

Meeting  
07/05/10

Agenda Item  
14

Reference No  
HEFCW/10/43

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## **1 Issue**

- 1.1 In 2007, HEFCW commissioned an independent survey on the views of its external stakeholders and partners, particularly HEFCW-funded institutions, about our services and our relationships with other organisations.
- 1.2 This was published in June 2008 and can be found on the HEFCW website under Home > Publications > Corporate documents > External stakeholder survey.

## **2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper**

- 2.1 The original decision to carry out our first survey of stakeholders and partners in 2007 came from new self-assessment processes for reviewing HEFCW effectiveness.
- 2.2 We used questions similar to those already used for the Scottish Funding Council and HEFCE. It is timely to check on progress three years after the original survey.

## **3 Recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
  - i. Agree that the next survey of stakeholders and partners will be carried out in the autumn of 2010.

## **4 Timing for decisions**

- 4.1 The decision is required now in order to have sufficient time to gain permission from Assembly officials and carry out a tender exercise to secure a company to carry out the survey in the autumn of 2010.

## **5 Council members' interests**

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

## **6 Further information**

contact Emma Raczka (Tel 029 2068 2225; email:  
[emma.raczka@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:emma.raczka@hefcw.ac.uk))

## **7 Background**

- 7.1 In 2007, HEFCW commissioned an independent survey on the views of its external stakeholders and partners, particularly HEFCW-funded institutions, about our services and our relationships with other organisations.
- 7.2 This was published in June 2008 and can be found on the HEFCW website under Home > Publications > Corporate documents > External stakeholder survey.
- 7.3 We used questions similar to those already used for the Scottish Funding Council and HEFCE. It is timely to check on progress three years after the original survey.
- 7.4 The survey gathered qualitative and quantitative data from HE institutions in Wales and from other partners in Wales and the UK, and was based on similar surveys in Scotland and England to provide HEFCW with an appropriate benchmark.

## **8 Survey outcomes and action plan**

- 8.1 HEFCW got feedback in a number of areas, including:
- people's knowledge, awareness and views of HEFCW
  - perceptions about HEFCW's role
  - perceptions about the quality of services and support provided by HEFCW
  - contact and dealings with HEFCW staff
  - the effectiveness of HEFCW's methods of communication
  - perceptions about the effectiveness of the relationships between HEFCW and our partners and key stakeholders
  - priority areas for improvement.
- 8.2 Our 74% favourability rating was comparable with that of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), at 72%. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) achieved a 76% favourability rating in its first survey which had increased to 84% by 2008.
- 8.3 In December 2008, we shared with Council our action plan to progress areas in the survey that required further attention, which were: defining and understanding our role, communications and interaction with HE institutions. Progress has been made against the actions in the plan, and these will be reported to Council in July 2010.

## **9 Next steps**

- 9.1 It had always been HEFCW's intention to carry out a second survey two to three years after the original. We therefore propose to carry out a second survey of stakeholders and partners in the autumn 2010 in order to gauge progress, to continue to benchmark ourselves against similar organisations and to identify areas for development.

- 9.2 We will need to seek permission from the Welsh Assembly Government to carry out the survey as all data collection exercises and surveys carried out by Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies must be approved in accordance with its 'Survey Approval' procedures.

## **10 Financial implications**

- 10.2 The cost for the original survey was £13.1K, including VAT and expenses. Most quotes for the last survey were between £20K and £25K. We recommend setting aside a budget of a maximum of £25K. A tender exercise will be completed to procure the survey to ensure best value for money.

## **11 Communications implications**

- 11.1 Higher education institutions and partners will be informed of our intentions early through our newsletter, and then through targeted correspondence. Management Board will consider and approve the questions and method of carrying out the survey. We will report the outcomes of the survey on our website and in our newsletter. There may be negative publicity implications where performance against any key indicators is deemed to be poor relative to the last survey or relative to the other funding bodies.

## **12 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications**

- 12.1 The questions and survey methodology will be subject to an equality impact assessment initial screening.
- 12.2 We will need to ensure that the language used is appropriate, and that respondents are able to reply to the survey in appropriate accessible formats, if required.
- 12.3 The survey questionnaire will be bilingual Welsh / English, and the company commissioned to conduct the survey must have the capacity to carry out interviews in Welsh as well as in English.

## 13 Risk Assessment

Risk	Action to address risk
<p>Not carrying out a survey in 2010:</p> <p>1. could lead to negative perceptions of HEFCW, as we would look like we are looking for a 'favourable' time to carry out the survey.</p> <p>2. would make it difficult for HEFCW to identify areas for improvement.</p>	<p>Carry out the survey.</p> <p>There is never a 'perfect' time to carry out such surveys, and the longer the time lag between surveys, the previous survey responses become less relevant.</p>
<p>Perception of little progress since the last survey in 2007.</p>	<p>Many visible actions have been carried out since 2007.</p> <p>However, HE in Wales is dynamic, with a new strategy for HE and new priorities.</p> <p>If the outcomes reflect a perception of little change, we will a) underline what has been done and b) again, seek to address areas where there is room for improvement.</p>