

## 5.0 SUSTAINABILITY AND VIABILITY

### 5.1 Is the business model sustainable? Provide data to support this alongside qualitative feedback.

The business model observes that the value to the academic institution lies not in the commercial returns, but in the convenience to the student and the reputational enhancement for the authors and the University. eTIPS continues with a hybrid approach – promoting a non-commercial business model through a commercial distribution route, whilst providing an open access one in its accompanying online materials.



**The website was useful.** The videos were clear and easy to follow, there were links to various other academic sites that students could gain extra information from and the website was **set out in a very user-friendly way.**

These additional learning tools **allow those with different learning styles to engage with the topics.** That said, it could be useful for these to be linked directly from the ebook, especially in platforms which have access to webpages (PC or iPad app). I like the idea of the discussion forums as **a way of bringing readers together** but I would worry about the engagement with them, especially given the lack of engagement on discussion forums on my university VLE and my own engagement on our discussion forums...

Overall **a great idea** and something I would like to be involved with in my institution going forward.

MSc Student  
Edinburgh Napier University

The total royalty paid by Amazon KDP on the first eTIPS book is £367.02 (**Fig.26**), with the greatest amount coming from access through KENP, before and after the free distribution period, in November 2015. eTIPS may choose to move in one of two directions. This report argues that a business model is partly sustainable as a *commercial* venture (distribution is already carried out through a commercial channel, after all), out with many of the constraints of its partner institutions – a model broadly followed by countless University Presses. Royalties have returned to the project for reinvestment. If scaled up through further eTextbook releases and additional distribution routes, as well as a focused investment on promotion, the model is likely to return a workable profit.

Sales Period	Marketplace	Payment Number	Date	Payment Method	Currency Code	Accrued Royalty	Net Earnings	Currency Code	Payment Amount
May 01 - May 31 2016	Amazon.co.uk	38990744	Jul 29, 2016	EFT	GBP	9.82	9.82	GBP	9.82
May 01 - May 31 2016	Amazon.com	39228089	Jul 29, 2016	EFT	USD	6.49	6.49	GBP	4.96
May 01 - May 31 2016	Amazon.co.jp	39016815	Jul 29, 2016	EFT	JPY	460	460	GBP	3.29
Apr 01 - Apr 30 2016	Amazon.co.uk	37773789	Jun 29, 2016	EFT	GBP	12.93	12.93	GBP	12.93
Apr 01 - Apr 30 2016	Amazon.com	38036579	Jun 29, 2016	EFT	USD	10.06	10.06	GBP	7.59
Mar 01 - Mar 31 2016	Amazon.co.uk	36715372	May 29, 2016	EFT	GBP	12.47	12.47	GBP	12.47
Mar 01 - Mar 31 2016	Amazon.com	36889777	May 29, 2016	EFT	USD	3.19	3.19	GBP	2.17
Mar 01 - Mar 31 2016	Amazon.com.mx	36666009	May 29, 2016	EFT	MXN	1.59	1.59	GBP	0.06
Feb 01 - Feb 29 2016	Amazon.co.uk	35603203	Apr 29, 2016	EFT	GBP	25.77	25.77	GBP	25.77
Feb 01 - Feb 29 2016	Amazon.com	35636136	Apr 29, 2016	EFT	USD	5.82	5.82	GBP	3.98
Jan 01 - Jan 31 2016	Amazon.co.uk	34336604	Mar 29, 2016	EFT	GBP	27.98	27.98	GBP	27.98
Jan 01 - Jan 31 2016	Amazon.com	34548572	Mar 29, 2016	EFT	USD	16.9	16.9	GBP	11.9
Dec 01 - Dec 31 2015	Amazon.co.uk	33365197	Feb 29, 2016	EFT	GBP	14.1	14.1	GBP	14.1
Dec 01 - Dec 31 2015	Amazon.com	33418049	Feb 29, 2016	EFT	USD	10.45	10.45	GBP	7.5
Dec 01 - Dec 31 2015	Amazon.com.au	33240393	Feb 29, 2016	EFT	AUD	2.91	2.91	GBP	1.49
Dec 01 - Dec 31 2015	Amazon.it	33173751	Feb 29, 2016	EFT	EUR	1.62	1.62	GBP	1.27
Nov 01 - Nov 30 2015	Amazon.co.uk	32036178	Jan 29, 2016	EFT	GBP	139.79	139.79	GBP	139.79
Nov 01 - Nov 30 2015	Amazon.com	32224829	Jan 29, 2016	EFT	USD	16.15	16.15	GBP	11.28
Nov 01 - Nov 30 2015	Amazon.ca	32199269	Jan 29, 2016	EFT	CAD	2.66	2.66	GBP	1.31
Nov 01 - Nov 30 2015	Amazon.it	31950522	Jan 29, 2016	EFT	EUR	1.62	1.62	GBP	1.22
Nov 01 - Nov 30 2015	Amazon.fr	31964972	Jan 29, 2016	EFT	EUR	3.78	3.78	GBP	2.84
Nov 01 - Nov 30 2015	Amazon.de	31987057	Jan 29, 2016	EFT	EUR	0.56	0.56	GBP	0.42
Oct 01 - Oct 31 2015	Amazon.co.uk	30940101	Dec 29, 2015	EFT	GBP	38.9	38.9	GBP	38.9
Oct 01 - Oct 31 2015	Amazon.com	31114312	Dec 29, 2015	EFT	USD	3.73	3.73	GBP	2.5
Sep 01 - Sep 30 2015	Amazon.co.uk	30039901	Nov 30, 2015	EFT	GBP	19.44	19.44	GBP	19.44
Sep 01 - Sep 30 2015	Amazon.com	30114737	Nov 30, 2015	EFT	USD	1.05	1.05	GBP	0.7
Sep 01 - Sep 30 2015	Amazon.co.jp	29768654	Nov 29, 2015	EFT	JPY	250	250	GBP	1.34
								Total	367.02

