preclude attempts to evaluate their achievement. Only half of the strategies specify targets, and these are usually specified in terms of inputs (what actions will take place) rather than in terms of outputs or outcomes. Specification of outcomes for students is very rare. Plans for evaluation are usually missing, or are intended to be developed at some later date. Very little attention is paid to changing the teaching culture or to addressing infrastructure blocks.

6. Extensive use was made of the guidance provided by the HEFCE (in Circular 99/55) and by HEFCE Regional Consultants, in focussing, laying out and explaining the strategy. There was also much evidence of building on good practice at other institutions, derived from examples in the HEFCE guidance. Formats for operational planning, for example, were emulated by many institutions.

7. Institutions have oriented their learning and teaching strategies to the HEFCE priorities (as specified in HEFCE 99/48) to a considerable extent, each targeting an average of two of the five specified HEFCE priorities. 'Staff development and membership of the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT)' was most often targeted (by 69 per cent of institutions), with 'addressing students' diverse needs' least often targeted (by 41 per cent, with 8 per cent making this a priority for development).

8. The other priorities most often targeted by learning and teaching strategies were: widening access (50 per cent of institutions); the development of flexible learning (48 per cent); improved student access to learning resources (47 per cent); and assessment (45 per cent).

9. More than a third of learning and teaching strategies included mechanisms to encourage innovation, often supported by institutional funds, as well as HEFCE funds. More than a third also included mechanisms to disseminate good practice (from within the institution and from the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) projects). However, only 2 per cent addressed issues of mainstreaming and embedding innovation. Given the history of innovations not spreading from where they were developed, this may require more attention.

10. In 1998 nearly half of learning and teaching strategies relied on policies and committees or were extensions of existing quality assurance mechanisms, and very few were genuinely strategic. By 2000, two thirds were predominantly or partly strategic, with new management and implementation structures and procedures, often outside the existing committee structure and involving projects or task groups. 35 per cent were fully or partly devolved to faculties or departments compared with only 6 per cent in 1998. This is a significant change in the model of strategy being implemented.

11. Every institution's learning and teaching strategy specified the change mechanisms they would use, while less than half did so in 1998. The range of change mechanisms used was also much wider, with an average of six different mechanisms employed: four times as many as specified in 1998. The most commonly cited mechanisms were: staff development and continuing professional development (CPD) for experienced staff (91 per cent of institutions);

support for ILT membership for staff (81 per cent); exploitation of computing and information technology (C&IT) (81 per cent) and promotion and rewards for excellence in teaching (65 per cent).

12. Approximately 50 per cent of learning and teaching strategies were linked to some extent with internal quality assurance mechanisms, with external quality assurance, and with the institution's mission, though in only one in five cases did this involve more than a mention. Integration with other institutional strategies (such as their estates strategy, their information strategy, their corporate plan, their use of capital funds, their research strategy, or their disability statement) was limited to a small minority of institutions (between 2 per cent and 12 per cent). Despite half of all institutions including widening access in their learning and teaching strategy, it was rare for them to make even a cross reference to their widening participation statement. There is scope for developing more 'joined up thinking' about strategic planning.

13. The availability of HEFCE funds has initiated a wide range of activity to develop learning and teaching. The most common uses of funds were: supporting ILT membership (65 per cent of institutions); staff development (61 per cent) and C&IT developments (52 per cent); establishing new posts involved in implementing the strategy (44 per cent); promotion and reward for excellent teaching (35 per cent); evaluation and research (35 per cent) and operating an innovations fund (31 per cent). More than half of institutions used funds for six or more purposes. In some cases the range of planned and existing activity targeted on each objective in the strategy was listed, and ran to 20 or more pages.

14. Institutional funding for learning and teaching strategies was not often specified, and funding for existing provision was rarely mentioned, though it was clear that in some institutions the funds specified in Annexe E were only a small component of total investment in the improvement of learning and teaching. It was not always clear if activities being funded were new, or if HEFCE funding was being used to cover the cost of activities already committed to. In a small number of cases the use of funds seemed only tangentially related to the purpose of a learning and teaching strategy.

15. As in 1998, many strategies in 2000 had a close planning horizon, with most specified activities scheduled to be complete within two years. Many institutions used Annexe E as their only planning tool and while this was very effective in encouraging operational planning, it had the negative effect of emphasising short term activity over longer term strategic thinking about goals. Many institutions still have ill-defined goals (such as 'quality in teaching'). Relying on Annexe E also had the effect of setting targets in terms of inputs (the completion of activity) rather than outputs or outcomes. The purpose of activities, and the links between goals and activities, were not always clear. Sometimes internal documents specifying the strategy were separate from, and weakly linked to Annexe E which specified funded activity.

