

Minutes of the eighth meeting of the Council's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee held Wednesday 15 December 2010 in HEFCW Offices, Llanishen.

Present:

Members: Prof Leni Oglesby, member of Council (Chair)
Katie Dalton, NUS Wales
Sandy Harding – on behalf of Stephen Griffiths, National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare
Rob Humphreys, institutional representative
David Mason, member of Council
Julie Lydon, institutional representative
Prof Danny Saunders, institutional representative
Prof Alan Speight, Reaching Wider Partnerships
Prof Dennis Thomas, institutional representative

Observers: Dr Julian Ellis, Quality Assurance Agency
Andrew Clark, Welsh Assembly Government
Dr Helena Lim, Higher Education Academy
Prof Craig Mahoney, Higher Education Academy
Dr Ioan Matthews, Centre for Welsh Medium Higher Education
Lisa Newberry, Higher Education Wales

Officers: Dr David Blaney
Celia Hunt
Gemma Long (Clerk)
Dr Cliona O'Neill (Secretary)
Dr Alyson Thomas

Apologies: Prof Mari Lloyd-Williams, Bethan Guilfoyle, Jacqui Hare, Richard Spear, Gavin Thomas, Sarah Lewis, Dr Peter Noyes, Prof John Parkinson, Meri Huws.

Welcome and Introductions

- Congratulations were given to the Open University for winning the 'Widening Participation Initiative of the Year' category at the annual UK-wide Times Higher Awards. The work originated from the OU in Wales, and its partnership with Unison. Cardiff University also won in the 'Outstanding Contribution to Leadership Development' category. Bangor University, Aberystwyth University and UWIC were short-listed for awards categories.
- Congratulations were given to Professor Dennis Thomas, who had been awarded a Personal Chair.
- The Chair informed the Committee that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (in consultation with the Devolved Administrations) had decided not to relicence Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) in its own right, when its licence expires on 31 March 2011.

- 1 THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY (SETQC/10/49)
 - 1.1 This paper invited Members to discuss the future direction of the Higher Education Academy and to identify how the Academy could help to deliver *For our Future (FoF)*. A presentation on 'Working Together For our Future' was given by Professor Craig Mahoney, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Academy (HE Academy), setting out his vision for the HE Academy. A paper was also tabled on the HEA's support for Quality Enhancement in Wales.
 - 1.2 Prof Mahoney reaffirmed the Academy's commitment to Wales and the positive working relationship between the Academy and HEIs in Wales. Indeed, recognising the collaborations and synergies in the Welsh HE sector, the Academy could engage easily and more responsively with all institutions.
 - 1.3 Although the Academy's vision was still under review, it was focusing on three areas of activity: teaching excellence, developing academic practice, and institutional excellence, including other broader activities such as Internationalisation, the Academy across the Nations, and the UK Professional Standards Framework. Funding for Subject Centres would cease in 2012, however, the HEA was committed to supporting subject disciplines via pedagogic resources, workshops, and small scale grant-support for excellence. The resource for each subject area would be reviewed better to reflect the numbers of students studying each area. The proportion of resource spent on front-facing activity would increase
 - 1.4 The Committee welcomed the content of the presentation and the Academy's support for Wales. Members endorsed the Graduates for our Future series of HE Academy events for Wales. The HE Academy remained committed to providing subject-level support, though members noted that funding for subject centres would cease. The rationale for this was noted, though Members raised concerns that local and regional priorities, particularly at a subject level, would still require support. A member queried whether the Academy could develop a matrix of subject and regional support to mitigate the risk of losing the good practice of the subject centres. The Academy would continue to maintain a base in Wales.
 - 1.5 It was the Committee's view that in reconfiguring its support for subject disciplines, it would be useful if the HE Academy categorised subjects according to pre-existing sector identifications. The Academy was willing to support the subjects identified in Wales' Economic Renewal Programme if this was set out in its grant letter from HEFCW.
 - 1.6 The HE Academy provided assurances that the new Welsh medium developments were a priority and that their capacity to engage in this work would remain.
 - 1.7 The Committee noted an underlying theme in the current economic climate that institutions would need to adapt to maximise resources, and provide

more for less. This should be reflected in the HE Academy Grant letter for 2011/12.

