

Meeting
23/10/09

Agenda Item
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Reference No
HEFCW/09/94

1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper provides details on the publication of the handbook for institutional review in Wales from 2009/10 for the information of Council.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 We operate a service level agreement with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Higher Education Wales (HEW). Through this agreement, which includes operation of the institutional review: Wales process, we have been able to meet our statutory remit under the further and higher education act, 1992, to 'secure that assessment is made of the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities it provides, or is considering providing, financial support'.

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The Council is invited to note the publication of the handbook for institutional review: Wales (second edition), to run from 2009/10.

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 There are no timing implications for this item.

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 Institutional Review: Wales (IR) forms part of the quality assurance (QA) arrangements for Wales which enable HEFCW to meet its statutory responsibilities, and to satisfy the public interest in knowing that higher education institutions (HEIs) in Wales provide awards and qualifications of acceptable quality and appropriate academic standards.
- 7.2 We invited HEIs, further education institutions (FEIs) with franchise and/or directly funded HE provision, representatives of students and other interested parties and stakeholders to give their views on our suggestions for the revised process detailed in Circular W08/31HE: Institutional Review: Wales from 2009/10). These were developed with the assistance of our Quality Working Group (QWG).
- 7.3 We held a consultation event for HEIs, FEIs, students and stakeholders on 21 October 2008. We also attended a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)/National Union of Students Wales student engagement event on 14 November 2008 to gain the student perspective on the development of the new process. Following this, the QWG considered revised recommendations for the new process in its November 2008 meeting.
- 7.4 The December 2008 meeting of Council received information on the outcomes of the consultation on the Institutional Review: Wales from 2009/10 (item HEFCW/08/91 refers). Members resolved to approve the recommendations from HEFCW to the QAA regarding the Institutional Review: Wales from 2009/10 and to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to approve submission of the amended document to the QAA.
- 7.5 The recommendations were then provided to the QAA in December 2008, and were published as Circular W09/01HE1.
- 7.6 The QAA considered these principles and developed a draft handbook which was discussed by the QWG.

8 Institutional Review: Wales handbook

- 8.1 The QAA published the handbook for the institutional review: Wales from 2009/10 for consultation in May 2009². The draft was discussed by the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee at its June 2009 meeting.
- 8.2 The QAA considered the outcomes of the consultation with the QWG at its July 2009 meeting. The tone of the responses was generally positive, and the majority of comments raised were about the benefit of further clarification in defining collaborative provision and the role of the institutional facilitator. In addition, there were some specific comments, including regarding the proposals for an annual student statement and the student submission.
- 8.3 The final version of the second edition of the institutional review: Wales handbook was published in October 2009³.

¹http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/Publications/circulars_5618.htm

²<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/circularLetters/CL0609.asp>

³<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reviewWales/feedback.asp>

9 Financial implications

- 9.1 The QAA is funded by the funding councils and by subscriptions from institutions. The annual payment from HEFCW to the QAA is included within the learning and teaching fund. The cost to HEFCW for 2009/10 is £140,521.

10 Communications implications

- 10.1 There is press interest in the outcomes of reviews for individual institutions and their partners.

11 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 11.1 The QAA is required, under the terms and conditions of the service level agreement, 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.
- 11.3 The new methodology includes permitting the student submission to be provided in forms other than written, to take account of students with disabilities. The submission provides the view of students, which can cover equalities issues identified by students.

12 Risk Assessment

- 12.1 Risks associated with the issues raised in this paper are identified below:

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
If the QAA were not to be funded the Council would be inhibited in meeting its statutory remit to 'secure that assessment is made of the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities it provides, or is considering providing, financial support'.	Provision of funding to the QAA; discussion with the QAA regarding minimisation of costs.
Institutional review: Wales process is not sufficiently robust to enable HEFCW to meet its statutory requirements.	Introduction of a rolling process to allow changes to be made to the process as and when appropriate; officers and the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee keeping a watching brief on quality developments in the rest of the UK and in Wales to ensure we meet our statutory responsibilities.

