

## Report to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales on the work of its Learning and Teaching Committee and the Quality Assessment Committee 2007/08

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the third annual report of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and the Quality Assessment Committee (QAC). The QAC is a subset of the membership of the LTC.
- 1.2 This report covers meetings held in 2007/08.

### 2 Remit

- 2.1 The remit of the Committees is attached at **Annex A**. This takes into account amendments made by the LTC at its June 2007 meeting. Potential changes to the remit were suggested at its June 2008 meeting, and are now under consideration by the Council.

### 3 Membership

- 3.1 Membership of the Committees during the period in question, together with observers and those in attendance, is listed in **Annex B**. All meetings were quorate.
- 3.2 Professor Tony Cryer, Alyson Twyman and Professor Tony Hazell, stood down at the end of the academic year, as did observers Elaine Allinson and Karen Jones. Their contribution to the Committee has been much appreciated.

### 4 Dates of meetings held

- 4.1 Meetings were held on the following dates:
 

5 October 2007	LTC	QAC
18 January 2008	LTC	
4 April 2008	LTC	
27 June 2008	LTC	
- 4.2 A joint meeting of the LTC, Third Mission Committee, and some members of the Widening Access Committee was also held on 18 March 2008 to consider the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation document 'Skills that work for Wales: a skills and employment strategy' taking account of 'Promise and Performance: the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales' in order to help to inform HEFCW's thinking.

### 5 Main areas of work of the LTC

- 5.1 The main areas of work of the LTC are detailed below.
  - 5.1.1 Higher Education Academy (Academy):  
The Academy provided a report to each LTC meeting to update Members on activities and report on progress against the annual grant letter provided by HEFCW to the Academy.

- Members commented on reports provided by the Academy including: an overview of its engagement in Wales in 2006/07, which enabled comparisons to be made across the sector; details of subject centre engagement in Wales; its service plan for 2007/08; and details of proposed work in Wales for 2008/09.
- Members commented on a presentation given by the Academy's Deputy Chief Executive on the action plan arising from the evaluation of the Academy by Oakleigh Consulting.
- Members contributed to the development of the Academy's new strategic plan.
- Members considered the draft grant letter from HEFCW to the Academy for 2008/09.
- HEW and the Academy had drafted a Quality Enhancement Action Plan to facilitate the development of a more strategic approach to enhancement work in Wales. The LTC recommended that the Academy should consider the relationship of this to HEFCW's proposed quality enhancement approach.

#### 5.1.2 Learning and teaching strategies:

HEFCW had asked the Academy in the 2007/08 grant letter to analyse the learning and teaching strategies for Welsh HE institutions, and the Academy had held an event on 'Welsh Learning and Teaching Strategies: effective practice in their development and implementation'. The analysis of the strategies is available at [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/aboutus/wales/welsh\\_lt\\_strategies\\_english\\_final.doc](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/aboutus/wales/welsh_lt_strategies_english_final.doc).

- Members agreed that the analysis provided an overview of learning and teaching within the sector in Wales. It highlighted innovative and interesting practice in the sector, and identified links between developments in Wales and those UK-wide.
- The Academy reported that analysis of the strategies showed that learning and teaching in the sector was in very good health. The sector was engaged with all the key themes anticipated, and the trends represented the overall direction throughout the UK with regards to learning and teaching. Members noted that successful completion of these strategies would result in the sector being in a good position in three years' time.

#### 5.1.3 Quality Assurance Agency (QAA):

HEFCW and Higher Education Wales (HEW) operate a service level agreement (SLA) with the QAA. The current SLA will end in 2008/09. The following principal issues were discussed:

- The QAA provided its annual report for 2006/07 on its performance against the SLA. Members agreed that the QAA had met all its commitments.
- Members agreed that the mid-cycle report for the current Institutional Review: Wales (IR) cycle was broadly positive. They noted that a further report would be produced at the end of the review cycle.
- The QAA had consulted on the Causes for Concern procedures for Wales as requested by the LTC. The LTC recommended that these be adopted for Wales from August 2008. The procedures are available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/causesforconcern/default.asp>.
- Members noted that the QAA and the HE Academy would carry out work on quality assurance and the enhancement of learning opportunities in Wales in 2008/09, pending the outcome of further discussions.

