

**Minutes of the meeting of the Research, Innovation and Engagement
Committee held on 7 July 2009 at Linden Court, Ilex Close, Llanishen, Cardiff,
CF14 5DZ**

Present:

Members:

Professor Garel Rhys (Chair)
Professor Peter Blood - Cardiff University
Simon Bradley, Business Representative
Ruth Brooks - representing Welsh Heads of Careers Services
(WHECS)
Dr Alastair Davies – representing Welsh Assembly Government
(DE&T)
Professor Richard Davies – representing Heads of Higher Education
Wales (HEW)
Professor Dylan Jones-Evans – University of Wales
Dr Steven Hill – Research Councils UK
Professor Brian Hobbs – University of Glamorgan
Geraint Jones – representing Network of Welsh Industrial Liaison
Officers (WILOs)
Gwennan Jones - representing Network of Welsh European Liaison
Officers (WELOs)
Sue Morgan - representing Welsh Assembly Government (DE&T)
Ken Richards – HEFCW Member
Dr David Walker, Business representative (*participating by telephone*)

Attendees:

Dr Paul Benneworth, Newcastle University
Professor Phil Gummett – Chief Executive, HEFCW

Observers:

Karen Latham - Welsh Assembly Government (DCELLS)
Greg Walker (HEW)

Officers:

Roger Carter - Head of Research Business & Communities
Teresa Cooper – Senior Economic Development Manager (Joint
Secretary)
Linda Tiller – Senior Research Manager (Joint Secretary)
Dr Alyson Thomas - Senior Economic Development Manager

Apologies

Professor Sir Brian Smith – HEFCW Member
Professor Duncan Tanner – Bangor University

1 Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Simon Bradley and David Walker to their first meeting of the Committee. He also welcomed Dr Paul Benneworth from Newcastle University, who had been invited to deliver a presentation on HEIs and Community Engagement. Apologies for absence were received from Brian Smith and Duncan Tanner.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 April 2009

- 2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April were accepted as an accurate record. Members noted that the unconfirmed Minutes had already been presented to Council.

3 Forward Agenda General Discussion (brought forward from April meeting – Minute 7.1 refers)

- 3.1 The Committee discussed the way in which the RIEC should conduct its business and determine ideas for topics/issues which members wished to see covered. It was agreed that there was a preference for themed meetings, and that the themes should address major problems and challenges facing the sector.

4 Presentation by Dr Paul Benneworth from the Centre for Knowledge, Innovation Technology and Enterprise at Newcastle University on *HEIs and Community Engagement*

- 4.1 The Committee received a short paper that set the scene for a presentation from Dr Paul Benneworth on HEIs and Community Engagement. The paper noted that Dr Benneworth was the Principal Investigator on one of nine research projects taking place under the *Impact of HEIs on Regional Economies* research venture, which was being co-funded by HEFCW alongside the ESRC and the other UK HE funding bodies. Before handing over to Dr Benneworth, the Chair expressed his hope that the forthcoming presentation and discussion would be useful in providing a policy and stakeholder perspective on the research in hand as well as helping to inform debate about the way in which HEIs' community engagement activities might be factored in to future third mission (3M) funding arrangements in Wales.
- 4.2 Dr Benneworth began by welcoming the opportunity to present to the Committee on the emerging outcomes from the research that he was leading on *Universities and Community Engagement: learning with excluded communities*. The presentation began by looking at “the rise of the third mission” in HE and the emerging body of evidence around the economic impact of HEIs, often articulated in terms of cash outputs from such knowledge transfer activities as spinouts and contract research. However, in a slide entitled “the wicked issues of University engagement” Dr Benneworth suggested that there

was too much emphasis on knowledge transfer and private beneficiaries rather than on the wider societal impacts of HEIs on communities and the public at large.