16. Institutions' ability to use strategic planning was, in general, varied. The potential weaknesses in 'subsidiary strategies' identified in HEFCE 00/24 (para 72) are still common. For example, many learning and teaching strategies contain activities for which the

resources necessary to implement them are not explicitly identified and where the consultation process necessary to elicit staff commitment to implement them has not taken place.

17. The teaching–research nexus was addressed to only a limited extent. It was very rare for institutions to make any mention of their research strategy in their learning and teaching strategy, and the potential conflicts or synergies between research and teaching strategies was generally not addressed. A variety of mechanisms are being adopted to make the improvement of teaching a more scholarly process, including supporting pedagogic research. In several institutions this is one of the main change strategies.

### **Institutional progress since 1998**

18. This section is based on analysis of English institutions' learning and teaching strategies in 2000. It identifies what strategies are focussing on, and how they are designed and implemented compared with a similar analysis in 1998. In doing so, it also identifies areas for development.

#### The focus of learning and teaching strategies

19. Learning and teaching strategies are focussed to a considerable extent on the five priorities identified by the HEFCE in Circular 99/48 (see Table 1: the HEFCE priorities are shaded). The three most frequently identified institutional priorities are all HEFCE priorities, though some institutions addressed none of the HEFCE priorities. Some challenges facing institutions, such as resources for teaching large classes, were perhaps surprisingly, not prioritised. Some institutional problems, such as worsening retention rates, tend to be hidden from view within learning and teaching strategies. Several other priorities, which institutions do outline (such as using C&IT, flexible learning, learning resources and assessment) are in practice often oriented to address large class or retention issues. The five HEFCE priorities, and the ten other priorities most frequently addressed by institutions, are listed in rank order in Table 1 below in terms of the percentage of institutions making each a priority for development. The percentage of institutions mentioning each of these priorities, or not mentioning them, is also listed.

Table 1

#### The priorities emphasised by institutions in learning and teaching strategies

Rank	Priority	Percentage of institutions giving this issue...		
		<u>priority</u>	a mention	no mention
1	Staff development, recognition and reward, ILT membership	<b>26</b>	43	31
2	Innovation emphasising employability, work experience, key skills	<b>24</b>	18	58
3	Exploitation of C&IT in improving	<b>23</b>	25	52

	learning and teaching			
4	Widening access	<b>20</b>	30	50
5	Learning resources	<b>17</b>	30	53
6	Assessment of students	<b>15</b>	30	55
7	Flexible learning	<b>13</b>	35	52
8	Learner support	<b>13</b>	19	68
9	Transferring good practices	<b>12</b>	31	57
10	Regional issues	<b>10</b>	14	76
11	Quality enhancement (in general)	<b>9</b>	23	68
12	Recognising diverse student needs	<b>8</b>	33	59
13	Lifelong learning	<b>3</b>	17	80
14	International issues	<b>3</b>	9	88
15	Large classes	<b>2</b>	3	95

20. Staff development and support for membership of the Institute for Learning and Teaching is the most common priority and the most commonly mentioned issue.

21. Efforts to enhance student employability, work experience and key skills are very much in evidence, and very varied in nature. The most common activity involved specifying learning outcomes, including key skills, for all courses. Other approaches included developing special skills modules, increasing expectations for, and support for, work experience, and developing assessment systems or record keeping systems which provide students with a profile of their skills or a progress record. Some institutions have largely completed this development (for example, some of those that received Enterprise in Higher Education funding, or project funding from the DfEE) and so it is not part of their current learning and teaching strategy. Others are still actively working on these issues, but as work started some years ago it has not been highlighted in the learning and teaching strategy which focuses on new activity.

22. Widening access was a priority for 27 per cent of pre-1992 universities: more than for other categories of institution. Methods to achieve this, for these institutions, tended to include mechanisms to provide access, such as collaboration with nearby colleges, but seldom mentioned any associated change in teaching and learning processes once the students had entered. Widening access has been a central issue for some time for a number of institutions that may not have included it in their learning and teaching strategy because it was already a mainstream activity. Institutions also have widening participation statements and may, as a consequence, exclude this focus from their learning and teaching strategy.

23. Institutional emphasis on learning resources encompasses new types of 'learning resource centre' to replace traditional libraries, and student access to electronic resources. It is associated with concerns to support more independent and flexible learning, open learning, and sometimes learning at a distance.

24. Assessment is emerging as a priority for many institutions. As class sizes increase, there are economies of scale in many teaching methods, but assessment costs increase in direct proportion to the number of students. As a consequence, marking now dominates many

teachers' workloads. There are significant threats to the volume of coursework that can be assigned (so reducing learning activity) and to the volume, frequency and quality of feedback to students. At the same time, there are worries about standards and the implications of benchmarking for assessment, and the assessment of key skills. The problems are becoming recognised as being beyond the ability of individual teachers to tackle, and require strategic solutions.

25. Recognising and responding to diverse student needs was identified as a priority for only 8 per cent of institutions, despite this being a central issue in widening access successfully.

