

Higher Education Academy  
commentary on:

**Welsh Institutional  
Learning and Teaching  
Strategies 2004–05**



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# hefcw

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## Summary

This report has been prepared by the Higher Education Academy in response to an invitation by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to provide analysis and commentary of Welsh institutional learning and teaching strategies 2004-05. The analysis was undertaken as a developmental exercise to identify emerging trends in learning and teaching developments to inform institutions, the Funding Council and the Higher Education Academy. The report highlights examples of novel and effective practices signalled in learning and teaching strategies. It also provides examples of information resources and other forms of support that might be of interest to institutions, that have been produced by the Academy and its Subject Centres and other non-Academy sources.

We hope that the report will be of interest and value to institutional staff who have a role in the strategic planning of teaching and learning or who are overseeing or supporting the implementation of learning and teaching strategies. The Academy welcomes feedback on whether this type of analysis of institutional learning and teaching strategies is useful and helpful to those who have responsibilities in this area.

Commentary and analysis are framed around twelve themes:

1. Creating the strategy
2. Devolving strategies to departments and schools
3. Connecting and aligning institutional strategies
4. Curriculum and assessment
5. Employability
6. Welsh medium
7. e-Learning
8. Equality, diversity and student support
9. Staff and professional development including enhancing teaching through research and scholarship
10. Recognition and reward
11. Disseminating and embedding effective practice
12. Monitoring and evaluation

The report concludes with some general reflections and the identification of key themes to develop over three years in the first instance.

With the agreement of institutions, the Higher Education Academy would like to use these themes as a starting point for developmental conversations with Welsh higher education institutions. We are proposing to visit each institution in the Autumn term to understand how the Academy might best support the implementation of learning and teaching strategies and gather more detailed information and insights on effective and innovative practice.

## Background

This commentary was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), with the following purposes:

- to provide an overview of the Welsh institutional learning and teaching strategies based on a series of predetermined questions
- to provide institutionally specific feedback on each of the 12 institutional learning and teaching strategies with a generic overview
- to identify novel and effective practices across Welsh higher education institutions which might be used as a basis for a themed enhancement conference in Wales in the Autumn
- to highlight examples of practices known to be effective and information resources from elsewhere in the UK

- to inform the Higher Education Academy about the strategies that Welsh institutions are using to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and students' higher education experiences and generate questions for developmental discussions with individual institutions.

## Methodology

An analytical tool was developed based on a set of questions provided by HEFCW. A small team of senior staff was involved in the analysis. A number of themes were identified in the analysis which forms the basis for this commentary as a way of highlighting key features and suggesting ways to further enhance strategic thinking. The Academy is not in a position to comment on the success of institutional strategies or to pass any sort of judgement on their appropriateness. We see this document as a collation of qualitative observations and emerging trends, enabling the Academy to develop a strategic overview of teaching and learning developments in Welsh higher education institutions so as to be able to support institutions more effectively.

## I. Creating the strategy

Institutions across Wales have spent a lot of time developing their learning and teaching strategies. They demonstrate an enormous range of existing and planned innovative activities in learning and teaching. The strategies were developed in a number of different ways. Some strategies were conceived following a review and assessment of the previous strategy, or following wide-ranging consultations over a number of years, while others were developed through the university's formal strategic planning processes.

One institution mentioned that a wide cross-section of staff across the institution had been involved both from academic schools and support departments as well as students. Only one institution mentioned it they had involved an external expert. Two interesting observations here are the involvement of students and using an external consultant to bring a different perspective and wider experience of UK higher education.

When institutions mentioned the culture and climate in which they were working, this was extremely helpful in setting the context. For example a number of institutions considered the geographical location, the low participation rate in higher education in their region or the age range and social mix of the students. This information had implications for the type of curriculum that was offered or the mode of study, such as part- or full-time study or producing more distance learning materials.

Another excellent feature was where institutions have missions and aspirations to provide a particular ethos. However, providing evidence of success in this area may be more difficult to achieve.

- *...Aims to provide a high quality learning environment which involves students at all levels in an active and transforming learning experience. We seek to foster a culture of reflection and innovation to enhance the quality and value of that experience.*
- *The mission is to provide quality higher education and research in a welcoming, friendly and supportive environment to meet individual, local, national and international needs.*

## 2. Devolving strategies to departments and schools

An interesting and positive trend is the production of strategies at the local level in order to improve ownership by members of the institution. Five institutions mentioned that each School/Department/Faculty would be producing its own learning and teaching strategy and action plan based on the institutional one:

- *As part of the enhancement of the learning environment, the University expects schools to produce robust operationally focused statements, which articulate the way schools plan to implement the key objectives outlined in this strategy.*

In some cases local funding to support implementation is being allocated against a set of bidding, monitoring and evaluation criteria. Some universities have established a cross-institutional, representative working group to develop the learning and teaching strategy. This mechanism allows for discipline-specific differences and preferences to be supported but within an institutional framework. Ownership is more likely to develop at the local level, but care is required to ensure that effective practices are picked up at the institutional level and shared across different discipline areas.

### Comparisons with practice elsewhere

The contrasting approaches to strategic development noted in Welsh learning and teaching strategies have also been recognised in England. For example, at Liverpool John Moores University each department gains a funding entitlement on receipt of an adequate strategy and continued funding on receipt of brief annual reviews of progress and plans. (Gibbs, G. 2003, p. 10)

Learning and teaching strategies may also be managed and controlled by senior management and a central committee with funding allocated by the centre for institution-wide initiatives. Previous research has indicated that this may not always achieve the desired ownership or involvement by staff at the local level:

*A characteristic of many learning and teaching strategies at an early stage of development or implementation is that they tend to give much more detail about the role of central management than they do about the role of departments or teachers. As most implementation needs to be undertaken at local level, it is likely to be necessary to engage departments in thinking about implementing the strategy, beyond simply discussing the institutional document. One approach is to require all departments to develop their own learning and teaching strategy. This might be expected to show how the main priorities of the institutional strategy are being addressed, and perhaps to set explicit targets against which progress could be gauged. (HEFCE 2001)*

### 2a. Management of change

Learning and teaching strategies are plans for large-scale, ambitious and complex organisational change. Managing change on this scale is an important dimension of the strategic process but it is very difficult to predict what will emerge from change that is promoted on such a scale within the timescale of a strategy. The total impact of such comprehensive and detailed strategic planning can only be imagined. In some cases it was felt that some institutions might have too many issues in their strategies and are trying to accomplish too much change in very short time-scales. There is some evidence from the analysis of the English learning and teaching strategies that, where an institution concentrates on fewer areas, it is more likely to be successful. It is interesting to note that only three Welsh institutions have adopted this approach. One Welsh institution has sharpened the focus of its Strategy with just two key aims:

- enhancing the employability and lifelong learning skills of the ... graduate

- to provide a supportive and effective learning environment for an increasingly diverse student population.

Another institution lists three priorities:

- to develop students' key skills
- embedding learning support in the curriculum
- developing the application of ICT in learning and teaching.

A third institution lists four key objectives as the development of:

- the learning environment
- the enabling curriculum
- support for learning
- staff.

Some institutions might have a wide ranging strategy, but might wish to consider limiting their focus by specifying what is to be achieved over a specific time frame.

#### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

##### **Change Academy**

A collection of papers on organisational change, team working and the evaluation of change  
**[www.heacademy.ac.uk/921.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/921.htm)**

An Academy publication entitled 'Change thinking, change practices' by Paul Trowler, Murray Saunders and Peter Knight is a useful resource as it strikes a balance between research-informed discussion and practical advice. It focuses particularly on the roles of heads of department and programme leaders in promoting and facilitating change. The authors draw on research literature to identify six key dimensions to understanding change and illustrate these with six case studies. They conclude by providing a number of guiding maxims to help readers develop their thinking about change (see example below). The publication can be downloaded from the Change Academy web page.