4.3 Dr Benneworth explained how his particular research project was exploring the overall engagement activities of HEIs in the North East and North West of England and in Scotland, mapping the extent to which commercial engagement might be prioritised over engagement with socially excluded communities. In the course of this study the researchers had identified a wide range of engagement activity being undertaken by a wide range of universities (ie in terms of mission) across an equally wide range of levels, including corporate, faculty, academic and student. Some case studies were highlighted to the Committee in the context of their relevance to the current prosperity of the host region and the extent to which communities were regarded as core HEI stakeholders. Dr Benneworth concluded by identifying six key questions for consideration by the Committee. In summary these were how doHEIs:

- Make engagement a core task in the light of competing demands?
- Use engagement to drive research (and teaching) and still be deemed excellent?
- Use university knowledge to create social value?
- Collectively contribute within a system, and how to measure that?
- Give communities the tools to be more demanding of their HEIs? and
- What is the next stage in consolidating diverse good activities into effective engagement?

4.4 The Chair opened discussion by posing the question to what extent community engagement was regarded as an extra imposition on HEIs? In a lively debate the following points were made:

- HEIs in Wales were already articulating community engagement activities within their 3M strategies (although these were currently not recognised within the 3M funding formula);
- Care should be taken in formally assigning “strategic responsibilities” to HEIs in this context, and perhaps more emphasis should be placed on the need for HEIs to work with partners that definitely bear strategic responsibilities for promoting social well-being (eg local authorities);
- There was a particular policy balance issue in Wales where Assembly Government policies frequently seemed to emphasise social justice at the expense of providing monies for wealth creation;
- Whilst some HEIs would be happy to celebrate their own community engagement activities, they would not wish to see HE funding bodies become more prescriptive in this area;
- HEIs should be “given space” to develop their own engagement policies and strategies – whilst recognising that HEIs also needed to improve on the way in which they communicated with stakeholder communities and celebrated the outcomes of their interactions;
- Developing metrics in this area was complicated by the range and diversity of HE-community interactions although the proposed REF impact measures (see

minute 6 following) and possible volume measures around student volunteering activities might offer some way forward.

- 4.5 The Chair thanked Paul Benneworth on behalf of the Committee for taking the time to travel from Newcastle and invited him to stay on and participate in the next discussion regarding future third mission (3M) funding arrangements in Wales.

5 Preparations for Consultation on HEFCW's Third Mission Funding Arrangements for 2010/11 to 2012/13

- 5.1 The Chair invited Teresa Cooper, Senior Economic Development Manager at HEFCW, to present a paper on the above and asked members to be mindful of the current economic crisis in responding to it.

- 5.2 The paper explained that the current 3M Fund cycle came to an end in 2009/10 and that in order for allocations for a third cycle to begin in October 2010, the sector and its stakeholders would need to be consulted on the nature of the 3M funding arrangements to be put in place in autumn 2009. In order to meet this timetable the Committee approved a recommendation that the Council should be advised to delegate authority to the Chair of the RIE Committee and HEFCW's Chief Executive to proceed with a consultation on 3M funding arrangements from 2010/11 to 2012/13 in October/November 2009.

- 5.3 The paper also recommended that the Committee be invited to advise Council on another eight specific issues identified by officers. One of these was whether or not the Council should be advised to consider increasing the overall size of its 3M Fund, which currently accounted for just over 2% of HEFCW's annual total recurrent grant and capital budget. Whilst there was some sympathy for this, in the light of the current economic climate it was recognised that an increase in 3M funding would only be possible at the expense of funding in support of HEIs' other core missions (ie teaching and research). Given also that VCs regularly argued that 3M/Engagement activity is now substantially embedded into their organisational bloodstream, the forthcoming consultation exercise should invite consideration of whether or not HEFCW should continue to provide a dedicated stream of 3M funding at all. However, there was a consensus that even if 3M funding ceased, institutions should still be asked to produce 3M strategies and quantify the impacts of their 3M activities.

- 5.4 In this context the following points were raised in discussion and - subject to Council's agreement to proceed as recommended in paragraph 5.2 – the following issues would be explored in the autumn 2009 consultation exercise:

- The need or otherwise to maintain core funding in support of HEIs' 3M activities?
- Underpinning principles to support maintenance or not of a 3M Fund?
- Size, features and components of any retained 3M Fund ?
- Range of activities to be covered in any 3M funding formula?

- Ongoing need for HEIs to formulate measurable 3M KPIs with baselines and targets for growth?
- Ways to continue to develop increased levels of collaborative 3M activity?
- Need for HEFCW to become more prescriptive in specifying expected 3M outputs from HEIs?
- Need to maintain external engagement in assessment of 3M strategies?
- Relevant Wales, UK and International policy contexts.

