

**Minutes of the nineteenth meeting of the Council's Student Experience,
Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC) held from 12:30pm on 14 May 2014
at HEFCW's offices, Llanishen.**

Present

Members: Professor Leni Oglesby, member of Council (Chair);
Beth Button, National Union of Students (NUS) Wales President elect;
Bethan Guilfoyle, member of Council;
Rob Humphreys, Open University representative;
Professor April McMahon, Higher Education Wales (HEW)
representative;
Professor Clive Mulholland, Chair of HEW Pro-Vice Chancellors'
Learning and Teaching Advisory Group;
Hannah Pudner, part-time student representative;
Dr Greg Walker, Colegau Cymru representative;
Gareth Williams, Sector Skills Council representative.

Observers: Lizzie Badrick, (in place of Dr Helena Lim) Higher Education Academy
(HEA);
Dr Julian Ellis, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA);
Dr Dafydd Trystan (in place of Dr Ioan Matthews), Coleg Cymraeg
Cenedlaethol.

Officers: Jackie Cresswell-Griffith;
Celia Hunt;
Jane Johns;
Rachel O'Gorman (Clerk);
Dr Cliona O'Neill (Secretary);
Gemma Woolfe.

Apologies: Stephen Griffiths, NHS Shared Services
Ruth Hayton, Welsh Government
Professor Ewart Keep, Skills and employability representative
Stephanie Lloyd, President of NUS Wales
Professor Julie Lydon, institutional representative
Dr Ioan Matthews, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
Lisa Newberry, HEW
Professor Alan Speight, institutional representative
Dr David Wright, institutional representative
Richard Spear, Careers Wales

Welcome and introductions

The Chair:

- Welcomed
 - Janet Graham from Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) and thanked her for presenting to the Committee.
 - Dafydd Trystan, from the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, who was attending in place of Ioan Matthews.
 - Beth Button, NUS Wales President Elect, attending in place of Stephanie Lloyd.
 - Lizzie Badrick, HEA, attending in place of Helena Lim.
- Noted that
 - this was Hannah Pudner's last meeting, and congratulated her on her new role within the Open University as Assistant Director, External Strategy. HEFCW asked the Open University and NUSW to liaise with NIACE Dysgu Cymru, as previously, to nominate a new part-time student representative.
 - this was Clive Mulholland's last meeting and congratulated him on his new role as Principal of the University of the Highlands and Islands.
 - Alan Speight has been reappointed to SETQC for a further three years, as an institutional representative, South West Wales.
- Congratulated the University of Wales Trinity Saint David on its success as runner up in the 2014 UALL awards.
- Reminded Members that for information items were available via the Extranet.
- Welcomed the news that Gavin Thomas had returned to work and requested that best wishes be sent to him on behalf of the Committee.

Strategic Discussion

1. UK admissions: policy and practice implications

- 1.1 The strategic discussion concerned UK full-time admissions policy and practice, with particular reference to admissions-related factors impacting on Wales. Janet Graham, Director of the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme (SPA) led the strategic discussion. A copy of the presentation would be placed on the Extranet.
- 1.2 Members raised the following points:
- Further Education Colleges would be interested in the information on good practice.
 - A query about the extent to which modelling had been carried out on the impact of the cap in England on the other countries of the UK. It was thought to be likely that it would impact on Wales, but this view was based on supposition, rather than the result of modelling.
 - The use of unconditional offers by institutions, which might have long term unintended consequences potentially impacting on: student motivation during A-levels, retention rates, the level of student support required while at University, degree performance, and later employability prospects. The

lifting of the cap in England may result in an increase of such practices in the next few years. Despite it being accepted that, in principle, there was nothing wrong with the exercising of such a practice, it was emphasised that institutions that did this must be confident that they could ensure a transparent process, especially given that those institutions might be more likely to be considered as selective institutions.