You are likely to fail if you ....	<b>CHANGE THINKING, CHANGE PRACTICE</b> You are likely to succeed if you ....	Expect
1. Look for single right answers	1. Can show there is good evidence, theory & practice behind the proposed innovation	1. Resistance & reconstruction locally (or simply ignoring, or being ignorant of, the proposed innovation)
2. See learning, teaching & assessment practices in isolation from the changing context of HE – particularly changes in the size & make-up of the student body	2. Develop or use ‘tools’ that are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• both generic &amp; adaptable locally</li> <li>• likely to elicit positive responses both intellectually &amp; emotionally</li> <li>• profitable to those on the ground</li> <li>• appropriate to needs in the new HE context</li> </ul>	2. The meaning & scope of an innovation to develop in local contexts as those on the ground work with it
3. See innovations in learning, teaching & assessment practices in isolation from lecturers’ identities, beliefs & current practices		3. Different outcomes in different locales
4. Forget that colleagues will often balk at change unless it ‘was invented here’; they’ll discount ‘foreign’ innovations: NIH (not invented here) breaks change forces		
5. Think about individuals, not the groups they work in		
6. Forget about history & contexts: they affect the way changes are understood & put into practice in very important ways		

### 3. Connecting and aligning institutional strategies

It is important within institutions that different strategies are not pulling in different directions and it is a great achievement when institutions are able to connect, align and eventually integrate previously unrelated strategies and policies. This can involve great effort on the part of the institution as frequently the various strategies are written by different staff at different times to fulfil very different purposes. For example, a policy on recognition and reward has implications for the human resource strategy, while designing a new building or modifying the physical environment for disabled students impacts upon the estates strategy.

An encouraging trend is for comments to relate to the value of strategy integration. One institution mentioned a commitment to '*develop stronger links*' between the learning and teaching strategy and the HR strategy primarily through the establishment of a CPD Framework. Other learning and teaching strategies had clear links with HR, widening participation and the estates strategies, indicating coherent planning with appreciation of the implications for learning and teaching in each area. Targets were clearly set out with timescales, costs, resources and responsibilities, showing the inter-linkages.

One institution mentioned specific ways in which the various strategies impacted on learning and teaching. For example:

*The Information Services Strategy supports the Learning and Teaching Strategy through an ambitious programme of enhancement to facilitate the use of new learning technologies to support innovative teaching and learning methods and increase the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of the learning experience.*

This trend towards a more integrated approach to strategies is clearly of benefit to students and ensures more joined-up thinking across an institution. It also allows for a more holistic view of where resources are needed or need to be shared or targeted across different departments or themes.

## 4. Curriculum and assessment

In the last few years a lot of institutional development activity has focused on embedding an outcomes approach to curriculum design and assessment. The development has been encouraged by the need for programme specifications and more explicit assessment of skills, including key skills. During the current planning cycle new forms of learning are being encouraged through the phased introduction of student progress files and personal development planning which are mentioned in most teaching and learning strategies and related to the UK-wide implementation of Personal Development Planning (PDP) in 2005-06. (See section 5a)

One trend, observed in 50% of strategies, is for institutions to review aspects of their curriculum within their learning and teaching strategy. This ranged from reviewing current programmes, with a view to deleting some and adding other more appropriate ones, undertaking a skills audit, reviewing the modular scheme and assessment strategies, embedding learning support in the curriculum and piloting a new template for programme specifications that is student focused.

One institution stated that it had made significant progress in auditing the curricula for accessibility and developing an action planning regime. With the current disability legislation it is important both to audit the curriculum and support staff in adapting to appropriate teaching methodologies to ensure good learning for all students. One resource that is especially useful here has been produced by the Scottish 'Teachability: Creating an Accessible Curriculum for Students with Disabilities' project. Part of the mission of TEACHABILITY is to produce materials to assist academic staff in reflecting on various aspects of delivery of curricula, and to consider possible changes to practices, in order to meet the teaching and learning needs of students with a range of impairments more effectively. The project is based at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland and the website hosts a number of very useful publications as indicated below.

### **Teachability project – University of Strathclyde**

**[www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/](http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/)**

1. Creating accessible information about courses or programmes of study for disabled students and applicants
2. Creating accessible course or programme design and structure for disabled students
3. Creating accessible lectures for disabled students
4. Creating accessible seminars and tutorials for disabled students
5. Creating accessible placements, study abroad and field trips for disabled students
6. Creating accessible practical classes for disabled students
7. Creating accessible e-learning resources for disabled students
8. Creating accessible examinations and assessments for disabled students

A companion guide called 'Accessible Curricula: Good Practice for All' is intended as a source of information to help busy staff to be aware of recent changes and to be ready to comply with the new disability legislation. It has been designed to assist colleagues to deliver coursework to allow for the divergent needs of student populations. It was written by Carol Doyle and Karen Robson, University of Wales Institute Cardiff and can be downloaded from the Academy website.

### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

#### **Accessible Curricula: Good Practice for All**

**[www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full\\_record&section=generic&id=128](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record&section=generic&id=128)**

An increasing trend in students across the UK is for them to attend in a variety of modes, part-time, full-time, on and off campus. To accommodate this diversity one institution is trialling a pilot scheme where a programme has a January start. This allows students to complete a degree in less than three years by studying over the summer vacation. It will be interesting to see the development of this programme. The same institution is also designing a flexible programme structure to enable students to combine different modes of study. This will include a combination of distance learning, campus study and supported outreach provision. In addition progression routes are being explored by including the accreditation of prior and experiential learning and identifying clear progression routes for all subject areas. This will enable students to progress smoothly from undergraduate to postgraduate level.

Another institution explicitly identified the skills and abilities it is seeking to promote and develop in students. These included an ability to respond analytically, critically and creatively to a variety of situations and experiences, and the academic and transferable skills to enable them to succeed and to continue learning beyond graduation. A second institution identifies a package of attributes including a love and respect for learning that it expects its graduates to have worked towards achieving (note: these are desirable educational outcomes rather than specific outcomes students have to achieve). One theme for future enquiry might be to see the commonalities and differences of these perceptions of graduate attributes between different institutions. Are we seeing the development of distinctive graduate outcome profiles in different institutions?

Designing a curriculum is an important, challenging and creative process. The Higher Education Academy supports institutions and their staff in this process by providing resources, undertaking research and organising events. Its work has been co-ordinated through the Imaginative Curriculum Project.

### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

#### **The Imaginative Curriculum**

**[www.heacademy.ac.uk/curriculum.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/curriculum.htm)**

**[www.heacademy.ac.uk/creativity.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/creativity.htm)**

#### *Example resources*

Curriculum guides e.g.

Constructive alignment

Problem-based learning

Learning through enquiry

Enterprising curriculum

Games, simulations and role play

Active email network of interested practitioners

Working papers on Creativity in Students' Learning

Research studies

Workshops and conferences

## 4a. Assessment

A key trend (50%) is for Welsh institutions to mention assessment as an important element of their strategy. One institution highlighted 'Assessment for successful learning', where during the academic year an institution-wide review of assessment is planned focusing on:

- Assessment loading
- Criteria-based assessment
- Peer assessment
- Plagiarism and detection
- Assessment of skills within the curriculum.

