

Minutes of the tenth meeting of the Council's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee held Wednesday 8 June 2011 in HEFCW Offices, Llanishen.

Present:

Members:

Prof Leni Oglesby, member of Council (Chair)
Katie Dalton, National Union of Students (NUS) Wales
Bethan Guilfoyle, member of Council
Stephen Griffiths, National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare
Jacqui Hare, Higher Education Wales
David Mason, member of Council
Clive Mulholland, on behalf of Julie Lydon, institutional representative
Dr Peter Noyes, Higher Education Wales
Prof John Parkinson, Universities Council for the Education of Teachers Cymru
Prof Danny Saunders, institutional representative (items 1 and 5 only)
Prof Alan Speight, institutional representative
Gavin Thomas, Colegau Cymru (items 1 and 5 only)

Observers:

Alison Bryant, Welsh Government
Dr Julian Ellis, Quality Assurance Agency
Dr Helena Lim, Higher Education Academy
Dr Ioan Matthews, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
Luke Young, NUS Wales

Officers:

Dr Alison Allan (items 1 and 5 only)
Dr David Blaney (items 1 and 5 only)
Vikki Burge (items 1 and 5 only)
Elizabeth Heal (items 1 and 5 only)
Celia Hunt
Jane Johns
Gemma Long (Clerk)
Dr Cliona O'Neill (Secretary)
Dr Alyson Thomas

Apologies: Sean Mackney, Simon Dancey, Rob Humphreys, Prof Mari Lloyd-Williams, Julie Lydon, Richard Spear, Julie Matthews, Lisa Newberry.

Welcome and Introductions

- The Chair gave her thanks to Professor John Parkinson for his contribution to the Committee and wished him well for his retirement.
- The Chair thanked Katie Dalton whose term of office at NUS Wales was ending in June 2011, for her sterling work in representing the interests of students on SETQC.
- The Chair welcomed Luke Young, the NUS Wales president-elect, to the meeting and wished him well in his forthcoming role.

- Congratulations were given to the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff for coming top in a number of categories of the International Student Barometer.
- The Committee welcomed the appointment of Professor Alan Speight as an institutional member.
- The Committee noted the absence of Rob Humphreys from the meeting owing to a recent accident and wished him a speedy recovery.
- The Chair thanked members for their contributions to and advice on draft HEFCW publications in between meetings.

1 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY UPDATE (SETQC/11/10)

- 1.1 The Committee received a presentation from David Ruebain from the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), on recent developments in equalities legislation, covering the changes brought in by the Equalities Act 2010, the public sector equality duty, and specific duties in Wales.
- 1.2 Members noted the requirements of the specific duties in Wales which applied to both staff and students, and the supporting work around creating an evidence base and engagement. It was noted that there were nine protected characteristics covered by the legislation, and Members recognised that the public sector duty was about more than preventing discrimination, including removing unintended discrimination, and considering impact.
- 1.3 The Committee questioned the role of the evidence base and the challenges of gathering data on religion and beliefs. The ECU advised that there was evidence that response rates increased when it was clearly communicated why the information was being collected and the purpose for which it would be used. Guidance on creating an evidence base was available from the ECU.
- 1.4 Members were concerned about how HEIs could prove that they are not discriminatory in admissions in the context of student recruitment and capping. In some subjects, eg Initial Teacher Training, there were competency standards and these would support decision making.
- 1.5 Members welcomed the 2009/10 equality and diversity data prepared by HEFCW officers from HESA data. Officers confirmed that franchised HE in further education numbers were included in the data, but directly funded numbers were not.
- 1.6 It was suggested that there needed to be a balance between gathering and monitoring data, and addressing inequalities as informed by that data. HEIs will need to re-calibrate their processes in light of the new legislation. Support would be available from HEFCW and ECU for this process.
- 1.7 It was suggested that institutions could collaborate regionally to offer assistive support to specific groups and then cross-refer students to those institutions that had specialist assistance. It was agreed that steps taken by

an institution to assist particular groups of students could be collaborative, but this would not absolve an institution of its responsibilities to all its students.