- Use of longer induction processes for widening access students, in order to improve the student experience and increase retention.
- Previous proposals to opt for a post-qualifications admissions process, which was rejected by schools, highlighted potential relationship problems between HEIs and schools on policy development. It was also noted that schools would still need to look to HEIs for advice and guidance.
- A query regarding how HEI autonomy in admissions fitted in with a cap on student numbers in Wales. It was noted that this autonomy was in relation to choice of who was admitted, rather than in terms of Government-funded numbers.
- Major changes in qualifications would be taking place in England but not Wales or Scotland, including decoupling AS levels and A2 levels. This might result in complexity in comparing students in terms of admissions, and may be beneficial for Welsh and Scottish students, as more will be known about their academic performance.
- Students may also use their offers as bargaining tools with institutions. This may disadvantage widening access students, who are less confident in doing this.
- Noted other countries where the cap had been lifted, and the varied impact on the student experience, particularly in the context where no additional funding had been available to support it.
- Chapter B2 of the quality code on admissions had been published by the QAA, and institutions would be reviewed against this, which might have reputational implications.
- Within this context, institutions would need to look at their complaints and appeals processes given the potential increase for complaints to be made. It was also noted that institutions should manage their processes for informing applicants of changes to course provision.
- All agreed that the removal of the cap in England would result in a turbulent environment.

- 1.3 Members were keen for the maximum fee grant to be removed in Wales. They noted that competitors were keen to recruit students from Wales, particularly in the context of the fee grant arrangements in Wales. HEFCW had committed to exploring options regarding the maximum fee grant, but within the context of constrained Welsh Government budgets.
- 1.4 The majority of HE enrolments in FE are part-time (ca 80%). Part-time HE funding was likely to impact on developments here and any changes to the maximum fee grant would need to consider the implications for part-time students.
- 1.5 Resolved:

- i) to note the advice of the Committee in relation to professionalism in admissions;*

2. Minutes of the January 2014 meeting

- 2.1 Members agreed the minutes of 29 January 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 29 January 2014.*

3. Matters Arising

- 3.1 The paper presented a report on action taken following the SETQC meetings held on 23 October 2012, 23 October 2013 and 29 January 2014. In addition to the points noted in the paper, the following points were raised in relation to the matters arising:
- 3.2 An update was provided on the following points:
- October 2013 (iv) and (v) - HEFCW does not hold this data, and currently does not have the capacity to acquire and analyse it. Officers would follow this up over the summer.
 - January 2014 1.7 (iii) – given HEW commitments and to ensure senior institutional representation, the Widening Access National Conference would be re-scheduled.
 - January 2014 7.5 - there had been a further meeting of the Skills and Employability Board. There would be an annual report on the outcomes for the year and an event in 2014/15.
- 3.3 Resolved: to
- i) Note the contents of the paper;*
- ii) Follow up on A-level grade profile of Welsh domiciled students being accepted to English HEIs.*

4. HEFCW remit letter 2014-15

- 4.1 This paper provided an analysis of the remit letter from the Minister for 2014-15 and invited members to comment on the remit tasks identified as being relevant to the SETQC remit, and how these might be taken forward in HEFCW's operational plan.
- 4.2 The following points were made:
- Whether the existing corporate strategy targets would in fact measure the contribution to Wales of Welsh HE: HEFCW reported that in addition to reporting on the seventeen corporate strategy targets, they would be producing an annual 'state of the nation' report to reflect HE's contribution. This would involve HEW and NUS Wales.
 - Buttle Trust: institutions should be making more of the fact that all institutions have the Quality Mark. It would be helpful for HEFCW to consider whether it would be possible to produce a short publication

celebrating the fact that all institutions have the Buttle Trust Quality Mark. It was clarified that, although references to care leavers in the remit letter were under higher education in further education, care leavers were not looked at solely in the context of HE in FE;

- Initial Teacher Training: it was essential to follow up the recommendations of the Tabberer review and to ensure that ITT provision in Wales was sustainable. There were concerns that the raised entry standards for GCSE maths and English were resulting in potential ITT students applying to other countries of the UK. This might impact on the numbers of students who would study through the medium of Welsh, and in turn might impact detrimentally on the numbers of WM teachers. Those teaching in Wales were not expected to have achieved these standards. It would be helpful to look at the broader issues surrounding the introduction of a B grade for Welsh GCSE.
- The delay in publication of the HE in FE review by Welsh Government was queried; a Ministerial statement had indicated that the report was submitted to Welsh Government in October 2013.
- Widening Access: it was noted that further evidence would be sought from institutions on student fee expenditure and external audits of activities. In Scotland there appears to be a shift of emphasis from simply monitoring access to evaluating the impact of widening access interventions and assessing the extent to which these were effective and successful. As with research activity, it was mooted whether learning and teaching activity might become increasingly subject to impact measurements. Recent educational press coverage indicating Wales' success in achieving its WA targets was noted. HEFCW reported that it was addressing the apparent Welsh Government perception that Wales was not good enough in relation to Widening Access. The re-scheduled WA conference would provide a platform to demonstrate and celebrate success and a case study publication was also planned. It was noted that the positive messages could be reinforced through the HEW Communications Group.
- Members expressed concern regarding the CBI's engagement with the Skills and Employability Agreement and action plan, as one of the four signatories. HEFCW would write to Confederation of Business Industry (CBI) to encourage their engagement. A conference, planned for 2014/15, would help to celebrate the success of achievements in this area to date.

