



Press release

Date: Thursday, 18 December 2008

Title: Wales research results released

Universities in Wales are continuing to deliver world-class research according to the results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) published today.

The exercise, which assesses the quality of research in higher education institutions throughout the UK, shows that Wales remains a vibrant player on the UK research stage.

Wales saw strong performances over a range of subjects from art and design to physics, with world-class achievement in a number of areas including civil engineering, computer science and informatics, psychiatry and neuroscience, psychology and Celtic studies.

14% of all research activity submitted by Welsh institutions was judged to be 'world-leading', with a further 35% assessed as 'internationally excellent'.

Roger Thomas, Chairman of HEFCW, said: "We are very pleased to see a strong research performance from Welsh universities in so many areas. The challenge now is to use these strengths to boost Wales's knowledge economy and create wealth and jobs, which is particularly important given the current economic climate."

Professor Philip Gummatt, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: “We should celebrate the impressive research that is done in higher education in Wales, and the contribution it makes to the reputation of Wales in the world.

“We recognise, though, that research remains a highly competitive process. We will continue to work to strengthen our research base in Wales. Maintaining our high standing relative to UK and global competition remains a big challenge both for us in HEFCW and for those in our universities charged with continually raising our research ambitions.”

11 institutions in Wales made a total of 144 submissions to the exercise, which covered 2,578 members of staff – over 10% more than for the last exercise in 2001.

Ends

Notes to Editors

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Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)

Notes to Editors

1 The outcomes of the 2008 RAE will be available on the RAE website on 18 December – www.rae.ac.uk. The media can also collect the outcomes, in paper or electronic form, from the HEFCW offices from 12 noon on 17 December, embargoed until 00:01 on 18 December.

2 The main purpose of the RAE is to produce assessments of research quality which are used by the UK higher education funding bodies to determine the main grant for research to their institutions. The 2008 RAE was the sixth in a series of such exercises; the previous one took place in 2001.

3 The 2008 RAE was conducted jointly by the four UK higher education funding bodies – the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL).

4 Higher education institutions were invited to submit their research for assessment. Submissions were made by subject area, and were assessed by expert review by specialist subject-based sub-panels. In the 2008 RAE, there were 67 sub-panels.

5 Across the UK, 159 higher education institutions made 2,344 submissions to the 2008 RAE, listing the work of more than 50,000 researchers.

6 The outcomes of the 2008 RAE are expressed as a quality profile for each submission. The quality profiles present, in blocks of 5%, the proportion of the submission judged to have met each of four quality levels ranging from 4* (world-leading) to 1* (nationally recognised). This is the main difference from the 2001 RAE, when each submission received a single rating on a scale from 1 to 5*. The introduction of quality profiles in 2008 allowed panels to exercise a finer degree of judgement.

7 The full definitions of the quality levels are:

Four star Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

Three star Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour, but which nonetheless falls short of the highest standards of excellence.

Two star Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

One star Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour.

Unclassified Quality that falls below the standards of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment.

8 Wales saw strong performances over a range of subjects from art and design to physics, with world-class achievement in a number of areas including civil engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, computer science and informatics, psychiatry and neuroscience, psychology, allied health professions, business and management, politics and international studies, town and country planning and Celtic studies.

9 10 higher education institutions in Wales, plus the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, made a total of 144 submissions to the exercise, which covered 2,578 members of staff – over 10% more than for the last exercise in 2001.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body responsible for administering funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government in support of:

- education in higher education institutions (HEIs);
- research undertaken by HEIs; and
- higher education courses at further education colleges.

HEFCW is also 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, HEFCW provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.