

**Minutes of the ninth meeting of the Council's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee held Wednesday 16 February 2011 in HEFCW Offices, Llanishen.**

**Present:**

**Members:** Prof Leni Oglesby, member of Council (Chair)  
Katie Dalton, NUS Wales  
Simon Dancey – on behalf of the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils  
Bethan Guilfoyle, member of Council  
Sandy Harding – on behalf of Stephen Griffiths, National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIAH)  
Rob Humphreys, institutional representative  
Dr Rhys Jones – on behalf of Prof Dennis Thomas, institutional representative  
Prof Mari Lloyd-Williams, member of Council  
Julie Lydon, institutional representative  
David Mason, member of Council  
Prof Danny Saunders, institutional representative  
Richard Spear, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Dysgu Cymru  
Prof Alan Speight, Reaching Wider Partnerships  
Gavin Thomas, Colegau Cymru

**Observers:** Alison Bryant, Welsh Assembly Government  
Dr Julian Ellis, Quality Assurance Agency  
Ruth Hayton, Welsh Assembly Government  
Dr Helena Lim, Higher Education Academy  
Dr Ioan Matthews, Centre for Welsh Medium Higher Education  
Lisa Newberry, Higher Education Wales (HEW)

**Officers:** Dr Alison Allan (item 1 only)  
Dr David Blaney (item 1 only)  
Celia Hunt  
Jane Johns  
Gemma Long (Clerk)  
Rachel O’Gorman  
Dr Cliona O’Neill (Secretary)  
Dr Alyson Thomas

**Apologies:** Michelle Creed, Stephen Griffiths, Jacqui Hare, Sarah Lewis, Sean Mackney, Julie Matthews, Dr Peter Noyes, Prof John Parkinson, Prof Dennis Thomas.

**Welcome and Introductions**

- The Chair gave her thanks to Meri Huws who had withdrawn from the Committee, and to Michelle Creed and Professor Dennis Thomas whose terms of membership were due to end. The Chair would write to thank each member individually for their contributions.

## 1 FEES AND STUDENT FINANCE (SETQC/11/01)

1.1 The Committee received a presentation from Celia Hunt on Higher Education Funding and Student Finance arrangements from 2012/13. Members were invited to identify unintended consequences of the fee plan proposals, any additional actions required by HEFCW, and issues to be considered in progressing and implementing the proposals. The three HEFCW project teams working on the development of fee proposals would be informed of the views.

1.2 Officers confirmed that

- Fee plans would be required at an institutional level for institutions wishing to charge annual fees exceeding £4k.
- HEIs would be able to charge a range of fees by subject
- HEFCW would review and approve the fee plans, which should support *For our Future* objectives with particular emphasis on widening access.
- the timelines did not allow for a pilot fee planning exercise.

1.3 Members identified the following issues for HEFCW to consider in progressing its proposals:

### Fee planning

- fee plans would need to be consistent with HEI strategic plans;
- although the Minister had stated that the Welsh system should not be market driven, Wales was part of a UK-wide market;
- the affordability of the proposed model depended on maintaining the current cross border flows, and it was imperative that Wales remained competitive and attracted students from England;
- it would be helpful to receive clarification on how the cap on student numbers would integrate with the new fee planning arrangements;
- predicating funding on the basis of speculative plans rather than results achieved might not yield the desired outcomes;
- there might be further changes to the tuition fee grant in Wales in the longer-term;
- prospective students could equally view cheaper provision either as better value for money, or as poorer quality, and it was therefore difficult to estimate the impact of the fee levels on student applications;
- more attractive fee arrangements in Wales might increase demand from EU students, although differential support provided in Wales via the Assembly Learning Grant had not attracted significantly higher numbers of these students previously.

### Students

- sensitivities in marketing to students domiciled in England;
- students would require more information on value for money and employability opportunities provided by their programme of study;
- the provision of advice to potential students was likely to become increasingly complex, and there was an increasingly important role for schools and careers advisers;

- students' unions would expect higher levels of funding to facilitate the increased representation of students as stakeholders;
- the White Paper in England may result in more student-centred quality assurance arrangements, affecting both the governance of the QAA, and the review processes.

#### Part-time provision:

- the arrangement for part-time students would be developed in the light of clarification from England on their proposals and any hiatus might produce planning difficulties;
- there was a risk that funding for part-time provision could be depleted by commitments to full-time students in the absence of a policy position;
- part-time provision was comparatively cheaper than full-time study, and a change in fees might have a disproportionate impact on this provision;
- any increased demand for HE in FE, vocational routes, or part-time provision would add to the complexity of progression arrangements.