- Members agreed that the QAA would produce a publication on the outcomes of the current IR cycle by the end of 2009 and provided views on the form of this publication.
- Members agreed that there were some excellent areas of HE activity in Wales which could be more effectively publicised, such as student engagement.

#### 5.1.4 Quality assurance of higher education in further education institutions:

Members commented on the draft handbook for the proposed review of directly funded Higher Education (HE) in Further Education (FE) institutions. The final version of the handbook is available at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/developmentalReview/default.asp>. Two directly funded FE institutions offering HE provision were reviewed in 2007/08.

#### 5.1.5 Teaching Quality Information (TQI)/National Student Survey (NSS):

Members discussed issues surrounding the TQI/NSS. The principal points discussed were as follows:

- The overall response rate to the 2007 NSS was 60%, an increase of 4% from 2006. Members noted that assessment and feedback continued to be particular issues of concern.
- A UCAS/Hotcourses consortium had won the contract to develop the website presenting the results of the NSS for three years from 2007. The site was renamed Unistats ([www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)). The publication of the 2007 results should have taken place in August, but was delayed until November 2007 due to technical reasons. Members expressed concern at this delay.
- The LTC agreed that the NSS results for medical students were of concern.
- The HEW PVC Committee had proposed that Wales should not participate in the bank of additional questions offered through the NSS. Members therefore recommended that these questions should not be used by Welsh institutions.
- Members expressed concerns at the potential introduction of a question on value for money into the National Student Survey. They recommended that HEFCW should request that Wales did not participate in the pilot of this question.

#### 5.1.6 Informing HEFCW's approach to quality enhancement:

The principal issues discussed were as follows:

- Members discussed the development of our approach to quality enhancement, including evaluation of the current IR cycle, evaluation of the degree of success of our strategy to support excellence in teaching, and informing our approach to develop an overarching quality enhancement framework.
- Members broadly supported the principle of a quality enhancement framework for HE in Wales.
- The LTC agreed to form a Quality Working Group as a subgroup of the LTC, including membership external to the LTC, to inform these developments. Outcomes of QWG meetings were reported to the LTC by the provision of minutes of QWG meetings.
- The outcomes of the work commissioned by HEFCW from Nigel Brown Associates were presented to the LTC for discussion. Members identified points which HEFCW would take account of in consulting on the methodology for the next IR.

#### 5.1.7 Measuring and recording student achievement

Members discussed the outcomes of the work of the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Steering Group (The Burgess Group). The Group agreed that there was a case for change to the current degree classification system and recommended the development of a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), to be used in conjunction with a summative judgement in the short/medium term. It anticipated that the judgement would decline in importance until it would no longer be considered necessary by stakeholders. Members noted concerns that Management Information Systems might not be able to deliver more complex transcripts and observed that this could be a useful area for development within the sector.

#### 5.1.8 Equality and Learning and Teaching.

Members discussed equality data for the HE sector in Wales. They also discussed the final report of Ethnicity, Gender and Degree project, which was part-funded by HEFCW. They agreed that it was useful to consider the degree classification data in the light of the NSS outcomes for black and minority ethnic group (BME) students. They welcomed Wales-wide information on equality and diversity in curriculum-related matters. They noted that the numbers of BME students in Wales were small and observed that it would be useful for data on numbers of BME students to be provided as standard with the HESA check data. As a result HEFCW discussed this with HESA and HESA has agreed to consider provision of the data in 2008/09, provided other stakeholders are in agreement.

#### 5.1.9 Update on European issues:

Members discussed European issues including the Europe Unit Bologna survey, the outcomes of the Welsh Bologna conference; developments with regards to the consultation on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Credit Issues Development Group (CIDG). The principal issues arising were as follows:

- Members were concerned about the low level of engagement of Welsh HEIs with the Bologna agenda and discussed how Welsh HEIs could use available EU funds to develop greater engagement with the Bologna Accord and compete on a European level.
- They agreed that management information system (MIS) issues needed to be resolved in order to move ahead with the Diploma Supplement (DS) and that the proposed development of the HEAR had stalled the development and delivery of the DS.