#### Integration of learning and teaching strategies with other institutional strategies and HEFCE initiatives

26. A learning and teaching strategy is one of several components which ought, ideally, to be aligned within institutions. Documentation was analysed to identify the extent of integration of learning and teaching strategies with: external quality assurance (the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education – QAA): information strategies; estates strategies; corporate plans; use of the HEFCE capital funds for teaching and learning; institutions' widening participation statements; institutions' disability statements; the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) and the Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP) initiatives; the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and the Generic Learning and Teaching Centre (GLTC) initiatives. In addition, the integration of the learning and teaching strategy with several components of institutional strategy and planning were analysed: internal quality assurance mechanisms; the institutional mission; personnel strategy concerning appointment, probation and promotion of teachers; research strategy.

27. On average, each of the other strategies or components was integrated in a developed way within only 8 per cent of learning and teaching strategies, while being mentioned, on average, in a further 22 per cent of cases, and not mentioned at all in 70 per cent of cases. 50 per cent of learning and teaching strategies made no mention of their institutional mission. 71 per cent made no mention of their corporate plan. 84 per cent of learning and teaching strategies did not mention their institution's research strategy. 90 per cent made no mention of the HEFCE capital funds for learning and teaching.

28. The greatest level of integration was with internal quality assurance mechanisms (with 21 per cent of learning and teaching strategies documenting explicit links). This mainly involved using these mechanisms to monitor implementation of the learning and teaching strategy, especially where this involves checking that courses' learning outcomes have specified key skills.

29. Overall these figures suggest that institutions have a considerable way to go to join up their strategic thinking and to have fully integrated learning and teaching strategies. Each sub-strategy or component is often on a different schedule for review, and may be reviewed by a different committee. There may be no point in time when they are all considered together, and no sense of which is the central strategy and which are subordinate and supportive.

30. The limited extent of integration is summarised in Table 2, with strategies listed in rank order in terms of the percentage of learning and teaching strategies that elaborated links explicitly. HEFCE initiatives are shaded.

Table 2

Integration of learning and teaching strategies with other strategies and initiatives

Rank	Strategy or initiative	Percentage of L&TSs with ...		
		explicit links	a mention	no mention
1	Internal quality assurance mechanisms	<b>21</b>	44	35
2	External quality assurance mechanisms (QAA)	<b>15</b>	32	53
3	Institutional mission	<b>15</b>	35	50
4	Widening participation statement	<b>12</b>	23	65
5	Corporate plan	<b>12</b>	17	71
6	Information strategy	<b>5</b>	14	81
7	Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning, Teaching and Learning Technology Programme	<b>5</b>	26	69
8	Personnel strategy/policy	<b>5</b>	14	81
9	HEFCE capital funds for learning and teaching	<b>5</b>	5	90
10	Estates strategy	<b>2</b>	20	78
11	Learning and Teaching Support Network	<b>2</b>	19	79
12	Research strategy	<b>2</b>	14	84
13	Disability statement	<b>2</b>	8	90

31. 15 per cent of learning and teaching strategies involved developed links with QAA mechanisms, involving, for example: redesigning the internal course review process to address subject review's six aspects of provision; planning for subject review visits; using subject review reports to identify priorities for action, and following up on audit visits. It was rare for any specific educational goals or direction to be identified as having emerged from external quality assurance, and statements mainly concerned compliance with external requirements and processes. Subject review reports were quoted to justify existing provision rather than to argue for changes.

32. A number of institutions stated that they would revise their external examining practices, re-align their qualifications and levels, and implement benchmarking, as guidance emerges from the QAA. As this guidance had not yet emerged, it has been difficult for institutions to engage in further detailed planning. There is also a tension between, on the one hand, institutions undertaking their own strategic planning and setting their own goals, and on the other, responding to external demands. A third of all learning and teaching strategies only mentioned the QAA, and half made no mention of it. At present, most learning and teaching strategies are not being aligned with external quality assurance requirements.

### Links to widening participation statements

33. While 65 per cent of institutions did not mention their widening participation statement, learning and teaching strategies address widening participation issues to a much greater extent than is indicated by explicit cross referencing between strategic documents. This is because they overlap in their focus. Issues of relevance to widening participation are often central to learning and teaching strategies. In particular, institutions' learning and teaching strategies address issues of student support, of the development of students' skills, and issues associated with employability, to a considerable extent. Where institutions are re-orienting their pedagogic processes to be more appropriate to mature or part-time students (for example, by emphasising student independence and flexibility rather than being teacher- and classroom-driven) this is likely to be presented in their learning and teaching strategy rather than in their widening participation statement. As student recruitment is affected by the nature of course content and process on offer, and student retention is affected by teaching and learning methods, the learning and teaching strategy is central to comprehensive attempts to widen participation. When developing widening participation strategies, institutions need to think through what they need their learning and teaching strategy to deliver for them.