#### Other

- Vocational subjects would remain important in some skills sectors and the Sector Skills Councils were working predominantly with FE and vocational providers;
- devolution had led to different relationships between SSCs and HE in each country of the UK;
- postgraduate courses were increasingly important for specialisation, as undergraduate qualifications become the minimum requirement for employment, and this trend may affect the employability of graduates;
- the impact of fee planning on the establishment of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol should be identified;
- concerns were identified that the student finance programme delivery board had not been sufficiently diverse in its membership, and did not include representatives of higher education, further education, part-time provision, employers or students. It was noted that Phil Gummatt was a member of the Board and that the Board was tasked mainly with the operational details of the new system;
- differential financial support in areas such as healthcare provision could impact on cross-border flows.

#### 1.4 Resolved to:

- i) *Officers would take into consideration these issues in developing and implementing the fee planning proposals*

## 2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (SETQC/11/02)

- 2.1 Members agreed the minutes as an accurate record of the previous meeting, subject to the amendment of 3.5 (i), to read *Endorse the provision of information on the Unistats website relating to the provision of more*

*useful information on institutional and subject profiles; and support the changes prompted by JACS 3.0.*

- 2.2 *Resolved:*  
 i) *Subject to the change above, to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting held on 15 December 2010.*

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Item 1.12.i) - The HE Academy would maintain an office in Wales and support disciplines via four subject teams.
- 3.2 Item 1.12.ii) and 1.12.iii) - The HEFCW grant letter to the Academy for 2011/12 was on schedule. The revised UK Professional Standards Framework would be provided to the May meeting of Council for approval. The Academy would promote the Framework via roadshows, including one in Wales.
- 3.3 Item 4.4.i) – HEFCW’s draft budget allocation had been approved, which confirmed the provisional allocations approved at January Council.
- 3.4 Item 6.4 (iii) – Analysis of retention data to consider different types of institutions in England and Wales, would be provided to a future meeting.
- 3.5 Item 7.4 (ii) - Comparator equality and diversity data for the sector in England would be provided to the June meeting.
- 3.6 Item 8.6 (iv) – HEFCW had written to institutions to ask for action plans for those subject areas with low National Student Survey (NSS) satisfaction outcomes.
- 3.7 Item 9.5 (iii) – NUS Wales had asked students’ unions to encourage institutional participation in surveys of the postgraduate student experience and NUS was undertaking some work on this area.
- 3.8 Item 10.8 (ii) – the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee had discussed the outcomes of *Future Ambitions: Review of Careers Services in Wales* and agreed with the conclusions of SETQC.

### 4 STUDENT EXPERIENCE (SETQC/11/03)

- 4.1 This item provided HEFCW’s strategic approach to the student experience. It invited Members to provide advice on further actions and on the definition of an excellent student experience.
- 4.2 Points identified including the following:
- The potential impact of the new fees arrangements on student expectations;

- The approach could include support for institutions benchmarking their student engagement and representation;
  - The numbers of applications could be used as an indicator of student perception of the quality of the experience in Welsh institutions;
  - The approach could identify employability and the part-time student voice more clearly, although it was recognised that these areas were considered more fully via other themes of the Corporate Strategy;
  - Some members reported difficulties in relating innovative practice to credit levels. It was agreed that this should be done with reference to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and that modules needed to be allocated levels in order to receive funding;
  - aims could include improving the provision of information for applicants, and current students;
  - the definition of an excellent student experience could include reference to graduates' destinations and employability;
  - the approach could refer to:
    - support for trainees in Initial Teacher Training in the context of the literacy and numeracy agenda for schools;
    - the Graduates For our Future events programme;
    - the Professional Standards Framework; and
    - engagement with postgraduate students, who were highlighted as a priority area in the *FoF* Strategy.
- 4.3 The overlapping priorities of student experience and employability skills could be addressed at the joint Committee meeting on 16 May. The evaluation of institutional employability statements on the Unistats website would also be discussed at that meeting.
- 4.4 HEW would share the draft with the HEW Pro Vice Chancellors' Learning and Teaching Advisory Group, recognising that the document was a draft and that references to HEFCW Corporate Strategy could not be amended.
- 4.5 Resolved:
- i) *Members would provide any further comments on the paper to the Secretary by 28 February 2011;*
  - ii) *officers would consider the issues raised in finalising the approach.*
- 5 LEARNING AND TEACHING AND WIDENING ACCESS STRATEGIES: SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE (SETQC/11/04)
- 5.1 This item invited Members to consider issues relating to the development of the supplementary guidance for Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies for 2011/12 to 2013/14. The paper provided the outcomes of the equality and diversity impact consultation carried out on the initial guidance. Officers were undertaking visits to institutions to discuss strategy development.

