

**Minutes of the first joint meeting of the HEFCW Learning and Teaching and Third Mission Committees, held on Friday, 9 March 2007 at the HEFCW Offices, Llanishen**

**Present:**

**Members:** Dr Len Arthur (HEFCW Council Member/3MC Chair)  
Prof Philip Gummatt (HEFCW Council Member/LTC Chair)  
Judith Cole (Welsh Assembly Government)(3MC)  
Dr Heather Graham (Open University)(WAC)  
Pat Jones (Welsh Assembly Government)(3MC)  
Julie Lydon (University of Glamorgan/South East Wales Reaching Wider Partnership)(WAC)  
Amelia Lyons (UW Newport)(LTC)  
David McParlin (UW Aberystwyth)(LTC)  
Dr Carl Peters (Universities Council for the Education of Teachers Cymru)(LTC)  
Michelle Sayers (Skills for Business Network Wales (LTC)  
Dr Colin Trotman (UW Swansea)(WAC)  
Karen Turnbull (Welsh Industrial Liaison Officers Network)(WILOs)(3MC)  
Alyson Twyman (Welsh Higher Education Careers Services)(WHECS) (3MC/LTC)  
Mr Iain Willox (Welsh Assembly Government)(3MC)

**Observers:** Dr Julian Ellis (Quality Assurance Agency)(QAA)(LTC)  
Amanda Wilkinson (Higher Education Wales)(LTC)  
Jackie Brown (Welsh Assembly Government)(LTC)  
Prof Howard Colley (Higher Education Academy)(HEA)(LTC)  
Mr Steve Outram (HEA)(LTC)  
Gavin Thomas (Fforwm)(LTC)

**Officers:** Roger Carter (Head of Economic Development)  
Teresa Cooper (Secretary, 3MC)  
Jackie Cresswell-Griffiths  
Celia Hunt (Head of Learning and Teaching)  
Dr Tove Oliver  
Dr Cliona O'Neill (Secretary, LTC)  
Dr Alyson Thomas  
Rachel Waters

**Apologies:** Elaine Allinson (LTC), Prof David Brooksbank (3MC), Dr Virginia Chambers (3MC) Becky Church (LTC), David Craddock (3MC), Prof Richard Davies (3MC), Jacqui Hare (LTC), Dr Rob Humphreys (WAC), Meri Huws (WAC), Eur Ing Helen James (WAC), Gabriel Jezierski (LTC), Dr Ioan Matthews (LTC), Dr Drew Nelson (3MC), Prof Tony Hazell (LTC), Prof Robert Pearce (LTC), Prof Teresa Rees (WAC), Bryan Reid (3MC), Richard Rossington (3MC), Sian Taylor (LTC), Nigel Thomas (3MC), Bob Waller (3MC).

**1 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

1.1 Dr Arthur welcomed attendees to the first joint meeting of the HEFCW Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and Third Mission Committee (3MC). . It was intended that a similar joint meeting would be held annually. He noted that members of the HEFCW Widening Access Committee (WAC) had also been invited on this occasion because of

the relevant agenda. Dr Arthur confirmed that a note of the meeting's conclusions would be shared with the full Council on 23 March.

## **2 THE WEBB REVIEW OF FURTHER EDUCATION**

- 2.1 Peter McAllister, currently Head of FE and Training Bill and FE Review Team (Head of Learning Policy), Welsh Assembly Government, introduced the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales (the Webb Review). He outlined the membership of the Panel, chaired by Sir Adrian Webb; the nature of an independent review; the Review terms of reference and process; and the timetable for reporting. He noted that the Review would be holistic in its approach, looking at education from 14 onwards, including work based learning, vocational programmes and the progression to higher education. It was due to report in autumn 2007. It would be the Assembly Government's responsibility thereafter to finalise its policies in response, although Mr McAllister confirmed that there was a possibility of further consultation on delivery arrangements in the Autumn.

## **3 THE LEITCH REVIEW OF SKILLS**

- 3.1 Barbara Morris, Head of Sector Skills Policy Branch, Skills Business and Employability Division, Welsh Assembly Government, introduced the Leitch Review of Skills and noted the key findings and recommendations. The UK Government had commissioned Sandy Leitch in 2004 to undertake an independent review of the UK's long term skills needs. Lord Leitch's final report had been published in December 2006. Although a UK report, a number of recommendations related specifically to the English context. Ms Morris noted that the recommendations included the need to strengthen the employers' voice, and particularly the use of SSCs (reformed and relicensed) in doing so. The Welsh Assembly Government would be responding to the Review in autumn 2007, taking into account Wales-specific activities, including the Webb Review. One of the key recommendations, regarding the establishment of a new UK Commission for Employment and Skills, had already been agreed by the Welsh Assembly Government and other UK devolved administrations and the post of Chairman advertised. The Commission will have a Welsh Board, led by a Welsh Commissioner.