### The changing nature of learning and teaching strategies

34. In the 1998 analysis of institutional documentation, a set of twelve components of learning and teaching strategies was identified which together made up a comprehensive strategy:

- **context:** describing the situation the institution found itself in, that framed the goals of the strategy;
- **creation:** how the learning and teaching strategy was developed, how consultation was undertaken and commitment built;
- **goals:** what the learning and teaching strategy was attempting to achieve, in broad terms;
- **targets:** operationalising (and where possible quantifying) the goals into specific outcomes that could be used to monitor progress against a specified schedule;
- **culture:** where a cultural shift needed to take place (for example, from a teaching-centred to a learning-centred approach, or towards a 'learning organisation');
- **curriculum:** what changes to the curriculum were associated with the learning and teaching strategy (for example, new modules in transferable skills, or new course description formats to encompass a skills curriculum);
- **teaching:** what specific teaching, learning and assessment tactics were being encouraged;
- **quality assurance:** how QA was to be used or changed to help implement the learning and teaching strategy and monitor this implementation;
- **change mechanisms:** what levers or processes would be used to bring about the desired changes (for example, training, promotion or infrastructure changes);
- **implementation:** how the implementation would be managed;
- **monitoring:** how the implementation of specified activities would be monitored;

- **evaluation:** how the impact of the learning and teaching strategy and the achievement of goals would be evaluated.

The extent to which learning and teaching strategies contained these components was analysed and compared with 1998. Figures from 1998 and 2000 are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3

Components of learning and teaching strategies in 1998 and 2000

Component	Percentage of L&TSs where this component was...					
	fully present		partly present		missing	
	1998	2000	1998	2000	1998	2000
Context	27	28	25	13	48	59
Creation	11	37	25	22	64	41
Goals	27	50	20	35	53	15
Targets	9	21	20	33	71	46
Culture	13	6	38	14	49	80
Curriculum	7	12	36	30	57	58
Teaching	14	2	29	19	57	79
Quality assurance	14	21	33	41	53	38
Change mechanisms	10	76	29	24	61	0
Implementation plans	9	16	28	58	63	26
Monitoring	9	8	27	57	64	35
Evaluation	6	3	21	44	73	53

35. There have been very marked developments in the content and nature of learning and teaching strategies since 1998, with much fuller specification in 2000, particularly of key components.

- 76 per cent of learning and teaching strategies had change mechanisms fully specified and 100 per cent had them fully or partly specified. In contrast, in 1998 only 10 per cent specified change mechanisms fully, and 61 per cent did not include anything about how change would come about. This is the single biggest change in learning and teaching strategies: building in mechanisms to bring about the desired changes.
- 85 per cent of learning and teaching strategies had goals specified fully or partly, compared with 47 per cent in 1998.
- 54 per cent had targets specified fully or partly, compared with 29 per cent in 1998. Annexe E required targets to be specified, but these represented only a proportion of the total range of activities associated with learning and teaching strategies, and even those targets in Annexe E were not always specified clearly or in ways which could be monitored.
- 74 per cent of learning and teaching strategies specified, fully or partly, how they would be implemented, describing a wide range of management mechanisms: who was responsible for what, and schedules. In contrast, in 1998 only 37 per cent

specified any implementation plans and at that time it was often difficult to see how the strategy could be implemented. Institutions are developing mechanisms such as 'action groups', 'task groups' and 'theme implementation groups', instead of relying on committees, and are allocating responsibility for specific actions to named individuals to be completed by specified dates. It seems very much more likely that most of the current learning and teaching strategies will be implemented as stated, whereas in 1998 many learning and teaching strategies appeared only to be documents.

- While the proportion of learning and teaching strategies containing plans for monitoring and evaluation has doubled since 1998, these components are still weakly specified in most cases, with little progress in the proportion of institutions with fully developed plans. Many institutions have left the specification of monitoring and evaluation until later, rather than seeing it as an integral component of the strategy. This is an area where institutions may need support. 35 per cent of institutions have allocated funds to support evaluation or research associated with the learning and teaching strategy. In some cases this involves student feedback systems, but funds are also being used to support research posts: either to research the implementation of the strategy or to support pedagogic research as part of the strategy. In many cases it is clear that the learning and teaching strategy is still in an early stage of development and funds are being used to review existing practice prior to more detailed planning.
- The proportion of learning and teaching strategies addressing, fully or partly, issues of changing culture dropped from 51 per cent to 20 per cent. This may be a consequence of the increased emphasis on operational planning required by Annexe E.
- The proportion of learning and teaching strategies specifying teaching methods to be adopted fell from 43 per cent to 21 per cent, hopefully in response to guidance that it was more appropriate for teaching methods to be selected by teachers or departments.
- The proportion of learning and teaching strategies explaining how they were created has tripled, and where this process is described it shows greater awareness of the importance of building consensus and commitment amongst staff.
- Only 27 per cent of learning and teaching strategies fully explained the context in which they were created, in a way that justified why the strategy has the priorities it does. The proportion of strategies which omit any consideration of context has increased.
- While 85 per cent of institutions specified goals, these were often confusingly spread amongst lists of mission statements, aims, goals, objectives and activities, sometimes in different documents written by different people at different times. They were not always clearly linked to each other, or to a preceding analysis of the institutional context justifying the goals, or to the list of funded activity in Annexe E. Some institutions listed every current activity that could be construed as being associated with teaching or learning – as if trying to demonstrate how active they were – rather than thinking strategically about priorities, or aligning effort in a particular direction. Experience from institutions that have worked with learning and teaching strategies for some years suggests that it is sensible to have a small number of goals (perhaps one to five) to which everything else is clearly linked. Without this simplicity, a learning and

