



**HEATED Project**

**Year One Evaluation Report 2008/9**

**October 2009**

## **1. Introduction**

This report is intended to form an end of year one evaluation of the HEaTED project.

HEaTED is a national project presently supported by funds from the HEFCE LGM fund over a 3 year period from 2008-2011.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess progress made against the key targets contained in the draft business plan submitted to HEFCE in May 2008, in application to the HEFCE LGM fund. This plan was prepared by Matt Levi, HEaTED Project Manager and Pramod Phillip, HEFCE. The plan was initially intended to provide a rationale and context for external scrutiny and to inform HEaTED stakeholders as to the initial project direction and purposes.

## **2. Executive Summary**

The evaluation was completed by Tracy Bell-Reeves, acting as an independent consultant to HEaTED for this purpose. Tracy prepared the initial HEaTED project application to HEFCE in 2007 and was a member of the first HEaTED project steering group from 2007-8.

The evaluation is based on an assessment of progress against the key objectives and targets set out in the draft 2008-11 Business Plan, of a review quantitative and qualitative data provided to the evaluator and of stakeholder responses to a short evaluation survey. The conclusions drawn from this assessment and review are set out in the report conclusion and are intended to be considered further by the HEaTED Steering Group and HEFCE to inform the next phase of the project.

Overall, progress has been excellent given the start up challenges; however the key issues needing to be addressed over 2009/10 and into 2010/11 is maintaining momentum against a difficult economic backdrop, assuring future sustainability to ensure continued support for this critical staff group and strengthening current resources to undertake this in terms of staffing, finances and support within HEaTED, IST and beyond.

## **3. Project Background, Context and Rationale**

Details of the rationale for the HEaTED project, its scope, purpose and objectives in relation to the needs of the technical workforce in HE and beyond are clearly articulated in the draft Business Plan 2008-11. The plan states the core aim of HEaTED to be:

*“That HEaTED becomes the recognised professional association and advocate for technicians, raising the profile of technicians and getting the profession acknowledged as a valued community of practice within the UK higher education sector”.*

The plan also sets out an excellent overview of the background to technical staff development via a number of differing organisations over the past few years together with a comprehensive stakeholder analysis and summary of the issues impacting on technical staff within HE. The perceived benefits of a project focused specifically on the needs of HEIs and their technical staff are well stated.

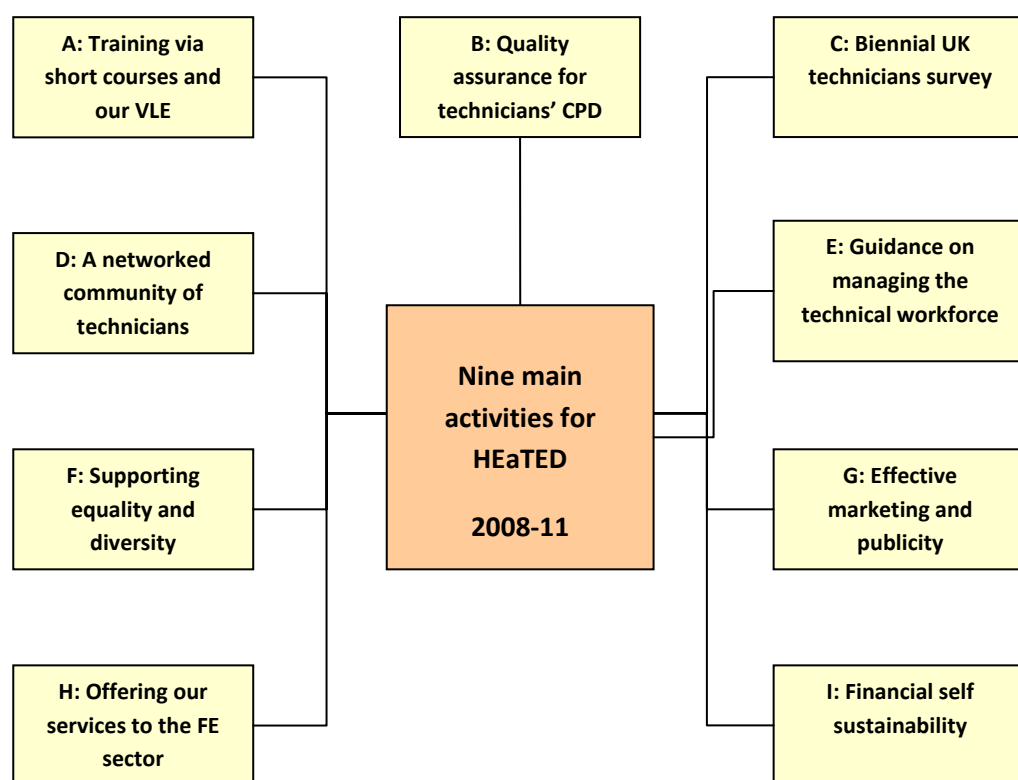
In terms of context, the only area that perhaps would benefit from strengthening for future business plans and/or project funding applications is that of workforce data. While the SWOT