Other institutions want to ensure that assessment is appropriate and fair:

*That assessment for all programmes is fair, equitable, allowing students from diverse backgrounds to optimise the achievement of learning outcomes.*

One institution is involved with an assessment research project in the Faculty of Art and Design. Partially funded by the Subject Centre for Art, Design and Media, the project focuses on 'Dyslexia as cognitive styles: right brain strategies for left brain tasks'. One of the objectives of this project is to feed into the development of alternative forms of assessment for students working at dissertation level. As a result of this two students are piloting visual dissertations.

Another institution includes as a strategic aim '*Measures taken in response to diversity of learning, teaching and assessment matters*'. The focus is on encouraging the different subject areas to look for solutions beyond their traditional cultures and practices to accommodate the diverse needs of students. The cultural change envisaged challenges staff to consider critically the way they use assessment, particularly in the first year, so that students can flourish and succeed.

### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

#### **The Philosophy and Religious Studies Subject Centre**

**[www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/diversity/index.html](http://www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/diversity/index.html)**

is working on a project with other Subject Centres to explore the implications of cultural and religious issues in higher education, in particular for the curriculum (for example, teaching style, content, assessment and student support).

The project was set up in response to interest from the academic community as they find themselves working with an increasingly diverse student population. Also, new legislation has recently been introduced that has given rise to concerns, and some uncertainty, about implications for the curriculum. For example, the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, introduced in response to the Employment Directive, outlaws discrimination on grounds of religion or belief in employment and vocational training. This will have implications for students engaged in work-based learning. For further information about this legislation, we suggest that you visit **[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)**.

Some English institutions have titled their strategy a Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy in recognition of the importance of assessment. In 2001, 45% of English learning and teaching strategies had addressed assessment as this was considered central to other changes to teaching and learning in many institutions. By 2003, Gibbs stated that assessment was commonly included in learning, teaching and assessment strategies, with institution-wide initiatives to change assessment, both in relation to learning outcomes and to provide more support for learning.

*There is a wide perception that the QAA emphasis on measurement and standards has been at the expense of using assessment to support learning, and that there has been a decline in formative assessment. This is a cause for concern as the shift to learning-outcome driven curricula has emphasised outcomes concerning skills and competencies that require practice and feedback to develop. Developing skills inevitably requires more formative assessment, not less. (Gibbs, 2003)*

A key issue in promoting students' learning is the balance in any assessment strategy between assessment that is designed to make judgments about capability or academic competence and assessment that is intended to provide feedback to students to improve the quality of their learning. Traditionally, higher education has placed more emphasis on the former than the latter but some institutions are beginning to give greater attention to the role of formative assessment. A project conducted by Universities Scotland: Educational Development Sub Group with funding from the former LTSN Generic Centre produced a publication called 'Student Enhanced Learning through Effective Feedback' (SENLEF). This focused on formative assessment and consists of seven principles of assessment, with practical examples of how these principles might be achieved. In addition, there are a number of case studies from across Scotland showing effective ways of giving students feedback on their assessed work. This is available from the Academy website.

#### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

##### **Student Enhanced Learning through Effective Feedback**

**[www.heacademy.ac.uk/senlef.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/senlef.htm)**

Good feedback practice:

1. Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning
2. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning
3. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards)
4. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance
5. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning
6. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching.

Practical examples to support each principle are given. The example given below highlights the principle of 'Encourages positive motivational belief and self-esteem':

## **Student Enhanced Learning through Effective Feedback**

### **Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem**

Research has shown that feedback can have both positive or negative effects on students' motivational beliefs and self-esteem. In one study, Butler (1988) has shown that feedback comments alone had more effect on students' subsequent learning than comparable situations where marks alone or feedback and marks were given. Butler argued that students paid less attention to the comments when given marks and didn't use them to make improvements. In another study, Butler argued that grading student performance had less effect than feedback comments because it led students to compare themselves against others rather than focus on where they were having difficulties.

Feedback given as grades has also been shown to have negative effects on the self-esteem of low ability students (Craven et al 1991). Dweck (2000) has interpreted some of these findings in terms of a theoretical model that distinguishes learners into two categories; those who believe that their ability is fixed (i.e. there is a limit to what can be achieved) and those that believe that their ability is malleable and depends on the effort that is input into a task (i.e. performance can be improved by more effort). The implication for teaching practice is that there should be many low-stakes tasks with feedback that emphasise progress and achievement (e.g. drafts, resubmissions and automated testing with feedback) rather than high-stakes summative assessment tasks.

Strategies for good practice might include:

1. providing marks on written work only after students have responded to feedback comments
2. allocating time for students to re-write selected pieces of work; this would help change students' expectations about purpose
3. automated testing with feedback
4. drafts and resubmissions.

The Bioscience Subject Centre has a Special Interest Group on formative assessment which can be assessed at: [www.open.ac.uk/science/fdtl/sig.htm](http://www.open.ac.uk/science/fdtl/sig.htm) Further details of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) can be found on the individual Subject Centre websites. Go to [www.heacademy.ac.uk](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk)

## Assessment Audit Tool

The assessment audit tool is developmental, helping to identify future areas for enhancement and not simply to produce an overall score for a module. It could usefully be used at 'Away Days', end of course evaluation, part of a course review or when producing a new course. The audit tool was developed by Professor Ian Hughes, Co-Director Higher Education Academy Bioscience Subject Centre and Professor of Pharmacology Education, University of Leeds as part of his National Teaching Fellowship.  
([www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/Audit.htm](http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/Audit.htm))

For example:

### 1. Are the assessment methods appropriate to the learning objectives?

	Score
1.1 Are the learning objectives (i.e. the changes in the student's knowledge, skills and attitudes) explicit for the module <b>and</b> for each constituent element piece of work where appropriate?	
1.2 Are the different types of element in the Learning Objectives reflected in the assessment? (e.g. <i>knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes etc</i> )	
1.3 In setting the Learning Objectives is consideration given to the learning objectives in other concurrent or previous modules?	
1.4 Is the different achievement in each Learning Objective <b>separately</b> identifiable by the student in the overall assessment?	
1.5 Are assessment methods/conditions adjusted appropriately for disabled students?	
1.6 Do students experience the method of assessment before it is used summatively? <i>Either in this module or in a previous module?</i>	
1.7 A single type of assessment (e.g. all MCQs) may disadvantage some students. Is there a variety of assessment methods used in different circumstances? <i>[For example knowledge can be assessed using MCQ, EMQ, SAQ, essays marked for factual content etc. To what extent are different assessment techniques used to give the student a variety of ways in which to demonstrate their abilities?]</i>	
Section score (% of section total)	

Another trend is for Welsh institutions to encourage staff to consider the influence that assessment has on student learning and retention. For example:

- *Assessment – diversifying student assessment to address the full range of needs, improve retention and maintain good stewardship of quality standards*
- *The influence that assessment has on student learning strategies will be considered in selecting teaching and learning methods. The nature of the methods and strategies employed within individual modules will also recognise the impact of increased student numbers and the need to deliver teaching efficiently.*

Scottish higher education institutions have assessment as one of the themes for their Quality Enhancement agenda. Welsh institutions might like to link to the Scottish QE website. It

contains information from year one of the enhancement themes on assessment and responding to student needs, and, from the current year, on employability and flexible learning. Resources from the workshops across Scotland over the last two years and a series of other publications are all available for downloading at: [www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk).

### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

#### **Assessment of Learning**

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/Assessmentoflearning.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/Assessmentoflearning.htm)

Over 50 downloadable items including 12 publications covering such themes as computer-assisted assessment, implementing an institutional assessment strategy and guides for senior managers, lecturers and students.

