



Development Plan: 2008 - 2015

turning information
into intelligence

June 2008

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Executive Summary

Our vision is that by 2015,

- HECSU is recognised internationally as an authoritative and innovatory source of research, development and practice support for career guidance, development and progression prior to, during and following HE, through its contribution to knowledge creation.

We aim to,

- Strengthen the dissemination of knowledge
- Undertake (as well as commission) research with key partners
- Contribute to student/graduate employability
- Influence policy making within HE in the UK
- Support the provision of pre-HE careers information
- Increase membership amongst colleges and employers

HECSU is an educational charity established in 1972 by the predecessor organisations of *UniversitiesUK* and *GuildHE* and our charitable object is,

- the *advancement of education* of applicants to, students and graduates of any establishment of higher education (which is a subscriber to or affiliate of HECSU) by supporting and assisting the work of careers advisory services, employers, academic staff and others.

We do this by,

- creating, commissioning and disseminating high quality, researched information on student/graduate career development and employment
- influencing and informing key policy makers within higher education in the UK
- supporting graduate employability by working with careers advisers, academic staff and employers
- bringing practitioners and researchers together
- contributing directly to the knowledge base and to turning information into intelligence and action
- being independent and inclusive and working with those who share an interest in graduate careers
- supporting, promoting and celebrating high quality work experience and employment

Current projects include,

- *Futuretrack*: longitudinal study of student career development
- *Futuretrack: Part-time students*: longitudinal study
- National and regional labour market analyses
- Accrediting providers of work experience with the *Quality Mark*
- Developing practitioner research within institutions
- Mapping postgraduate education and identifying research questions
- Subject-specific career trajectories on behalf of professional bodies

Support to AGCAS

- Contributing to funding of central administration and website
- Provision of bursaries for staff development
- Supply of information booklets and publications for students

Our primary UK partners include,

- Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services
- Association of Graduate Recruiters
- Birkbeck, University of London
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- Graduates into Employment Unit, University of Liverpool
- GuildHE
- i-graduate
- Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick
- NICEC
- UCAS
- UniversitiesUK

Our international partners include,

- Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers
- Graduate Careers, Australia
- National Association of Colleges and Employers, USA
- FEDORA
- INGRADA
- South African Graduate Recruitment Association

We are organized into teams for,

- Labour market information
- Practitioner research
- Research
- Work experience
- Membership services

We report to a Board of eighteen Directors comprising, Vice Chancellors/Principals, Heads of Careers Advisory Services, Chair of the Association of Graduate Recruiters, Registrars and Advisers and Officers of UniversitiesUK and GuildHE.

HECSU's commercial subsidiary Graduate Prospects Ltd works closely with AGCAS to deliver the *UK's Official Graduate Careers Website* (see www.prospects.ac.uk)

For more information

Visit www.hecsu.ac.uk and www.futuretrack.ac.uk and www.work-experience.org

Introduction

The Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) is the educational charity, with the commercial arm Graduate Prospects Ltd, established over thirty five years ago by the predecessor organisations of *UniversitiesUK* and *GuildHE* to advance the education of students and graduates by working with careers advisory services in Higher Education institutions in the UK. The Executive Summary provides an outline of HECSU's recent activities.

During 2007/08 the HECSU team set out to clarify the aims and objectives of HECSU's work to 2015. As part of this, extensive consultation with HECSU Board members was undertaken during March/April 2008. This Development Plan (referred to as the 'Plan') aims to capture that thinking and to project a range of short, medium and long term objectives necessary to fulfil its aims and vision.

The Plan builds upon both the *Research Strategy 2003 - 2008* and the *Development Plan 2006 - 2011*, the latter of which was constructed as part of establishing the new HECSU team in the Autumn/Winter of 2005/06.