## **4 DISCUSSION OUTCOMES**

- 4.1 Prof Gummett thanked Peter McAllister and Barbara Morris for their helpful presentations. He asked for members' views to contribute to the Council's response to both reviews. The following points were made in discussion:
- The comparison made by Leitch between the number of graduates in the UK and those in India and China did not take account of population size. Nevertheless, the UK did not perform well against OECD comparators, particularly in terms of numbers of graduates.
  - An employer demand-led education system would need to be responsive to future technology and innovation. That is, it would need to cover multiple timescales.
  - The concept of employer-led provision needs to be balanced against that of individual demand.
  - The role of Sector Skills Councils in expressing employer demand, defining gaps, identifying skills/foresight for inward investment, etc, needs further exploration, including by SSCs themselves.
  - Given current demographic projections of young people, the adult learner market and those already in the workplace would be crucial to meeting Leitch's ambitions for higher level skills attainment, but don't assume demographic trends in Wales will mirror the rest of the UK (there may also be more volatility in this respect in Wales, given the small population base).
  - Employers will be important stakeholders in supporting workbased learning. HEIs need to be highly flexible in the format of provision to respond to this market, including part-time and work-based learning and the future of FE-HE progression will revolve around this.
  - The number of young inward migrants to the UK was noted as a potential source of future applicants. Further work is required to explore the extent of this demand.

- The Leitch recommendation regarding a voluntary skills pledge (8.19) for level 2 will take some time to implement comprehensively so that a review in 2010 might be too early to assess results.
- Price rather than skills motivates many employers. Compulsory levies will increase the cost base for employers, which could drive them out of Wales and the UK in general. (However, there are also examples where upskilling in the Welsh workforce has helped to save jobs from withdrawal to overseas, eg Airbus and Schaeffer.)
- There is a difference between a voluntary pledge, an entitlement and a levy. Funding support will be provided (as in the Train to Gain initiative in England, although not sure if this scheme would be transferable to Wales) to assist employers in making training available and meeting the level 2 pledge.
- Various Welsh skills initiatives such as the revised National Curriculum in Wales, which focuses on skills development, and the Basic Skills Strategy, have not been identified. Connections need to be made between these different skills initiatives.
- Ministerial pronouncements regarding skills as 'employer-led, sector specific and economically relevant' require further development, not least to reach a coherent view of priority sectors.
- Some sectors, such as the performing arts, do not have 'employers' in the traditional sense. More generally, self-employed workers could easily be missed from these initiatives. It was queried how SSCs would identify this demand as they operate at the sector, not individual employer, level.
- Given resource constraints, SSCs would prefer to work at a generic level, collating market intelligence data, working with representative bodies and, where possible, gaining the views of individual employers.
- Whilst Careers Wales is an all-age careers guidance service, the knowledge base required to achieve this is very wide. WHECS provides specialist careers advice for graduates but receives no WAG funding to do so. Perhaps the Leitch debate provides an opportunity to reconsider this position.
- It is important to recognise the need for upskilling for those not in education or employment. Widening access to education is an important part of the Leitch agenda and economic inactivity a key issue, especially in Wales. An evolution in how we view part-time provision will be crucial here as well.

4.2 Prof Gummatt drew members' attention to the HEFCW principles paper and invited members to identify gaps or omissions. The following points were made in discussion:

- The paper was rather too focussed on traditional forms of HE. Whilst sandwich degrees have been a key area of engagement between HE and employers, we need new ways of supporting employers, especially through workbased learning. The point about lead-in times for development was crucial.
- Careers Wales and other careers guidance services could act in a brokerage role, with an emphasis on progression through education sectors.
- The paper considers only HEI/FEI provision, but this is a wider agenda which includes private providers and work-based learning environments, etc.
- Efficiency and simplicity were key aspects, in a context of funding differences and debates about new criteria. It was important that there was no duplication in qualifications frameworks between the HE framework, national occupational standards and those implemented by professional bodies.
- To achieve this there would be a need for joint working, eg between Skills for Business and HEFCW/HEIs. This would include partnership working; data collection and pooling, eg on employer engagement and also on work-based learning national training. It was suggested that discussions take place between HEFCW and the Skills for Business Network to achieve a common understanding.
- The section on quality focussed on foundation degrees. It was important that the quality and standards of HE provision generally was highlighted. Foundation Degrees are already offered in Wales.
- A key assumption was that every time you changed jobs you would need to learn new skills. It would be important to re-emphasise the concept of 'graduateness', which included an ability to transfer skills rather than constant re-training (although some specific training might be required).

- Capacity building was important between FE/HE/SSCs and in some sectors, private training providers and industry advisory bodies.
- Employers are looking for small, bite-sized chunks, building on other provision and driven by the market. We need an understanding of the market, with government paying the costs of development and delivery funded by employers (if the product is right). Some current developments (eg the new Printing and Coating Masters degree at Swansea) might show a way forward.
- We need to encourage HEIs to recognise the change in skills requirements which future entrants to HE might bring.

## **5 CLOSING REMARKS**

- 5.1 Dr Arthur noted the opportunities presented by the Graham Review and forthcoming funding to address particularly the part-time market. He drew attention to the way in which education and skills were coming together to focus on the learner. He noted that the minutes of the meeting would be received at both committees (and WAC) after they had been to Council and thanked all for their attendance and contributions.