#### **Managing Effective Student Assessment (MESA) Benchmarking Club**

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/799.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/799.htm)

#### **Case Study 1 – The diversity of assessment**

Stuart is currently on the first year of a modular degree programme and has to study ten modules over the year. Although he is only half way through the academic year, Stuart feels as if he has come across every assessment method in the world. For instance, for one of the year-long modules he is required to build a portfolio; in the statistics module he has to undergo regular computer-aided assessment; for one of the strategy modules he has to do a presentation on video, as well as create a poster based on some group work. In one of his optional modules, the module leader, drawing upon popular media culture, randomly allocated small groups to take part in a quiz – based on 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' – at the start of each seminar. The method by which Stuart achieved his assessments also varied. For the poster group work, the students were allowed to select their own groups and Stuart opted to join with his slightly wayward friends. In contrast, for the quiz he was allocated to a group which included two Chinese students and a Cypriot. During this exercise, Stuart seemed to spend most of his time describing the concept of the show 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' to the international students.

Assessment is of concern to both staff and students. One way of helping to raise issues and offer solutions is to run joint workshops with both staff and students. This can help both sides to understand the assessment issues from another perspective. A recent Academy Benchmarking Club 'Managing Effective Student Assessment (MESA)', containing eight institutions interested in collaborating to improve their assessment practice, produced a series of case studies based on real issues that they had encountered. For example in case study one (listed on p.10) colleagues are asked to discuss: What are the key issues for the student? And what are the key issues for the institution? Some additional contextual information is then provided about both the student and the institution, which enables participants at a workshop to consider the learning points from the case study and also the key points emerging.

One Welsh institution is looking at ways of utilising the JISC plagiarism detection service. Plagiarism is becoming an increasing problem and one that needs addressing with all students early on in their course. Stefani and Carroll (2001) say that students will best understand what constitutes plagiarism if they actively work with whatever definitions they are offered. One way to achieve this (and to encourage discussion) is to ask them for examples or provide your own.

## Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions

### A Briefing on Plagiarism

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full\\_record&section=generic&id=10](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record&section=generic&id=10)

“Jane lifted six paragraphs from the Web the night before her essay was due because she was pressed for time and when challenged she says she believed the information on the Web was free.” Did she intend to plagiarise? Did she in fact plagiarise? “John bought an essay from a commercial supplier.” Did he intend to plagiarise? “Abu and Raphael did the work together and each handed in the answers as his own work.” Did their collusion constitute plagiarism? (Stefani and Carroll, 2001)

## 4b. International Issues

Another key trend was in relation to international issues with two main themes emerging. One was concerned with supporting staff and internationalising the curriculum, while the other aspect had the specific aim of increasing the number of international students.

The curriculum is a fundamental part of the students' learning experience and as such a focus on reviewing its content is to be welcomed. As our students become more diverse, reviewing the relevance of the curriculum to today's world is to be welcomed. In particular with the increasing number of international students, it would be timely to ensure that the curriculum reflects the diversity of our student population. A number of institutions mentioned international students.

- *The University has embarked upon a strategy of internationalization. This is a broad initiative which will encompass activities such as student and staff recruitment, the curriculum and its delivery, staff and estates development, and more. Pursuing such a strategy will not only enrich the experience of the University's students and staff but also contribute to the Welsh Assembly Government's goal of creating a vibrant, diverse and equitable HE sector and wider community.*

Other institutions wanted to:

- *Ensure that the language and learning needs of international students are properly supported. They also wanted to engage with issues arising from e.g. Bologna process, including ECTS and the Diploma Supplement*
- *Increase participation in international activities through the transfer of expertise and technology between the University and institutions overseas and the provision of high quality learning opportunities in the University and overseas*
- *Review support services for overseas students.*

Three institutions had a specific aim to increase the numbers of international students:

- *Specific targets will be set in relation to international student recruitment*
- *Continue to recruit residential students from the UK and overseas*
- *One of the strategic developments is to increase the proportion of international students at the College, targeting Asia in particular.*

Some institutions might like to consider ways in which internationalising the curriculum and supporting international students could be enhanced.

**Leeds Metropolitan University international strategy (2004–08)**

**[www.leedsmet.ac.uk/internat/faculty/docs/Internationalisation%20final.doc](http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/internat/faculty/docs/Internationalisation%20final.doc)**

Internationalisation is... “the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service of an institution.”<sup>1</sup>

“Diversity requires not only opening up access to classrooms and computers but to one another, to our languages, our cultures and ourselves.”

Professor Simon Lee, Vice-Chancellor

In 2004 LMU used the opportunity of the Change Academy to help plan how it might achieve its strategic goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Knight, J. & de Wit, H. (1995), 'Strategies for internationalisation of higher education: historical and conceptual perspectives' in de Wit (ed). *Strategies for internationalisation of higher education*, EAIE, Amsterdam

## 5. Employability

Employability is a well developed part of every strategy. The very successful links with GO Wales were clearly evidenced and with a variety of interesting and varied outcomes.

One institution had a specific target to ensure that by 2009-10, 96% of their graduates (currently 94.2%) are able to gain employment or take up further education opportunities upon conclusion of their studies.

Another institution was committed to designing curricula which are vocational, performance-centred and attuned to developments in professional practice. Innovative practice includes developing a wide range of potential placements in the fields of community music and school music education and undertaking a pilot scheme which offered 10 students an opportunity to shadow peripatetic instrumental teachers.

Other aspects of the employability agenda included maintaining and developing close partnerships with industry and employers, responding to their needs by equipping graduates with the high level skills and flexibility they will require in future life to adapt to an ever-changing workplace.

This included promoting skills development, a university-wide PDP, increasing opportunities for work placements, online means of engaging students in career management activities, developing closer links between the careers service and the academic departments and extending embedded CPD to a wider range of second-year students.

One institution had 'Enhancing the employability and lifelong learning skills of its graduates' as one of its two key aims, with the following objectives:

- *Relevant programmes of study – supported by robust links with industry and professions*
- *Raising student aspirations*
- *Developing a culture of entrepreneurship*
- *Work-based learning opportunities*
- *Emphasis on key transferable skills*
- *Students' awareness of characteristics and requirements of chosen sector*
- *Ability to career plan*
- *Students' self awareness and ability to identify their own development needs.*

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded a project on employability called Enhancing Student Employability Skills Co-ordination Team (ESECT). As a result of this project and the employability work of the Academy a significant number of resources have been produced and all are available for downloading at: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/employability.asp](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/employability.asp).

The Academy Subject Centres have a number of resources relating to employability, including *Pedagogy for employability*, *Work-based learning and employability*, *Employability audit* and *The Role of card sorts in employability learning*.

### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

#### **Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES) GEES Employability Profiles**

[www.gees.ac.uk/projtheme/emp/empprofs.htm](http://www.gees.ac.uk/projtheme/emp/empprofs.htm)

This resource pack contains profiles of the subject disciplines of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES), written from an 'employability' perspective. The profiles are intended to assist students in articulating the subject dimension of what they have to offer employers, i.e. what their degree was about and what qualities it has helped them develop.

The employability profiles are not intended to be definitive descriptions of the GEES subjects. Rather, they are summaries that are designed to emphasise the skills, knowledge and competencies our students can offer employers.

