

Meeting  
19/09/07

Agenda Item  
8

Reference No  
HEFCW/07/68

---

## **1 Issue**

This paper updates the Council on a number of issues relating to Welsh medium provision and seeks agreement to some specific actions.

## **2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper**

The 2007-10 Corporate Strategy and Corporate & Operational Plan states that: "Particular support is given to maintaining and developing Welsh medium provision, through both institutional funding and support for the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre. We will be working with the sector to establish a new strategic framework and development plan for Welsh medium provision"; and notes planned actions to achieve this.

## **3 Recommendations**

The Council is invited to:

- i. receive formally the constitution for the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre;
- ii. agree in principle to continue the core grant to the Centre until the end of the 2010/11 academic year;
- iii. agree that
  - a. the existing allocation method for the Welsh Medium Provision Fund is continued for 2007/08 as set out in Circular W07/25 HE;
  - b. a decision on the allocation method for 2008/09 is deferred to February 2008;
- iv. note the transfer of £78,398 from the Welsh Medium Provision Fund for 2006/07 to 2007/08.

## **4 Timing for decisions**

Decisions at this meeting on:

- the Welsh Medium Provision Fund will enable its use to support the implementation of the national development plan during 2007/08;
- core funding for the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre will facilitate its longer term planning in support of the sector strategic framework for Welsh medium provision.

**5 Council members' interests**

No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

**6 Further information**

contact Alison Allan (Tel 029 2068 2223; E-mail: [alison.allan@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:alison.allan@hefcw.ac.uk))

## **7 Background**

- 7.1 In November 2006, following an independent options appraisal undertaken on behalf of the sector, HEIs in Wales committed, through HEW, to the establishment of a sector strategic framework, including a national development plan for Welsh medium provision. A new Welsh Medium Higher Education Sector Group (WM HESG) was set up, with senior management representation from each HEI. The Group has met four times since February, and has agreed an initial development plan. Professor Robin Williams has agreed to chair the Group from August 2007, succeeding Professor Hazel Walford Davies who acted as interim chair. HEW is liaising with the Welsh Assembly Government on a formal launch of the framework and plan in November 2007.
- 7.2 The strategic framework included an enhanced role for the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre in supporting the implementation of the development plan. HEFCW supports the Centre through a core grant and Reconfiguration and Collaboration funding. Under the new framework HEIs wanted the Centre to be transferred to sector “ownership” under a consortium agreement, rather than under the auspices of the University of Wales as hitherto.
- 7.3 The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning requested in the Council's 2006/07 remit letter that we submit advice to the Assembly Government in the light of the outcomes of the options appraisal. This was submitted in two stages in January and June 2007. (Council papers in December 2006 and May and June 2007 refer). We received an interim response in March, authorising the use of Reconfiguration and Collaboration funding to provide support for the majority of staffing requirements and infrastructure of the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre. We have not yet received a response to the remaining aspects of our advice which included continuing support for the Welsh Medium Postgraduate Scholarship and Teaching Fellowship Schemes, investment in the development of provision and budgets for the Centre to support in particular the marketing and staff development aspects of the national development plan.
- 7.4 The Council has made a Welsh Medium Provision Development Fund available for a number of years (£325K in 2006/07). The most recent arrangements for the Fund, introduced in 2003/04, include a number of elements: direct allocations to the larger providers of Welsh medium provision; the opportunity for other institutions to bid to the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre; some additional payments based on increases in enrolments. Any balance is added to the Centre's general development funding. In the light of the new framework and development plan, we informed the Council in May of our intention to consult through the WM HESG on the future use of the Fund.

## **8 Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre**

- 8.1 The transfer of the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre to sector ownership was achieved to the timescale of 1 August 2007 agreed between

HEW and the University of Wales. HEW prepared a constitution for the Centre in consultation with HEFCW. The heads of all HEIs signed the constitution document before 1 August to enable the transfer to take place. The University of Wales has indicated that it will become a signatory to the constitution once the new Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive is in post. HEW would like the Council to receive the constitution formally (attached at Annex A).

- 8.2 Trinity College Carmarthen is acting as host institution for the Centre on behalf of the sector. We have written to Trinity detailing the funding for the Centre from HEFCW for 2007/08.
- 8.3 The vast majority of the funding for the Centre is provided through the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund. However, there remains a core grant (which the Council has paid since the establishment of the Centre in 2000) which primarily covers the salary of the Director and some infrastructure support.
- 8.4 The Council has agreed the payment of the core grant until the end of the 2007/08 academic year. We would recommend that the Council confirm in principle the continuation of the core grant to 2010/11, to cover the same period as the Reconfiguration and Collaboration funding. As well as securing the Director post, this will facilitate the Centre's longer-term planning. The grant for 2007/08 is £60,877 and is uprated each year in line with the overall uplift to the teaching grant.

***The Council is invited to:***

- i) receive formally the constitution for the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre;***
- ii) agree in principle to continue the core grant to the Centre until the end of the 2010/11 academic year.***

## **9 Welsh Medium Provision Development Fund**

- 9.1 We put proposals on the future use of the Fund to the WM HESG in June 2007, focusing on key criteria to support the development plan. The proposals included phasing out the direct allocations to individual institutions over a two-year period, so that the Fund would be allocated against an agreed development programme.
- 9.2 The proposal to withdraw the direct allocations caused grave concern amongst the three largest providers of Welsh medium provision, Aberystwyth University, Bangor University and Trinity College Carmarthen. In the light of this, we then conducted a formal consultation with the sector. This included an alternative approach: continuing with the present allocation method for a year which would give the providers concerned time to plan for the change.
- 9.3 A summary of the consultation responses is attached at Annex B. These demonstrate that there is still major concern amongst the three main Welsh medium providers, Aberystwyth, Bangor and Trinity, that removing their direct allocations, under either approach, would seriously undermine recent progress and the plans which they have put in place to develop Welsh medium provision.