- 1.8 The views of Members were sought on the equality and diversity implications for student experience, teaching and quality with the aim of improving the work of the Committee as well as the development of HEFCW's new equality scheme. Members noted that while HEFCW needed to set some global objectives in the scheme for the sector, institutions would need to set more focussed objectives internally to reflect their mission and markets. It was suggested that HEFCW might also want to monitor any unintended consequences of Welsh Government (WG) priorities such as recruitment to science, technology, engineering and maths subjects.
- 1.9 Resolved to:
- i) Note the recent equalities legislation changes in UK and Wales and requirements of the Equalities Act 2010; and
 - ii) Note the 2009/10 equality monitoring data on students in Welsh HEIs.

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

2.1 Members agreed the minutes of 16 February 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 16 February 2011.*

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Item 1.4.i) –Officers had taken into consideration issues identified in the strategic discussion on fees and student finance in fee plan arrangements. All institutions had submitted fee plans.
- 3.2 Item 3.7 – NUS Wales had emailed student unions to ask that they promote postgraduate student participation in surveys and were aware that some unions had acted on this.
- 3.3 Item 3.8 – the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee had also agreed with SETQC's conclusions regarding the outcomes of *Future Ambitions: Review of Careers Services in Wales*.
- 3.4 Item 4.4. – the Higher Education Wales Pro Vice Chancellors' learning and teaching group had agreed to discuss the HEFCW' strategic approach to the student experience at a future meeting.

3.5 Item 6.4.i) – The requirement on HEFCW and other WG sponsored bodies to produce a Child Poverty Strategy had been extended until March 2012. A draft strategy would be provided to the Committee in November to inform its development before it is put to Council in January 2012.

3.6 Item 7.2i) – Council had approved the SETQ Committee annual report for 2008/09 to 2009/10, and it would be published on the HEFCW website.

4 OUTCOMES FROM KIS CONSULTATION (SETQC/11/12)

4.1 The Committee was invited to advise on the outcomes of the KIS consultation in Wales. Delegated authority had been given to HEFCW's Chief Executive by Council to enable outcomes to be taken forward in order to align with timescales in England.

4.2 SETQC advised that Wales should participate in the production of the KIS. They noted that the Committee's Quality Assessment and Enhancement Sub-Group had advised that information on the proportion of the course that can be undertaken through the medium of Welsh should be included in the Welsh KIS. Officers would liaise with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure that the KIS provided information consistent with that provided by the Coleg in relation to this area. NUS Wales reported that they would welcome the work in Wales on the costs of study to be more fully reflected in the Welsh KIS. SETQC advised that HEFCW should draw concerns identified through the KIS consultation to the attention of HEFCE, as appropriate.

4.3 SETQC advised that student unions in Wales should be able to select an optional question bank for their institution within the National Student Survey. They agreed that Wales should follow advice from England as to whether this should be in place of one of the six banks that an institution can select, or in addition to these. They noted concerns that the NSS could become unwieldy if too many additional question banks were selected.

4.4 Members noted that the NUS had some concerns that a single question on satisfaction with student unions would not provide meaningful data, given the diversity of services offered by different student unions. They agreed it would be helpful to have an optional question bank specific to student unions, which the student union could select further to explore outcomes in relation to a specific question. NUS Wales advised that Wales should follow the outcome agreed for England, to capture student satisfaction with their student union in the NSS from 2012.

4.5 Members advised that the employability statements for Wales should be maintained on Unistats. They agreed that HEFCW should ask the HE Academy to support institutions in strengthening their statements.

- 4.6 Resolved:
- i) *To advise that Wales participate in the production of the KIS from 2012/13*
 - ii) *Officers would liaise with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure that students had access to consistent information on the proportion of the course available through the medium of Welsh through both the KIS and the Coleg;*
 - iii) *HEFCW would explore the inclusion of a statement within the Welsh KIS on fuller information on the costs of study available on the institution's website;*
 - iv) *HEFCW officers would draw concerns identified by respondents to the attention of HEFCE, as appropriate.*
 - v) *To advise that student unions in Wales should be able to select an optional question bank for their institutions for the NSS, and follow advice from England as to whether this should be in addition to, or replace, one of the existing six banks that an institution can select;*
 - vi) *Advise that Wales should follow the approach agreed in England for capturing the students' satisfaction with their student union;*
 - vii) *Advise that employability statements should remain on Unistats; and*
 - viii) *Officers would ask the Higher Education Academy to support HE institutions in strengthening their employability statements.*

