

To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales

Reference: W03/01HE
Date: 08 January 2003
Response By: 14 March 2003
Further Information: Linda Tiller (029 2068 2228)
Email: TillerL@elwa.ac.uk

IMPROVING STANDARDS IN POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES: INFORMAL CONSULTATION

As you will be aware from Circular letter W01/94HE, issued in November 2001, the four UK higher education funding bodies are collaborating on a joint project to develop threshold standards for postgraduate research degree programmes. As the first stage of that process, Metcalfe Associates were commissioned to undertake a study leading to the development of a quality framework.

Copies of Metcalfe Associates' report on the study are enclosed with this letter. An introductory section from the funding bodies has been bound in with the report as pages 1-4 of the document.

You will see from the introductory section that the funding bodies have drawn on the report to identify a set of core standards which appear to them to represent the essential minimum for the provision of high quality research degree programmes. Institutions are invited to comment on the proposed core standards and on a number of other issues arising from the report. The particular issues on which views are sought are set out in paragraph 15 of the introductory section on page 4 of the document.

Institutions' responses will be used to inform the development of a formal proposal for threshold standards for research degree programmes which the funding bodies plan to issue jointly for full public consultation later this year.

Responses to the present informal consultation should be submitted by email and should be sent directly to Will Naylor (w.naylor@hefce.ac.uk) at the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) by **Friday 14 March 2003**. It would be appreciated if you could also copy your response to Linda Tiller at HEFCW (TillerL@elwa.ac.uk).

PHILIP GUMMETT
Director of Higher Education