#### **Scottish Enhancement theme: Employability**

[www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/defaultpage121bc1.aspx?pageID=165](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/defaultpage121bc1.aspx?pageID=165)

In addition Scotland has employability as one of its two enhancement themes for the academic year 2005–06 and resources are available on the Scottish Enhancement theme website, including a number of case studies on employability-related good practice from Scottish HEIs. Examples of case studies include:

Integrating Employability, PDP and Work-based Learning within the Curriculum  
Anne Gifford and Jane Robertson, University of Paisley

Curriculum Design for Employability  
Dr Sara Lodge, School of English, University of St Andrews

Managing Voluntary Organisations: Integrating Theory and Practice through the 'Learning Journey'  
Eleanor Burt, School of Management, and Colin Mason, SALTIRE, University of St Andrews

Other interesting institutional features in the Welsh strategies included an 'Employability Champions Group' within each school where such a champion is responsible for furthering the agenda, reporting to the Learning and Teaching panel, and where Subject Consultative Boards were encouraged to include representatives from associated employers in all vocational programme areas. This has also been a successful practice in Scotland where institutional champions have met to share practices as part of the employability enhancement agenda.

## **5a. Personal Development Planning (PDP)**

A key trend in all the strategies is the development of personal development planning (PDP). Many institutions had already developed a pilot scheme and were now rolling this out across the student population. In support of PDPs, most strategies mentioned the development and integration into the curriculum of a variety of skills which included critical analysis, logical reasoning, learning through reflection, fluent written skills and communication and presentation skills.

### **The Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)**

**[www.recordingachievement.org](http://www.recordingachievement.org)**

CRA is a UK-wide network-based organisation and a registered educational charity. It seeks to “promote the awareness of recording achievement and action planning processes as an important element in improving learning and progression throughout the world of education, training and employment”. The Academy has contracted CRA to provide a range of services to help institutions develop and implement their PDP practice.

Examples of support:

PDP-UK Network **[PDP-uk-Network@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:PDP-uk-Network@jiscmail.ac.uk)**

(UK-wide email network for practitioners and people responsible for implementing PDP policy)

Bimonthly newsletter to help institutions keep abreast of developments

Case studies of PDP practice

Working Papers engaging with development issues e.g.

e-portfolios in post -16 learning in the UK: developments, issues and opportunities

Progress files: are we achieving our goal?

Regional meetings around the UK

### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

#### **Guides for Busy Academics**

**[www.heacademy.ac.uk/963.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/963.htm)**

1. Personal Development Planning
2. PDP and Programme Specification
3. Using PDP to help students gain employment
4. Learning through reflection
5. Enhancing student learning through voluntary work
6. Connecting PDP to employer needs and the world of work

In addition the Academy’s Subject Centres are now building subject-specific resources to support PDP practice.

However, recognising the changes required in teaching in order to develop these skills and competencies and the changes required in feedback and assessment are key to the successful embedding of these skills. These changes are difficult to achieve within a short time span.

## 6. Welsh medium

Welsh medium provision was mentioned in nearly all strategies with some making cross-reference to their more detailed Welsh medium plans and Welsh Language Schemes. In general, institutions noted their intention to increase the numbers of students undertaking some element of their course through the medium of Welsh and, in this context, to review current Welsh medium provision and establish opportunities for further development. The Academy will be working with HEFCW and the Welsh Medium Teaching Development Centre to determine the ways in which the Academy can support the Welsh medium agenda both through the Subject Centres and cross-subject and staff development activity.

Some of the Subject Centres have already been engaged with Welsh medium activity. For example Escalate (the Subject Centre for Education) is funding two projects - see the two boxes below.

### **Welsh-language access technology interface: enabling a fuller educational experience through the medium of Welsh for blind and partially-sighted students**

Blind and partially-sighted people are able to use computer systems through the use of access software. This software can be used to magnify the contents of the computer monitor or it can be used to speak the contents of the computer monitor. This enables the blind or partially-sighted user to email, word-process, access the Internet and use many other software packages. Blind students studying through the medium of Welsh, or those studying the Welsh language, who are using speech output as their method of knowing what is on the computer screen are hampered by access software that has been written for the English language rather than the Welsh language.

The interface to the access software is used to control a large number of features. In addition there are a number of items of spoken information. These are currently said in English but are difficult to understand when spoken by a Welsh speech output system and, in any case, it is incongruous to be learning Welsh or using the medium of Welsh with occasional words spoken in English. Contact Dr Janet Pritchard for further details. ([eds068@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:eds068@bangor.ac.uk))

[www.escalate.ac.uk/1505](http://www.escalate.ac.uk/1505)

### **Bilingual teaching in ITET in HEIs in Wales**

Courses within ITET (initial training of teachers) in Wales are provided through the medium of both Welsh and English. This project is investigating the scope for providing such courses within a bilingual mode. It builds on work developed by Canolfan Bedwyr (a research and development centre at the University of Wales, Bangor) into bilingualism within education in Wales. In particular the project will allow the sharing of good practice and develop appropriate models for bilingual provision within the sector.

The expected outcomes of the initiative will include an account of the experiences shared by the institutions involved in the form of a bilingual booklet (Welsh and English) together with their perceptions of agreed good practice.

[www.escalate.ac.uk/resources/bilingualitetwales](http://www.escalate.ac.uk/resources/bilingualitetwales)

## 7. e-Learning

A significant trend is the concentration of resources towards e-learning. An increasing number of institutions are investing in the implementation of a virtual learning environment (VLE). This includes developing a VLE or utilising an existing platform such as Blackboard. One institution was keen to develop its VLE to include students from the rural community. There was also a focus on blended learning and using technology for efficiency. How efficiency gains are to be achieved is sometimes not clear and in most cases a cost benefit analysis will be required. Across the UK, institutions are redesigning space in connection with e-learning. A Joint Information Systems Committee project is looking at how innovative technologies are influencing the design of physical learning spaces in the post-16 sector ([www.ldu.bham.ac.uk/espaces/](http://www.ldu.bham.ac.uk/espaces/)).

### **Study on how innovative technologies are influencing the design of physical learning spaces in the post-16 sector**

The University of Birmingham has received JISC funding under the JISC e-Learning Programme, [www.jisc.ac.uk/elearning\\_innovation.html](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/elearning_innovation.html) to report upon the ways in which learning technologies are influencing the design of physical learning spaces in further and higher education institutions.

All universities, higher education institutes, colleges of further education and sixth form colleges were invited to contribute to the project by completing a survey. A hard copy of this survey was sent to senior management teams for them to pass on to the most appropriate person. The hard copy was primarily for information as we preferred an electronic version of the survey with any additional information included by email.

The final report will be available on the project website.

Project Manager: Steve Hewett

Blended learning was also being explored. One institution was seeking to make all programmes available in all modes of study by producing open learning materials and making it easier for students to transfer from one mode of study to another. They were also adopting a single platform for the delivery of distance learning programmes. The Economics Subject Centre has a new chapter in its handbook for economics lecturers entitled 'Online communication using discussion boards', with details at: [www.economicnetwork.ac.uk/handbook/discussionboards/](http://www.economicnetwork.ac.uk/handbook/discussionboards/).

One way of using the technology to enhance learning and teaching was by a regime of systematic identification and promulgation of best practice including a learning and teaching/QE good practice website with links to online debating facilities in Blackboard. This includes items fed back from external examiners and QAA. In addition one Centre for e-Learning will further develop regimes for the production of exemplar e-learning materials and learner support interfaces. Additional resources to support e-learning are available at: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/e-learning.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/e-learning.htm) and include five guides for Senior Managers, Heads of Department, Teaching Staff, Learning Technologists and Support Staff respectively.

### **Supporting sustainable e-learning**

**[www.heacademy.ac.uk/SSeLF.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/SSeLF.htm)**

The Supporting Sustainable e-learning Forum brings together a range of staff from with the UK HE and FE community to disseminate good practice and facilitate discussion of salient issues. Presentations from previous SSeLF events and details of the 2005 events are available by following the link above.