**Fig.26 Royalties received through Amazon KDP for eTIPS eTextbook One**

As a non-commercial model, which contributes to the enhancement of *free* open educational provision, it is too early to give a view on sustainability. eTIPS has created strong branding, produced written and multimodal content which is dynamic and peer-reviewed, and assembled and trained and engaged a team of individuals. Across the report we argue that provision of content to Kindle is, indeed, convenient for many students. The key to its success depends on support from senior colleagues and from academic and technical members of staff, and on embedding innovative content creation more broadly across a range of academic programmes.

## 5.2 How are you dealing with author reward? Are they receiving any compensation?

To this point, no reward, monetary or otherwise, has been offered to eTIPS authors and no compensation for their time or work has been provided. All contributors to the first and second eTextbooks work within the resources provided to them by their employer.


In general terms, their active part in the creation of an eTextbook provides academic colleagues a good route to publication, to enhancement of their profile, and to the addition of a professional multi-platform learning resource.

A conversation is scheduled for a future eTIPS project meeting, to discuss the sustainability and development of this.

## 5.3 Based on your data/experience so far, do you think the business model is viable? Is it scalable? Please explain why/why not.

Interest in the eTIPS business model, as it is, is strong across both UHI and Edinburgh Napier University. The skills gathered by the eTIPS team have been recognised by senior colleagues as beneficial, and opportunities are being sought to develop strategies for institutionally published works across both partner institutions. Further discussions and embedding of the ideas that underpin the project is required before it may be viewed as viable. Its scalability is dependent on adoption by programme teams

and instructional designers. Moreover, that adoption must also happen on a level similar and to a comparable degree as that of UHI's Educational Development Unit, which appears to be at the centre of the model's implementation.



The open aspect of the eTextbook is realised via the website created with **additional trusted** and reliable sources of information but it also makes me a little sad that they didn't afford the same 'openness' to the book itself. It would have been fantastic to have seen this issued under a **Creative Commons** license.

It's great to see the use of a website and collaborative space to let users of the textbook discuss and debate ideas related to the text. I hope that this will be a place that the writers of the book can also learn from and engage in discussion for any additions or changes to the book, a **crowd sourced Wikipedia** approach.

*Tenny Robertson*  
MSc Student  
Edinburgh Napier University

Its scalability is also dependent on partner institutions' intended strategic direction for content acquisition – whether materials and resources are purchased and supplied, or produced and distributed internally.

Opportunities for learning through engagement and collaboration are presented by the companion online materials in particular. Whereas much of this activity may happen, presently, across the Virtual Learning Environments of partner institutions, there is scalability in the dynamic online content produced by eTIPS. At UHI, certainly, there is, in the future, a perceived decrease in reliance on VLE for distribution of digital content.

## 5.4 Is it bringing value to your institution/partnership?

There is potential. Because the concept is new, it is difficult to observe any real value. At a low-level of engagement, it may further strengthen the support for multimodal learning across UHI and Edinburgh Napier University in partnership, for innovative content creation, and learning at a distance, for example. When incorporated further across partner institutions, the learning, teaching and assessment approaches to the delivery of modules and programmes are improved. At that stage, when 'home-grown' texts are created, supported by mediated collaborative learning environments, content is iteratively amendable, collaborative opportunities are greater. At its highest level, it may motivate institutions to consider their acquisition policy, reducing ties to consortia purchase of 'bundled' electronic materials.

## 5.5 What would need to happen to make it viable, sustainable and scalable?

Partnership is needed. Edinburgh Napier University and UHI are exploring the idea of a partnered approach to institutional publishing which, it is hoped, will continue when the eTIPS project has ended. The strength in working together, it is believed, will assist in sharing knowledge about the publishing process itself, as well as to draw together authoring and discipline understanding. Such a direction of travel will be central to ensuring that institutional publication becomes an integrated practice and not a one-off project.