analysis states an estimated technical staff workforce of 30,000, it may be useful to review and report workforce data with regard to *size*, *composition* and *location* of the technical staff workforce in H.E. and elsewhere. This could perhaps be done via accessing HESA data or via individual HEI returns to HEaTED and it is understood by the author that there are also plans to use the 2009 HEaTED survey results for this purpose.

#### 4. Project Aims and Objectives

The project aims and objectives are expressed as in a number of ways:

- Details of core activities for HEaTED 2008-11 (see diagram below)
- Marketing Strategy
- Details of planned services
- Financial Forecast / Income targets



(HEaTED main activities 2008-11- draft Business Plan 2008-11)

Each of these is reviewed in the following sections. However the following points need to be taken into account when assessing progress:

- Delays in staffing appointments and agreement to certain core activities were caused by the length of time to secure a replacement Vice Chancellor Chair for HEaTED Steering Group, as required by HEFCE.
- Assessment of the degree of success in progress to date is made more difficult by the lack of anticipated completion dates within the schedule of core activities – i.e. whether to be in year 1, 2 or 3. Realistically, given staffing appointment delays, it is to be

expected that completion of core activities will be loaded to years 2 and 3 so the apparent lack of completion to date needs to be balanced against this backdrop.

## 5. Assessment of Main Activities/Impact to date

Main activities of HEaTED	Specific attribute	Performance Review
<b>A: Training via short courses and our VLE</b>	<p>Course volumes</p> <p>Satisfaction of participants</p> <p>Usage of the HEaTED Virtual Learning Environment</p>	<p>Numbers of delegates participating on training interventions has been lower than intended to date due to the late recruitment of the Skills Development Manager, which was postponed until a VC chair for HEaTED was in place.</p> <p>However, over the last 6 months attendance has begun to improve as statistics show (see table below) with events showing high user satisfaction ratings.</p> <p>VLE was launched but with slower than anticipated take up. Some materials have been supplied and utilised with slow initial progress but hope of improvement over 2009/10.</p>
<b>B: Quality assurance of CPD</b>	<p>CPD accreditation becomes regarded as a requirement for technical staff in HE</p>	<p>Number of CPD accreditations has been low to date. Some 'in-house' cohorts underway but critical mass still to be attained.</p>
<b>C: Biennial technicians survey</b>	<p>Level of participation by technicians in the survey</p>	<p>2009 survey launched and secured responses from 130 HEIs, over 75% of the sector. Overall participation rates and responses yet to be published but positive outcome thus far.</p>
<b>D: Networked community of technicians</b>	<p>How well HEaTED has promoted the creation of a networked community of practice</p>	<p>Early evidence suggests this still has some way to go with low numbers of web postings and ethical helpline still to be launched.</p> <p>Mentoring scheme launched September 2009 and take up to be reviewed at year 2 evaluation.</p> <p>Low numbers attending events also impacts on networks – critical mass should improve this</p>
<b>E: Guidance on managing the technical workforce</b>	<p>Production of high quality guidance to support HEIs workforce planning</p>	<p>No progress made to date that effectively impacts on HEIs; however, role profiles have been published and some collaborative work with ECC undertaken which it is planned to strengthen.</p> <p>"In at The Deep End" published to member HEIs as guidance for technical staff working in L&amp;T.</p>
<b>F: Supporting equality and diversity</b>	<p>HEaTED activities promote equality and diversity within the technical workforce</p>	<p>No progress to date in partnership with Equality Challenge Unit, although is in hand for 2009/10.</p> <p>Raised profile of technical staff community however suggests progress on an equality basis for previously underrepresented group of staff.</p>
<b>G: Effective marketing and publicity</b>	<p>Level of participation in HEaTED activities by the UK HE community</p>	<p>Number of HEIs holding corporate memberships in 2008/9 was 60 – approx. 34% so below the 50% of UK HEIs target</p> <p>2009/10 memberships currently predicted to be below 2008/9 levels however which is a cause for concern.</p> <p>Number of technicians holding individual HEaTED memberships is low due to slow implementation of CPD award.</p>
<b>H: Offering our services to the</b>	<p>Level of participation in HEaTED</p>	<p>Progress in engaging with FE to date exploratory only. Focus</p>