These developments, however, require a commitment in resources and buy-in from staff via staff development activities. This has staff development implications and requires time to enable staff to attend workshops. Most institutions had allocated resources to this area.

## 8. Equality, diversity and student support

A very positive trend seen in learning and teaching strategies is the commitment of institutions to supporting diversity within the student population. This work clearly has strong connections to the work of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU). Some institutions have chosen to focus particularly on support mechanisms for students with disabilities with a well-defined relationship between student support and staff development. Institutions were also being flexible about support requirements by offering dyslexia support and study support in the evening for part-time students. Equipment and software were being enhanced to further support the learning environment of students with disabilities. Some institutions had a focus on reviewing induction, retention and career skills.

Another recognisable trend is to integrate the support work of academics and support services; a number of institutions were reviewing central support services and how they could enhance their role and work more collaboratively across an institution. One institution wants to refine the way it gains students' views and opinions and to achieve this with greater coherence across the University. It also intends to strengthen ways in which feedback is provided to students on how the institution has responded to their interests and concerns. It has recently appointed a student conciliator at senior level to assist in the resolution of problems. The aim is to provide change indicators towards the best possible student experience. Resources in support of widening participation can be downloaded at: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/199.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/199.htm)

Another trend is to improve the physical environment, recognising that this can have a positive influence on students and their learning. For example, one institution was reviewing its estates management strategy and it has recently established a new Estates Development Committee. In particular, the university is engaged in a fundamental review of the landscape of the campus with the purpose of improving the environment and enhancing the facilities for staff and students who are disabled.

It was encouraging to see the number of institutions who wanted to listen to the student voice by involving them in joint staff and student workshops and campus-wide questionnaires. Some institutions wanted to find out what forms of support students required, while others wanted to undertake audits of student skills requirements. These various methodologies will then provide information enabling resources to be focused in the required areas. It would be useful to share the content of some of these questionnaires not only to save time, but also share and benchmark outcomes. Institutions could then contextualise these questionnaires as appropriate.

## **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

### **Equity and diversity**

Widening participation brings with it challenges of equity for diverse groups of students. But good teaching and learning practices tend to be good for all students, so as we seek to improve our practice for some, all should benefit. One project which sought to enhance the quality of learning of disabled students has been led by Mary Fuller at the University of Gloucestershire: 'Seeking parity of learning experience'.

### **Meeting the challenge: managing equity and diversity in higher education**

The Meeting the Challenge resource pack has been developed by Coventry University and the University of Warwick, with funding from HEFCE's Good Management Practice Fund. The aim of the pack, which comprises a film and accompanying booklet, is to raise awareness and stimulate discussion about staff equality and diversity issues.

Project leader: Karen Ross

### **'Widening participation: mature entry to full-time higher education in the UK'**

This article by Stella Green of UCAS briefly explores data collected by UCAS on successful UK applicants to full-time undergraduate higher education – focusing in particular on the mature cohort – to examine the extent to which access to higher education really is widening.

## 9. Staff and professional development including enhancing teaching through research and scholarship

There is a trend towards supporting the professional development of all staff who support student learning. A growing area is developing the scholarship of learning and teaching or pedagogical research. This is a significant way of gathering evidence-based practice and could make a very real contribution to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the learning and teaching strategy.

Some HEIs are examining the relationship between teaching and research. This includes making the benefits of research strengths more explicit to undergraduate teaching and bringing the elements of teaching and research into closer proximity. One institution proposes that in consultation with schools the Learning and Teaching Panel seek to clarify the features of research-led learning and teaching and explore how this can be strengthened within the different disciplinary contexts. In due course this should then be incorporated in school learning, teaching and assessment strategies. There are a number of Academy resources that are relevant to this area, including 'A guide to the research evidence on teaching-research relations' and 'Linking research and teaching in departments'.

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?section=generic&process=filter\\_fields&type=all&id=20&history=](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?section=generic&process=filter_fields&type=all&id=20&history=)

### **An FDTL project on linking teaching with research in planning, land and property management and building at Oxford Brookes University**

[www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/planning/LTRC/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/planning/LTRC/)

This project identifies, develops and disseminates good practice in linking teaching with research and consultancy in town and country planning, land and property management and building. It enhances research and teaching synergy within and between the three disciplines, and reinforces subject-specific findings within the consortium departments. The project enhances institutional learning and teaching strategies and ensures long term sustainability.

One institution aims to establish an information base of current research and scholarly activity and disseminate the information among academic staff. Additionally it wants to disseminate information about relevant research provided by Palatine, the Subject Centre for Dance, Drama and Music.

Scholarship and research are used in a number of institutions as a means of improving teaching. An interesting trend is to have a named Centre to support this aspect of work. One institution is developing a Centre for Pedagogic Research to support and encourage both discipline and generic pedagogical research. Another institution has a Research Institute for Enhancing Learning within the School of Education which supports research into teaching. A third institution is setting up a Centre of Excellence in Learning Development. This new Centre will incorporate, co-ordinate and further develop three existing strands of excellence in the form of the Learning and Teaching Office, the International Centre for e-Learning and HE Pedagogy Research and Evaluation.

Other institutions wished to:

- *encourage research into pedagogy and research-led teaching and its public dissemination both internally and externally*
- *develop in collaboration with appropriate outside groups, including the Academy, subject and discipline-specific clusters to research into and develop key aspects of the curriculum*

- *propose that the Learning and Teaching Panel should in consultation with schools seek to clarify the features of research-led learning and teaching and explore how this can be strengthened within the different disciplinary contexts. In due course this should then be incorporated in school learning, teaching and assessment strategies.*

Other ways of developing scholarship are by funding research projects into aspects of learning and teaching and funding attendance at conferences. Institutions might also like to think about additional ways of developing the scholarship of learning and teaching such as funding research assistants to conduct and evaluate research on developmental activities as part of the learning and teaching strategy, establishing Teaching Fellowships to conduct pedagogic research and supporting collaboration with research-centred organisations. This work may require staff development activities to improve research skills.

Emphasis was clearly given to supporting both new and experienced staff. Most institutions specifically mentioned the Academy-accredited programmes for new staff. A few institutions mentioned research training for postgraduate students and developing undergraduate/postgraduate research skills. Peer observation of teaching was being developed in 50% of institutions and is seen as a valuable way of sharing effective practices. Institutions may wish to think of extending peer observation to enable staff from one discipline area to observe teaching in a very different discipline area, or neighbouring institutions to observe each others' teaching.

#### **Academy resources that might be of interest to institutions**

##### **Peer observation of teaching (POT)**

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/988.htm](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/988.htm)

Peer observation of teaching is increasingly used in UK higher education to enhance learning and teaching practice and respond positively to external review. Even reluctant participants have reported benefits, including incremental changes arising from constructive feedback by trusted colleagues and new techniques adapted from observing others. More importantly, there is some evidence that discussion of mutual observation of teaching has encouraged reflective learning and may form part of longer-term CPD plans.

The Higher Education Academy has identified a range of developmental models of POT used in higher education in the UK and internationally. These and further resources on POT are located in the POT Resources section of the Academy's website. Three examples are featured:

Teaching process recall  
Peer pairing  
Sharing excellence

You can also visit the Higher Education Academy Education Subject Centre (ESCALATE) which presents models involving external sampling and panels. It also seeks to bring together and synthesise common guidance and advice for developmental purposes.

