

Press release

Date: April 2008

Title: £1 million for universities to apply new technology

Universities in Wales are to receive a share of £1 million to help them embrace new technology to boost the experience of students in higher education.

The funding, provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), is to help universities implement a new ten-year strategy for 'technology-enhanced learning'.

The strategy, drawn up by HEFCW with the support of representatives from universities and higher education-related organisations, aims to mainstream the use of technology in learning and teaching practices. This will lead to more flexible and accessible courses to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.

As well as supporting institutions which are at the forefront of innovation in using technology in their teaching, the strategy will support Welsh medium education and encourage collaboration and sharing good practice in Wales and more widely. It should also put Wales at the forefront of technology-enhanced learning and improve the competitiveness - and attractiveness - of Welsh institutions.

Professor Philip Gummett, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: "This strategy should help universities gather speed in implementing a raft of new developments related to enhancing teaching by using technology. As the strategy

covers the next 10 years, we, and our universities and colleges, must keep pace with as yet unforeseeable developments in learning technology. This is why we will update the strategy regularly to make sure it remains relevant to higher education in Wales.”

HEFCW Chairman, Professor Sir Roger Williams, said: “Through our research and consultation with universities, we have become impressed by the degree of innovation in technology-enhanced learning that exists in institutions. They are now taking on the challenge of making such innovation the norm, rather than an exception, and we are sure this is something the student body, increasingly knowledgeable in the use of technology, will welcome.”

Ends

Notes:

Contacts for further information

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The strategy

This strategy has been developed over the past eighteen months by HEFCW and its e-learning sub-group, chaired by Professor Robert Pearce from the University of Wales, Lampeter. It has also been informed by the institutions, organisations and individuals who responded to the consultation on the strategy and on the statement of position of e-learning in higher education in Wales.

Rather than refer narrowly to e-learning, the strategy emphasises the broader enhancement of learning and teaching facilitated and supported by the use of

information and communications technology (ICT). We refer to this as 'technology-enhanced learning'.

Examples of technology-enhanced learning that are used or under consideration in Welsh HEIs include:

- Online library facilities including online catalogues, databases, discovery tools, e-journals and e-books
- Digital resources eg EDINA Digimap, BIODIDAC
- Electronic course materials eg e-books, use of Virtual Learning Environments
- CD-ROM and web-based interactive simulations and environments
- Other online learning experiences replacing activities such as group work, field trips or residential trips
- Electronic submission, assessment and feedback
- Electronic administration of programmes
- Online support eg study skills, careers
- E-based Personal Development Planning or e-portfolios
- Asynchronous Computer Mediated Conferencing
- Wikis and Blogs
- Synchronous audio conferencing
- Webcasting, podcasting and video-streaming of teaching sessions

The strategy groups a number of themes under the following headings:

- Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and of Core Processes;
- An Enhanced Student Learning Experience;
- Increased flexibility and accessibility of provision;
- Effective Collaboration and Sharing of Current and Good Practice; and
- Institutional engagement.

It also contains a number of short- and long-term indicators of success under these objectives.

The strategy is available on the HEFCW website at
[http://194.81.48.132/Publications/circulars_5137.htm.]

The **funding** consists of £1 million to support and encourage institutions to take up the opportunities provided by technology and to meet the objectives of the strategy. HEFCW will also provide funding to the Higher Education Academy to support consultants to work with institutions on the enhancement of learning through use of technology.

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.