5 EMPLOYABILITY STATEMENTS (SETQC/11/13)

- 5.1 The Committee received an analysis of institutional employability statements conducted by the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB). DS reported that WESB had welcomed publication of the statements but, having analysed them, recommended that these should be more detailed.
- 5.2 Members welcomed the analysis, and noted the findings that statements were difficult to find, and did not consistently provide information about particular local, regional or national employers. Statements could be improved to highlight existing good practice in HEIs in relation to employability or the package available to students, and provide information on the second or third destination of graduates.
- 5.3 There was a balance to be struck between general university-wide statements applicable to all students, and specific statements about subjects and employers. It was agreed that course-level information was more useful to students and Members suggested that institutional statements could link to specific course information, such as could be provided through the Key Information Sets.
- 5.4 Members advised that the employability and skills agenda needed to recognise that Welsh language skills and bilingualism enhanced graduate employability.
- 5.5 The HE Academy had carried out some scoping work for HEFCE on employability statements. They had arranged for a workshop to be held in

Wales on enhancing the statements but this had to be cancelled due to the limited number of registrations.

5.6 Members noted that further education colleges (FECs) with fewer than 50 full-time equivalent HE students, whether directly funded or franchise, were exempt from providing statements. However, of the 15 eligible to produce statements, only two had done so. Colegau Cymru would raise the profile of the statements through taking a paper to its next Board, including it on the agenda of the next HE in FE network meeting, and encouraging eligible colleges to produce statements.

5.7 Resolved to:

- i) *HEFCW would ask the Higher Education Academy to support institutions in Wales in enhancing their employability statements; and*
- ii) *Colleges Wales would raise the profile of employability statements through providing information to its Board and to the HE in FE network*
- iii) *Colleges Wales would encourage FECs to provide employability statements.*

6 HEFCW REMIT LETTER FOR 2011-12 (SETQC/11/14)

6.1 This item invited Members to consider any implications for HEFCW arising from identified remit requirements covering items relevant to the Committee.

6.2 Members advised that HEFCW would need to clarify what was meant by a world class HE system in order to demonstrate excellence in the sector in this respect.

6.3 There were queries related to the length of the deadlines attached to some of the proposed HEFCW actions. Officers clarified that although many actions would be complete in advance of some of the March 2012 deadlines, the length allowed HEFCW time to take related actions to meet additional requirements as the agendas moved forward.

6.4 Members expressed concern about the workload implications of revising regional strategies by October 2011. Officers confirmed that they were aware of such concerns and a questionnaire had been circulated to regions to identify issues to be taken forward in the revision of the strategies.

6.5 Resolved to:

- i) *Note the requirements on HEFCW arising from the remit letter for 2011-12.*

- 7 QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND ENHANCEMENT SUB-GROUP AND INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW: WALES CONSULTATION (SETQC/11/15)
- 7.1 This paper provided the minutes of the Quality Assessment and Enhancement Sub-Group (QAESG) for information and invited Members to comment on the consultation on revisions to the Institutional Review: Wales (IRW) process.
- 7.2 QAESG had undertaken a detailed consideration of the IRW and the substantive items to include in the consultation. Many of the proposed changes would bring features of the review process in line with the Institutional Review in England and Northern Ireland (IRENI), for example changing the categories of judgements so review outcomes in Wales remained comparable with IRENI.
- 7.3 Members queried whether it might be possible to change the outcome judgements for institutions that had recently undergone the IRW. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) advised that this would not be possible, but a statement could be added to the website alongside the published reviews notifying the reader of changes in terminology since publication.
- 7.4 The consultation outcomes would be put to the September meeting of QAESG. Its advice would be considered by officers and the Chair of SETQC who would make recommendations to Council in October. The outcomes would be reported for information at the November SETQC meeting.
- 7.5 Resolved:
- i) *To note the unconfirmed minutes of the May 2011 QAESG meeting;*
 - ii) *HEFCW would ask the QAA to put a statement on their website alongside IRW reports that used terminology from old IRW.*
- 8 WIDENING ACCESS: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (PIs) AND RETENTION DATA (SETQC/11/16)
- 8.1 The Committee was invited to advise officers on performance indicator-related issues to contribute to the UK review and to note the retention-related benchmark data.
- 8.2 The Committee noted the limitations of benchmark data, including that they are set annually and vary depending on individual institution and sector-wide performance. Benchmark data required contextual analysis by the HEI to be a useful mechanism for institutional enhancement.
- 8.3 Members noted that PIs had originally been developed for the sector's use, but they were now more widely scrutinised by the media and other stakeholders. The difficulties of interpreting PIs included a lack of data, missing data and/or small sample sizes. It was suggested that PIs could be

reduced in number and that they would be more accessible if the UK Review agreed to the development of a set of 'key performance indicators'.