teaching strategy can be difficult to communicate to staff, and can lack credibility or coherence.

#### Types of learning and teaching strategy

36. In 1998 four types of learning and teaching strategy were identified:

- **devolved:** where responsibility is devolved to faculties or departments within a minimal central framework, specifying priorities with, in some cases, central support for devolved activity;
- **integrated:** where the existing quality assurance system is used as the main means to bring about change, for example, by specifying what would be addressed at the next course review. The creation of new management structures or documentation is avoided;
- **policy driven:** where policies developed by various committees are used as the main means to direct change;
- **strategic:** where goals and targets are set, and plans for implementation are developed, managed and integrated centrally, paying attention to aspects such as change mechanisms and monitoring.

These types are not mutually exclusive and many hybrid forms exist.

37. There has been a trend away from policy-driven strategies and total integration within existing mechanisms, and a move towards strategic and devolved forms of strategy. In 1998 nearly half of all strategies were integrated or policy driven, and only 6 per cent were devolved. By 2000, only 5 per cent were predominantly integrated and only 5 per cent were predominantly policy driven. 35 per cent were devolved to some extent (and 43 per cent were devolved in all universities combined). Some documentation from devolved learning and teaching strategies was accompanied by the learning and teaching strategy of each faculty or department. 67 per cent of all learning and teaching strategies were strategic to some extent, 34 per cent predominantly so. This is a very significant shift in the way institutions understand and manage their learning and teaching strategy and has been, in many cases, an essential pre-requisite to effective implementation.

38. Despite this change in learning and teaching strategy documentation towards more devolved strategies, only 5 per cent of institutions allocated HEFCE funds directly to departments with no specification for its use, and almost all funding involves central activities. In one learning and teaching strategy from a pre-1992 university, which stated that it had a devolved strategy in keeping with its overall form of management, 18 pages of operational plans did not once mention an activity which was the responsibility of teachers or departments. Pre-1992 universities were a little less likely to adopt devolved strategies than post-1992 universities (41 per cent doing so, compared with 46 per cent). Devolved learning and teaching strategies are a new phenomenon and there is currently little good practice to build upon, though some devolved strategies included a collection of departmental learning and teaching strategies. At present departmental strategies, where they exist, tend to be short, relatively unsophisticated, incomplete, and very varied in quality across departments.

### Change mechanisms employed

39. A particular weakness of learning and teaching strategies in 1998 was their lack of specification as to how their goals would be achieved – about how the institution would be changed. Institutions tended to rely on a single mechanism (with an average of 1.5 mechanisms per institution) and seldom elaborated on how they would operate. In marked contrast, in 2000 every learning and teaching strategy specified change mechanisms and used a wide range, averaging six mechanisms per institution. The most commonly utilised change mechanisms are listed in rank order in Table 4, with the percentage of institutions utilising each mechanism in 2000 alongside the equivalent percentage in 1998.

Table 4

Change mechanisms employed in learning and teaching strategies in 1998 and 2000

Rank	Change mechanism employed	Percentage of L&TSs	
		1998	2000
1	Staff development and CPD	4	91
2	ILT membership	[1]	81
3	Supporting C&IT	22	80
4	Promotion and rewards for excellent teachers	12	65
5	Funding for projects and innovation	9	49
6	Training for FT teachers	25	47
7	Student feedback systems	7	44
8	Organisational change	25	36
9	Appraisal of teachers and use of teaching portfolios	8	32
10	New types of post (e.g. readerships in teaching)	7	31
11	Educational development support services	22	24
12	Training for PT teachers and GTAs*	3	20
13	Learning materials production facilities	11	7
Average number of change mechanisms in each L&TS		1.5	6

[1] ILT membership was not available in 1998

GTA = Graduate Teaching Assistant

40. Four of the six most utilised change mechanisms involve staff and staff development in one way or another, and in each case this is a substantial change from 1998. Of the 4 per cent of institutions that had staff development provision in 1998 (see Table 4, row 1), that provision which did exist in 1998 was usually not perceived as relevant to the learning and teaching strategy. To some extent, these figures reveal that institutions are now being more strategic in aligning existing mechanisms with their overall strategy, rather than establishing completely new mechanisms.