Direction is needed. Coupled with this, conversations with senior management in both institutions have indicated interest in exploring and sustaining a model of institutional publishing after the close of the project.

Commitment is needed. Academic content is best produced by academics and instructional designers. The defined allocation of academic time can best be introduced by managers and senior leaders.

Access is needed. A distribution model which is supported by the structures of the partner universities – to access from library systems and virtual learning systems – as well as made available to the outside world.

Resource is needed. The beating heart of the eTIPS model is the companion website. For this to become an active and engaging community, a realistic allocation of support is required.

## 5.6 Did the licencing model you selected work as expected? Did it change, if so, how?

eTIPS believes that the dual licensing model selected at the start of the project has performed well, offering no issue, and requiring no change in thinking. The content of the companion web materials is provided on CC licence, which its authors understand, and reuse is encouraged. The project's distribution route largely defines its licencing model, but eTIPS has continued to enable Digital Rights Management on Amazon KDP (**Fig.27**), for its eTextbooks, and has offered them through the KDP Select marketplace.

Select a digital rights management (DRM) option: [\(What's this?\)](#)

- ☒ Enable digital rights management
- ☐ Do not enable digital rights management

*Fig.27 DRM on Amazon KDP*

## 5.7 Is the licencing model sustainable? Provide data to support this alongside qualitative feedback

The report sees no reason to believe that the dual licensing model tested by the eTIPS project would not be sustainable. Whilst there is some contradiction in offering material on a creative commons licence, and others on a commercial basis, the project believes that by testing the relational basis between the two platforms, it will understand how its students expect content to be made available to them, and begin a conversation around sustainability of 'product'. That expectation is also being looked at across the evaluation interviews and survey.

### **5.8 Did you encounter any particular issues with licencing. If so, what, and how did you overcome them?**

No issues were encountered with licencing during the first and second years of the project.

### **5.9 Did the distribution model you selected work as expected? Did you change it? If so, how?**

The distribution model – to the Amazon network, through Amazon KDP, worked without any surprises. No core changes to the process were made. Across a network where, on a daily basis, thousands of new items come into 'stock', the team have considered how to improve visibility and discoverability of the eTIPS eTextbooks. They have amended some internal metadata (keywords, description, title) (**Figs. 28, 29**), as well as creating Amazon Author Central accounts for each eTIPS author. The price has remained the same.

Search keywords (up to 7, optional) ([What's this?](#))

Dissertation, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Research, Ethics, Report, Planning

0 keywords left

**Fig.28 Keywords listed for the first eTIPS eTextbook**

The report has already noted the restrictions in providing eTextbooks, published through Amazon, to institutional academic libraries. The project is exploring offering a download-for-free code for students.

Publisher (optional) ([What's this?](#))

eTIPS

Description ([What's this?](#))

This easy-to-engage-with book is a short, practical guide with tips and suggested activities relating to the key stages of the dissertation-writing process. A range of topics is covered, from first steps in understanding research through to writing the final report.

The book is accompanied by a website that takes forward the themes of each chapter by providing additional reading and sources of information as well as an opportunity to join a discussion with fellow readers. There are video and audio clips from the authors and other experts as well as links to further digital tools and resources.

Companion website - <http://www.etextbooks.ac.uk/dissertations/>

3335 characters left

Book contributors: ([What's this?](#))

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Add contributors

**Fig.29 Internal KDP information for the first eTIPS eTextbook**

Benchmarking across relevant comparative titles has been made easy, and the evaluation team have followed the movement of the first eTIPS eTextbook in three genres, alongside others and compared written Amazon reviews.



**Fig.30 Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought – Amazon UK for the first eTIPS eTextbook**

Overall, Amazon KDP provides a simple, workable mechanism for distribution, and makes it easy to update small changes. The integrated real-time statistical package allows the project to understand which world territories, and when, purchases have been made. The first eTIPS eTextbook is most popular in the UK – around two-thirds of purchases are made from that store. But interest has come from the US, Japan, Canada and Australia, too. Rich data, for example the 'Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought' (**Fig.30**) and 'What Other Items Do Customers Buy After Viewing This Item?' (**Fig.31**) panels – permit iterative change to SEO and item metadata. The

eTIPS publication is purchased alongside premium-priced and traditionally-published eTextbooks, it seems – at the time of this report, these ranged from £0.85 to £7.04.

#### What Other Items Do Customers Buy After Viewing This Item?



**Fig.31 What Other Items Do Customers Buy After Viewing This Item? – Amazon UK for the first eTIPS eTextbook**

## **5.10 Is the distribution model sustainable? Provide data to support this alongside qualitative feedback**

To some extent, the distribution model tested here offers sustainability, promoting content to students of partner institutions in a format which many find accessible and easy to use. The eTIPS team intend to work with academic colleagues to discover how Kindle content may be embedded to online modules – for example, through the institutional VLE. Partnered by companion online materials, the options for internal distribution are greater.