- 1.8 Members noted the HE Academy's plans to source external funding by providing services to overseas institutions, the rationale being that the additional funding would offer the HE Academy more financial flexibility and enable it to respond better to change.
- 1.9 The HE Academy was willing to support HE in FE work if instigated by HE, but noted that, since Further Education Colleges (FECs) were not subscribers, the Academy would not normally undertake work instigated by an FEC.
- 1.10 The HE Academy was revising the UK Professional Standards Framework so that it better reflected the pressures on HEIs to improve quality, and the increased accountability of teaching. The framework was subject to consultation. Members agreed the framework had an important role in raising the profile and standards of teaching, but were concerned that there would remain a number of academics who would not receive training and would be beyond the reach of reflective practice programmes. The framework would be provided to the March meeting of Council, following the end of the consultation.
- 1.11 Officers would consider the points raised in drafting the grant letter for the Academy for 2011/12. The February 2011 meeting of the HEW PVC group would also discuss the grant letter.
- 1.12 Resolved:
- i) The HE Academy would consider the items discussed in determining its future direction and its support for FoF;*
 - ii) HEFCW would take account of the issues raised in the grant letter to the Academy for 2011/12; and*
 - iii) To note that the HE Academy's revised Professional Standards Framework would be brought to the March 2011 meeting of Council for approval.*

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (SETQC/10/50)

- 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 28 September 2010.*

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Item 2.9 (ii) - clarification of the funding arrangements for foundation degrees was emailed to Members.
- 3.2 Item 4 – Officers were working with the other partners to develop an action plan for the Wales Initiative for Student Engagement.
- 3.3 Item 5 – HEFCE had asked the Unistats website team in to update subject and institution overview pages to display the most useful pieces of data, including graduate salary information at subject level; the revised Unistats Subject Hierarchy and UCAS Course Search Syndication Mapping to accommodate change in JACS 3.0; and changes to how Employability Statements are presented on the site. Members offered the preliminary view that these changes would be useful for the profiles for the Welsh institutions on the website, but were cautious that the graduate salaries might unduly reflect economic depression in some areas of Wales.
- 3.4 Item 9 – The SETQC Annual Report would be submitted to Council in accordance with a reporting cycle recommended by the Audit Committee. It would be updated to cover meetings held from its inception to 31 March 2011. A revised version would be supplied for the SETQ Committee's consideration in February, and would be updated with the outcomes of the February meeting with the approval of the Chair.
- 3.5 Resolved: *to*
- (i) *Endorse the provision of information on the Unistats website relating to graduate salaries per subject, and the provision of more useful information on institutional and subject profiles; and support the changes prompted by JACS 3.0.*

4 UPDATE ON BUDGETS AND IMPLICATIONS (SETQC/10/51)

- 4.1 This item provided an analysis of the recently announced Welsh Assembly Government draft budget for 2011-12 and noted further implications from the Minister's response from the Browne Review.
- 4.2 Members considered the likely implications of the budget and future tuition fee arrangements. Members felt there was much detail yet to be determined, and HEIs recognised a number of possible issues relating to risk management. They welcomed the Minister's decision on tuition fees arrangements in Wales, and welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the development of the HEFCW's policies. They also noted that:
- there was a need to be alert to unintended consequences of actions taken;
 - HEIs would become more dependent on attracting students from outside of Wales and would need to balance the recruitment of English and Welsh students;

- it was important to understand more about the attraction for students from England studying in Wales, and expressed an interest in a report on cross-border flows commissioned by Higher Education Wales (HEW);
- it was uncertain whether there would be the same demand for UG places from students in England once they were required to pay up to £9k/pa;
- there were concerns from students that the reduction in funding would affect institutions' ability to maintain the quality of their provision;
- NUS Wales objected to the permission for HEIs to charge a higher fee being used a lever to support mergers, noting that that they would prefer a scenario where the funding lever directly improved the quality of the student experience and widened access;
- the arrangements for part-time students remained unclear; and
- that the 100% reduction in the capital budget alone meant that some HEIs would struggle to fund their IT facilities.

4.3 There were concerns that the Universities would find the budget settlement for 2011/12 difficult, given that HEIs would also be need to deliver the regional agenda in addition to ordinary work. Officers recognised the concerns of HEIs and were considering scenarios that would smooth funding changes, such as amending the 60:40 split of funding between two financial years to cover an academic year.

4.4 Resolved: *to*

- i) Note the analysis of the draft budget; and*
- ii) Ask the HEW officer to make available the report on attracting students from England.*

5 LEARNING AND TEACHING, WIDENING ACCESS AND REACHING WIDER PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES (SETQC/10/52)

5.1 The Committee was provided with the HEFCW Circular and Guidance on Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies 2011/12 to 2013/14, and a draft circular on Reaching Wider (RW) partnership Strategy Guidance for discussion.