HECSU comprises five integrated yet distinct areas of activity:

- Labour market information (LMI)
- Putting Research Outcomes into Practice (PROP)
- Research and Development (R & D)
- National Council for Work-experience & Employability (NCWE)
- Membership services

The most recent component 'work experience' was included when the National Council for Work Experience (NCWE) was transferred from Graduate Prospects Ltd., in 2006. Staff teams are organised to reflect the above but also work collaboratively on a regular basis.

Resourcing

HECSU, the charity receives funds from three major sources:

1. covenant from Graduate Prospects Ltd of its annual profit
2. A sum each year withdrawn from a professionally managed investment holding
3. membership subscription income

The management of the reserve fund ('reserve strategy') is a matter of report to the HECSU Board and is responsive to changes in profit levels and expected investment returns. The third source of resourcing, subscription income, is used to support the production and delivery of hard copy and web borne information direct to careers advisory services in institutions (cost £245k). In addition HECSU funds AGCAS directly to support, the central organisation, the website and staff development (cost c£127k)

In making this Plan, it is assumed that a steady level of funding of approximately £1.1 million pounds will be available over the period and that if additional activities are undertaken; these will be on the basis of attracting additional, external funding.

Key performance indicators

In creating this Plan HECSU has taken account of its actual and perceived strengths and limitations. The table below summarises the key performance indicators that underpin HECSU's position in relation to the HE community it serves.

HECSU strengths	HECSU (developmental) needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality research and analysis • Innovative and takes initiative • Committed to the advancement of education of students/graduates • Adaptable and agile organisation • Effective networks and communication channels - able to utilise media • Strong team-working, collaborative ethos • Independent • High level of contact with recruiters • Provider of staff and organisational development (eg work experience and career learning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen PR to raise visibility • Maintain flexible staffing • Engage more with employers • Broader membership base • Enhance awareness of academic staff and employers • Deploy expertise to maximum effect • Work collaboratively with key partners • Focus on key strengths • Build upon existing relationships (eg AGCAS)
HE sector* strengths	HE Sector (employment-focussed) needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality, audited research and teaching • High visibility & media interest • Committed to the advancement of education of students/graduates • Strong international reputation • Differentiated across wide range of variables • Providing both specialised and generic high level skills • Influential and innovative • Extensive range of purposes for contact with employers (eg curricular, experiential, professional) as well as recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted, local, regional and sector specific data • Support to develop student employability • Employability support for international students and graduates • Data on effectiveness of specific interventions (eg work experience) • Assessment of labour market impact of (economic or curricular) change • Accessible and up-to-date information and analysis • Conceptual models and frameworks with analysis of what works and why • Evidence to influence decision-makers
<p>* institutions</p>	

Mission, vision and aims

HECSU's charitable mission is student-focussed:

the advancement of education of applicants to, students and graduates of, any establishment of higher education (which is a subscriber to or affiliate of HECSU) by supporting and assisting the work of careers advisory services, employers, academic staff and appropriate others.

The values that underpin HECSU's research and development work are reported in the *Research Strategy 2003 - 2008* available on the HECSU website (see www.hecsu.ac.uk)

HECSU's vision for 2008 - 2015 is that it is,

recognised internationally as an authoritative and innovatory source of research evidence and practice support for career guidance, development and progression prior to, during and following HE.

HECSU's aims for 2008 - 2015 are to,

- Strengthen the creation and dissemination of knowledge
- Undertake (as well as commission) research with key partners
- Contribute to student/graduate employability
- Influence policy decision-making within HE in the UK
- Support the provision of pre-HE careers information
- Widen and increase membership amongst colleges and employers

Development Plan 2008 - 2015

Responsive, agile, adaptable objectives

The rationale for the aims and objectives that follow, derive from three strategic imperatives that require HECSU's work to be responsive, agile and adaptable:

- Creating knowledge
- Influencing decision-making
- Widening membership

Creating knowledge

The aim of HECSU in creating knowledge is to add directly to the knowledge base of the 'graduate careers/employability' community and importantly, to contribute to turning 'information into intelligence and action'