- 9.4 The WM HESG has made considerable progress in its first few months, with members seriously engaging with the issues to be addressed. Aberystwyth, Bangor and Trinity are crucial to the success of the network. It would be unfortunate if the progress made to date was adversely affected at this early stage by the anxieties of these three institutions.
- 9.5 We propose therefore that
- we continue the present allocation method for 2007/08 as set out in the consultation document. The Council has previously agreed that £390K be made available in 2007/08. An allocation table is at Annex C.
  - we confirm to the sector our strong commitment to using the Development Fund in ways that are consistent with and support the national development plan, but defer a decision on precise arrangements for 2008/09 onwards until the 1 February 2008 Council meeting. A decision at this time will fit in with the institutions' planning cycles for Welsh medium development which they have indicated to us begin in March.
- 9.6 Deferring the decision will give us an opportunity to have some practical experience of drawing together institutional and collaborative proposals into a coherent development programme and for the WM HESG to have an opportunity to discuss the consultation responses at its next meeting in November. By the new year, we would also hope that we will have received a response from the Assembly Government to our advice and therefore a clearer understanding of the overall Welsh medium funding position from 2008/09.
- 9.7 At the same time, we need to signal clearly to the sector that the Development Fund is henceforth to be deployed within the framework of the national development plan. It would be a poor use of public funds for us to offer development funds on any other basis, and the institutions that are currently the main beneficiaries will need to appreciate this point clearly. That said, we can also expect them, because of the weight of their contribution to overall Welsh medium activities, to continue to be major beneficiaries of the funding but, henceforth, in ways that are coherently related to the national development plan.
- 9.8 **2006/07 Fund:** Some of the 2006/07 Fund has not yet been allocated as there is an opportunity to bring some of the proposals into the plans for subjects identified by the WM HESG for collaborative developments. The Chief Executive has therefore agreed that this sum, totalling £78,398, can be added to funding for 2007/08.

***The Council is invited to:***

- i) agree that***
  - a) the existing allocation method for the Welsh Medium Provision Fund is continued for 2007/08 as set out in Circular W07/25 HE;***
  - b) a decision on the allocation method for 2008/09 is deferred to February 2008;***
- ii) note the transfer of £78,398 from the Welsh Medium Provision Fund for 2006/07 to 2007/08.***

## 10 Financial implications

The paper commits the Council in principle to the payment of core grant to the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre to 2010/11. The grant (£60,877 in 2007/08) will be updated each year in line with the uplift to the teaching grant. The Welsh Medium Provision Fund budget for 2007/08 has already been approved by the Council. £390K of this will be available to support the provision development section of the national development plan in 2007/08. The paper also notes the transfer of £78,398 from the 2006/07 budget to 2007/08.

## 11 Communications implications

Subject to the Council's approval, we will inform the sector of the outcome of the consultation on the Welsh Medium Provision Development Fund and the Council's decision. The consultation outcome will also be discussed at the next meeting of the WM HESG. It will be important for us to make clear that the Council is committed to supporting the new Welsh medium strategic framework and development plan and is seeking to use its funding to best effect to achieve this. There has already been some negative comment in the Welsh language press over the summer that HEFCW is taking funding from the three main Welsh medium providers. (This was based on some misunderstanding and in one of the articles which appeared in Golwg we were given the opportunity to comment.)

## 12 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

The issues discussed in the paper are crucial to the Council's policies on supporting Welsh medium provision in the sector. Widening access to HE in the context of Welsh medium provision will be included within the national development plan.

## 13 Risk Assessment

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
<p><i>Assembly target for Welsh medium HE enrolments.</i> We have always recognised this as a very challenging target, with limited progress made to date.</p> <p>If we are unable to secure sufficient engagement from the sector with the Welsh medium agenda, this will adversely affect our ability to meet the target.</p>	<p>The agreement by the sector to the new strategic framework, and which HEFCW has supported, is a major step forward in the commitment to strengthen Welsh medium provision.</p> <p>We will continue to work with the WM HESG, HEW and the Welsh Medium Teaching Centre to help ensure that the new framework becomes embedded and is able to achieve its aims.</p>

<p>Progress achieved in the WM HESG to date could be undermined if we are not able to achieve consensus on the use of the Welsh Medium Provision Fund.</p>	<p>Through the actions on the Welsh Medium Provision Development Fund outlined in the paper.</p> <p>We will also stress to the sector HEFCW's commitment to the strategic framework and its wish to ensure that available resources are used to best effect to support the framework.</p>
<p>If additional funding is not forthcoming from the Welsh Assembly Government, then this will seriously impact on our capacity to support the strategic framework and make progress against the target. It will also risk endangering the commitment of institutional heads as well as goodwill which has been built up with many staff in the sector.</p>	<p>We will maintain close contact with Assembly Government officials on funding requirements, as well as emphasising the need for longer-term sustainability.</p> <p>If additional funding is not available, particularly in the immediate term, then we will need to work with the sector to determine what can be achieved with existing resources.</p>