5.2 The Committee welcomed the Guidance and the opportunity offered to integrate the widening access and learning and teaching strategies. Members identified the following to be taken into account in developing further guidance for April 2011:

- That institutional strategies will need to have a general dual focus on supporting change and protecting provision;
- That the guidance should more explicitly recommend that institutions involve students in the development of their strategies; and
- It would be useful for the Committee to discuss the second guidance publication in draft at the February 2011 meeting.

- 5.3 Institutions were concerned that there would be challenges in writing the new strategies as there were many uncertainties in relation to the funding and fees arrangements for 2011/12 and beyond. HEIs were concerned that although they could make plans to a certain extent, it would be impossible to identify all the unintended consequences that would impact on the delivery of these strategies.
- 5.4 In considering the draft guidance for RW Partnerships, Members identified that there was some duplication with institutional widening access objectives. There was ambiguity too regarding recruiting from Communities First areas and students with protected characteristics, such as equality and diversity groups.
- 5.5 There were concerns that that the authority given to Regional Partnerships to approve or reject RW strategies could have unintended consequences, and at worst, prevent an HEI from receiving funding. It was suggested that the expectation for Regional Partnerships to approve RW strategies (as opposed to regional strategies) be clarified.
- 5.6 It was important for strategies to be coherent with the development of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol in terms of institutional approaches to recruiting Welsh medium students.
- 5.7 It was suggested that the guidance should more explicitly recommend that institutions involve students in the development of their strategies.
- 5.8 Resolved: *to*
i) Ask officers to take into consideration the items identified in drafting the further Guidance on Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies and on Reaching Wider Partnership strategies;

6 RETENTION (SETQC/10/53)

- 6.1 This tabled item provided an analysis of student retention-related data and an update on HEFCW's *Strategic Approach to Widening Access*, initial actions and funding mechanisms to support retention and student success. There was also an update on ongoing retention related work with the Higher Education Academy.
- 6.2 It was clarified that the module completion data set recognised students who undertook the work of an entire module, but did not measure the achievement of students. Members noted that the data was sought as it was coherent with Measure 2 of the HEFCW Corporate Strategy and HEFCW teaching funding method.
- 6.3 The Committee noted that the comparators between England and Wales used aggregate data, and asked if there would be value in comparing types of HEIs between England and Wales as this would reveal information about

recruitment patterns. It would also make clear whether there was a problem specifically in Wales, or specifically with the types of institutions in Wales.

6.4 Resolved to:

- i) Note the analysis of retention-related data;*
- ii) Note HEFCW's strategic Approach and the initial actions to support retention and student success;*
- iii) Suggest to officers that the data be further analysed to take into consideration the data of different types of institutions in England and Wales;*
- iv) Welcome the draft HEFCW/HE Academy e-publication; and*
- v) Note the proposed funding mechanisms and modelling to support retention and student success.*

7 DISABLED STUDENTS: UPDATE (SETQC/10/54)

7.1 The Committee considered an update on disaggregated disabled student data which included data on dyslexia to provide the full context.

7.2 Members noted the data presented, and suggested that certain subjects would attract greater numbers of disabled students. As a consequence, according to their subject profiles, some institutions would attract more disabled students than others. Members were concerned how the data compared with institutions in other parts of the UK and asked officers to provide further information.

7.3 Members also received an update on disability projects such as disabled student engagement in HE, a standing conference on disability, using data to improve the disabled student experience, and developing an inclusive culture in HE.

7.4 Resolved: to

- i) Note the disabled student data;*
- ii) Ask officers to provide comparator data for the sector in England; and*
- iii) Note the ongoing disability equality projects.*

8 QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND ENHANCEMENT SUBGROUP:
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS (SETQC/10/55)

8.1 The Committee was provided with the minutes of the Quality Assessment and Enhancement Sub-Group, held on 4 November 2010.