FE sector	activities by the UK FE community	for year2.
I: Financial self sustainability	HEaTED can sustain itself as an ongoing business.	Financial surplus attained in year 1; however probability of self sustaining model by 2011 unlikely given level of commitments and targets for 2009-11 and present economic situation.

### Summary of HEATED events and attendance 2008/9

Conference June 2008 Manchester	270
25th Jan 2009 Training day Manchester	12
2nd March Tig welding	6
20th March Lab Gases	6
26th March Mechanical Training York	6
16th June 2009 Safe Lab Gases	6
30th June Train the Trainers	12
2-4th Aug Practical Scanning Electron Microscopy	6
7th July 2009 TIG welding Sheffield	6
15th July 2009 Department Estate Management	5
15th September The Basics of Immunoassays	4
14th October Abrasive Wheels Loughborough	10
	<b>349</b>

**(NB: technical skill events promoted and supported by HEaTED; other in house events have been carried out but not noted in this table)**

## 6. Review of Marketing Strategy

The majority of actions outlined within the marketing strategy have already either been completed or a start on action has been made. The progress in this area is strong overall, a view supported within the stakeholder and user review (appendix 1).

It is clear that the HEaTED brand has been well established across HE and that the HEaTED team have done well to raise the profile through a variety of marketing media including physical representation at external and HEI events, marketing literature such as the recent newsletter and virtually via the VLE, web and email lists.

This is positive; however stakeholder and user feedback shows a need to link this established presence with tangible benefits and services, which will need to be the focus for year 2. It may be useful to allocate some of the marketing budget to the development of case studies and personal stories to illustrate how HEaTED has engaged with and benefited HEIs and technical staff, or how some HEIs are positively tackling technical staff issues.

The remaining actions not yet commenced within the marketing strategy primarily relate to funding issues, for example: sponsorship opportunities with associated supplier companies, annual conference (2009), funders forum. The delay in HEaTED staffing appointments has been the partial reason for this; however, these are potentially useful income streams and profile raising opportunities that need to be addressed. Further staffing resource may be needed to support these, such as consideration of a more permanent administrative service or increased support from IST.

## **7. Review of Planned Services**

These were set out in the draft business plan as:

- Membership Services
- Web presence
- CPD accreditation
- CPD renewal
- Professional Development Interventions
- Technicians Survey
- Ethical Helpline
- Workforce Strategy Information
- Annual Conference

With the exception of the annual conference<sup>1</sup>, ethical helpline and workforce strategy information, progress has been made in all areas which is to be commended. The stakeholder and user review showed widespread awareness of these services, in particular the development programme, web presence and survey - probably as these are seen to have more practical value and application. CPD accreditation take up has been lower than anticipated to date but the stakeholder and user review illustrated some useful suggestions as to how this could be improved.

The development of workforce strategy information does need to be progressed in year 2 as this could prove valuable in engaging with wider stakeholders such as UUK, UK HR and the HR community as well as providing a good basis for further funding discussions with funding bodies. This may entail engaging a researcher, perhaps from within one of the research councils and maximising use of the 2009 HEaTED survey results.

## **8. Management and Administration**

The draft business plan set out a proposed corporate and governance structure, linked to being an associated (but independent) body of the IST.

The management structure is now in place but as previously mentioned has taken longer than anticipated to establish. The core team consists of a small number of personnel, supplemented by support from IST staff, paid for administrative services from MYOB, steering group members and associate consultants. The commitment, leadership and achievements to date of HEaTED, despite constituting a small core team, is highly commended by the feedback from stakeholders and users.

The Executive Director in particular has worked hard to use existing networks, such as the SDF of which he is also Vice Chair, and to develop contacts within new ones – such as HEDG and HEPI. This has paid off in terms of how well HEaTED is known across the sector.

