

Meeting  
03/07/09

Agenda Item  
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Reference No  
HEFCW/09/52

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## 1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper seeks initial Council responses to the Review of Higher Education in Wales Phase 2 Report (the Jones Report) and the associated ministerial response.

## 2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 The Jones report, and the associated ministerial response, will form the backdrop to the establishment of a new policy for higher education in Wales, replacing *Reaching Higher*. As such, the Council will be required to ensure that its future strategic plans respond to the agenda. The report, therefore, has significant implications for corporate planning.

## 3 Recommendation

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
- i. Offer early views on the Jones Phase 2 report, and the government response, and to provide initial steers in informing the production of the next corporate plan.

## 4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 Initial responses of the Council to the report are required in this meeting in order to provide steers for the development of the Corporate Strategy for 2010-11 onwards.

## 5 Council members' interests

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

## 6 Further information

contact David Blaney (Tel 029 2068 2221; E-mail: [david.blaney@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:david.blaney@hefcw.ac.uk))

## **7 Background**

- 7.1 Council members will be aware of the review of higher education in Wales which was commissioned by the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and chaired by Professor Merfyn Jones, Vice Chancellor of Bangor University. The first phase of the review was published in the Autumn of 2008 and recommended changes to the student support regime operating in Wales. Council has already considered that report.
- 7.2 The second phase report, which is attached to this paper, was submitted to the Minister in April, 2009. At the time of writing, it is understood that the report is to be published by the Welsh Assembly Government on 22 June, with a statement by the Minister to be made in a plenary session of the National Assembly on 23 June.

## **8 Response to the Report**

- 8.1 As indicated above, the Minister is due to make a statement responding to the report in plenary session on 23 June. At the time of writing, we do not have details of the likely content of the Minister's statement, but an update on her comments will be provided at the meeting including, if available from WAG, a transcript of her statement. The statement is expected to be key in setting the government priorities for higher education to which the Council will have to respond.
- 8.2 In addition to the above statement, the Minister is also scheduled to appear before the National Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee on the afternoon of 2 July, as are the Chair and the Chief Executive of HEFCW as well as Higher Education Wales. Further information on the discussion at the Committee will be made available to members at the Council meeting.
- 8.3 At the time of writing, it is not yet clear what the WAG response to the report will be. Neither is it clear what process might be followed by both WAG and HEFCW in responding more fully to the Minister's statement. We can expect, though, our next remit letter to reflect the Minister's response to Jones and we will have to respond ourselves in our next corporate plan. The opportunity is being taken in this meeting, on the basis of the attached report and any further information which might be available by the meeting, to seek the early views of Council to the report, and the government response and to provide initial steers in informing the production of the corporate plan.

***Council is invited to offer early views on the Jones Phase 2 report, and the government response, and to provide initial steers in informing the production of the next corporate plan.***

## **9 Financial implications**

- 9.1 There are no significant immediate financial implications of this paper but subsequent responses to the Jones report will have financial implications which will be considered as proposals are developed.

## **10 Communications implications**

10.1 An initial response to this report will have been offered by the Chairman and the Chief Executive in the Enterprise and Learning Committee on 2 July, subject to proper discussion in Council. It is likely that further public statements will be made following Council consideration of the report. This will depend, in part, on the government response, and that of the sector.

## 11 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

11.1 We do not believe this paper has immediate implications for age, disability, gender, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or the Welsh language. This will not be the case for proposals arising from future responses to the Jones report, which will, however, be subject to an equalities impact assessment prior to implementation.

## 12 Risk Assessment

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
The prime risk is that HEFCW's response to the Jones report is ill-focussed and ineffectual.	We will work with WAG colleagues and, as appropriate, with the sector to ensure that our response is well informed and appropriately focussed.