



## Press release



QAA



ASA



**Date:** Monday, 12 October 2009

**Title:** Students stay connected

Universities and their students will be celebrating the role of the student voice in developing higher education in Wales at an event in the Senedd on 12 October. Welsh Assembly Government Education Minister, Jane Hutt, will be hosting the event, which will mark the publication of a cross-sector – including higher education (HE) organisations and NUS Wales – commitment, ‘*Wales Initiative for Student Engagement*’ (WISE), and will also launch the new ‘Have your say’ project.

The event will celebrate the committed and inclusive approach taken by HE institutions in Wales to ensure that students have an active role in shaping their university experience.

The ‘Have your say’ project puts students at the heart of future developments in higher education (HE) in Wales through to recruiting, training and empowering a network of student course representatives.

WISE and 'Have Your Say' will help put Wales at the forefront of student engagement, leading to a greater ownership for students of their higher education experience, as well as wider leadership, representation and communication skills, making students' university experience more fulfilling.

Roger Thomas, Chairman of HEFCW, said: "There is already a lot of good work in this area in higher education institutions in Wales, and this approach allows all partners to build on these strong foundations. Students are best placed to provide expert advice about their learning experiences.

"We know already, from the results of the National Student Survey and other student feedback from Welsh universities and colleges, that students are positive about studying in Wales. Through closer working between higher education institutions, NUS Wales and other bodies, we want to increase student empowerment through greater involvement in decisions about their learning."

Katie Dalton, President of NUS Wales, said: "This student-focused, more interactive approach aims to reinforce the feedback mechanisms already in place, so students can work more closely with their institutions to enhance their learning experiences.

"We are confident that with the right support and resources in place students can play an active role in the future of higher education in Wales, ensuring that the needs of an increasingly diverse student population are better understood and their feedback is used constructively by institutions to enhance the educational experience in Wales."

Anthony McClaran, newly appointed Chief Executive of the Quality Assurance Agency, said: "Students' views are central to our work. This collaboration between the higher education bodies and the NUS in Wales will help shape the quality of learning experiences now, and in the future. QAA sees working with

students and gaining their input and insights as a vital component in ensuring the quality of higher education.”

Professor Noel Lloyd, Chair of Higher Education Wales and Vice Chancellor of Aberystwyth University, said: “Student engagement in a wide range of aspects of the work of higher education institutions is important, and is something that we do well in Wales. Engaging students in the overall educational experience, providing effective support and setting high expectations are matters that we are driving forward in our universities.

“Today’s launch marks an exciting opportunity for students to maintain the momentum of engagement in universities and to continue to bring a fresh perspective to the student learning experience.”

**Ends**

## Notes to Editors

### Contacts for further information

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The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has identified good practice in student engagement in HE in Wales, and the 2006, *Study of the Extent and Effectiveness of Existing Student Representation Structures within Higher Education Institutions across Wales*, by York Consulting, identified approaches to student engagement and a range of positive activities which will be shared and built upon through the new commitment. The study is available on the HEFCW website:

[http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/policy\\_areas/learning\\_and\\_teaching/york\\_consulting\\_doc.pdf](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/policy_areas/learning_and_teaching/york_consulting_doc.pdf)

The cross-sector group which will work in partnership with NUS Wales includes public bodies dealing with the quality and funding of higher education, and university organisations which develop teaching practices in HE and represent heads of HE institutions.

The group includes Higher Education Wales (HEW), the National Union of Students Wales (NUS Wales), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

The new approach aims to reinforce, share and build upon current good practice and to learn from partners across the UK and Europe. You can find more at the end of this press release.

**The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)** is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body which administers funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government to support:

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

HEFCW also accredits providers of **initial teaching** training for school teachers and commissions research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

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

NUS Wales was established in 1974 and is the largest democratic organisation in Wales, representing over a quarter of a million students from both the Higher and Further Education sectors.

NUS Wales is an open organisation that works in partnership with students' unions in Wales. Local and National Government, the Media, Industry, Trade Union, Pressure Groups and Voluntary Organisations all recognise and respect NUS Wales as the collective voice of students in Wales.

NUS Wales is an autonomous 'special region' of NUS UK, setting its own policy, electing its own executive committee, and campaigning on the issues that affect students studying in Wales.