6 Preparations for Consultation on the Proposed Research Excellence Framework

6.1 The Committee considered a paper which set out proposals for future arrangements for research assessment (the Research Excellence Framework – REF). These had been developed as the basis of a proposed UK-wide consultation in Autumn 2009.

6.2 It was noted that the Council had considered the proposals at its meeting on 2 July, and a number of comments from that meeting were reported to the Committee. The Council had endorsed the proposals and agreed that HEFCW should participate in the UK-wide consultation. It had delegated authority to the Chief Executive to take account of any further comments from the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee in finalising HEFCW's response.

6.3 The following points were made in discussion:

- More detailed information was required on how the citation data would be used. This should be specified by the assessment panels when the guidance is issued.
- There should be consultation on the following points:
 - The proposed implementation date of 2013 for the first REF. This would be a very tight timescale, particularly for institutions which were currently undergoing significant change or development. For example, as REF submissions would be due in 2012, any data on numbers of doctoral degrees awarded would have to relate to students who were already on course by 2009.
 - The proposal that REF should not take account of the proportion of staff submitted.
- It was noted that RCUK was broadly content with the proposals and very supportive of the inclusion of the impact element.
- It was confirmed that work undertaken with companies could be included in the REF.

6.4 The Committee confirmed that it was broadly content with the proposals as the basis for consultation in Autumn 2009.

7 First Annual Report of the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB)

7.1 Dr Alyson Thomas presented a paper on the above that had also been discussed at the latest meeting of HEFCW's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality (SETQ) Committee. This paper summarised the recommendations of the WESB report and highlighted issues arising that particularly impacted upon Wales' HE sector.

7.2 Dr Thomas noted that the SETQ Committee would be having a detailed policy debate around the skills and employability agenda in October 2009 and invited RIE Committee members to highlight issues to feed into this debate. In the ensuing discussion some members took issue with aspects of the economic analysis that underpinned the WESB recommendations. In particular, concerns were raised over the level of focus on SMEs at the expense of large companies (and especially those multi-nationals with whom some HEIs were already building strong links) and doubts were raised as to whether or not addressing skills levels in isolation (ie without linkages to other aspects of economic development policy) was the key to driving growth in SMEs. More specifically, issues were also raised about the:

- need to increase post-graduate student enrolments in Wales, which was currently heavily reliant on European (ie finite) funding for post-graduate recruitment;
- quality of "executive education" (or management and leadership training) offered by HEIs in Wales in comparison with elsewhere in the UK;
- perceived failure of the report to address the need to increase the study of STEM subjects at all levels of the education system in Wales; and
- need for the WAG to make clear whether it is the WESB report or *Skills That Work for Wales*, which is now the lynch pin of Assembly policy in this area, and to give proper attention to the importance of high level skills to the knowledge economy.

7.3 Regarding the issue of preparing graduates for employment, the WHEC's representative suggested HEIs could do more to help students and graduates understand better their employability skills and demonstrate their openness to training ('trainability') to prospective employers.

7.4 Members were also invited to reflect further upon the WESB report and email Dr Thomas outside of the meeting with any other issues that they would like to see explored in more detail by the SETQ Committee in October 2009.

8 Planned Research Visits to HEIs by HEFCW officers

8.1 The Committee received, for information, a paper outlining plans by HEFCW officers to undertake a programme of institutional visits to enhance their understanding of institutional approaches to research following the RAE.

9 Minutes of the Meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee held on 29 April 2009

- 9.1 The Committee received, for information, the Minutes of the meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee held on 29 April 2009. It was noted that the name of the Committee had subsequently been changed to the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee.

10 Any Other Business

- 10.1 Professor Dylan Jones-Evans requested that the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee should include a presentation from DE&T and DCELLS on funding programmes operated by the Welsh Assembly Government, which are relevant to higher education-business interactions, including around the skills agenda. Simon Bradley also offered to provide a presentation on the *Innovation Works* initiative to add a more industry-led perspective to Government-Business-HE interactions.

11 Dates of Next Meetings

- 11.1 It was noted that future meetings of the Committee would be held as follows:

- 20 October 2009
- 26 January 2010 (rescheduled from 14 January)