

## Press release

**Date:** 8 August 2006

**Title:** WALES WELCOMES NEW NATIONAL DIVERSITY ROLE

The body responsible for funding higher education in Wales has employed Wales's first dedicated national co-ordinator to help universities and colleges put their equalities policies into practice.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales's (HEFCW) Disability and Diversity Co-ordinator will work closely with higher education institutions in Wales to give them practical support and guidance on how best to make equality of opportunity a reality for students - and will play a significant role in shaping HEFCW's disability and diversity policies over the next three years.

Vikki Burge, an education professional with nearly 10 years' experience, most recently in a senior role managing disability and access services, is relishing the challenge as the newly-appointed co-ordinator. She hopes that the universities and colleges will work together to share both experiences of and resources for disabled students, at a time when they are preparing their first ever Disability Equality Schemes.

Speaking from her base at HEFCW in Llanishen, Cardiff, Vikki said:

"I can't wait to start working with universities and colleges in my new role. I believe so much more can be achieved by taking this sort of co-ordinated approach to diversity in higher education and having a central resource which the institutions can tap into.

"Higher education institutions have made tremendous improvements in how they provide and encourage services for disabled students over the last few years. You just need to look at the latest performance indicators from HESA, the Higher Education Statistics Agency. They show that institutions in Wales are recruiting a higher proportion of students in receipt of a Disabled Students' Allowance than the UK as a whole.

“While this is great news, we still have work to do in helping to move disability and diversity matters up the agenda in universities and colleges by working with senior management to help maximise the opportunities for all students, - and staff, too - whatever their background.

“I’m thrilled to be taking on this role and am looking forward to working with the sector to help bring true equality of opportunity for all students.”

Ends.

### **Media contacts**

#### **HEFCW**

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#### **Background - HEFCW**

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body, established in May 1992, which assumed responsibility for funding higher education in Wales on 1 April 1993.

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the Council is responsible for the administration of funds made available by the Assembly in support of the provision of education, the undertaking of research by higher education institutions, and the provision of prescribed courses of higher education at further education institutions.

Under the Education Act 1994, the Council is responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, the Council provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.

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