

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

Reference: W05/40 HE  
Date: 19 July 2005  
Response By: no response required  
Further Information: Karen Jones, (029 2068  
2283) [karen.jones@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:karen.jones@hefcw.ac.uk)

### **ACCESS TO NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS, AND LAUNCH OF THE TQI WEB-SITE**

I am writing to provide an update on plans to launch the Teaching Quality Information (TQI) site, including the results of the National Student Survey (NSS), and to inform higher education institutions (HEIs) how to access their survey results. We are arranging for HEIs to preview their own survey results before the launch of the TQI site, and to have access to additional data that will not be published. To indicate your agreement to these arrangements, please complete and return the forms at **Annexes A and B**.

#### **Launch of the TQI web-site**

The TQI development site has been available since August 2004. A number of improvements to the site are being implemented, in preparation for the launch. These include the new navigation and structure based on 41 subjects, the addition of destinations data, the results of the 2005 NSS, the extension of the site to the whole of the UK, the development of a Welsh medium site.

The UK Wide & Welsh medium TQI sites will go live to the public on 20 September 2005. To launch the sites, the funding bodies, in conjunction with NUS, will hold a press conference on 19 September, followed by regional media campaigns. Publicity will be aimed primarily at applicants and their advisers, to help inform student choices for 2006 entry. In addition to the media publicity surrounding the launch, HERO has been incorporating materials regarding TQI into UCAS and other relevant publications, distributing materials to careers advisers and teachers, and will build links to relevant web-sites. The funding bodies will provide a briefing for institutions' press officers in advance of the launch.

#### **Institutions' preview of NSS results**

From 1 August, institutions will be able to preview their own NSS data as it will appear on the TQI site. This information will be under embargo until the launch, so that partial information is not disclosed to the public. This preview will enable institutions to prepare a commentary on their NSS results, if they wish to do so. The commentary can be published on the TQI site, to explain the context of an institution's results and any response to them.

We recognise the difficulties in preparing commentaries without access to other institutions' results. However, such access will not be possible until 19 September, the day before the launch. To assist with the preparation of commentaries, therefore, sector-wide average scores will be made available in early August. These will be published on the HEFCE web-site as part of an initial analysis by Ipsos UK of sector-wide results, mainly to provide assurance about the robustness of the questionnaire. (This report will be followed by further general analysis and evaluation of the results, by the Department of Sociology at the University of Bristol, which will be reporting from late autumn 2005.) To ensure that your institution will be able to access the preview data, please sign and return the form attached at **Annex A**, agreeing to respect the embargo.

### **Access to additional NSS data**

The main output from the NSS is the results on the TQI site, intended to inform applicants and their advisers. To ensure the robustness of this information, we will apply a 'reliability threshold'. Data will only appear on the site for any given subject at any given HEI where more than 30 responses were received, and the response rate was at least 50 per cent. A secondary output from the NSS will be useful information for HEIs and students' unions. For their internal purposes, we believe that information at a finer level of detail could be useful, and that the risks arising from use of unreliable data are smaller. In addition, institutions and students' unions could gain insights from anonymised qualitative comments, which will not be published on the TQI site.

We have therefore commissioned Ipsos UK to provide additional data to HEIs and student unions only for their own institution. The data will remain anonymised. Ipsos UK recently consulted with their NSS contacts in HEIs and students' unions about the format and range of data to be included. The general intention is to provide, through the web:

- a. General summaries for the HEI.
- b. An interactive web tool that enables interrogation of the HEI's own data and access to students' comments, using a range of variables (such as subject or student characteristics).
- c. A facility to compare results with those of 'peer' institutions.

We will only publish robust data on the TQI site, and are keen to ensure that more detailed data, which would not be reliable for the purposes of informing student choice, are not released to the public in a misleading way. We are therefore asking institutions to agree that their detailed data will only be used internally. Institutions should sign and return the form at **Annex B**. (We are writing separately to students' unions about this; unions will be provided access to the same data as HEIs, on the same terms).

The additional data and comments will be available online via Ipsos UK, from October 2005. All HEIs and students' unions that have returned a signed agreement will be provided with passwords to access the information. We recognise that these agreements are somewhat unusual. However, they are intended to manage the risks involved in providing institutions with previews and additional information, while preserving the integrity of the published results.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Gummett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Phil Gummett  
Chief Executive