

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg  
Uwch Cymru  
Higher Education Funding  
Council for Wales

hefcw

THIRD MISSION  
COMMITTEE

**MEETING OF THE THIRD MISSION COMMITTEE OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING  
COUNCIL FOR WALES STARTING AT 9.30 AM ON  
12 SEPTEMBER 2008, AT LINDEN COURT, ILEX CLOSE, CARDIFF, CF14 5DZ**

**AGENDA**

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Notes of the last meeting held on 2 May 2008 & any matters arising not covered by the agenda (*attached*)

**Meeting theme – Skills and Employability**

- 3 A Strategic Perspective on the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the *Skills That Work for Wales Consultation* by Jo Banks and Rachel Garside-Jones (see [http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/policy\\_strategy\\_and\\_planning/skillsthatforwales/?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/policy_strategy_and_planning/skillsthatforwales/?lang=en) )
- 4 An operational perspective from the *Food Industry Skills Project* (being funded with HEFCW 3M Fund collaborative monies) by Katherine Davies (UWIC), Helen Taylor (UWIC) and Huw Rees (Improve) [SSC for the food industry].
- 5 HEFCW perspective on current activity (*to follow*). This will include an overview of individual HEI activity in this area drawing on data from HESA, HEBCIS, GO Wales and other available sources.
- 6 Round table discussion in which members will be invited to formulate advice to Council on ways to help promote the sector's contribution to the skills and employability agenda.
- 7 Any other business
- 8 Next Meeting - **Friday, 28 November 9.30 am**

**Unconfirmed Notes of the meeting of the Council's Third Mission Committee held on 12 September 2008 at [Linden Court, Ilex Close, Llanishen, Cardiff, CF14 5DZ**

**Present:**

**Members:**

Dr Len Arthur – HEFCW Council Member (Chair)  
Professor David Brooksbank – UWIC, Cardiff School of Management  
Dr Virginia Chambers – Welsh Assembly Government DE&T  
Mr David Craddock – representing Network of Welsh Industrial Liaison Officers (WILOs)  
Dr Rachel Garside-Jones – Welsh Assembly Government DCELLS  
Dr Grahame Guilford – business representative  
Mr Iain Willox - Welsh Assembly Government DE&T

**Attendees:**

Mr Jo Banks - Welsh Assembly Government DCELLS  
Mrs Katherine Davies - UWIC  
Mr Huw Rees – Improve (SSC for the food industry)  
Ms Helen Taylor - UWIC

**Observers:**

Mr Greg Walker - HEW

**Officers:**

Mr Roger Carter - Head of Research business & Communities  
Ms Teresa Cooper – Senior Economic Development Manager (Secretary)  
Ms Jackie Cresswell-Griffith – GO Wales Programme Manager  
Dr Tove Oliver – Europe and International Manager  
Dr Alyson Thomas - Senior Economic Development Manager

## 1 Introduction and welcome

- 1.1 Dr Arthur welcomed everyone to the meeting of HEFCW's Third Mission Committee. He noted that this meeting would be the first to pilot a themed agenda as discussed and agreed by members at the last meeting. Dr Arthur announced that the purpose of the meeting was to:
- (i) Examine in detail the contribution of higher education (HE) to the skills and employability agenda in Wales, but paying due regard to relevant UK Government and wider international policy developments in this area
  - (ii) Offer advice to Council on enhancing the contribution of Welsh HE to the skills and employability agenda
- 1.2 Before proceeding to business Dr Arthur recorded apologies on behalf of: Ruth Brooks (WHECS representative) Professor Richard Davies (HEW representative); Angela Evans (WAG Chief Social Research Officer); Richard Rossington (DE&T); Dr David Walker (business sector representative); Bob Waller (DCELLS).

## 2 Notes of the meeting date of the Third Mission Committee held on 2 May 2008

- 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as an accurate record.

## 3 Matters arising

### European Commission Directive [Note 15]

- 3.1 The matter raised by Professor Brooksbank at the last meeting had now been largely resolved, but he noted that whilst guidance was now available on the WEFO website, no formal agreement had been reached with WEFO on the final overhead rate to be charged in Wales, and methodologies would need to be agreed with HEIs on a case by case basis. This was likely to contribute to the delay until 2009 of the commencement of most 2007-13 European funded projects.

### HE-SSC Interactions [Note 18]

- 3.2 Copies of this paper would be circulated to members with the draft notes of the meeting.

## 4 A strategic perspective on the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the *Skills That Work for Wales Consultation*

- 4.1 Members received a presentation from Jo Banks and Rachel Garside-Jones on the above. Jo Banks provided a broad overview noting key policy differences between Wales and England and the way in which the consultation response was designed to help deliver *One Wales* commitments. Rachel Garside-Jones concentrated on the elements of the response that

impacted on the higher education (HE) sector, with reference as to how these might impact on the work of the Task and Finish Group established by the Assembly Government under the chairmanship of Professor Merfyn Jones to look at policies for HE in Wales.