Much emphasis was placed on the various ways in which staff development is encouraged. This is not surprising given the UK debate about professional standards and this emphasis is to be welcomed. One institution had a specific objective to:

- *develop the skills of academic and support staff by providing staff development opportunities that promote professional development, sharing of good practice and research into the development of learning and teaching.*

To illustrate this variety one institution listed a number of specific developments which included:

- *Continuing to develop teaching in higher education programmes for probationary staff*
- *Departmental based staff development on a needs basis*
- *Development of a Learning Leadership programme for mid-career staff*
- *Provision of support and advice to staff in pedagogical and technical areas e.g. IS for e-learning*
- *Peer observation of teaching*
- *A teaching and learning innovations and best practice event*
- *Space and permission to discuss / share teaching and learning issues*
- *Welsh medium Teaching Fellows*
- *Evaluation of the implementation of internal Teaching Fellowship schemes.*

Notwithstanding the value of workshops, conferences and other forms of event, the kind of developmental experience that is integrated with day to day activity (such as external examining, being on a validation panel) can be undervalued. In the national consultation on professional standards, one HEI in Scotland reported that it had modified its learning and teaching strategy to give greater attention to and recognise this kind of activity.

The following table illustrates the variety of ways that Welsh institutions (listed here as 1 – 12) are supporting and developing staff as reported in their strategy.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Support for new staff	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√
Support for postgraduates	√		√					√	√			
Department-based activities		√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	
Support for mid-career/ experienced staff		√			√	√	√		√	√		√
e-learning		√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Peer observation	√			√	√				√			√
Innovation fund			√	√	√	√						√
Teaching Fellows/Teaching a7 Learning Co-ordinators/ Champions		√						√				
Develop/review staff development programmes	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Improve or extend dissemination activities	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Promote links with the Academy/accreditation	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	
Support for innovative teaching		√		√	√		√	√	√		√	

The range of activities for enhancing students' experiences would suggest that there is a wide agenda for pedagogic training, in for example the fields of personal development planning, blended learning, employability and entrepreneurial skills. Some institutions are intending to support academic staff in their efforts to enhance learning and teaching by providing funds to support innovation. Another trend is to establish a range of forums to facilitate the exchange of ideas and innovative practice to be disseminated to the wider academic community.

Some institutions are establishing the postgraduate programme for new staff as a compulsory part of probation, by, for example, the programme being linked to the probationary compact. One PG Certificate is now being developed as an e-learning programme for nurse educators in the rural community in Wales. An intranet site is being developed to embrace e-learning support for the CPD of staff and to support the delivery of the PGCPD programme.

A number of institutions made reference to the Higher Education Academy and its Subject Centres with an explicit aim to foster strong links. One institution made reference to a joint research project that had received funding from a Subject Centre. Many of the programmes in Wales to support new staff are accredited by the Academy or are in the process of being accredited.

A positive trend was to include the role of support staff in the strategy: For example, the role of the careers staff was mentioned in relation to employability strategies, technical and information staff in relation to e-learning, while one institution identified recognising and rewarding academic and support staff as a key priority. Another identified as a major priority the need to raise awareness among all staff and to include students in workshop activities.

In another institution support staff (Library Information Services, Quality Officer, Learning Technologists, Careers, Staff Development Unit, Estates Department, Media Services, Student Support Department) play a key role and are integrated into the action plan. Evidence from Australia indicates that when all categories of staff are involved collaboratively in supporting the student learning experience then students feel more supported and retention of first-year students increases. This is especially so when the induction process is planned and delivered by groups of staff representing different categories across an institution and when the induction process is delivered over a longer period.

## 10. Recognition and reward

Recognising and rewarding staff is a key way to enhance the status of learning and teaching. One of the strongest ways to recognise the value of teaching is to ensure that new staff value teaching and show potential as excellent teachers.

A growing trend is for HEIs to highlight recognising and rewarding staff. Distinguished teaching awards were cited as one way of rewarding staff. Internal development funds are also being made available, with the individuals instigating such projects receiving on-going advice and guidance and being helped to disseminate their projects across the university. An annual conference can showcase innovative and excellent practice. Institutional Teaching Fellowship awards are made on an annual basis in another institution.

There is real scope in this area for institutions to be creative in developing a range of mechanisms to recognise and reward good practice. These could include the following:

- Changing promotion criteria to include teaching
- Allowing teaching excellence to be the sole criterion for promotion in some circumstances
- Developing the ability of staff to collate and provide evidence in teaching portfolios
- Developing the sophistication of promotion panels in making judgements on evidence about teaching
- Taking teaching competence into account at interviews and appointments
- Emphasising teaching in application forms
- Asking students to nominate an excellent teacher
- Making teaching competence a requirement for probation
- Having teaching-focused reviews
- Introducing teaching-focused promotion opportunities such as Readerships and Professorships which emphasise teaching achievements
- Teaching awards and prizes
- Titles carried for one year
- Additional pay or increments
- Publicity, events and conferences that showcase excellence
- Titles such as 'Teaching Fellow' and 'Teaching Co-ordinator'. These titles may be time limited with a focus on a specific project
- Encouragement, practical and financial support to write for publication
- Financial support to attend conferences both in the UK and overseas
- Funding for a course team to develop an aspect of innovative teaching
- Financial support to a course team to enable another course team to embed the innovation.

In the Open University publication *'Recognising and Rewarding Excellent Teaching'*, Gibbs and Habeshaw (2003) list five approaches to recognition and reward:

### 1. Recognition of teaching in appointments and probation

- a. Recognition through appointment mechanisms, emphasising teaching in
  - i. advertisements and job specifications
  - ii. application forms
  - iii. selection procedures
- b. Recognition through probation mechanisms
  - i. Requiring qualifications or ILT membership for probation
  - ii. Teaching-focused review or appraisal for probation

### 2. Rewarding through promotion and pay

- a. Reward through promotion
  - i. Clear criteria
  - ii. Different criteria for different levels of promotion

- iii. New requirements for the submission of evidence about teaching
  - iv. Peer review of teaching prior to consideration of evidence by a promotions panel
  - v. Development of the judgment of members of the promotions panel
  - vi. Mechanism for balancing the weight placed on excellence in teaching and research
  - vii. Requiring evidence concerning teaching for all promotions
  - b. Reward through increased pay
  - c. Reward through creating teaching-orientated career paths
  - d. Parallel teaching and research career paths
  - e. New teaching-orientated senior positions
3. Recognition and increased status through awards and titles
- a. Teaching prizes and awards
  - b. Titles
4. Recognition through new teaching-related roles
- a. Teaching development roles
  - b. Recognition of teaching development activity in duty allocations
  - c. Funding for leadership of development projects
  - d. Membership of institution-wide development teams
  - e. Membership of 'Teaching Academies'
5. Recognition and reward for teaching-related staff

Recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching can go some way to addressing the imbalance between teaching and research. This issue is clearly on the agenda of a number of institutions and some sharing of effective practices could strengthen this aspect of the learning and teaching strategy.

## 11. Disseminating and embedding effective practice

Dissemination can take a number of different forms. For example, work can be written up for in-house newsletters or presented at faculty seminars, lunchtime events or institutional Learning and Teaching Conferences. One institution runs three whole staff conferences per year. Some UK institutions produce impressive booklets of innovations, but it is not always clear how these impact on student learning or how they persuade others to integrate the practices that they are promoting into their own practices.