Access to information resources has increased exponentially via the web and more recently Web 2.0. A significant challenge facing students/graduates and their advisers now is not how to access resources but how to ensure that information is reliable, robust and tailored to their needs. HECSU's goal is to ensure that it creates knowledge that is not only high quality (as judged by internal and external criteria) but also credible, valued and used by practitioners. For example, the PROP (*Putting Research Outcomes into Practice*) project aims to achieve this by encouraging multi-disciplinary team working and what has been termed 'powerful practice'. Here the focus is the use of researched evidence in applied settings alongside the articulation of research questions by practitioners. Research and practice are symbiotic; both are necessary but neither is sufficient on its own.

HECSU's role in creating knowledge includes:

- commissioning/specifying research
- reviewing and reporting upon findings (own and others)
- co-funding research and development projects
- disseminating, synthesising and providing commentary/critique
- stimulating debate and raising questions
- undertaking research work (own and others)
- publicising and generating interest in research-practice interface
- encouraging practitioner research
- recognising and developing quality in work experience
- supporting staff development and professional training

Turning information into intelligence is a key component in using research. However, users of researched evidence have very different needs; for example, career advisers might need to know about all broad trends, students (and parents) may need to know about likely outcomes of particular subject choices, employers are interested in knowing about graduate expectations of working life, etc. The same or similar evidence bases might be used to respond to these wide ranging needs but with very different outcomes. Good quality, complex data is open to interpretation and seldom objective in a practical context. Findings (knowledge, researched evidence) need to be made accessible and targeted at users/user groups. It will be increasingly necessary for HECSU to work collaboratively with a range of research organisations (in the UK and overseas), initiate forward-looking research and development projects and become more involved in evaluating its own and others' innovative approaches.

Creating knowledge objectives 2008 - 2015	Leading team	Short, medium or long term
<p>Aim 1 Strengthen the dissemination of knowledge</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. devise strategy for (<i>Futuretrack</i>) data analyses 2. endorse/accredit good practice in the research-practice interface 3. create studentships and research fellowships 4. increase the range and type of reporting of research findings 5. establish an on-line refereed journal <p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ensure strategy responds to users needs 2. use <i>PROP</i> and <i>Quality Mark</i> to identify, develop and promote good practice 3. participate in knowledge transfer partnerships 4. focus on transmission of key messages and use innovative media 5. seek international referees and include interactive mechanism <p>Aim 2 Undertake research with key partners</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. promote and support practitioner enquiry 2. seek opportunities for external funding and co-funding 3. undertake research projects directly and in collaboration with key partners and Fellows 4. increase revenue from external research contracts <p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with AGCAS and PROP to develop practitioner research capacity 2. Find out about and respond to priorities of funding bodies 3. Identify complementary strengths of staff, Fellows, research students and key partners 4. Set targets for revenue generation annually <p>Aim 3 Contribute to student/graduate employability</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. engage employers/employing organisations in research and development activities 2. support development of employability in students/graduates 		

3. provide high quality, information on the graduate labour market 4. identify trends and changes in the graduate labour market Actions 1. Work with employers/employer organisations/SMEs to identify research questions and interpret data 2. Develop models/conceptual frameworks drawn from practice 3. Create labour market information on regional, sectoral, occupational or subject specific bases. 4. Report findings concisely and explain jargon (eg 'global career')		
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Influencing decision-making

Central to HECSU's ambition to influence decision-making is the notion that good decisions are founded on reliable evidence but that also that evidence may be complex and challenging. Assisting users to understand implications of researched evidence is an (often iterative) educative process and HECSUs aim is to promote thinking and debate. Further, some users may need assistance in how to understand findings – and to critique, challenge or compare with other findings.

