

**To: Heads of higher education institutions
in Wales**

Reference: W03/68HE
Date: 5 December 2003
Response By:
Further Information: Karen Jones, (02920
682283) karen.jones@hefcw.ac.uk

I am writing to draw your attention to a range of UK wide developments that impact on the teaching quality information requirements for Wales.

Following the Council consultation on the Higher Education Quality Assurance and Standards Framework for Wales, the Council confirmed (Circular W03/08HE, February 2003) that the institutional review process for Wales would require each institution to publish a range of regulated information about teaching quality and standards, which in turn will be verified through the QAA review process. In addition, a much wider range of information will be routinely available to the auditors to assist the review process. A full list of the information to be published and that to be made available to the auditors is attached as **Annex A**.

The information requirements developed for Wales differ from those in England/Northern Ireland in two key respects:

- ⇒ information requirements in England/Northern Ireland include the introduction of a new process of preparation and publication of summaries of external examiners' reports. We are not requesting this in Wales.
- ⇒ it was also agreed that the preparation and publication of summaries of internal annual and periodic monitoring reports would not form a requirement for Wales.

TEACHING QUALITY INFORMATION WEB-SITE

Attached for information are five copies of the recent HEFCE publication, 'Information on quality and standards in higher education'. This document provides final guidance on the position adopted by HEFCE (with HEFCW observer participation in the work) on the provision of information on quality and standards of teaching and learning in higher education, to be published by HERO on a new UK-wide Teaching Quality Information (TQI) web-site. HERO has been commissioned by HEFCE to develop this web-site, and to provide support to HEIs. The web-site will be accessible from summer 2004, and the first full set of information should be made available on it by December 2004.

The Council has initiated discussions with HERO on the detailed timetable for developments for Wales. Similar discussions are currently being undertaken in Scotland. We will need, in particular, to confirm with HERO a timetable for institutions in Wales to:

- (a) nominate TQI contacts to liaise with HERO,
- (b) produce a mapping of anticipated quantitative data linked to JACS principal subjects, and provide this to HERO using software provided, and,
- (c) begin loading institutional qualitative information onto the TQI web-site.

The timetable for activities in Wales should be confirmed in January 2004.

HESA CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: TEACHING QUALITY INFORMATION – QUANTITATIVE DATA

As you will know, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) is currently consulting on the detailed technical specification for the TQI quantitative data, prior to providing these data directly from HESA to HERO for publication in England. As the TQI quantitative information requirements are to be consistent across the UK, it is important that colleagues from institutions across Wales respond to the English consultation paper. Copies of the consultation document will have been circulated directly by HESA in October 2003 to institutional contacts. Institutions are however encouraged to ensure that officers responsible for academic quality have had an opportunity to examine the consultation document prior to an institutional response to HESA being made by the deadline of 5 December 2003. The consultation document can be downloaded at http://www.hesa.ac.uk/circulars/student/2003/03_04.htm

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY: TEACHING QUALITY INFORMATION – QUALITATIVE INFORMATION

You will be aware that, on the advice of its Quality Working Group, the Council postponed the HEFCE/HEFCW National Student Survey (NSS) seminar that was to have been held on 27 November 2003. The aim had been to enable higher education institutions across Wales to gain an understanding of the outcomes of the UK NSS pilot and consider the HEFCE consultation document on future NSS activities. It was also designed to enable the sector to discuss with representatives from HEFCW how Wales will proceed in relation to the national survey. At the start of November HEFCW officers were advised that the HEFCE timetable had been amended significantly. The pilot results of the UK NSS will not be available until Spring 2004. HEFCE will then consult formally with the sector on the implementation of the survey. The postponed HEFCW seminar will therefore be timed to coincide with these developments. The first full-scale survey will now be conducted in January 2005, with the results being published in summer 2005.

The HEFCE paper that would have been circulated at the seminar can be downloaded at: http://iet.open.ac.uk/nss/download/interim_report.pdf. Copies of the slides of the HEFCE presentation, which would have formed the bulk of the postponed seminar, will also be available on the above website shortly.

Finally, the QAA has arranged a seminar to provide institutions with an introduction to the institutional review method in Wales on 2 December 2003, at Buckland Hall, Brecon. Colleagues from institutions across Wales have been invited to attend. The programme for the seminar will include a workshop provided by Council and QAA officers on the information requirements and the use of reference points in the review process for Wales. It is anticipated that questions relating to the issues identified in this letter will be explored further at this event, alongside issues relating to the qualitative information to be published on the HERO TQI web-site, including Institutional learning and teaching strategies and summaries of employer links.

I hope this update on developments is helpful, but if you require further information, please contact Karen Jones (02920 682283) karen.jones@hefcw.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR PHILIP GUMMETT
DIRECTOR OF HIGHER EDUCATION