

**Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Council's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee held Wednesday 20 January 2010 in HEFCW Offices, Llanishen.**

**Present:**

**Members:** Prof Leni Oglesby, Member of Council (Chair)  
Katie Dalton, National Union of Students, Wales  
Rob Humphreys, institutional representative  
Meri Huws, Welsh Medium Higher Education Sector Group  
Dr Rhys Jones, representing Dennis Thomas, an institutional representative  
Prof Mari Lloyd-Williams, Member of Council  
Julie Lydon, institutional representative  
Dr Peter Noyes, Higher Education Wales (HEW) nominee  
Prof John Parkinson, UCET Cymru representative  
Prof Danny Saunders, institutional representative  
Richard Spear, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Dysgu Cymru  
Prof Alan Speight, Chair of Reaching Wider Partnership  
Gavin Thomas, Colleges Wales

**Observers:** Dr Richard Brown, Quality Assurance Agency, in attendance  
Dr Julian Ellis, Quality Assurance Agency  
Sarah Lewis, on behalf of Simon Brown, Estyn  
Dr Ioan Matthews, Centre for Welsh Medium Higher Education  
David Sadler, Higher Education Academy  
Greg Walker, on behalf of Lisa Newberry, HEW

**Officers:** Dr Alison Allan  
Dr David Blaney  
Celia Hunt  
Jane Johns  
Gemma Long (Clerk)  
Dr Cliona O'Neill (Secretary)  
Dr Alyson Thomas

**Apologies:** Simon Brown, Michelle Creed, Stephen Griffiths, Jacqui Hare, Mike Hopkins, Lisa Newberry, Dennis Thomas, Pauline Thomas

**Congratulations:** The Chair congratulated both Professor Danny Saunders, on his recent award of an OBE, and Julie Lydon, on her appointment as VC designate of the University of Glamorgan.

- 1 FOR OUR FUTURE (SETQC/10/01)
- 1.1 The Committee received a paper on the *For our Future* (FoF) publication from the Welsh Assembly Government, which set out the higher education strategy and plan for Wales. This built on and replaced *Reaching Higher*, and provided a response to the Jones Review of Higher Education in Wales. Katie Dalton (National Union of Students (NUS), Wales), David Sadler (Higher Education Academy (HEA)) and Celia Hunt (HEFCW), gave presentations identifying matters for consideration.
- 1.2 Members discussed the implication of FoF on the work of the committee focussing particularly on widening access, the student experience and the skills agenda. The advice of Members on these issues is available at **Annex A**.
- 1.3 Members noted that the implications of FoF for higher education included
- impacts on the diversity of the student body, and the need to ensure inclusive representation within students' unions and the institutions;
  - the need to strike a balance between short-term responsiveness to employers' needs and the timescales for accreditation in HE;
  - Foundation degree awarding powers were likely to impact on the relationships between HE and FE;
  - a need for further strategic thinking on how to enhance the learner's experience;
  - the role of HE in the knowledge economy; and
  - the impact of regionalisation on HE delivery.
- 1.4 Members identified a range of actions HEFCW should take in response to FoF, with particular reference to collaboration and competition, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and widening access.
- 1.5 Members also:
- discussed factors to be considered in the context of HEFCW's overarching aim to develop a sustainable, excellent higher education system;
  - commented on how success/impact could be identified and appropriate measures taken; and
  - were particularly keen to see a reduction in bureaucracy.
- 1.6 Resolved:
- i) *to produce a report summarising the conclusions of the discussions, to be appended to the minutes of the meeting (Annex A);*
  - ii) *officers to consider the outcomes of discussions in relation to the development of HEFCW's new corporate plan; and*
  - iii) *a fuller joint meeting between SETQC, the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee, and the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committee would be held to discuss the HEFCW corporate strategy in the context of FoF.*