4.3 Resolved:

- i) *HEFCW to consider whether it would be possible to produce a short publication celebrating the fact that all institutions have the Buttle Trust Quality Mark;*
- ii) *HEFCW would write to CBI to encourage their engagement with the Skills and Employability Agreement and action plan.*

5. Future of GO Wales

- 5.1 This paper provided further information for the Committee on progress made in the development of a refreshed GO Wales Programme. It detailed

proposals which HEFCW would be making, subject to consultation with the sector, and invited Members to note progress and make comments.

5.2 Members raised the following points:

- Whether it might be possible to apply for funding to address dedicated Welsh language needs of employers, e.g. through a short course followed by a placement;
- The principle of getting Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills into businesses was very important, but was complex to operate as it doesn't necessarily fit easily within the priorities outlined in the WEFO Operational Programmes.
- HEW PVC group was keen to see funding for GO Wales continue. However, they had concerns regarding WEFO's indication that the most likely source of funding for GO Wales would be the Youth Attainment Priority because only those under the age of 25 years at the start of their intervention would be eligible for support.
- Improving the skills levels of companies could be achieved by improving the skills of employees, or through creating opportunities for highly skilled graduates within companies. However, there is no obvious fit between the latter approach and the specific priorities in the Operational Programmes.
- HEFCW had been investigating a range of pathways to try to keep the effective aspects of the current model going, but it looked as though this was going to be problematic, given current WEFO funding priorities;
- HEFCW were keen to pursue with WEFO the possibility that structural funding could be used in some way to support the use of Erasmus Plus funding for work placements. ECTARC had successfully built a consortium of HEIs to make an application to the managing agent (British Council) for funding and the outcome should be known in June, after which HEFCW could undertake further discussions with WEFO.
- Employability was a priority for the NUS in the coming year.

5.3 Resolved:

- i) *HEFCW would take the advice of Members into consideration when developing its proposals;*
- ii) *NUS Wales would provide an update on the NUS priority of employability at the next meeting.*

6. Enhancing Learning & Teaching through Technology Strategy Review

6.1 This paper provided the draft refreshed strategy for Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology (ELTT), for discussion.

6.2 Members noted the following:

- The focus on the student experience was appropriate, including the shift from the student learning experience, to the student experience more broadly;
- There was a query regarding whether there should be a reference to blended learning;

- Academic and professional development of staff was a priority and it was helpful to have this as a major focus in the strategy;
- It would be helpful to reference the need for identification of the parameters of social media use by both staff and students, including managing staff and student expectations.

6.3 HEFCW thanked those who had participated in the review group, which had held one meeting and then subsequently communicated electronically.

6.4 Resolved:

- i) *to take account of advice of Members in finalising the ELTT strategy.*

7. Equality & Diversity: Annual Report & Future Developments

7.1 This paper provided an update on HEFCW's 2012/13 equality-related work and invited SETQC to advise on future planning and development.

7.2 Members made the following points in relation to objective 6, improving the diversity of governing bodies in Wales and within HEFCW;

- Wales appeared to be performing better than other parts of the UK in relation to this. However, further work was required to scope the position in the sector;
- In FE it was considered good practice for the governing bodies to have an appropriate gender balance;
- The ECU could scrutinise types of appointments, and the bodies involved in making the appointments, to see whether good practice could be identified;
- The ECU had carried out work with the Committee of University Chairs on the responsibilities of governing bodies in relation to equality and diversity, providing guidance, case studies and resources;
- HEFCW could follow the practice of HEFCE in including questions on the appointments of governing bodies in its annual monitoring;
- Institutions could consider building the appointment of governors into their strategic equality plans;
- Effecting cultural change could take a number of years, in terms of encouraging a diversity of candidates to apply for positions;