41. The increase in use of student feedback mechanisms from 7 per cent to 44 per cent of institutions is also an indication of increased strategic thinking. In only a small number of

cases does this involve the development of a student feedback system for the first time. Most commonly, student feedback is being organised and re-oriented for strategic goals, to obtain evidence to inform implementation of the learning and teaching strategy. For example, traditional student feedback systems tend to ask questions about teaching and teachers rather than about learning, students or learning resources. The increase in use of appraisal or observation of teaching (from 8 per cent to 32 per cent) is somewhat similar. Every institution already had an appraisal scheme, though some may have been weakly implemented and poorly focussed. They are now being revived with a strategic focus – for example, encouraging teachers to review the extent to which their efforts are achieving institutional goals. Such mechanisms will need to be strengthened further to implement the HEFCE initiative ‘Rewarding and developing staff in higher education’ (01/16). There are examples of moribund appraisal systems having evolved into developmental and focussed collaborative activity.

42. The increase in use of funding to support innovations (from 9 per cent to 49 per cent) is more often a new initiative and is one of the main uses of HEFCE funds. Where innovation funds existed in some modest form in the past, they have sometimes been re-oriented and targeted on the goals of the learning and teaching strategy, rather than supporting whatever good ideas keen teachers previously had. They are also being used to engage groups of teachers, or departments, or even to encourage collaboration across departments, so as to support wide-spread adoption and embedding of new methods, rather than their isolated use by an individual. There is considerable scope for increasing the cost-effectiveness of such funded project-based activity within institutions through sharing experience of bidding, support, monitoring and dissemination mechanisms.

43. Use of promotion and reward for excellent teachers as part of the learning and teaching strategy increased from 12 per cent of institutions in 1998 to 65 per cent in 2000. The growth of mechanisms to reward excellence in teaching has been well documented and this is not an entirely new phenomenon. What is new is using promotion to help implement a strategy – for example rewarding innovation, or leadership of change that is congruent with the strategy, rather than simply rewarding excellence. Institutions are being more imaginative in the kinds of reward mechanisms they are adopting in order to orient teachers to institutional goals. In many cases changes to promotion mechanisms are an intention rather than a clear plan, and much work needs to be done to develop the details of workable mechanisms for different contexts, especially contexts where research is more highly valued.

44. 81 per cent of institutions have plans for supporting ILT membership as part of their strategy, and 65 per cent are using HEFCE funds to support this, the most common use of funds. This is very positive for the longer term future of the ILT. However it is probably changes to institutional personnel systems in relation to ILT membership which will deliver most ILT members, rather than individual interest. For example, one research-led institution has made ILT membership a requirement for all promotions to senior lecturer, reader or professor. Some institutions have established workshops and mentoring mechanisms to support experienced teachers to apply for membership, or have subsidised application fees or even membership fees. Some institutions have set ambitious targets for membership (e.g. 450 staff at one pre-1992 university, 50 per cent of staff at an institute). However, most

institutional support is for new teachers, in the form of ILT-accredited initial training programmes required for probation, and it will take some years for these programmes to build up a substantial membership.

#### Infrastructure blocks

45. HEFCE 99/55 emphasised the importance of infrastructure blocks that made appropriate change difficult. Examples included:

- the way teaching productivity and duties are calculated in terms of class contact hours, blocking the adoption of course designs which involve more independent learning and less teaching;
- the way departments are charged for some learning support facilities (such as computers) but not for others (such as classrooms and the library), so obliging Heads of Department to stay with existing patterns of course delivery;
- the way assessment regulations often prohibit student self assessment, peer assessment, group assessment, or 100 per cent assessment by project or other coursework: all of which might support moves towards lifelong learning, student independence or the assessment of skills;
- the way, as courses become larger and more complex (especially with uses of C&IT) design costs increase in relation to delivery costs, without budgets accounting for design time and costs in any way, leading to a total reliance on special project funding to plan change.

46. Learning and teaching strategies hardly addressed such issues at all in 1998 and almost no progress has been made. Duty allocation systems are addressed by only 2 per cent of learning and teaching strategies, timetabling and classroom allocation by 1 per cent, inter-unit costing and charging mechanisms by 2 per cent. C&IT infrastructure issues, such as institutional adoption of a single learning environment, are addressed by 8 per cent of learning and teaching strategies, and only 6 per cent of learning and teaching strategies addressed any other infrastructure issues. It may be that institutions do not yet know how to address these complex issues, or it may be that institutions are not yet aware of the extent to which progress is obstructed by infrastructures which were designed for a stable state some time ago. This is likely to be an area which requires support over an extended period.