The steering group are also commended for their commitment and enthusiasm and in building links within their own institutions. However, they also are aware of the limited dedicated personnel resource available to HEaTED and suggest that greater use be made of steering group members and IST to lead certain activities or develop innovative approaches to taking HEaTED forward. It may be an option to review ways of doing this with members, perhaps on a consultancy or seconded basis.

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<sup>1</sup> Although HEaTED held a national conference in 2008, this was prior to the start of this project plan

## 9. Financial Overview

As stated previously, the financial out turn for 2008/9 has been positive with a surplus to carry over into year 2.

However, financial sustainability and growth from year 1 on was originally constructed around a key set of assumptions:

1. That HEaTED services for HEIs could be developed and maintained based on a willingness and capacity within HEIs to pay HEaTED membership fees.
2. That demand for these services and therefore, membership, would increase on a year by year basis
3. That progress to advance income generating activity such as development programmes, sponsorship and conferences would have proceeded at a faster rate than in actuality within year one and be able to be priced at a competitive level to maintain a surplus
4. That the overall HE funding regime and assumptions of 2007/8 would be sustained for the foreseeable future.

Since 2008, the economic situation has changed dramatically with anticipated reduction in HEI income levels from early 2010 onwards. This has already impacted on membership renewals for HEaTED, a situation also faced by LFHE and other organisations.

However, the importance of the focus and work of HEaTED remains and perhaps is of greater importance given the age profile of the workforce, commitment by government to increase investment in science and technology to retain UK competitive advantage and the role of technical staff in supporting student learning when student numbers in HE are at their highest levels.

While the financial situation at year one end is therefore currently stable, it is recommended that increased effort be placed on income generation and maximisation from present and planned activity but that alternative funding models and options are explored with HEFCE and others as a matter of priority. The HEaTED Executive Director has made initial contact with HE funding bodies for Wales, Scotland and Ireland and also FE but maintaining pressure and establishing technical staff as a priority amongst competing funding demands is time consuming. This may be an area where steering group members, HEFCE and IST can assist as it is critical to sharing risk and building sustainability.

Stakeholder and user comments also highlight concern that maintaining momentum is critical and perhaps a core funding approach may form a more suitable alternative.

## 10. Conclusions

HEaTED is clearly an important development to support the needs of an underrepresented key sector of the HE workforce who are guardians of a vital set of skills, knowledge and expertise that is expensive to develop, hard to maintain and at risk of being eroded.

During the course of year one, despite delays in securing key roles, significant progress has been made against the project targets, in establishing a national profile and beginning to address previous under investment in technical staff development via sharing and collaboration across networks.

Recognising the need to establish a profile and presence in order to create an 'offer' and stimulate demand, most effort has quite rightly gone toward marketing, relationship building and the setting up of the second HEaTED survey.

However, in order to secure a sustainable future and to achieve the core aim of HEaTED there is a need to review focus on income generation, funding streams other than HEFCE, make maximum use of stakeholder and HEI contacts to identify and promote successful models of technical staff engagement, engage the support of the academic community and review funding mechanisms with HEFCE and HEaTED Chair, Professor Keith Burnett.

## **11. Recommendations**

1. Review development programme for technical staff to ensure that:
  - Annual Conference is planned and promoted at a central UK location but that ownership and relevance be maximised by utilisation of technical staff to lead and direct the event
  - Regional coverage is provided across the UK for events and conferences
  - Promotion is done via number of media and networks
  - Improve take up of the CPD scheme, perhaps via regional cohorts for the CPD award
  - Develop number of successful case studies at an institutional and individual level to illustrate impact of positive technical staff development interventions
2. Maximum use be made of the Executive Director to build networks, secure financial sustainability and strategically influence. This may entail strengthening administrative support and making greater use of the expertise within the Steering Group to promote and organise HEaTED activity, so releasing time from the Executive Director.
3. Secure a sustainable funding model for HEaTED in discussion with HEFCE and Keith Burnett to enable HEaTED to continue its work long term
4. As a matter of priority seek ways to positively engage with other UK funding bodies, FE and unions to seek additional funding streams
5. To refocus the business plan with target dates for completion of key objectives to better monitor progress on an on-going basis
6. Engage with the HR community and unions at a national and local level to identify the importance and urgency of the need for a technical staff workforce development plan. HEaTED survey outcomes, technical staff workforce data and role profiles could assist with this.
7. Engage with the academic community to support HEaTED activity – possible suggested options are: HEA; Deans and PVCs via development activity jointly with LFHE; HEDG; CETL events
8. Make stronger use of the IST to promote, dissemination and further develop HEaTED and its services, particularly the CPD award and skills programme
9. Ensure that a risk register is established for HEaTED to monitor and develop a strategy for dealing with potential risk, a key one of which is the possible loss of the Executive Director.
10. Develop a technical managers forum to focus on developing this group to lead and embed technical staff development supported by HEaTED
11. Ensure that all workshop and skills events/conference supported by HEaTED are recorded and reported to the Steering Group on an on-going basis to inform future planning and marketing
12. Undertake a wider stakeholder and user review toward the end of year 2 to assess progress and levels of engagement with HEaTED