- 2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (SETQC/10/02)
- 2.1 Members agreed the minutes as an accurate record of the previous meeting.
- 2.2 Resolved:  
i) *to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting held on 21 October 2009.*
- 3 MATTERS ARISING
- 3.1 Item 1.2 – Members agreed that it was appropriate for the annex to the minutes of the last meeting to be shared with the Wales Employment and Skills Board to inform its work.
- 3.2 1.5 (iii) - HEFCW to consider further how the economic impact of HEI activity in relation to skills provision and graduate employability might be demonstrated, including through ongoing studies from other organisations – this would be taken forward with Welsh Assembly Government Department for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills (WAG DCELLS) colleagues in relation to the implementation of FoF.
- 3.3 Item 3.1 - HEFCW/HEA/sector strategic dialogue in November 2009 – this had been held.
- 3.4 Item 5.6 (ii) – HEFCW had not yet received its remit letter for 2010-11. The letter would be provided for the March meeting.
- 3.5 Item 6.5 – It had been reported that the January 2010 meeting of SETQC would consider the student experience in its strategic discussion. This had of necessity been included with the discussion on *For our Future*. However, the Committee would return to fuller discussions on the student experience at a future meeting.
- 3.6 Item 6.8 (iv) – The Quality Working Group would examine areas identified by the report of HEFCE’s Teaching, Quality and Student Experience sub-Committee, *HEFCE’s statutory responsibility for quality assurance*, at its next meeting and would report to SETQC.
- 3.7 Item 8.7 – the circular on HEFCW’s approach to quality enhancement had been published, and annexed the statement on the Wales Initiative for Student Engagement (WISE). Members also noted, in relation to student engagement, that Aberystwyth University had scored highly in the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey.
- 3.8 Item 8.8 (i) – Council had approved Wales’ participation in the National Teaching Fellowship Awards, and HEFCW had made an agreement in principle with HEFCE to join the scheme from 2010/11.

3.9 Item 9.6 (i) – HEFCE had confirmed that it would be possible for the analysis of national student survey (NSS) results to facilitate the comparison of outcomes for Wales with those in other parts of the UK. However, the analysis would not produce predicted results based on institutional, student and subject profiles, and would not provide a comparison of different mission groups.

#### 4 WIDENING ACCESS (SETQC/10/03)

4.1 This item invited members to discuss the implications for widening access policy implementation of the strategic drivers and aims set out in *For our Future* and to provide any particular steers on widening access. Members took account of the widening access-related strategic discussion under Item 1. Further detail is available in **Annex A**.

4.2 HEFCW's advice to the Welsh Assembly Government, which took into account the October discussion of widening access at SETQC, was tabled. The advice recognised that it pre-dated Council's early considerations of FoF but it confirmed that HEFCW would take account of additional strategy priorities which were not covered in the advice.

4.3 The Committee agreed that HEFCW should establish a task and finish group to work with officers to examine the implications of widening access-related FoF proposals. It would be a subgroup of SETQC, and would report to that committee, and including expert advice as necessary. Interested parties were invited to put their names forward for consideration. Membership of the group would be approved by the Chair. Officers would provide all SETQC members with the membership and working parameters of the group, once established.

4.4 Resolved:

- i) to set up a task and finish group to examine the implications of widening access-related FoF proposals;*
- ii) the Chair would determine the membership of the group, which would be comprised of members of SETQC, including expert advice as appropriate;*
- iii) Officers would provide all members with the membership and working parameters of the group, once established; and*
- iv) The group would report its recommendations to SETQC.*

#### 5 GUIDELINES FOR HEIs REGARDING COST OF STUDY (SETQC/10/04)

5.1 This item provided HEFCW's draft circular to institutions regarding guidelines on the provision of information on the cost of study. Members noted that HEFCW's advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the costs of study, which had been developed with the help of a steering group, was attached to paper SETQC/10/03 as **Annex A**. Officers reported that, as the guidelines included some of the information in the advice, they would

seek permission from the Welsh Assembly Government to publish the guidelines.

- 5.2 HEFCW would not monitor the implementation of the guidelines, but would draw them to the attention of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), in relation to the accuracy and frankness of information provided, as examined in the institutional review, and in relation to the provision of information stipulated in the QAA Code of Practice on admissions. The QAA welcomed the guidelines.
- 5.3 Members agreed that the timescales suggested for the guidelines were achievable.
- 5.4 Members suggested that costs which are common to students in all universities, such as accommodation, could be provided via a common dataset for all institutions, to minimise the work load.
- 5.5 Members noted that with new programmes the full costs might only emerge over time. They agreed the information provided should initially focus on mandatory costs (eg cost of required field courses), and then on necessarily incurred costs (eg accommodation) and the information should be expanded over time to include additional optional costs. Members suggested amendments to the draft circular in order to clarify these issues. They also identified the need for institutions to avoid legal challenge regarding the provision of costs' information, as noted in the draft circular.
- 5.6 Resolved:
- i) *Officers would seek permission from the Welsh Assembly Government to publish the guidelines for institutions on the cost of study; and*
  - ii) *Officers would amend the guidelines to take account of members' comments.*

