

Press release from QAA, HEFCW and Estyn

Date: 27 January 2010

Title: Tri-partite Memorandum of Understanding 'Good news for Wales'

Three of the organisations that ensure and oversee aspects of quality in Wales' universities have today signed an agreement that commits them to closer working together.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed today in Cardiff by Anthony McClaran, Chief Executive of Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Professor Philip Gummett, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and Dr Bill Maxwell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales.

The document sets out the framework of cooperation between the organisations and will ensure that administrative burdens are reduced that expertise is shared and that this commitment to work together will benefit students across Wales.

Anthony McClaran, Chief Executive of the QAA, commented: 'The signing of this Memorandum is good news for Wales. This document will strengthen the relationship that QAA already has with HEFCW and Estyn. It will also ensure that we share expertise to develop and support improvement in the management of the quality of higher education in Wales.

'We are into the second decade of devolution in Wales and QAA wants to ensure that it remains at the heart of ensuring good practice with its universities and higher education subscribing institutions and this will play an important part in doing that.'

Professor Philip Gummett, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: 'It is essential to be able to continue to demonstrate the high quality of student experience in Wales. By continuing to work with the QAA and Estyn, building upon our previous agreement, we will be able to develop areas of common interest, and benefit the HE sector in Wales by improving clarity and reducing the administrative burden on institutions.'

Dr Bill Maxwell, Chief Inspector Estyn said: 'I am very pleased to sign this Memorandum of Understanding. Estyn inspects initial teacher training, youth and community work training and Welsh for adults provided by higher education institutions in Wales. We have been working with the QAA and HEFCW over recent years to share information and expertise and to develop protocols for working together. This has been particularly important where areas of influence overlap such as, for example, where higher education courses are provided in further education colleges in Wales. The Memorandum of Understanding demonstrates a commitment to work in partnership for the benefit of learners in HE in Wales.'

Notes to editors:

1 For further information and interview requests please contact:
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2 QAA checks how UK universities maintain own academic standards and quality. We review and report on how they meet their responsibilities, identify good practice and make recommendations for improvement. We publish guidelines to help UK universities and colleges develop effective systems to ensure students have the best learning experience.

3 Under the terms of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, HEFCW is required to secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities it provides, or is considering providing, financial support. 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.

4 The Inspectorate is responsible for providing independent inspection of the quality of all education and training funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (excluding higher education but including initial teacher education and training and youth and community work training). The Inspectorate's aim is to raise standards and quality in education and training in Wales through inspection and advice, in support of the vision and strategic direction set out by the Welsh Assembly Government.