7.3 Members made the following points in relation to objective 8, exploring the barriers for, and potential ways of improving the recruitment to HE provision of, young, white males from lower socio-economic backgrounds;

- It would be helpful to consider the promotion of a range of routes to HE for this group;
- Information, advice and guidance at school was key in relation to this, as was early promotion of the ethos of engaging with studying;
- Universities and students unions could, in partnership, send students to schools as ambassadors to promote HE;
- HEFCW should follow up with the University of South Wales regarding engagement with this group living and working in the Universities of the Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI) area;

- There was a query regarding the extent to which vocational and academic education was separated, and whether the aim should be to get this group to engage in either type of education, rather than solely the academic. NUS Wales was also keen to see a more fluid definition than is currently used by student advisors in schools, including transition from FE to HE.
- The Open University would examine its data on the gender profile of its students.

7.4 Resolved:

- i) *to consider the advice of Members and take it forward as appropriate;*
- ii) *HEFCW would follow up with the University of South Wales on its progress in recruiting young, white males from lower social-economic backgrounds in UHOVI.*

8. Quality Assessment and Enhancement Sub Group minutes

8.1 This item provided the minutes of the February 2014 meeting of HEFCW's Quality Assessment and Enhancement Sub-Group (QAESG).

8.2 Members noted the following:

- Item 5.3 of the minutes referred to additional action with regard to ITT outcomes, as action had already been taken;
- Item 7.4 noted the Wise Wales partnership conference, which would take place in summer 2014;
- QAESG had suggested some measures for assessing an excellent learning and teaching environment, which included involvement in the UK Professional Standards Framework, the number of National Teaching Fellows, employability rate of graduates, recruitment of international students, and QAA's recognition by the European Association for Quality Assurance in higher education;
- Item 8 referred to the number of complaints made to the OIA, rather than those which were successful.

8.3 Resolved:

- i) *to note the minutes of the February 2014 meeting of QAESG.*

9. Effectiveness review and terms of office

9.1 This paper provided the details of full effectiveness review and terms of office of SETQC Members. This was being considered as an agenda item rather than electronically.

9.2 Members noted that the new Chair of Council would want to carry out a review of HEFCW's Committees, including SETQC, which was established in 2010 following the amalgamation of three committees into one, which accounted for its size and breadth of remit.

9.3 Officers left the room for the discussion.

9.4 Concerns expressed by committee members and observers included:

- the suitability of the meeting room for a large committee;

- the volume of papers to read and business to deal with within the current time constraints, although members acknowledged that there were now fewer papers for meetings than had previously been the case;
- the extent of formal feedback to and from Council.

9.5 Commendations of the committee's operations included:

- the breadth of expertise and experience by committee members which enabled strategic discussions on the broader student experience;
- the opportunity to focus on particular developments and assess their contributions to good practice;
- the chairing of the committee.

9.6 Suggestions for the future included:

- extending the task and finish group approach to deal with topics which required more in-depth analysis than allowed for within the usual committee timings. The deliberations could then be fed back to the full committee;
- inviting panels of people (e.g. employers, teachers, student leaders) to address the committee on specific areas impacting on the HE experience and curriculum (e.g. schools qualifications and curriculum) and how these areas might be addressed/improved.

9.7 It was recognised that the role of HEFCW would change in response to the HE Bill, and this would impact on the role of Committees.

9.8 Resolved:

- i) *The Chair would circulate a copy of the discussion notes to all Members and observers and invite further comments and reflections;*
- ii) *Council would take account of the views of Members in the review of Committees.*

10. Any other business

10.1 There was no further business.

11. Date of next meetings

11.1 1 October 2014.

12. Unconfirmed minutes of the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee meeting of 3 April 2014

12.1 This paper presented the unconfirmed minutes of the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee meeting of 3 April 2014, and was available via the Extranet.

12.2 Resolved to:

- i) *Note the unconfirmed minutes of the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee meeting of 3 April 2014.*

13. Have Your Say Report 2012/13

13.1 This paper presented the Have Your Say Report for 2012/13, and was available via the Extranet.

13.2 Resolved to:

i) Note the Have Your Say Report for 2012/13