Student and graduate career learning and decision-making lies at the heart of what HECSU currently seeks to understand by means of research (eg *Futuretrack*) and joint working with professional partners. However, learning and decision-making is informed by a wide range of factors, notably, HE policy contexts, socio-economic background, curricular experiences, gender, ethnicity and economic conditions. Thus, HECSU's attention is not solely focussed upon the student and graduate but must also take account of the factors outside the immediate experience of students; these particularly include the actions of HE policy makers and employers. Thus HECSU aims to use research and development initiatives to influence decision-making at several levels:

- *micro level* - via provision of (labour market) information and research services for individual students/graduates and their peers/parents etc
- *meso level* - via the provision of information and research services for intermediaries/professional practitioners; eg careers advisers, academic staff
- *macro level* - via influencing organisations such as institutions, government bodies and employing organisations who require analysis and synthesis of researched information (and 'horizon scanning')

Influencing decision-making objectives	Leading team	Short, medium or long term
Aim 4 Influence policy making within HE in the UK Objectives 1. target researched evidence to contribute to policy debates		

<p>2. promote HECSU within the UK, Europe and internationally</p> <p>3. provide information on the career development of specific groups of students and commentary on current issues.</p> <p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify channels of communication (eg UUK), use innovative media (eg podcast) and tailor information to users needs. 2. Promote HECSU to international partners and support (at least one) trans-national project 3. Provide analyses by type (gender, race, age, nationality) and issue (eg. employment of international students) <p>Aim 5 Support the provision of pre-HE careers information</p> <p>Objective</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use knowledge base to enhance pre-HE careers information and guidance <p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Establish effective channels of communication with providers of pre-HE careers information and guidance 2 Tailor information about labour markets and work experience to pre-HE users (eg younger people, parents, access students) 		
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Widening membership

As a membership organisation HECSU works for and on behalf of students/graduates, their advisers and institutions. Thus far membership has been available to institutions providing HE, as either Subscribers (universities and colleges of HE) or Affiliates (colleges of HE/FE) and membership has conferred reciprocal benefits in terms of access to information/resources and alerting students, graduates and staff to services that might be of interest.

HECSU now plans to increase membership amongst institutions, employers, individuals and groups in order to make its work accessible to those involved in providing pre-HE information and guidance services, and those involved in post-HE recruitment and selection. The major purpose of widening membership in this way is to support students/graduates and their advisers working at these points of transition and to complement, not duplicate, existing information sources. New membership categories will facilitate networking, dissemination of knowledge and the celebration of good practice. In particular it is intended that this will result in membership growth in the following ways:

Institutions - colleges

HECSU will continue to promote *Affiliate* membership to colleges providing HE but also amongst colleges from where students are likely to embark upon higher education. Specifically, these will include general FE colleges, sixth form colleges and other tertiary education. The purpose is three-

fold: (i) to create awareness of post-HE career trajectories amongst actual and potential applicants to HE, (ii) to facilitate dialogue with pre-HE institutions to help shape HECSU's research and development agenda, and (iii) to work with institutions to promote and celebrate high quality work experience. A modified range of membership benefits will be provided.

Institutions of HE (universities and colleges) will continue as primary *Subscribers* entitled to the full range of membership benefits and charitable donations as currently.

Organisational - Employers

There is some evidence that employers (and employer organisations) would welcome greater contact with HECSU. In particular employers are expressing interest in national and regional analyses which lie outside the interest of individual institutions. Institutions have expressed the view that HECSU is well-placed to research and develop practice amongst employers and provide supplementary information to support institutions' employer engagement strategies. Employer membership will be specifically aimed to optimise existing relationships and care will be taken not to undermine any local arrangements between institutions and employers and to consult on emergent themes and issues.

Thus, the purpose of encouraging membership amongst employers is: (i) to add the knowledge base in careers advisory services and others, (ii) to promote 'careers work' to employers, and (iii) engage employers in research and development of high quality work experience.