5.2 Members identified the following issues for consideration in development of the supplementary guidance:

- a checklist of information to be included in widening access, reaching wider and regional strategies would be useful, to assist institutions in articulating these strategies more clearly;
- it would be useful to provide further information on the link between HE and FE with regards to widening access, with particular reference to part-time students;
- institutions would welcome early feedback on their foundation degree bids to inform their strategy development;
- whether there might be any unintended consequences resulting from rolling in the former Additional Support for Part-time Students into Widening Access and Innovation and Engagement funding streams - officers confirmed that institutions would be expected to report on their activities in relation to part-time students;
- the relationship between Widening Access funding and Innovation and Engagement funding for part-time students should be explicitly identified.

5.3 Resolved:

- i) *to note the policy context in which supplementary guidance will be developed;*
- ii) *officers would take account of the issues raised by members in developing the supplementary guidance;*
- iii) *note the outcomes of HEFCW/HEI meetings about Learning and Teaching, Widening Access, and Reaching Wider strategies held to date.*

## 6 CONSULTATION ON TACKLING CHILD POVERTY (SETQC/11/05)

6.1 The Committee considered information on HEFCW's duty to provide a Child Poverty Strategy, and a draft response to the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation on the Child Poverty guidance and regulations.

6.2 Members noted that HEFCW needed to develop its own Child Poverty Strategy. A draft would be provided to the June 2011 meeting of SETQC and would also be published for consultation. HEIs would be expected to support the delivery of the Strategy. Members queried whether it would be useful to make further links between the strategy and institutional Widening Access Strategies in the supplementary Learning and Teaching and Widening Access strategy guidance.

6.3 Members suggested that HEFCW's response to the consultation could include making links with information on part-time students and care-leavers.

6.4 Resolved to:

- i) *Note the requirement on HEFCW to produce and publish a Child Poverty Strategy by 30 September 2011;*

- ii) *Note the proposed response to the Assembly Government consultation on the Child Poverty guidance and regulation;*
- iii) *Officers would take account of the Committee's views in responding to the WAG Consultation and developing a Child Poverty Strategy;*
- iv) *Officers would include reference to the Child Poverty Strategy in the supplementary guidance for Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies.*

## 7 SETQC ANNUAL REPORT (SETQC/11/06)

7.1 The Chair provided an oral update on the development of the SETQC Annual Report to Council. The report timetable had been rescheduled at the request of HEFCW internal audit. The report would be revised to take account of meetings up to, and including, the July 2010 meeting, then shared electronically with the Committee for comment.

7.2 Resolved: to

- i) *Give delegated authority to the Chair to approve the final report.*

## 8 REMIT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE (SETQC/11/07)

8.1 The Committee was provided with its remit and terms of reference for review, as required by the standing orders. It was proposed that meetings would move from four to three times a year.

8.2 The following points were made:

- the Membership and observers covered all areas set out in the remit;
- the role of the Committee was advisory and it needed to represent a range of constituencies, given the broad remit;
- the Committee title accurately reflected the business of the Committee;
- the shift to three meetings per year was appropriate;
- an additional annual joint meeting with the other strategic committees of HEFCW's Council would also be held, if appropriate;
- the identification of, and approach to, strategic discussion items was welcomed;
- the Chair and officers would consider whether it might be possible to make the Committee smaller;
- the NUS in Wales queried whether it might be possible to include an additional student representative on the Committee;
- wording that specified that the membership would include HE careers services and widening access practitioners should be removed.

8.3 Members discussed the proposal to distribute papers by electronic means only. Officers confirmed that this would be done via the Committee Extranet. Papers would continue to be available a week in advance of meetings. Members requiring hard copies could contact the Secretary.

- 8.4 Resolved:
- i) *SETQC would meet three times a year from 2011/12;*
  - ii) *the Chair and officers would consider whether the size of the Committee could be reduced;*
  - iii) *To note membership may be terminated for non-Council members who fail to attend three consecutive meetings;*
  - iv) *To agree that papers for SETQC meetings be distributed electronically.*

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 There was no other business.

10 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

10.1 Future meetings of SETQC would be held on 16 May (joint meeting of Research Innovation and Engagement Committee, SETQC and Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committee), 8 June 2011, 1 November 2011, 1 February 2012, and 6 June 2012.

10.2 Resolved: *to note the dates of the next meetings.*

11 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2011 (SETQC/11/08)

11.1 The unconfirmed minutes of the Council's Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee held on 21 January 2011 were presented for information.

11.2 Resolved: *to note the minutes of the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee.*

12 WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION: COLEG CYMRAEG CENEDLAETHOL UPDATE (SETQC/11/09)

12.1 This item provided the progress on work to establish the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

12.2 Resolved: *to note*  
 i) *The update on work to establish the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.*

Signature.....

Date.....