8.2 The terms of reference of the Sub-group as amended at the Sub-group's meeting, were approved.

8.3 Members agreed that ordinarily the Sub-group should report to SETQ Committee, but for reasons of timeliness or urgency, it would be

- appropriate on occasions for officers, in liaison with the Chair of SETQ Committee, to be advised directly by the Sub-group.
- 8.4 Members noted the recommendations made by the group to HEFCW and agreed they were appropriate. Officers clarified that because of the timeliness of the matter, officers had already completed the request for HEFCW to make a formal representation to the Westminster government regarding the implications of the Browne review for the devolved administrations. This had been incorporated in a letter to the Director of Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning Division of the Welsh Assembly Government.
- 8.5 The Committee expressed concern that HEFCW would act upon low National Students Survey (NSS) outcomes using data from one year, as this would not allow for anomalous results. Officers clarified that they would be using data that aggregated NSS results over two years. There were also concerns that where results were low, it was not sufficient to ask institutions only for an analysis of results and recommended that they be asked to provide an action plan to HEFCW.
- 8.6 Resolved to:
- i) *Confirm the terms of reference of the Sub-group;*
 - ii) *Agree that for the reasons set out above, officers could be directly advised by the Sub-group;*
 - iii) *Note the unconfirmed minutes of the Quality Assessment and Enhancement Sub-Group; and*
 - iv) *Agree with the recommendations made by the group to HEFCW, with the exception of 8.4d , where it was resolved that institutions be asked to provide an action plan in response to low NSS outcomes.*
- 9 POSTGRADUATE EXPERIENCE SURVEYS (SETQC/10/56)
- 9.1 This item provided an update on the Higher Education Academy Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) for discussion. The Committee welcomed the data and the improvements in student experience identified by the 2010 survey, whilst noting that the reasons for the improvement would be particularly valuable.
- 9.2 It was clarified that the response rate for the postgraduate surveys was lower than that of the National Student Survey (NSS) as it was delivered online only. There were ongoing sector discussions about whether postgraduate students should be included in the NSS. The Committee suggested that the response rate for the postgraduate surveys could be improved by students' unions working to promote the survey, encouraged to do so by NUS Wales.

- 9.3 Members observed that the areas of organisation and management, and assessment and feedback obtained lower results, and thus correlated with some of the NSS outcomes.
- 9.4 There was a further HE Academy pilot on enhancing provision using the results of PTES and PRES. One HEI in Wales was participating in the pilot owing to their high response rate and above average scores.
- 9.5 Resolved:
- i) *To note the outcomes of the 2010 PTE Survey;*
 - ii) *To note the outcomes of the 2010 PRE Survey; and*
 - iii) *Recommend that NUSW work with students' unions in Wales to encourage increased participation in the surveys.*
- 10 IMPLICATIONS OF *FUTURE AMBITIONS: REVIEW OF CAREERS SERVICES IN WALES* FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (SETQC/10/57)
- 10.1 Members received the outcomes of *Future Ambitions: review of careers services in Wales*, commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government. The report made a number of recommendations relevant to higher education.
- 10.2 It was clarified that recommendation 30 was in response to suggestions that some careers advisory services were not linked up and provision could be more holistic, for example, clearer links between HEI careers services and Careers Wales. The Committee noted that Careers Wales funding had been reduced and its capacity to deliver would likely be affected.
- 10.3 The Committee welcomed in principle the recommendation that expectations regarding higher education careers services should be clarified (recommendation 38), and agreed that it was important to 'determine a minimum service entitlement'.
- 10.4 In responding to the suggestion that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) jointly audit with Estyn the higher education careers services (recommendation 39), the QAA stated that there was a Code of Practice for Careers Guidance that covered this area, and was a point of reference in Institutional Review. Members suggested that adherence to the QAA's Code of Practice was sufficient, and that given the funding challenges there would be reluctance among HEIs for an additional inspection.
- 10.5 Members made the following observations in relation to the suggestion that HEIs become more actively involved in the design and delivery of work focused experiences for students (recommendation 40):
- it was understood that the recommendation meant that HEIs would be responsible for the design and delivery of the placements;
 - Noted that GO Wales was cited as an example of excellence;
 - recognised that employers would prefer to invite students for placements at any point in the calendar year, but that HEIs' were

constrained to operate an academic calendar partly occupied by module provision; and

- acknowledged that in healthcare subjects there were obvious limitations regarding the service of unqualified people. NLIAH had prepared guidance on Enabling Work Experience in the Health Sector in Wales and would send this to the Secretary for circulation.
- 10.6 In response to the review's suggestion that there should be a Centre for Careers Excellence, it was suggested that this could be an HE led research centre.
- 10.7 The Committee observed that HEIs generally were being asked to be more systematic in the provision of advice to students. Institutional officials should be willing to engage with the outcomes of this review to determine what could realistically and practically be improved.
- 10.8 Resolved: to
- i) *Note the Future Ambitions: review of careers services in Wales report; and;*
 - ii) *Agree that officers take into consideration the points raised by the Committee in responding to the consultation.*
- 11 RECENT HEFCW DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO *FOR OUR FUTURE* (SETQC/10/58)
- 11.1 This item provided an update on a number of developments relating to taking forward *For our Future* and provided an opportunity for Members to discuss relevant policies.
- 11.2 Members noted that many of the issues arising from the policies in the paper had already been discussed in the meeting.
- 11.3 Resolved: to
- i) *Note the update on For our Future developments.*
- 12 PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON COSTS OF STUDY: PROGRESS TO DATE (SETQC/10/59)
- 12.1 The Committee was provided with an update on the provision of information on the costs of study and was invited to discuss how improvements in information could be taken forward.
- 12.2 NUSW noted that students' expectations might change as a result of paying fees up to £9k/pa, and that it would be disappointing if information on the cost of study was not fully clear to these higher-fee payers.

