

Meeting	Agenda Item	Reference No
26/09/08	10	HEFCW/08/59

1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper presents for discussion a HEFCW consultation on the Institutional Review: Wales (IR) process to be used by the QAA in reviewing Welsh Higher Education Institutions from 2009/10.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 HEFCW has a statutory obligation under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities we provide, or are considering providing, financial support. We achieve this through the IR.

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
- i. Discuss the consultation on the IR to be used from 2009/10
 - ii. Identify issues for officers to take into account in considering the outcomes of the consultation

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 The discussion is required now as the circular has been published for consultation. We need to provide the QAA with our recommendations following the December 2008 meeting of Council.

5 Council members' interests

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

6 Further information

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7 Background

- 7.1 The current six year IR cycle, operated by the QAA, is coming to an end and therefore we have been considering the process to be used from 2009/10. The new process must enable us to meet our statutory obligation under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities we provide, or are considering providing, financial support.
- 7.2 Earlier this year we commissioned Nigel Brown Associates (NBA) to evaluate the previous arrangements and inform our approach to quality enhancement. Council approved expenditure of funding from the learning and teaching fund for this at its October 2007 meeting (item HEFCW/07/92 refers). We also established a Quality Working Group (QWG) to advise us on the establishment of new quality assurance and enhancement arrangements for Wales.

8 The IR from 2009/10

- 8.1 **Annex A** provides the consultation on the IR methodology proposed from 2009/10 which was published in September 2008.
- 8.2 The principal changes proposed to the current process are:
- the adoption of a rolling programme, rather than a set cycle, in order to enable changes to be introduced to the methodology as appropriate, to take account of developments in other countries of the UK, Europe and internationally;
 - The adoption of a more risk-based approach, with institutions that received an outcome judgement of limited or no confidence in their previous review, being reviewed after no more than four years, compared to six years for institutions which received an outcome judgement of confidence;
 - Increased emphasis on quality enhancement;
 - Inclusion of a student as a full member of the review team.
- 8.3 The full list of changes is detailed in the circular. Responses are due by 14 November 2008 and will be considered by the Quality Working Group.
- 8.4 A further paper will be brought to the December 2008 Council meeting on the outcomes of the consultation. Following this meeting, we will provide our recommendations to the Quality Assurance Agency, who will develop an operational description for the new process.

The Council is invited to:

- (i) Discuss the consultation on the IR to be used from 2009/10***
- (ii) Identify issues for officers to take into account in considering the outcomes of the consultation***

9 Financial implications

- 9.1 Since the establishment of the QAA in 1997, HEFCW has operated an annual SLA with the Agency. Through this agreement, we have been able to meet our statutory remit to ensure that assessment is made of the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities we provide, or are considering providing, financial support.
- 9.2 From 2003/04 a Memorandum of Understanding was operated between HEFCW, HEW and the QAA to provide a framework for working relationships, with the aim of ensuring efficient and effective cooperation in relation to the new Institutional Review (IR) process for Wales and confirming the scope of activities to be undertaken in Wales. Based on this, a SLA was then drawn up between the QAA, HEFCW and HEW covering the period 2006/07 to the end of the review cycle (2008/09).
- 9.3 The QAA is funded by subscriptions from institutions and funding bodies. Institutions pay a standard amount, agreed UK-wide. The funding bodies pay the balance of the cost of the services delivered by the QAA in each country. The cost to HEFCW in 2008/09 is £214,329.

10 Communications implications

- 10.1 There is likely to be some publicity around the development of the new methodology. The proposal for a rolling programme is innovative and allows Wales to keep up with developments elsewhere. England will soon be consulting on the development of a new institutional audit method, so there may be some publicity surrounding differences in the proposed methodologies. Adoption of a rolling programme will enable Wales to adopt any features from the English method deemed appropriate.

11 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 11.1 QAA is required, under the terms and conditions of the SLA, to have an appropriate equal opportunities policy and take account of the requirements of the HEFCW Equality Schemes, seeking opportunities to promote equality in line with the requirements placed on the UK funding councils.
- 11.2 It is also required to meet the requirements of its own, HEIs' and the HEFCW Welsh Language Schemes, including ensuring that it establishes and maintains an appropriate organisational capacity in the Welsh language.

12 Risk Assessment

- 12.1 Risks identified are as follows:

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
Sector does not want to adopt	Details of the reasons for the proposed

new methodology	changes are included in the consultation. QWG was formed to discuss and agree the proposed changes. We are holding a consultation event in October to consult the sector on the changes, which will allow opportunity for more detailed discussion with individuals.
England adopts a more radical audit method than is agreed in Wales	The proposal for a rolling programme will enable change of the IR process to be managed on an ongoing basis