- 8.4 The Committee recognised that the usefulness of PIs was variable and while the data was meant to inform institutional improvements, the scale of additional and contextual analysis required, plus the range and volume of data often inhibited this. It was noted that HEFCW did not use the PIs in its funding methodology or to inform its widening access Corporate Strategy measures.
- 8.5 The indicator for part-time module completion was specific to Wales and, therefore, did not have a UK benchmark. It was suggested that it should be removed as it was of limited value. Members advised that officers should seek more detailed advice from institutional data contacts who would also comment specifically on their use of PI data.
- 8.6 Resolved to:
- i) Note the complexity, range and issues of fitness for purpose of the current PI data;*
 - ii) Note the retention-related benchmark data and its limitations;*
 - iii) Advise that the PI for part-time module completion be discussed with institutional data planners;*
 - iv) Ask officers to seek the views of institutional data contacts on PIs to inform the UK review.*

9 IMPROVING GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN WALES (SETQC/11/17)

- 9.1 This item invited Members to consider opportunities for improving graduate employability in Wales and advising on the development of the Graduate Opportunities (GO) Wales programme. It was identified that the programme closely supported WG priorities as expressed in the Council's remit letter and the *For our Future* strategy. Members recognised the esteem that was given to GO Wales and gave it wholehearted support.
- 9.2 GO Wales was developing a proposal for European funding which if successful would commit a proportion of match funding from HEFCW over a three year period. The Committee acknowledged that this would be a challenging commitment for HEFCW as it coincided with the move to a new funding regime. The programme's first commitment would be to the Welsh regions identified by the EU as needing Convergence funding, and only if HEFCW could confirm funding would other regions receive support.
- 9.3 Officers confirmed that the proposed placements via the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action which were unpaid would be short-term and supported by bursaries where possible.
- 9.4 Members noted that SETQC's role was predominantly advisory, and while members were content to endorse the recommendation that GO Wales

submit a proposal for a sixth phase of EU funding, it was not the role of the Committee to take decisions on matters relating to funding.

9.5 Resolved:

- i) To note the very positive feedback from SETQC for GO Wales; and*
- ii) To endorse the proposal that the GO Wales Programme should submit a proposal for a sixth phase of EU-funding in order to develop in the direction set out in the paper.*

10 SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY: MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING AND NEXT STEPS (SETQC/11/18)

10.1 This paper provided the draft notes of the joint Committee meeting of the 16 May, and invited Members to comment on actions identified in light of the meeting.

10.2 The Committee noted that the joint meeting had been extremely successful and thanked the officers who had undertaken the organisation of this event and had provided subsequent papers.

10.3 Members agreed that the notes captured the main messages and welcomed the four key actions identified in the discussion paper. They recognised the increasing importance of this agenda, suggesting that more activity should be targeted in this direction. However, caution was advised in terms of any moves that might increase the burden of reporting on HEIs. In this context, it was agreed that HEI plans in relation to work experience and employability were, to a large degree, already mainstreamed in the current strategies submitted to HEFCW and that fee plans now provided another important vehicle in this respect.

10.4 Members welcomed the proposals to develop HEFCW's GO Wales programme so that it increased the availability and the breadth of work experience opportunities (the previous agenda item referred).

10.5 A more proactive regional agenda could support the development and provision of appropriate Labour Market Information (LMI), and Members welcomed the news that the WG was developing an LMI unit. It was suggested that, while the WG unit should rightly focus on drawing together retrospective and/or current LMI, the role of the HE sector in this context might be described in terms of the provision of data that ensures "future proofing" of its graduates.

10.6 Members supported the concept of developing the role of HE in workforce up-skilling, and suggested that this could be progressed via HE-FE partnerships and the regional agenda, noting also the role of Foundation Degrees.

