1.1 The 2016 HEA Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence (CATE) scheme produced a large number of high-quality submissions that evidenced the calibre of collaborative work taking place across the higher education sector. The launch of this new national award scheme acknowledges the growing importance of collaborative working to higher education. The standard of submissions received demonstrates the impact of collaborative working on higher education practice and the award recognizes those teams that have shown excellence in their collaborative approach to teaching in higher education. This document is devised from and synthesises the reviewer feedback.

1.2 At each stage of the CATE process submissions were rigorously assessed against the award criteria. At stage one these criteria were:

- a clear set of aim(s), objectives and rationale for the team’s approach (criterion 1)
- demonstration of how the team presented in the application, works collaboratively and how collaborative working has been an advantage (criterion 2)
- demonstration of how the team, presented in the application, constitutes a team and developed as a team (criterion 3)
- demonstration of direct involvement of students with the team (criterion 4)
- illustration of how the team has addressed a thematic issue: assessment and feedback; retention, employability, staff development; students as partners; technology and social media (criterion 5)
- demonstration of creative solutions to a challenge, situation, problem (criterion 6)
- provision of detailed comment on the impact of the outcomes/outputs of the collaborative work (criterion 7)
- demonstration of how the collaborative work has enhanced student learning (criterion 8)

The supporting statement from the institution’s senior manager was also an important aspect of the stage one application.

1.3 Applications that were long listed at stage one were invited to submit a dissemination and impact plan which was assessed against the following criteria:

- a coherent plan of dissemination with objectives
- demonstration of stakeholder engagement in the dissemination process
- demonstration of embedding cutting-edge practice
- clarity with regard to dissemination tools
- manageable timeframe
- details of evaluation and the measurement of impact

1.4 Assessor feedback on both stages of submission has been analysed in order to provide advice and guidance for future applicants. Thus the following generic feedback addresses:
• Information that could have strengthened applications, i.e. those areas where the award criteria could have been better or more fully evidenced

and

• Positive aspects of submissions i.e. the nature of the information in submissions that was most helpful in making a case for an award

2. Information that could have Strengthened Applications

2.1 The Focus on Team Working.

The area most frequently needing greater clarification was that of how the team presented in the application had developed and how members worked together (i.e. a combination of stage one criteria 2 and 3). Whilst many applications showed evidence of innovative and valuable interventions there was some tendency to focus wholly on the intervention itself at the expense of fully articulating the nature of teamwork.

In some cases this resulted in the constitution of the team being unclear and raising the question ‘who, precisely, are this team?’ In this respect applications could have benefited from providing greater detail regarding the strengths and contributions of each team member.

Thus the nature of teamwork itself was rather implicit in some submissions and further evidence of how such teamwork was fostered and developed would have been useful. When such evidence of team development was limited in this way it prevented a clear sense of how the team collaborated e.g. who took particular roles, how they work together now and how they had developed over time.

The specific aims and particular benefits of taking a team approach together with the team processes and development needed greater consideration in a number of applications. Further discussion and explanation of such areas could have better demonstrated the cohesiveness of the team and could have provided greater support for the approach taken.

2.2 The Involvement of Students and Enhancement of Student Learning

There was some scope in applications to be more explicit about the nature of the interaction between staff and students and the role that students took within the collaboration (stage one criteria 4 and 8) - particularly the extent to which students were involved over and above their provision of routine feedback. Thus, further examples of students’ involvement in different aspects of the team’s work and the identification of any reasons for their lack of involvement would have enhanced applications.

More evidence of progress and improvements in the student experience & learning would also have been valuable.

2.3 Impact of the Project
In some cases the accounts and evidence regarding beneficiaries of the project could have been more convincingly presented and there was potential for applications to offer a wider range of evidence to demonstrate impact and indicators of success. There could have been greater identification of those strategies used for data collection and more discussion of whether the data collected – in addition to student feedback – supported assertions regarding the success of the project. In general a need to more fully address the ‘transformative impact’ was required in a number of otherwise excellent applications.

In addition to discussing the impact of outcomes, it would have been useful for some submissions to provide further information on how others (including students) were influenced during the process of the project.

Additional detail regarding the impact of the team’s work beyond the local environment was needed in some submissions, including the cascading of good practice through the extension of the project to other departments/groups within the University or more widely, and/or details of how outcomes were extended to different experiences and activities.

Why the changes emanating from the project depended upon the cooperation that existed amongst team members, (and would not have been possible without such cooperation), could have usefully been explained in a number of applications.

2.4 Project Aims and Thematic Issue Addressed

On occasion accounts were too generalized, the aims and objectives of the transformation described were rather vague and it was difficult to clearly discern the particular ‘thematic challenge’ being addressed (criteria 1 and 5).

It was regrettable that, in an effort to address a number of different agendas, some submissions were over-complicated and appeared less focused and precise.