#### Planning horizon

47. One feature of documentation in 1998 was the limited breadth of vision indicated by a very close planning horizon, with most targets set for one – or at most two – years ahead, and concerning operational details rather than broad strategic shifts. The HEFCE initiative required plans for three years, though the timing of funding meant that for many institutions this only required planning two years ahead. Some institutions now have plans to review the implementation of their strategy in five years' time. Nevertheless there is still often a limited strategic horizon in terms of, for example, predicting the student profile, class sizes, requirements for teaching space, or the scale and nature of use of C&IT in learning in five or ten years' time. Most learning and teaching strategies are still largely operational rather than

strategic in nature, internally rather than externally oriented, and look backwards to past experience (e.g. TQA reports) rather than forwards to future scenarios.

48. There is a tendency for learning and teaching strategies to plan to implement every component immediately, in parallel, over a short time period. A consequence may well be that institutions find it difficult to manage all these parallel activities, and also that it may be difficult for staff to perceive what the priorities are. Very few institutions have a longer term perspective on implementation, with new initiatives planned to be launched in series over an extended period.

#### Targets, monitoring and evaluation

49. In 1998, two thirds of the institutions that had a learning and teaching strategy had no targets, monitoring of activity, or evaluation to check that the strategy had any impact. Fewer than one in ten had fully developed monitoring or evaluation plans. Annexe E of the HEFCE initiative has required the setting of targets that can be monitored (at least for those components of learning and teaching strategies for which HEFCE funds have been allocated). This has greatly increased the explicitness of plans and encouraged institutions to operationalise broad aspirations: 54 per cent specified targets and 63 per cent specified monitoring mechanisms. It is now easier for institutions to monitor the implementation of their own learning and teaching strategies because what they involve, and what they are designed to achieve, has been specified much more clearly. Nevertheless, most targets are still more often framed as *inputs* (e.g. the changing of promotion criteria to reward excellent teachers) than as *outputs* (e.g. the proportion of promotions awarded on the basis of teaching excellence). Targets are very rarely specified in terms of *outcomes* (e.g. changes in the priority given to teaching by staff as a consequence of changes in promotion mechanisms). Even where the entire strategy is focussed on, for example, increasing graduate employability, or on improving student support, there seems to be a reluctance to specify target outcomes in terms of, for example, employment rates or retention rates. Explicit plans for evaluation (beyond a statement that it is intended to conduct an evaluation) are still missing from 97 per cent of learning and teaching strategies. A small number of institutions have allocated funds or posts to evaluation as an integrated component of implementation of their learning and teaching strategy. As institutions have to report progress against their learning and teaching strategy targets in their annual operating statement for the HEFCE, it will be necessary for institutions to develop fuller plans for monitoring and evaluation.

#### Innovation

50. To a much greater extent than in 1998, learning and teaching strategies now focus on supporting innovation in teaching and learning, even setting up 'Learning Innovation Committees' and establishing 'Directors of Innovation' (see Case Study 10 in Section 2 of HEFCE 01/37). 49 per cent of learning and teaching strategies included mechanisms to fund and support innovation projects (compared with 11 per cent in 1998). 31 per cent use HEFCE funding for this purpose while others use only their own funds. Some have used HEFCE funds to increase the scale of an existing innovations initiative. 42 per cent of

learning and teaching strategies contain mechanisms to disseminate best practice, including the outcomes of innovation projects, across the institution. Some have gone further and have plans to benefit from innovations in other institutions, for example from FDTL projects, or from similar institutions. One institution has made learning from innovation elsewhere the first of its five strategic priorities (see Case Study 14 in Section 2 of HEFCE 01/37.) Only 4 per cent of learning and teaching strategies contain mechanisms to go beyond dissemination of ideas and achieve widespread adoption and embedding of practices. An FDTL project at one university, for example, is taking a successful innovation in one department and spreading it across the whole institution. This embedding process is part of their learning and teaching strategy. There is increasing sophistication evident in the kinds of change processes being described and centrally supported, though only in a minority of institutions. For example, one institution rewards teachers whose innovations are adopted elsewhere in the institution, and one rewards departments which actively spread their practices to other departments.

#### The teaching–research nexus

51. A small number of institutions have highlighted the importance of making the benefits of their research strengths more explicit to undergraduate teaching and of seeking ways to maximise such benefits. This would seem to be an obvious priority for those institutions that claim that their teaching excellence is based on their research excellence. However, it has not usually been identified as a priority by research-led institutions. It was very rare indeed for a pre-1992 university to make explicit links with their research strategy. Their learning and teaching strategies appeared to be dealt with as a separate venture, and contained the same kinds of mechanisms to improve teaching as post-1992 institutions where no teaching–research nexus was claimed. Only a very small number of (mainly post-1992) institutions included a focus on the teaching–research nexus in their learning and teaching strategy, and even for these institutions, mechanisms through which this nexus might be exploited are not yet articulated. Strengthening the nexus is at present an aspiration rather than a plan. Specific actions identified in Annexe E, for example, are very rare. One university is attempting to collate examples of where a teaching–research nexus can be identified. One university that emphasises this issue in its learning and teaching strategy has established a website to collate literature and examples of effective relationships between research and undergraduate teaching, and has support from the FDTL for a project concerned with linking teaching to research and consultancy. This issue is likely to be an area of keen interest in the immediate future and is an obvious area for future support for institutions.