Individual - Fellows

The major purpose of creating a category of membership for individuals is to enable HECSU to confer Fellowship status on individuals. HECSU Fellows will be individuals who make a substantial contribution to the achievement of HECSU's charitable object. They are likely to be drawn from experienced practitioners and researchers closely involved in supporting and understanding the progression of students into, through and beyond higher education. HECSU proposes to award a small number of Fellowships per year, commencing in 2008/09. Fellowships will be conferred at high profile events that celebrate the individuals' personal achievements whilst promoting the work of the sector in supporting the employability of students/graduates.

A Fellowship network will be created as part of Membership Services, and Fellows will be encouraged to work collaboratively with the team on HECSU-funded or externally-funded research and development projects. Fellows will also be encouraged to contribute to the journal and other publications.

Widening membership objectives	Leading team	Short, medium or long term
Aim 6 Increase membership amongst colleges, employers and others		

Objectives

1. refine membership categories to include new individual, organisational and Fellowship categories
2. increase membership amongst colleges providing HE in FE
3. increase membership amongst employers and employer organisations
4. increase membership amongst institutions and individuals outside the UK
5. increase revenue from subscriptions
6. establish and maintain a Fellowship network

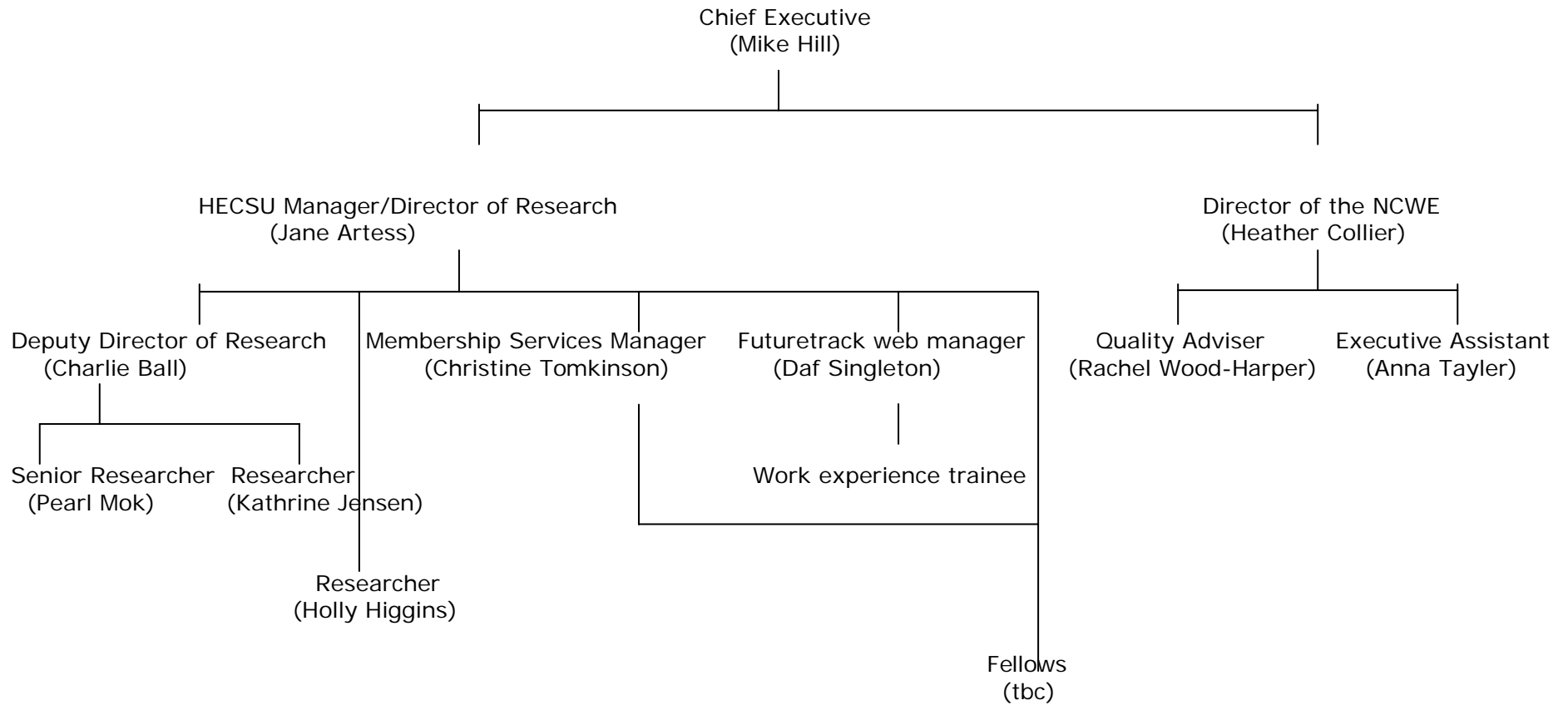
Actions

- 1 Promote new membership categories
- 2 Create area of HECSU website to house items of interest to colleges.
- 3 Promote membership to employers and organisations that represent them
- 4 Promote membership to international partners, institutions and organisations.
- 5 Set targets for new memberships and agree incentives and benefits.
- 6 Establish communication system for Fellowship holders and host annual presentation evening for award of Fellowships.

Appendices

Staffing

Staffing structure proposed to meet the objectives in the Development Plan is follows:



Stakeholders and Partners

Recently the HECSU team has developed effective working relationships with a wide range of stakeholders in such degree that HECSU is now represented on all major national initiatives affecting student/graduate career development and employability.

There is consensus amongst HECSU staff that key stakeholders are: students/graduates, AGCAS, careers advisory staffs, employers, researchers, academic staff, senior management in HE, and professional organisations.

