## SEDA Collective Response to NTFS consultation

1. **What is the value of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS)?**
2. The value to the sector is mixed. It is better to have the scheme than not,   
   but by celebrating a few excellent teachers it points out that they are often not properly rewarded through normal institutional channels (there is no need for a national competition for excellent researchers).
3. The developmental value to nominees and aspiring nominees can be considerable in developing their reflective Claim for excellence. This is particularly so if local awards or promotions are based on the same criteria. It is therefore important not to change the criteria and so disrupt this alignment where it has taken place.
4. The career value to the winners is varied. In a research department it can further isolate one; to the senior management it may mean little beyond one’s value in marketing. It may or may not help promotion. Given the autonomy of institutions and the predominance of research in the promotions processes of some institutions, it is difficult to see how this can improved. A study of the impact of winning an NTF on their careers would be instructive.
5. The award of £10,000 can be very helpful to the winners. They may not have access to other funds they can use with the same freedom. For example, they may not be part of well funded research projects in disciplines. Excellent teachers are often burning the candle at both ends, doing a lot of teaching while making it innovative and excellent, and maybe trying to keep up their discipline research too. They will not be getting any workload allocation for being excellent. The award can help considerably by saving them time and giving them the resources they can use to develop professionally.

**2 What do you see as the role of National Teaching Fellows?**

Their role *should* be as models to colleagues and exemplars to other stakeholders like parents, students and government. Their views *should* be sought on teaching issues within institutions and nationally.

1. **Do you consider there to be any negative aspects to the NTFS?**
2. The assessment process is not transparent enough.
3. It emphasises individuals rather than teams. Could there be some team awards?
4. It indicates that excellent teaching is not generally rewarded enough in institutions, compared with discipline research.
5. As a competition with a low rate of success per applicant, it is time consuming for already busy people (nominees and the educational developers who support them). A smaller number of nominees per institution would reduce the burden.
6. Failure in the national competition is tough on individuals who are nonetheless excellent in the eyes of their institution.

**4. What impact do you think that National Teaching Fellows have had?   
(e.g. on the student learning experience; on staff engagement   
with teaching innovation)**

1. There has been some impact on some teaching staff. The applicants themselves have typically been helped to be more reflective about teaching and have become more excellent in the process of refining their Claim document, perhaps on more than one occasion. Their colleagues may be influenced if they win, but less so if they don’t.
2. The scheme rewards the direct impact of the nominees on their own students, of course. Beyond that, there is likely to be only an indirect influence on other students through a general raising of awareness of teaching standards, and the impact on NTF nominees as teachers. This is an area worthy of research, to document the long-term influence of NTFs on their students.

**5. What aspects of the NTFS do you consider could be developed?**

1. Most importantly, the assessment process should be more transparent; it does not currently model best practice. The reviewers should be a combination of existing NTFs (practitioners) and qualified educational developers (specialists), recruited openly. Their names and qualifications to review should be published. They should be trained and the training should be visible.
2. The current mechanism of managing the award (£10,000) within an institution can be problematical. “The award is intended for Fellows' professional development in teaching and learning or aspects of pedagogy.” (HEA web site) This criterion may conflict with the agreement to put the funds under the personal control of the NTF. Who is to decide what is developmental, the NTF or the Finance Department?

Difficulties can arise when an NTF leaves the institution; some guidance or rules from the HEA would help, e.g. that remaining funds should be moved to a new institution, or returned to the HEA. What should happen to equipment bought with the award? For how long can the award be used? These and other practical issues could be part of the agreement between the HEA and the institution when funds are transferred. At the moment, some NTFs have to negotiate these questions *ad hoc*. Some published guidelines would be helpful to them.

1. Don’t go back to having categories for different types of staff. The criteria are broad enough to cover all and it complicates institutional selection.
2. Ways should be sought to capture NTFs expertise and wisdom. The current annual booklet listing them all is not systematic enough to be helpful. E.g. a study like Ken Bain’s, What the best college teachers do.
3. Policy makers like BIS should be consulting the NTF community. The HEA itself should make more use of the NTF community.
4. Other mechanisms than text for judging the Claims (interviews, videos)   
   are unlikely to be both fair and feasible.

**6. If you have any other comments about the NTFS that have not   
already been addressed, please record them here**

“2010 and 2011 NTFS Individual Award Holders and Nominees could apply to be Fellows of the HEA on this basis until 31 December 2011. Due to revisions to the UKPSF this is no longer possible.” (HE Academy web site)

This message on the web site is not convincing as NTFs were previously offered FHEA, and that has not changed much in the UKPSF revision. As winners of a norm-referenced competition, NTFs should not be offered fellowships, which should be a criterion-referenced qualification. (But if the Academy *were* to consider offering fellowships, it should be Principal FHEA.)

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