## APPENDIX 1

### HEaTED Evaluation - Stakeholder and User Review

Responses to 5 questions were sought from HEaTED steering group members, senior SD staff in HEIs and HEaTED associate staff.

The overall conclusions from the feedback are included within the evaluation report but a more detailed summary of the comments received is included here as it may be of value to HEaTED management.

#### 1. What do you feel have been the key achievements of HEaTED to date?

There was a general consensus that the key achievement to date is the success HEaTED has had in raising awareness of the key challenges connected with effective technical staff development within the HE community, HEFCE and the IST. Aligned to this, there was recognition of the achievement of securing funding for technician development and the signup of a significant number of universities to HEaTED membership, which meant HEaTED has harnessed valuable support and commitment at an institutional level.

The other key achievement was seen as the bringing together of a (small) professional team, led by a prominent and capable leader. There was recognition that although the team is small, they have been pro-active in getting out and about in the community.

*"They have been keeping the message alive and involving HEIs in the survey to find out exactly what's what"*

*"Matt has personally done a brilliant job in getting around and getting the message over, and his personal commitment to this is fantastic"*

Specific recognised outcomes were also mentioned, in particular:

- Role profiles
- Development of Skills Courses programme, including new bespoke courses
- HEaTED Survey – *"a high profile survey that informs the projects direction and engages over 130 institutions in the process"*
- Pulling together activities aimed at technical staff - establishing a workable CPD programme and online presence dedicated to the technical professions
- Producing a "terrific newsletter to help make people feel they have a truly professional body that serves all their interests".
- The HEaTED 'brand' including a new website and newsletter

#### 2. What is your assessment of how far the HEaTED 'brand' has penetrated HE so far?

There were mixed views regarding the success of how far HEaTED has penetrated the sector. Overall, there was general agreement that at an institutional level, it is well known considering it has only been in existence for a relatively short amount of time.

However, there was concern that below the level of senior staff in either technical roles or HR/SD, there is still much work to be done. In addition, some respondents felt that awareness was restricted to certain pockets of an HEI and more had to be done to ensure as many staff groups and networks were targeted. In particular, more could be done to engage academic colleagues and other senior stakeholders.

Some respondents also stated that while much had been achieved, a balance needed to be struck between 'marketing talk' and real deliverables. Respondents commented on the practical focus of

technical staff and their need to see that HEaTED can meet practical needs, along with raising awareness at a strategic and policy level.

A minority of respondents said they were unaware of how well the brand was known.

*"I wonder whether behind the brand we have something of substance and practical value that we can offer the technician community. It has taken a while to get the skills events up and running and I am unsure how many are registered for the CPD award. The task I believe now is to build on the brand and have a practical programme of support events that will ..... avoid HEIs questioning their subscription"*

*"The HEaTED newsletter is a great marketing tool but more about relationships and infrastructure, less about substantial member services – this must be the focus and priority"*

*"Technicians do not automatically think 'HEaTED' – mention of it is missing for example from an internal report about planning for technicians roles/support"*

*"I think the brand is fairly well known here because HEaTED communications get circulated to the technical staff pretty routinely but I am aware a lot of them still don't really "get" what it's all about. There is a culture of waiting to be given stuff, rather self direction"*

*"Brand penetration seems quite good at institutional level and senior technical manager level but it is unclear how well the brand has penetrated through to sub-management level - registrations at individual technician level are fairly low"*

*"Responses to the 2009 survey are good – over 130 HEIs – but I am not sure how well we have penetrated beyond HR and Staff Developers ..... and I don't think that academics within HEIs are necessarily aware of HEaTED either"*

### **3. What are the challenges facing HEaTED over the next 12-24 months?**

A variety of views were expressed as to the nature of the challenges faced and how to address them.