In particular,

- HECSU has a long-standing strategic relationship with and provides funding support to AGCAS. As the organisation that works on behalf of careers advisory services in HE, AGCAS is uniquely placed to represent the broad range of interests that services respond to. HECSU funding is utilised to support both the core organisation and also specific projects, such as staff induction and training. Furthermore AGCAS has been a key partner in some of HECSU's externally funded work. Although now managed principally via Graduate Prospects Ltd, HECSU sees the continuing relationship with AGCAS as crucial to its success and direction.
- HECSU also works closely with careers advisory services, both individually and via regional/country networks, providing resources to develop services for students/graduates and staff (eg the award-winning What Do Graduates Do – Scotland)
- HECSU's work with individual employers, (eg NCWE Quality Mark) is aimed to promote best practice in work experience and recruitment. It also works with employers' organisations, both in the UK and overseas (eg NACE in the USA and Graduate Careers Australia) to disseminate learning from other countries and promote international education.

Other stakeholders who share common interests and with whom joint working is beneficial include:

AGR	Other academic staff
ASET	Parents/carers
British Council	Press - educational and other
DIUS	Prime Minister's office
Employers	Pro Vice Chancellors
Funding authorities	Providers of work experience
Gap year organisations	Regional development agencies
Government 'think tanks'	Regional government offices
HE Academy	Secondary and tertiary teachers
Head-teachers (secondary)	Sector Skills Councils
HE learning and teaching units	Small-medium sized enterprises
HESA	Student loan company
i-graduate	Sub-groups of students
Job-shop staffs	Suppliers (goods and services)
Learned societies	UCAS
Learning and Skills Councils	UKCISA
Multi national companies	UKGrad
NASES	UUK
NUS	Vice Chancellors

HECSU's relationship with stakeholders is differentiated; some stakeholders have greater need of HECSU services than others and HECSU relies upon some external organisations more than others. Over time the balance in relationships shifts.

Stakeholders may also be partners; for the purpose of the Plan, stakeholders are distinguished as those who have a direct or indirect interest in the outputs of HECSU and partners are those contributing directly or indirectly to the outputs of HECSU. Whilst partnerships have emerged through the need to collaborate on tasks/projects, some partnerships have endured and provide the bedrock for subsequent development.