## 6 HE ACADEMY REPORTS (SETQC/10/05)

- 6.1 This item provided the Higher Education (HE) Academy annual report against the 2008/09 grant letter from HEFCW, and a report on the engagement of Welsh HEIs with the Academy's subject centres (SCs), as requested at a previous meeting.
- 6.2 Members welcomed the paper on the engagement of SCs. All SCs are required to report on activity in Wales. Engagement of Welsh HEIs with the SCs was similar to the rest of the UK, although there were variations by HEI and by subject.
- 6.3 Queries were raised as to how SCs add a Welsh Medium element to their work, and how they present their work to a Welsh-speaking audience. The Academy reported that some SCs had consultants based in Wales to support their work.

- 6.4 Members agreed that Wales should engage more with the appropriate SCs, and particularly the one based in Wales, as SCs add significant critical mass to research, learning and teaching and innovation.
- 6.5 Members were satisfied that the annual report of the HE Academy met the requirements of the 2008/09 grant letter. They agreed that more UK-wide events should be held in Wales.
- 6.6 Members queried the role of the HE Academy in the Welsh medium strategies of HEIs in the future, for example with regards to the Coleg Ffederal. It was agreed that discussions would be held between the Academy, CWMHE and HEFCW outside of this meeting.
- 6.7 Members discussed the priorities for 2010/11 grant letter from HEFCW. They agreed that it should identify the need to take into account the Assembly's steer towards more part-time and flexible provision within the objectives.
- 6.8 The Academy would have less funding in 2010/11 and would need to work in a more focussed manner. They were changing the way they prioritised activities, and value for money would drive the shape of the Academy in the future.
- 6.9 Additional priorities to consider were learning in the workplace; to support academics to manage in current climate; to enhance part-time and flexible provision; and to increase emphasis on the international student experience.
- 6.10 Resolved:
- i) To note the HE Academy annual report for 2008/09;*
  - ii) The role of the HE Academy in the development of Welsh medium strategies of the future would be considered outside of the meeting; and*
  - iii) To take account of the additional priorities identified by SETQC in the HE Academy grant letter for 2010/11.*

## 7 QUALITY ASSURANCE (SETQC/10/06)

- 7.1 This item provided the outcomes of a survey carried out by the QAA on the Institutional Review: Wales (IR) cycle 2003/04 to 2008/09. HEIs in Wales had been broadly satisfied with the IR process. The QAA would include opportunities for student representatives to comment in the formal evaluation of the current IR process.
- 7.2 Members debated the draft outcomes reports for Wales. The QAA reported that challenges and strengths were similar in England and Wales. The principal challenges were with regard to assessment and collaborative provision (CP). Specific recommendations were given to each HEI in their individual reports. Members agreed that the outcomes papers had a general value in bringing together the findings over the period of the review

cycle, and noted the need for the reports not to damage the reputation of HE generally. The QAA reported that a different format of outcome reports would necessitate a change in style of the IR.

- 7.3 Members considered the recommendations made in cases of limited confidence judgements in England in relation to CP, together with recommendations for CP more generally in Wales. The QAA reported that the principal areas for concern were the institutional oversight of CP, and due diligence of legal processes. Members agreed that the outcomes for Wales in relation to CP generally showed that there was confidence in this provision. However, there were a range of forms of CP other than franchise provision, and it would be useful to clarify these in order to address the risk of different forms of provision.
- 7.4 In Wales there was a focus on franchise HE in FE provision rather than directly funded provision. For this reason officers were concerned that the use of a hybrid model to review CP in some cases might not fully meet HEFCW's statutory responsibilities with regards to quality assessment. There had been no separate Institutional Quality Enhancement Review, separate CP reviews or foundation degree reviews in Wales, unlike England, and therefore there was no secure evidence base to assure HEFCW of the quality of the range of CP which was funded by HEFCW.
- 7.5 The Committee would discuss a written statement on the assurance of CP at the March meeting regarding HEFCW's statutory responsibilities and the QAA's approach.
- 7.6 Members were provided with an update on foundation degree awarding powers (fDAPS) in Wales, to enable FE colleges to award the qualification. Members noted this development and the impact it might have on HEIs currently offering foundation degrees.
- 7.7 Members broadly endorsed the HEFCW's proposed approach to the review of all directly-funded provision as set out in the paper.
- 7.8 Resolved:
- i) *to note the QAA report on the Institutional Review: Wales (IR) cycle 2003/04 to 2008/09, and that HEIs in Wales were broadly satisfied with the IR process;*
  - ii) *the QAA would include opportunities for student representatives to comment in the formal evaluation of the current IR process;*
  - iii) *to discuss the assurance of CP at the March meeting in relation to HEFCW's statutory responsibilities and the QAA's approach;*
  - iv) *note developments with regards to foundation degree awarding powers; and*
  - v) *endorse HEFCW's proposed approach to the review of all directly-funded provision.*