Assessors recognized many applications were submitted by well-established teams that have been operating over a number of years and that some of these may have attempted to cover too wide a range of activities. In such cases applicants may have benefited from focusing more explicitly on a specific issue in order to demonstrate meeting the award criteria.

More pragmatically in some submissions greater clarity and more accessible explanation was needed around specialist and local terminology that, whilst well understood by applicants, could be confusing for others.

2.5 General Points

A few recurring general areas for improvement in stage one applications should also be mentioned. These are:

- In terms of presentation there were a number of submissions where there was a lack of explicit linking of information in the evidence document, or evidence referred to in the team application document as being available was missing from the evidence document. A final check of all evidence should serve to rectify this in future.
• Without being formulaic there was some need to more explicitly address the eight headline criteria and accounts of how the work addresses one or more of the thematic areas could be more overt.

• Opportunities to show how interventions were in fact innovative were sometimes missed and there was scope in some applications for further evidence of creativity.

2.6 Stage two specific points

Some stage two applications required greater detail about who would undertake evaluation and dissemination. Internal dissemination strategies tended to be well-established, however strategies for external dissemination could have been more thoroughly explored, for example more detail of targets, milestones and funding could have been provided. There was also scope for greater discussion of transferability to alternative contexts in some submissions.

In terms of presentation the use of unexplained acronyms was not helpful.

3. Positive Aspects of Submissions

The HEA received a diverse range of applications that showed great commitment, enthusiasm and skills in collaborative working. Notwithstanding the comments made above indicating the ways in which applications could be strengthened there were many areas to commend in the submissions received. The strongest aspects of applications clearly demonstrated the power of working in teams and how drawing upon the insights of multiple team members has allowed creative and constructive solutions to evolve.

3.1 Evidence of Support and Sustainability

The strong support from senior leadership was appreciated in a number of the applications with some of the most convincing applications providing a clear assurance that university leaders were not only supportive of the project but also had a well-developed understanding of its benefits. Internal indicators of recognition were frequently used by such institutions and applications tended to show clear evidence of how the initiative would be sustained.

3.2 Student Involvement

Some student statements of impact were particularly compelling and showed the significant influence of initiatives on student learning and the student experience. A positive aspect of many applications was that they not only involved students in collaboration but also clearly demonstrated their engagement as partners and peers. Recognition of the heterogeneity of the student population was also a notable strength in some applications.

In terms of presentation of evidence the impact of some powerful student statements was maximised as they were utilized as part of the narrative presented rather than just as standalone quotations.

3.3 Clarity of Team Roles, Specific Strengths and Expertise
Although, as previously noted, there was generally scope for greater attention to team characteristics and development, applications also showed some excellent examples of effective team working and the sharing of responsibilities, workload and recognition.

In some applications team composition was made explicit and teambuilding events demonstrated a commitment to group development. The best showed a strong understanding of roles in relation to one another with descriptions of how team working was facilitated being particularly useful. Some supported their submission with evidence of specific collaborative activities such as the establishment of task and finish groups and open forums and a few applications also usefully provided diagrammatic representations of the team that clarified the roles of team members.

Additional positive aspects included the constructive discussion of constraints and obstacles faced by the team, how these were managed and any particular refinements made to meet the challenges faced. Some applications also pointed to the benefits gained by team members themselves from being involved in the collaboration.

3.4 Impact

Robust evaluation to support claims regarding the impact of the project included relevant performance data and other quantitative indicators in addition to student, staff and external testimony. Tangible results and clear outcomes were shown in many of the best applications.

3.5 General

Other positive areas that were noted in the most highly regarded application were:

- Clear evidence of the work of the team having raised the profile of learning and teaching.
- Acknowledgement of the mutual benefits to be gained by a range of stakeholders, including professional networks and alumni.
- An honest identification of challenges faced by the team.
- A strong appreciation of the different skill sets used to achieve team objectives.

3.6 Stage Two Specific Points

Stage two applications generally showed good awareness of the systematic measurement of impact, and objectives were clearly related to a detailed plan for dissemination.

Dissemination strategies used a combination of established channels and more creative approaches with a clear rationale for the different methods. Convincing cases were often made regarding the wider impact of activity with transferability and indicators of success clearly defined. Stakeholder engagement and utilization of expertise in dissemination strategies was also clear.

In terms of timescales, although there was inevitably some tension between showing rapid progress and manageability, in general submissions indicated clear progression plans.

4. Summary
Submissions to this first year of the Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence have shown the wealth of teamwork practice that is taking place across the sector. As indicated there is some room for improvement in applications particularly in respect of providing greater detail about the teamwork and team development itself. In some applications a more explicit account and evidence of impact on others could have been provided - particularly the external impact.

However, convincing student testimony did provide support for the influence of applicants’ work and many strong submissions provided accounts of robustly evaluated and innovative initiatives and clearly evidenced the benefits of teamwork.