#### 5.1.10 Technology-enhanced learning strategy

Members discussed the strategy prior to its publication in April 2008 and suggested amendments. HEFCW officers confirmed that the strategy would be reviewed regularly throughout its lifespan to ensure that it did not become outdated.

#### 5.1.11 Other

Retention: Members discussed reports on retention performance in Wales and in a UK context, which had been used to assist HEFCW's Widening Access Committee in developing a programme of actions to improve retention in higher education. They agreed that HEFCW and HEW would have further dialogue on retention.

Promise and performance: the report of the independent review of the mission and purpose of further education in Wales in the context of the learning

country: vision into action (the Webb report): Members commented on the Webb report to help develop HEFCW's thinking. This was considered further at the joint meeting of the LTC, 3MC and WAC (see below, and para 4.2).

International students: Members considered the learning and teaching implications of the report by the Council for Industry and Higher Education entitled 'Global Horizons for UK Universities', the outcomes of the i-grad survey of international students, and the outcomes of the recent HEFCW conference on 'The International University.' They identified that institutions might need to have separate European and global strategies.

Employer Engagement and Higher Education Learning: Members discussed the report of the HEFCE Quality Assurance Task Group on Employer Engagement and HE Learning and employer engagement activity in Wales of relevance to learning and teaching. They agreed that some of the outcomes of the HEFCE report could be built into future work of the All-Wales Centre for Workforce Development subject to agreement to provide further funding for the Centre.

## **6 Main areas of work of the QAC**

6.1 The main areas of work of the QAC are detailed below.

### 6.1.1 The QAA's Mid-cycle review report:

Members agreed that the document should be revised to include identification of the context of individual reviews, to acknowledge where the joint Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs)/Institutional Review (IR) process had taken place. The Committee agreed that this report should not be published at this stage but that it might be useful to publish the end of cycle report.

### 6.1.2 Evaluation of the IR cycle:

Members discussed the proposals to evaluate the current IR cycle, evaluate the degree of success of our strategy to support excellence in teaching, and inform our approach to developing an overarching quality enhancement framework. They discussed the potential publication of a QAA report on the outcomes of the cycle.

### 6.1.3 Institutional Review reports

Members discussed the following:

- outcomes of the IR of North East Wales Institute of Higher Education (NEWI) which was carried out in March 2007.
- Outcomes of the IR of the University of Wales, Lampeter.

### 6.1.4 Other issues discussed

- Relationship between HEFCW and the University of Wales (UW)
- Outcome of the Estyn inspection of initial teaching training at Aberystwyth University
- NSS results for medical students

**ANNEX A.****HEFCW Learning and Teaching Committee/Quality Assessment Committee remit****1 CONSTITUTION**

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales hereby resolves to establish a Committee of the Council to be known as the Learning and Teaching Committee (the LTC) and a small sub-set to form the statutory Quality Assessment Committee (the QAC) until such time as resolved by Council that the Committee(s) is/are to be disbanded.

**2 PURPOSE AND DUTIES**

The purpose of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) is to advise the Council on all matters relating to the promotion of teaching excellence in higher education, and the enhancement of the student learning experience. A small sub-set of the LTC will form the Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) and undertake the Council's statutory responsibilities in respect of quality assurance. Specifically, the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 requires the Council to ensure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities it provides, or is considering providing, financial support. The QAC will advise on the delivery of the Council's assessment responsibilities, monitor the operation of the work of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in Wales and comment on the QAA's annual report to the Council on progress made linked to the Council's Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Agency.

**The specific duties of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) shall be:**

- a. To advise officers on the effectiveness of the mechanisms employed by the Council for supporting excellent teaching in higher education.
- b. To advise officers on learning, quality assurance and enhancement aspects of the Council's strategic planning process.
- c. To consider and advise Council on achieving/progressing learning and teaching-related targets and outcomes included in HEFCW's Corporate Strategy and Plan.
- d. To assist officers reviewing pedagogical practices across Wales to ensure that teaching methods evolve to meet the needs of all learners and address the impact of equalities and a diverse student population, especially non-traditional students.
- e. To keep under review the methods and outcomes of assessment of the quality and standards of higher education provision in Wales, identified through the QAA Institutional Review (IR) process, in the context of UK-wide and European developments.
- f. To advise on the continuing development of the quality assurance process.
- g. To advise officers on the effectiveness of mechanisms employed by institutions to provide accurate, timely and reliable information to students

and other stakeholders on the quality of learning opportunities and academic standards across Wales.