#### Scholarship of teaching

52. In contrast to the limited progress on the teaching–research nexus, a range of mechanisms are being implemented that place a greater emphasis on making the improvement of teaching a more scholarly process. These include:

- documenting teaching and making it public using teaching conferences, newsletters and journals;

- funding for teaching innovation projects with a scholarly component. This may involve requiring a prior review of the literature, properly conceived research into the impact of the innovation, or publication of outcomes;
- promotion or reward for excellent teaching, with criteria including the scholarship of teaching;
- support for pedagogic research, such as funding for research, support from research assistants and training in research methods;
- a scholarly approach to evaluating implementation of learning and teaching strategies;
- identifying use of pedagogic research as one of the main change strategies;
- making initial training of new teachers more scholarly, and requiring use of the literature in teaching portfolios or assignments;
- learning and teaching strategies, using insights and terms from pedagogic research, to provide a scholarly justification for the focus of the strategy, and the selection of change tactics or teaching tactics with a proper scholarly justification.

53. In Australia, some institutions have started using pedagogic research evidence in institutional planning or, as at the University of Sydney, using research to provide performance indicators to determine faculty funding.

#### Differences between institutional types

54. In 1998 the differences between institutional types were not as wide as might have been expected, and this pattern was repeated in 2000. The main differences found in 2000 were:

- post-1992 universities were more likely to have a strategic model of learning and teaching strategy and were less likely to rely on quality assurance mechanisms than pre-1992 universities. They were likely to have more experience of implementing learning and teaching strategies and perhaps a more centralised model of implementation;
- universities (both pre- and post-1992) were much more likely to have fully developed plans for implementation, monitoring and evaluation than colleges or specialist institutions. In small institutions the individual designated to develop and to manage the learning and teaching strategy often has a wide range of other responsibilities, with no-one to delegate to, so that detailed planning of implementation appears harder to accomplish. Having said this, few small institutions submitted any learning and teaching strategy documentation in 1998, and progress has been rapid, from a low base;
- specialist institutions were much more likely to specify planned changes to curricula. They often have a small number of courses, and it is more possible to make sensible decisions about the curriculum centrally than in large institutions with a wide range of courses;
- post-1992 universities, and especially pre-1992 universities, were much more likely to use training as a change mechanism than colleges or specialist institutions. They often have staff or educational development units that can deliver this training, while in small institutions formal staff development is harder to arrange;

- universities (both pre- and post-1992) were much more likely to use promotion for excellent teachers and funding for innovation projects as change mechanisms, than were colleges or, especially, specialist institutions. Previous studies have highlighted the low level of promotion for teaching excellence in colleges (where promotion tends to be used to fulfil management responsibilities). Other reward mechanisms may need to be developed by these institutions;
- pre-1992 universities and specialist institutions were much more likely to plan to use student feedback as a change mechanism than were post-1992 universities or colleges;
- post-1992 universities were much more likely to invest in educational development support, and to emphasise C&IT, than the other institutional types. They have a longer history of educational development support, and appear to adopt more centrally driven solutions to supporting C&IT development, rather than leaving it up to departments.

#### Methodology of the research

55. Learning and teaching strategies from 133 institutions were analysed, each with an accompanying Annex E, specifying the uses to which HEFCE funding would be put. A category system, coding system and database were established from questionnaire returns and documentation supplied by institutions in 1998. Ten learning and teaching strategies submitted in 2000 were coded independently by two researchers and codings compared. Where there were disagreements, the definitions of categories were adjusted and the aspect re-coded, until the level of agreement reached approximately 80 per cent. All 133 learning and teaching strategies were then coded by a single researcher using these category definitions and the data entered into database to allow easy analysis. This database has enabled comparisons to be made with 1998 and will be able to be used to track future development of institutional strategies. Figures for 1998 have in some cases combined two categories previously used, and have in some cases been recalculated. They therefore differ in minor ways, in some instances, from the figures presented to the HEFCE in 1999.

56. Institutions were categorised as 'pre-1992 universities', 'post-1992 universities', 'colleges and institutes of higher education' and 'specialist colleges'. This category system was used because in the 1998 analysis these institutional types showed some differences in the way they developed and used learning and teaching strategies. In particular small institutions, often with a single disciplinary area ('specialist colleges') face different challenges in working with a learning and teaching strategy, regardless of their age and research orientation.