However, a majority of respondents that key to success was securing the engagement and participation of technical staff, technical managers and interestingly, academics as both participants in HEaTED activity and contributors to delivery, content and future direction.

There was support for continuation of existing activity such as CPD, VLE, conferences and newsletters but recognition that some momentum is needed to increase both provision and engagement. Some useful suggestions were made to address these outlined in responses to question 4.

In summary, the key challenges were seen as:

- Widening engagement with HEaTED across the technical and academic staff communities
- Ensuring a sustainable funding model for HEaTED to be able to continue the work long term
- Being able to demonstrate ROI/impact of HEaTED in response to survey findings
- Ensuring maximum utilization of the VLE, web site, CPD award and programme of events
- Maintaining momentum across the portfolio of activities with a small core team – in particular, regular marketing materials such as the newsletter produced in time to advertise

events, publishing the survey results promptly and in a way that facilitates further engagement, ensuring income generation to maintain and increase HEaTED staffing.

- Time and resource in HEIs to keep up the profile and support HEaTED activities

*“What's difficult here is that there's no institution-wide co-ordination because we just don't have the resources to allocate anyone to doing it. I pass on messages but, with the exception of a couple of proactive technical managers, nobody is chasing it up” (HEI Staff Developer)*

#### **4. What actions should be taken to ensure these challenges are met successfully?**

In addition to the recognition that funding and sustainability needed to be high on the agenda, a number of respondents commended the current HEaTED leadership but recognized that this was a heavy load focused primarily on a limited number of individuals. There was a general willingness to engage more creatively with ideas on how to take HEaTED forward, perhaps via a specific strategy planning event or conference forums.

A number of practical suggestions were made, summarized below.

- Capture take up/web hits
- Reword the questionnaire to build upon successful addressing of concerns
- Positively target universities where HEaTED is not supported
- Plan further planning sessions with stakeholders to stimulate creative ideas for engaging technical staff and those who support them
- Secure additional/diverse sources of funding
- Develop collaborations with key technical managers to help build a framework to develop/handle technical materials for displaying on the VLE
- Secure better political and VC proactive backing for the project; academics need to be totally on board with the development of their technical staff to encourage participation
- Need to better demonstrate take up and success of the CPD scheme. A suggestion was made to develop regional cohorts for the CPD award, co-ordinated at a national level.
- Future HEaTED conferences needs to be higher on practical content – perhaps also offer conferences in regions to encourage greater ‘local’ participation/contribution.

*“We need to get enough technicians through the doors of high-quality, relevant events to make them advocates of the approach and to justify institutions' spending. This means having good intelligence about what is needed, good providers offering training, and the commitment of technicians and their managers to put some effort in to make these things a success”*

*“Overcome the inertia that is seen at technical manager level to staff development - it is all too easy for staff at that level to opt for the easy ground and argue that they do not have sufficient time or funding to develop their staff”*

#### **5. Which key stakeholders should HEaTED focus on to secure continued growth and sustainability?**

A number of useful suggestions were made as follows:

- Principal Investigators
- Senior Institutional Leaders
- Technicians and Technical Managers
- HEI senior HR staff

- HEFCE, HEFCW, Irish and Scottish counterparts
- Other technical groups/bodies
- Further Education & schools
- Research Councils and other HEI awarding bodies
- Vice Chancellors, senior faculty/ academic leaders and HoDs in Universities

*It has to be top of their minds (in a good way) when thinking about technical staff"*

*"They have not really been engaged and they often do not appreciate or acknowledge the importance of the development of technical staff within their Faculties/Units"*

Some respondents stated that further conversation was needed with HEFCE in particular to reassess the funding model for HEaTED with a suggestion that a move to more stable funding basis would better support sustainability of HEaTED over the longer term to enable it to be able to deliver its core objectives alongside HE and FE needs.

This was summed up very well by one reply in particular:

*"I feel that rather than use a finance model that depends on funding being sought at individual institutional level to make the project self-sustaining in the long term, it would be better to try and move to a core funding model, which provides a annual baseline level of funding each year from HEFCE. This would not only make the project sustainable in the long term but it would also ensure that resources expended to date and the progress made so far is not wasted. In addition it would also allow the project deliverables to be available to the whole of the HE sector rather than just those institutions that choose to buy-in, thereby avoiding some technicians, technical specialists and technical managers within the sector being disadvantaged"*