Title of paper:	Transformative Quality – the possibility of a new 'agenda' in the enhancement of the student experience

Title of Stream: Beyond standards and recognition – supporting our own professional development as reflective practitioners

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Problem statement/rationale

This proposal reports on the interim findings of an HEA funded project on '*Transformative Quality – strategies for generating quality at the sub-institutional level*' , a 'spin-off' project from an FDTL5 funded project (***Quality in Business Education***) conducted by a consortium of six universities led by Cass Business School.

'Transformative' quality represents a fundamental anchorage point in the theoretical discussions of quality in HEIs (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey and Knight, 1996; Harvey 2005) The kernel of their argument is that higher education should act as a transforming set of experiences for students, best effected by fundamental shifts in the teaching and learning process.

As well as instances of 'top-down' quality models (such as the EFQM Excellence model) there are also initiatives in local quality management and processes. One of the aims of the investigation was to explore the degree of autonomy exercised by sub-institutional units (such as a Faculty or School). The constraints experienced by departments having to operate within institutional policies and the extent of their achievement of transformative learning have been investigated.

Research Design and methods of data collection and analysis

The research design is predicated upon an essentially qualitative methodology in which the views of key informants within institutions is sought in a series of interviews. A range of institutions has been selected to reflect the range and diversity of the sector. After transcription, the interviews are subjected to a thematic analysis. Issues raised in earlier interviews suggest further lines of enquiry and/or analysis to be researched in later interviews.

Main findings

Findings are necessarily tentative at this stage but the initial analysis indicates that
- Departments have more institutional autonomy to define and pursue their own 'quality journeys' than hypothesised.

- The drivers of quality may well lie in 'Learning and Teaching' rather than those more traditionally associated with quality monitoring.

Discussion of Implications

Discussions of quality may need recasting upon the lines of continua (or implicit tensions) such as the following:

- Institutionally driven v. subject peer-generated approaches to quality

- Conventional quality monitoring is a necessary condition but it fails to achieve the culture of excellence stimulated by advances in teaching and learning (as a sufficient condition)

List of key references/sources

Harvey, L. and Green, D., 1993, 'Defining quality', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18(1).

Harvey, L. and Knight, P., 1996, *Transforming Higher Education* (Buckingham, Open University Press and Society for Research into Higher Education).

Harvey, L. (2005), 'A history and critique of quality evaluation in the UK', *Quality Assurance in Education* **13**(4), May