## 8 WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION: COLEG FFEDERAL (SETQC/10/07)

- 8.1 Members received information on the developments towards establishing the Coleg Ffederal to support Welsh medium higher education provision. HEFCW, in conjunction with HEW and the sector, would set up a shadow board to take forward the establishment of the Coleg. Members were invited, in particular, to comment on the issues which the shadow board would need to cover and the expertise it would need to be able to draw on.
- 8.2 Members noted that the developments (and the shadow board itself) would be working to a tight time-table. There would be a considerable amount of technical, detailed work involved in setting up the Coleg and board members would be required to consider wider issues, for example, from *For our Future* and the Assembly Government's forthcoming Welsh medium education strategy, in addition to those directly related to the Coleg. Its composition would therefore be critical.
- 8.3 Members stressed that a focus on the structure of Coleg Ffederal should not over-shadow issues about the reality of delivery and actions.
- 8.4 Members noted that the Shadow Board and HEFCW's role were likely to be subject to significant public scrutiny, given the amount of funding involved and wider political interest. It was therefore important that the work of the board was seen to be effective and efficient.
- 8.5 Members agreed that it would be important to have all the HE institutions involved in discussions regarding the Coleg Ffederal. It could be useful for the shadow board to adopt a task and finish group approach to progress the detailed work required on particular aspects.
- 8.6 Resolved:
- i) *to note that HEFCW would put in place the shadow board in early 2010; and*
  - ii) *to recommend to the shadow board that it consider a task and finish group approach to address particular issues.*

## 9 REVIEW OF THE ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS (SETQC/10/08)

- 9.1 Members considered the outcomes of the independent evaluation of Additional Funding of Part-Time students.
- 9.2 Members noted the review and that the continuation of funding had been agreed in principle by Council for a further three years to 2012/13 in line with main recommendations of the review.
- 9.3 Members raised concerns about the timing of future decisions regarding the funding and asked if they could be brought forward in order to provide security of jobs related to the funding in HEIs.

- 9.4 SETQC would await the outcomes of the Welsh Assembly review 'Research into part-time higher education supply and demand' due to report in April 2010, before addressing the outcomes and recommendations of the Additional Funding of Part Time students evaluation further.
- 9.5 Members suggested that HEFCW could consider how it responded to the recommendations and how it might amend the funding model, including in the light of discussions in SETQC/10/01 'For our Future'.
- 9.6 Resolved:
- i) *HEFCW would identify when it could provide specific information to HEIs on future funding; and*
  - ii) *SETQC would await the outcomes of the Welsh Assembly review 'Research into part-time higher education supply and demand' before addressing the outcomes and recommendations of the Additional Funding of Part Time students evaluation further.*
- 10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS
- 10.1 There was no other business.
- 11 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS
- 11.1 The next meetings would be held on 24 March 2010; 8 July 2010; 7 October 2010.
- 12 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 October 2009 (SETQC/10/09)
- 12.1 The unconfirmed minutes of the Council's Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee held on 20 October 2009 were presented for information.
- 12.2 Members welcomed the inclusion of the minutes as useful and interesting.
- 12.3 Resolved:
- i) *to note the minutes of the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee.*
- 13 UNSATISFACTORY QUALITY PROCEDURE (SETQC/10/10)
- 13.1 This item provided the HEFCW Unsatisfactory Quality Procedure which would be implemented when an institution is considered to be at higher risk in terms of the quality of its provision. The procedure followed a consultation on a policy for addressing unsatisfactory quality policy carried out in 2009 (HEFCW Circular W09/25HE) and covered a wider range of

circumstances than originally proposed to address more effectively a broader range of situations that may indicate that an institution was at higher risk in terms of the quality of its provision.

13.2 Resolved:

- i) *to note the publication of HEFCW Circular W10/01HE Unsatisfactory Quality Procedure.*

Signature.....

Date.....