Dissemination can involve three stages:

- **Dissemination for awareness.** This is where other staff can find out about the innovation or practice. This may be achieved by reading a case study or article or listening to a presentation. It does not automatically lead to colleagues or course teams adopting the practice.
- **Dissemination for understanding.** This is where staff understand what is involved in the innovation and can make judgements about how it might work for their context and group of students. This may involve active involvement in a workshop or visiting a colleague or seeing the innovation in practice.
- **Dissemination for use.** Here the person takes up the innovation and adapts it for their own use and course. It may require the support of others, via for example a Special Interest Group (SIG) or a virtual network. It may also need the person to develop new skills. This last stage is the most difficult to achieve, but the one that has a more lasting impact. (Gibbs, Holmes & Segal, 2002)

One institution claims a high priority is placed on dissemination of good practice with mechanisms such as peer review of teaching, school-based events and a one-day Learning and Teaching conference. A teaching and learning development fund is targeted towards developing the Learning and Teaching conference, support for the student retention strategy, supporting the implementation of the MLE, embedding the role of Learning and Teaching 'Champions' in schools and the furtherance of school-based specific needs. The institution is encouraging and supporting staff to take an active part in devising pedagogical research projects, presenting papers at conferences and disseminating published outcomes.

The transfer of innovative practice that has been developed in one context to another is a challenging issue, but the examples listed all tended to focus on internal dissemination at both the institutional and faculty level. The hope is that the Academy Welsh Strategies Conference planned for Autumn 2005 may be one mechanism for enhancing the dissemination between and across institutions in Wales and for sharing successful examples of how such transfers have been accomplished.

## 12. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can help institutions to analyse the effectiveness of the learning and teaching strategy. In the strategies there was evidence of monitoring, and in most cases clear targets against which progress can be measured were given. Particular responsibilities were mentioned and allocated to a named committee, role or person. Milestones are helpful if the activities are spread over a certain time frame. Most institutions had a Learning and Teaching Committee or equivalent that had a key role in monitoring, with a senior member of staff chairing the committee. Some institutions undertook monitoring throughout the year, feeding back in a formative way.

One institution engages the staff unions in the design and implementation of these policies. They also engage external stakeholders in the development of policies and processes and take account of experiences in other sectors. This engagement of external stakeholders is to be welcomed and could usefully be adopted by other institutions.

Monitoring and evaluation are often combined. Yet they are very different processes. Monitoring can be a relatively easy process; the more difficult task is how that information is used and then fed back to help future planning. Only a few institutions mentioned evaluation and its impact on student learning. One such institution highlighted its commitment to institutional research but it is not clear how learning then connects to decision-making. Another institution indicated it was going to compare its performance through a peer group benchmarking club. Demonstrating impact on student learning is not easy to achieve, as multiple factors interact in different ways. Institutions seemed reluctant to admit where areas of weakness had been identified, yet the health of our education system depends on a culture of criticality.

Evaluation can take place at both the institutional level and the departmental or faculty level. A small number of institutions mention developing a pedagogical research culture. Three institutions have set up a centre to support this work. Some of the output from these centres could focus on aspects of the strategy to see if they are having an impact on student learning. Developing a culture where the scholarship of learning and teaching can take place and is recognised and rewarded is one way of encouraging this evaluation and a way to engage staff in this process.

Interestingly, no institution mentioned the use of either an internal or external evaluator. The impact on student learning was rarely highlighted. Using an external person can shed a new light on issues and highlight areas for development that may not have been recognised. One suggestion may be to use a colleague from a neighbouring institution to act as a 'critical friend'. Few institutions linked or referred back to the previous strategy. When this was done clear developments over time could be seen. One institution headed a section 'Success of strategy to date' and listed the outcomes of the previous strategy in terms of success factors. This was a really good way of highlighting what good work had gone on and would help other staff to see achievements. Another institution gave an account of 'Summary of progress resulting from the previous strategy' and 'significant activities in progress'.

## Reflections

It is clear that many innovative and effective forms of learning and teaching practices are taking place across Welsh higher education. However, on the basis of the documentation alone, it is difficult to provide any insights on the innovations or effective practices as the strategies had not been designed with this purpose in mind. If institutions believe that this would be a worthwhile product of such an exercise then perhaps in future institutions might highlight one or two case studies of effective practices arising from the learning and teaching strategy that could be shared across Welsh institutions. We would welcome discussing how this might be achieved when a senior Academy member visits the institution in the Autumn.

Reflection on the strategies indicates a number of significant trends that would be worthy of exploring further at the Academy Welsh Strategies Conference on 1 December 2005. These key trends include:

- Quality Management
- Curriculum development and innovation
- Recognition and rewards
- Assessment.

## Appendix I

As the strategies were presented in different ways, comparing issues and highlighting innovative practices was not always easy. Where action plans were provided they were very useful. Institutions might like to consider if the following set of headings help in future review and planning of the learning and teaching strategy:

- Institutional context and culture
- How the strategy was produced
- Strategic goals of the institution
- Infrastructure and resources to support the strategy
- Key targets
- Significant innovations produced as 1 or 2 case studies
- Implementation strategy
- Coherence and integration of other institutional strategies
- Staff and educational development
- Scholarship and pedagogical research
- Recognition and reward
- Identifying, disseminating and embedding of effective practices
- Links with external agencies, including the Higher Education Academy
- Monitoring against measurable targets, with a time scale for delivery and a named person or group who is responsible for ensuring delivery
- Evaluation – funds or posts might be allocated to this as an integral part of the strategy.

## Appendix 2

In *Implementing learning and teaching strategies* by Gibbs, the concluding chapter offers some questions for review and reflection. The following questions are extracted from that section. We hope they will assist you in developing future work.

**Strategic goals.** Is the institution attempting to change its teaching goals or its way of going about teaching, or is it trying to be better at what it does already? Are new goals understood and widely shared? Is there a clearly understood definition of what 'better' or 'higher' quality means? Is the approach to teaching better informed by pedagogical research?

**Centrally-driven or devolved strategy?** Is there a single, shared direction for all departments, a diversity of goals and priorities across the institution, or a mixture of institutional and departmental goals? Is the learning and teaching strategy managed from the centre, or is it devolved and driven by departments and their goals and interests?

**Communication.** Do all staff know what the strategy is about, understand and share its aims? How are staff consulted on learning and teaching matters? Do all staff need to know about the strategy or is the strategy mainly a tool of management that only managers need to work with? How are the goals of the strategy communicated?

**Professional development.** Is the strategy supported by adequate processes of professional development for all staff? What are the key areas where further professional development is required? What is the take-up of development activities? Are there sections of staff that need further targeting?

**Alignment with other strategies.** Is there alignment and synergy between the learning and teaching strategy and other institutional strategies, or do they operate in parallel and independently? Do the existing processes such as course approval and review, departmental review and personnel decisions reinforce the strategy, ignore it or undermine it? Does the research strategy support the development of teaching?

**Continuation and embedding.** Will the learning and teaching strategy slip away if funding ceases, or is its implementation now embedded in institutional systems and practices?

**Incentives and rewards.** Why would academics take the strategy seriously and engage with it? Are there incentives and rewards for engagement with the strategy? Has the status of teaching, and the level of attention paid to it, been raised? Do staff have incentives to take a more scholarly approach to their teaching?

**Monitoring and evaluation.** What would provide convincing evidence that the strategy is being successful? How do those managing the strategy know that the activities being undertaken are achieving the strategic objectives set? Is teaching being improved as a result of the implementation of the strategy? Is student learning better supported now than five years ago? What are the barriers to progress that need to be addressed?

**Future planning.** What is the next stage in the development and implementation of the strategy? When will the strategy need to be revised? What data will need to be gathered to inform the framing of the revised strategy? What form will the revised strategy take? Can better alignment with research and widening participation be achieved?

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