

Unconfirmed Minutes of 24 March 2010 meeting of
SETQ Committee

Disclosable

| Meeting | Agenda Item | Reference No |
|----------|-------------|--------------|
| 07/05/10 | 20 | HEFCW/10/49 |

1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper presents for information the unconfirmed minutes of the Council's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC) held on 24 March 2010.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 The SETQC is one of the standing committees of the Council and its purpose is to advise the Council on matters relating to the promotion of teaching excellence in higher education, and the enhancement of the student learning experience. It also undertakes HEFCW's statutory responsibilities to ensure provision is made for assessing the quality of education in higher education institutions (HEIs) for whose activities it provides financial support.

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The Council is invited to note the unconfirmed minutes of the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee meeting on 24 March 2010.

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 There are no timing implications for this paper.

5 Council members' interests

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

6 Further information

- 6.1 Contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (Tel 029 2068 2283; E-mail: cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk)

7 Background

7.1 The SETQC undertakes HEFCW's statutory responsibilities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 in respect of quality assessment.

8 Minutes of the SETQC meeting of 24 March 2010

8.1 The minutes of the March 2010 meeting of the SETQC are available at **Annex A**.

8.2 Members may particularly wish to note the following issues:

- The meeting began with a strategic discussion on foundation degrees. Presentations were received from officers, the Welsh Assembly Government, and CollegesWales identifying matters for consideration with regards to foundation degrees, and in light of *For our Future*. The Committee highlighted issues in relation to quality, and employer engagement which would inform the development of the Corporate Strategy.
- The Committee received HEFCW's remit letter for 2010-11 from the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning. It was agreed that the Committee had a role to provide views on the remit letter to inform the development of HEFCW's Corporate Strategy, and would do this via strategic discussions on specific matters, as required. Members also identified specific matters related to the remit letter to inform the Corporate Strategy.
- The Committee discussed a paper on Widening Access including the terms of reference of a task and finish group to examine the implications of *For our Future* proposals on widening access. Members noted that widening access principles also applied to postgraduate students and they would also be included in future targets. However, members cautioned that all targets were open to manipulation. Officers would consider the advice in developing the Corporate Strategy.
- The Committee received a draft HEFCW Circular on Refugees and Asylum Seekers as requested by the 2009-10 remit letter. Members offered advice on how to support this agenda, recommending that additional evidence be provided to set out the rationale for the agenda, and suggested that it would be useful to clarify why refugees and asylum seekers do not access information on higher education.
- Members commented on proposals set out in the HEFCW consultation circular *Developing a Regional Dimension to the Planning and Delivery of Higher Education (W10/06HE)* to inform officers' consideration of consultation outcomes. Members agreed that the regions identified were a reasonable compromise but that HEFCW should note caveats in using these regions, highlighting a number of issues in relation to regional 'need'. It was noted that there had been success in regional approaches in FE, but that there would be impacts not accounted for in the proposals, and that it was important that institutions were able to continue to engage internationally.
- The Committee received further information from the Quality Assurance Agency on assessment of collaborative provision in HE in FE, providing

scenarios for the selection of collaborative review methods. Members expressed concern that the criteria would be interpreted differently over the review cycle and would not be applied equitably. However it was agreed that there was no evidence that the current approach was not managing risk. Members also agreed that directly funded provision should be reviewed separately, and considered it inappropriate that the review method for directly funded HE in FE be used to review foundation degrees.

- The Committee noted published reports from the Quality Assurance Agency on the *Outcomes from Institutional Review*¹, cycle 2003/04 to 2008/09, which covered the following topics:
 1. Part one: Institutions' quality frameworks and arrangements for programme approval, monitoring and review;
 2. Part two: Institutions' arrangements for managing academic standards;
 3. Part three: Institutions' arrangements for engaging with students and with the wider world; and
 4. Part four: Institutions' intentions for enhancement and support for teaching and learning.

Members are invited to note the unconfirmed minutes of the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee meeting of 24 March 2010.

9 Financial implications

- 9.1 No immediate financial implications arise out of this paper. However, some of the suggestions made by the Committee with regards to *For our Future* might have financial implications if adopted.

10 Communications implications

- 10.1 Quality matters, such as the outcomes of institutional reviews, and reviews of the quality of higher education in other countries of the UK may also generate press interest, particularly when the outcomes are not favourable.
- 10.2 Matters relating to widening access, skills, and foundation degrees are generating press interest as a result of the current economic climate, and emerging Welsh Assembly Government policies.

11 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 11.1 There are no immediate diversity or equal opportunities implications arising from this paper. However, the terms of reference for the Committee confirm that the specific duties of the Committee include advising the Council on matters relating to learning and teaching in higher education, including widening access to higher education and Welsh medium provision.

12 Risk Assessment

- 12.1 Risks associated with the areas arising in this paper are detailed below:

¹ Outcomes from Institutional Review - <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reviewWales/outcomes/default.asp>

| RISK | ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK |
|--|---|
| Council is unable to meet its statutory responsibilities regarding quality assurance | The Committee advises Council on its statutory responsibilities in relation to quality assurance, using a subset of membership where appropriate. |