- h. To advise officers on the preparation, and monitoring the operation of, the annual Grant arrangements letter with the Higher Education Academy (HEA).
- i. To consider enhancements to the quality of learning and teaching in Wales arising from Estyn inspections of initial teacher training, youth work and further education and training provision in HE institutions, where appropriate.
- j. To monitor and advise officers on the effectiveness of its partnerships with the Higher Education Academy and the Quality Assurance Agency.
- k. To promote the enhancement of Welsh Medium provision in institutions.
- l. To advise on matters as requested by the Council.
- m. To report annually to the Council on the enhancement of teaching and learning, and the operation of the SLA with the QAA, monitored by the QAC.
- n. To consider any matters referred to the Committee by the Council.

**The specific duties of the Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) shall be:**

- o. To advise officers on the contents and operation of the Higher Education Wales (HEW), HEFCW, QAA Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- p. To ensure that the distinctive features of the higher education sector in Wales, including those related to Welsh Medium provision, are reflected in the SLA.
- q. To ensure that the QAA has the capability to provide an appropriate Welsh language service.
- r. To advise the Council on action to be taken where any institution gains 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence' in the IR process.
- s. To advise on other issues relating to the delivery of the Council's assessment responsibilities.

### **3 STANDING ORDERS**

#### **A MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE**

- I. The members and the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee shall be appointed by Council's Appointments' Committee. The Committee will include one member from within the membership of the Council, who will Chair the Committee. The Chair may appoint another member to chair a meeting in his/her absence. The members and Chair shall have no executive responsibilities. The Committee may co-opt members with particular expertise.
- II. Each Committee member shall be appointed for a term of two years in the first instance, and the Chair will have the option to propose to the Appointments' Committee to extend the term for a further period of no more than two years. The Chair of HEFCW's Council may propose to the Appointments' Committee

extending the term of office of the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee on an annual basis, should no suitable alternative Council member be available to undertake this role.

- III. All members will complete a Declaration of Interests form prior to attending their first meeting. If a member declares an interest in a matter to be considered at a meeting of the Committee, the disclosure shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Members with a direct interest in any item to be considered at a meeting of the Committee shall withdraw from the meeting during discussion of that item. Any substitutes will also have to complete a Declaration of Interests form prior to attendance. Observers do not have to complete this form as they are not formally part of the decision-making process. A register of such interests will be maintained by the Secretary and is open for viewing to anyone who requests it.
- IV. The quorum for LTC Committee meetings is five members, including the Chair or his/her nominee and two representatives from Higher Education Wales (HEW)/ the HE Sector for LTC meetings. The quorum for QAC Committee meetings is three members, including the Chair or his/her nominee and one representative from HEW/the HE Sector.
- V. The Head of Learning and Teaching shall normally attend the meetings of the LTC and QAC.
- VI. A Senior Manager from the Learning and Teaching Team (the Secretary) will service the LTC and QAC.

## **B AUTHORITY**

- VII. The Committee is an advisory body with no executive powers.

## **C FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS**

- VIII. The LTC shall determine the frequency of meetings, subject to a minimum of three meetings per year (minimum one meeting per year for the QAC).
- IX. Ordinary meetings will be arranged in advance, following consultation with members by the Secretary. These may subsequently be varied by the Chair following, if practicable, consultation with members, who will be notified as soon as possible.
- X. At the request of the Chair, the Secretary may convene a special meeting of the LTC or QAC to deal with business that will not wait until the next ordinary meeting. The Chair may also convene an annual joint meeting with other Council Committees, such as the Third Mission Committee or Widening Access Committee.

## **D MINUTES AND REPORTING**

- XI. No recording or transcript is made of the discussions at LTC or QAC meetings. Outcomes are noted by the Secretary and recorded in the minutes as the formal record. The Chair has the opportunity to comment on the draft minutes before the Secretary circulates them to members. Unconfirmed minutes will be submitted to the next ordinary meeting for approval. The minutes are then signed by the Chair to confirm that the Committee(s) has/have agreed them a correct record prior to being submitted to the next Council meeting for

information. Unconfirmed minutes will be submitted to the Council where the next Council precedes the next ordinary LTC meeting.