- 12.3 The Committee noted the timetables for the provision of information related to necessarily incurred costs, mandatory costs, and optional costs.
- 12.4 Resolved: to
- i) Note the update on the provision of information on costs to study; and*
 - ii) Note that HEFCW would ask institutions to report on the provision of information on the costs of study through the annual monitoring statement for learning and teaching strategies.*
- 13 QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY ANNUAL REPORT (SETQC/10/60)
- 13.1 This item provided the QAA's annual report to HEFCW for 2009/10 against the service level agreement (SLA) between the QAA, HEFCW and Higher Education Wales.
- 13.2 Members agreed that the annual report met the requirements of the SLA and the programme of services for 2009/10.
- 13.3 Members discussed the suitability of the programme of services for 2010/11, and welcomed the quality enhancement event for Wales planned for 2011/12 on 'responsive HE provision'.
- 13.4 In response to questions regarding developmental reviews of Foundation Degrees, the QAA set out that the scope and draft features would be discussed by this Committee's Quality Assessment and Enhancement sub-group to inform an agreed approach to be developed by summer 2011. Members queried the threshold at which a Foundation degree cohort would be too small to necessitate a full review. The view was expressed that there was a risk that a small cohort of FD students in a large FEC could receive sub-standard teaching. The QAA agreed there was a risk, but that it was important for the scale of the FD review process to be proportional to the amount of provision, though no less thorough.
- 13.5 The QAA noted that there was some interest from Welsh FECs in the Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAPs), but concerns remained that the funded period for new FD developments was too short to make an application worthwhile.
- 13.6 Resolved: to
- i) Advise that the annual report of the QAA to HEFCW for 2009/10 met the requirements of the service level agreement and the programme of services for 2009/10.*
- 14 HE ACADEMY ANNUAL REPORT (SETQC/10/61)
- 14.1 This item provided the HE Academy Annual Report against the 2009/10 grant letter from HEFCW, and a report on the engagement of Welsh HEIs

with subject centres. Members thanked the Academy for the report and the useful information provided on subject centres, and noted the quality enhancement theme on Graduates for our Future.

- 14.2 Resolved: to
- i) *Advise that the report met the requirements of the grant letter for 2010/11 and that there were no issues arising from the report on engagement with subject centres.*
 - ii) *Agree that the HEA Grant letter for 2011/12 would include as an underlying theme the need for the Academy to provide support to the sector as it underwent change;*
 - iii) *Endorse the arrangements for the quality enhancement conference to be held in 2011/12.*

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 15.1 There was no other business.

16 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- 16.1 Future meetings of SETQC would be held on 16 February 2011, 16 May (joint meeting of Research Innovation and Engagement Committee (RIEC), SETQC, Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committee (RCC)), and 8 June 2011.
- 16.2 Members noted that Sir Adrian Webb would provide a presentation at the joint meeting on 16 May 2011.
- 16.3 Resolved: *to note the dates of the next meetings.*

17 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2010 (SETQC/10/62)

- 17.1 The unconfirmed minutes of the Council's Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee held on 12 October 2010 were presented for information.
- 17.2 Resolved: *to note the minutes of the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee.*

18 HEFCW REMIT: UNIVERSITY OF WALES (SETQC/10/63)

- 18.1 This item informed members of the additional remit to HEFCW from the Welsh Assembly Government to provide clarifications and investigate issues relating to the University of Wales.

18.2 Resolved: *to note the information provided on the remit to HEFCW regarding the University of Wales.*

19 WIDENING ACCESS UPDATE (SETQC/10/64)

19.1 This item set out progress on work towards widening access.

19.2 Resolved: *to note the*
i) Paper presented on Communities First Areas;
ii) Information provided on the Welsh Assembly Government's Child Poverty Strategy; and the
iii) Widening Access Strategic Approach and Plan.

Signature.....

Date.....