10.7 The importance of Higher Education Academy activity via its *Graduates for our Future* enhancement theme was also noted, and HEFCW would work with the Academy in developing its approach to skills and employability.

10.8 Resolved to:

- i) Note the draft notes of the joint meeting held on 16 May 2011;*
- ii) Note that HEFCW was working with the QAA to develop a process for the review of Foundation Degrees; and*
- iii) Ask officers to consider further the themes and actions arising from the joint meeting against the requirements of the HEFCW remit letter.*

11 COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY (SETQC/11/19)

11.1 The Committee considered the suitability of a draft effectiveness survey which had been developed at the suggestion of a Member. Taking into account the views of Members including those from Rob Humphreys by correspondence, it was agreed that the survey would be useful.

11.2 The survey would be carried out in June, and the outcome would inform the Chair and officers' consideration of the Committee membership agreed at the last meeting. The Committee recognised the importance of getting the constituencies right on an advisory committee that had such a broad remit. A survey report and any proposals on membership would be provided to September Council for approval and reported to the November SETQC meeting.

11.3 Members noted the appointment and interim arrangements in respect of Professors Alan Speight and Danny Saunders.

11.4 Resolved to:

- i) Carry out the effectiveness survey; and*
- ii) Note the appointments and interim arrangements to the membership.*

12 EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: OUTCOMES FROM BASELINING PILOT STUDY AND UPDATE ON SUSTAINABILITY IN HEFCW (SETQC/11/20)

12.1 The Committee received the findings of a pilot study on an Education Development Framework (EDF) tool in respect of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC).

12.2 Members agreed the EDF tool should be introduced to key senior HE staff. This would be taken forward by the HE Academy, possibly through its work with the ESDGC sector network. It was suggested that it could be grouped with other issues where the sharing of good practice would be beneficial.

- 12.3 Members recognised that although engagement with the ESDGC agenda remained a WG priority, as a curriculum issue, it was not appropriate for SETQC to stipulate specific requirements in this area.
- 12.4 Resolved to:
- i) the HEA would investigate how the EDF tool could be introduced to key senior HE staff;*
 - ii) Note the sector's Common Understanding of ESDGC; and*
 - iii) Note the progress on embedding sustainability in HEFCW and the implications this may have on agreements for funding.*
- 13 UK PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK (SETQC/11/21)
- 13.1 Members were invited to comment on the draft Professional Standards Framework that had been developed following a UK-wide consultation by the HE Academy.
- 13.2 There were some concerns about the introduction of a fourth descriptor as the number of levels that could be attained had now increased to include a new level of Principal Fellow. Many institutions had mapped their existing appointments processes to the HE Academy's categories and these may need to be revised. The HE Academy advised that the new descriptor intended to identify senior academics who had institution-wide, national, or international influence, and that the new framework had been informed by the sector. Members were advised by the HE Academy that the further descriptor was appropriate as it reflected all levels of academic practice and would appeal to senior managers.
- 13.3 The HE Academy planned to obtain further feedback on the draft PSF. Members advised that the best means of doing this was through the Academy's Welsh Institutional Group and through the HEW Pro-Vice Chancellors' Learning and Teaching Advisory Group.
- 13.4 Resolved:
- i) Endorse the draft of the revised HE Academy UK Professional Standards Framework*
 - ii) The HE Academy would obtain further feedback on the draft framework via its Welsh Institutional Group and through the HEW Pro-Vice Chancellors' Learning and Teaching Advisory Group.*
- 14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS
- 14.1 There was no further business.
- 15 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS
- 15.1 Future meetings of SETQC would be held on 1 November 2011, 1 February 2012, and 6 June 2012.

- 16 HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY GRANT LETTER (SETQC/11/22)
 - 16.1 The draft Higher Education Academy grant letter for 2011-12 was provided for information and was pending completion by HEFCE.
 - 16.2 Resolved to:
 - i) Note the draft Higher Education Academy grant letter for 2011-12.*

- 17 REPORTS OF RELEVANCE (SETQC/11/23)
 - 17.1 This item provided a digest of some of the recent reports of relevance to the Committee and its remit.
 - 17.2 Resolved to:
 - i) Note the summaries of reports of relevance.*

Signature.....

Date.....