- XII. The LTC and QAC Committees will submit a joint annual report to Council on the discharge of their duties. In addition, the LTC will report annually to the Council on the enhancement of teaching and learning, and the operation of the SLA with the QAA, monitored by the QAC.

**E REVIEW**

- XIII. The Council shall review the LTC and QAC Committees' remits and membership on an annual basis.

***DATE REMIT REVIEWED: 22 JUNE 2007***

## **HEFCW Learning And Teaching Committee (LTC)**

### **Members:**

One Council Member (Chair)  
Six nominees from Higher Education Institutions in Wales  
*Four Institutional Representatives*  
*Two Higher Education Wales nominees*  
One Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET Cymru) representative  
One employer  
One National Union of Students (NUS) Wales nominee  
One Fforwm representative  
One Welsh Higher Education Careers Services (WHECS) representative

### **Observers:**

Higher Education Academy  
Skills for Business Network  
Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre  
Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)  
Estyn  
Higher Education Wales officer (HEW)  
Two representatives from the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS)  
NUS Wales staff officer

### **In Attendance:**

Head of Learning and Teaching  
Senior Learning and Teaching Manager (Secretary)  
Learning and Teaching Officer (Clerk)

## **HEFCW QUALITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE (QAC)**

### **Members:**

One Council Member (Chair)  
One HEW nominee  
Two Institutional Representatives  
National Union of Students, Wales

### **Observers:**

QAA  
Higher Education Wales officer (HEW)  
Estyn  
National Union of Students, Wales staff officer

### **In Attendance:**

Head of Learning and Teaching  
Senior Learning and Teaching Manager (Secretary)  
Learning and Teaching Officer (Clerk)

**ANNEX B.****Members of the Learning and Teaching Committee, observers, and those in attendance.****Members**

Council Member (Chair)	Prof Phil Gummett
Six nominees from Higher Education institutions in Wales:	
Four Institutional nominees	Professor Tony Cryer (CU) Dr Richard Dover (NEWI) David McParlin (UWA) Jacqui Hare (UWIC)
Two Higher Education Wales nominees	Prof Robert Pearce (UWL) Dr Peter Noyes Dr Carl Peters (UWN)
One Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET Cymru) representative	
One employer	Prof Tony Hazell (Velindre Health Trust)
One National Union of Students (NUS) Wales nominee	Ben Gray
One Fforwm representative	Gavin Thomas/Berni Tyler
One Welsh Higher Education Careers Services (WHECS) representative	Alyson Twyman

**Observers**

Higher Education Academy	Gabriel Jezierski/Sean Mackney/ Howard Colley
Sector Skills Development Agency	Michelle Sayers/Creed
Centre for Welsh Medium Higher Education	Dr Ioan Matthews
Quality Assurance Agency	Dr Julian Ellis/ Dr Richard Brown
Estyn	Elaine Allinson
Higher Education Wales (HEW)	Karen Jones
Welsh Assembly Government (ELWa)	Marion Jebb
NUS Staff officer	Sian Taylor

**In attendance**

Head of Learning and Teaching, HEFCW	Celia Hunt
Senior Learning and Teaching Manager, HEFCW (Secretary)	Dr Cliona O'Neill
Learning and Teaching Officer (Clerk)	
Director of Strategic Development	Alun Williams
Nigel Brown Associates	Dr David Blaney Nigel Brown Sue Boorman Richard Lewis Anne Miller

**Members of the Quality Assessment Committee, observers, and those in attendance.**

***Members:***

One Council Member (Chair)	Professor Phil Gummett
One HEW nominee	Prof Robert Pearce (UWL)
Two Institutional Representatives	Richard Dover (NEWI)
	David McParlin (UWA)
National Union of Students, Wales	Ben Gray

***Observers:***

QAA	Julian Ellis
Higher Education Wales officer (HEW)	Karen Jones
Estyn	Elaine Allinson
National Union of Students, Wales staff officer	Sian Taylor

***In Attendance:***

Head of Learning and Teaching	Celia Hunt
Senior Learning and Teaching Manager (Secretary)	Dr Cliona O'Neill
Learning and Teaching Officer (Clerk)	Alun Williams