- 4.2 The presentation was followed by a general discussion on the response to the *Skills That Work for Wales* consultation, concentrating on the implications for the Welsh HE sector. In summary whilst members welcomed the response, they felt that in some areas there was a lack of ambition and that perhaps opportunities to make a real impact on the skills and employability agenda in Wales had been missed. In particular, members:
- Questioned why Wales had not formally adopted the targets for high level skills set out in the Leitch Review;
  - Raised concerns that Wales was unable to match the increased levels of funding now being put into high level skills initiatives in England and the potential detrimental impact of this on both HEIs and businesses in Wales;
  - Recommended that the proposed review of the STEM (science/technology/engineering /mathematics subjects) supply chain in Wales should take due account of employer perspectives.
  - Following on from the above point, there was concern that links between the science and skills agenda were still not fully recognised by policy makers and it was noted that major (national and international) employers of STEM graduates had begun to express concerns over the skills levels of UK STEM graduates – ie qualifications should not be regarded as a proxy for skills.

## **5 An Operational perspective from the *Food Industry Skills Project***

- 5.1 Members received a presentation on progress with the above project, which was being funded via the collaborative element of HEFCW's Third Mission Fund from Katherine Davies (UWIC), Helen Taylor (UWIC) and Huw Rees (Improve [SSC for the food industry]). Other partners in this project, which was being led by UWIC, were the University of Glamorgan, Aberystwyth University, Coleg Menai and the Food Network Wales.
- 5.2 Members welcomed this as a successful example of an employer driven project that had arisen directly out of HEFCW's "brokering" role in facilitating links between HEIs and SSCs in Wales. The project is aimed at addressing the outcomes of research carried out by Improve, which identified that one in five food industry employers is struggling to fill vacancies for food scientists and technologists. In addition to the "founding" partners listed above, the Committee noted that a further SSC had now engaged with the project, Lantra (SSC for the environmental and land based sectors) plus 15 industry partners (including sector leaders such as Premier Foods, First Milk and Northern Foods). The £250k made available for this three year project was being used to develop and launch industry-specific short courses, a food industry bursary scheme and masters course.

- 5.3 Asked what factors had contributed to the success of this project, the presenters agreed on the following key points:
- Input from an academic with relevant industry experience and an up to date awareness of current industry issues/needs; and
  - The availability of a flexible funding package such as the collaborative HEFCW Third Mission Fund monies without which this project would not have been able to move forward.
- 5.4 Members noted the role played by the Third Mission Fund in facilitating this project and their wish to advise Council to consider making more monies available for collaborative third mission projects should more funding become available.
- 5.5 In relation to the shortage of food scientists and technologists emerging from the UK HE system, Huw Rees also highlighted a need to put the food industry on the *radar* of careers services as a potential career pathway that extended beyond ‘cooking.’

## **6 HEFCW perspective**

- 6.1 Dr Alyson Thomas guided the Committee through a paper which:
- Highlighted current activity by HEFCW around the skills and employment agenda – including: ways in which the Executive was already working with Assembly colleagues in DCELLS and DE&T to determine how best to deliver priority actions for *HE in Skills That Work for Wales*; HEFCW engagement with the UK-wide structures established in the wake of the Leitch Review; HEFCW’s participation in the WAG SSC Stakeholders Group and the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) Task and Finish Group on SSC Relicensing and Performance Assessment and the role of HEFCW’s HE-SSC Communications Group;
  - Drew attention to the European and wider international dimensions of the skills and employability agenda – including the need to ensure that Wales avoids becoming marginalised relative to important changes that are occurring under the Lisbon and Bologna agendas.
  - Provided a snapshot of current performance data and information on the activities of individual HEIs in Wales in relation to this agenda – drawing for example, on latest HEBCIS, HESA and GO Wales data.
- 6.2 In the ensuing discussion members highlighted a need for:
- HEFCW to continue to help embed the skills and employability agenda in institutions’ overall strategic thinking, and not just around their ‘third mission’.
  - HEFCW to consider whether or not the time had come to abandon the third mission soubriquet with its connotations of *third place* or *third best* etc

- HEFCW to take a more proactive role in highlighting and disseminating good practice in this area (as demonstrated by the *Food Industry Skills Project*) via sector seminars, workshops etc;
- HEFCW to encourage HEIs not to spread their resources too thinly – for example, whilst general innovation or enterprise networks might reach more companies/employers, they might deliver less tangible benefits than more focused (sector or industry specific) projects;
- All policy makers in Wales to focus on and make more of those areas in which Welsh HEIs can be regarded as trail-blazers, eg in relation to GO Wales, SSC interactions, high level skills projects previously funded via the Knowledge Exploitation Fund (KEF), which included innovative HE/FE/business sector collaborations that were unique in the UK.
- All policy makers in Wales to guard against an over-prescriptive approach to funding especially in the context of identifying priority sectors in Wales – funding can be facilitative without being prescriptive.

## **7 Any other business**

- 7.1 Professor David Brooksbank drew attention to a new CIHE/NESTA publication on the theme of graduate entrepreneurship and commended it to members. Greg Walker also noted he would bring it to the attention of HEW.

## **8 Date of next meeting**

- 8.1 The next meeting of the Third Mission Committee will take place on 28 November 2008 when the theme of the meeting will be third mission funding. The keynote presentation at this meeting will be provided by Innovas, the consultants appointed by HEFCW to undertake an independent review of its first third mission fund cycle, 2004/05 to 2006/07 and its impact on institutions and their stakeholders.