

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

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**Report of the Auditor General for Wales on the management of sickness absence in further education institutions in Wales**

I am writing to commend to you and your colleagues this report of the management of sickness absence in further education institutions in Wales. Copies of the report are available on the Welsh audit office website ([www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk)) under Reports and Publications, National Reports, 2005 (May). Further printed copies of the report can also be obtained from the Wales Audit Office, 2-4 Park Grove, Cardiff, CF10 3PA.

Whilst this report is directed at the FE sector, HE institutions are also heavily dependent on their staff for delivering their objectives. Therefore the report's findings and examples of good practice in the management of sickness absence and its consequences are equally relevant to HE institutions. The Welsh Assembly Government in its strategic consultation document, *Making the Connections: delivering better services for Wales* (October 2004), explicitly recognizes that the potential benefits for reducing sickness absence and workplace stress are substantial, with a reduction of one day a year sickness absence for each member of staff across the public sector in Wales representing an efficiency gain of around £25 million. It is therefore important that HE institutions manage sickness absence effectively, as well as generally promote and protect the health of their workforce.

A summary of the report is set out on pages 4 to 9 of the document with a summary of the recommendations on page 10. Appendix 2 to the report on page 39 provides examples of good practice in the management of sickness absence whilst Appendix 3 on pages 40 and 41 identifies the basic procedures for the measurement, documentation, management and reporting of sickness absence that should be contained in any sickness absence policy procedures.

I would ask you to provide copies of the report to your Audit Committee together with a statement from your Human Resources committee (or equivalent committee), which identifies your institution's position measured in relation to the recommendations and best practice procedures provided in the report.

If you have any further queries about the report please contact Bethan Owen, Head of Risk Assurance (tel: 029 20682215, email: Bethan.Owen@hefcw.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

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

**PHILIP GUMMETT**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**