

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

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MECHANISMS FOR SUPPORTING EXCELLENT TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales is pleased to announce the key features of the mechanisms for supporting excellent teaching to be adopted for higher education (HE) in Wales from 2004/05 onwards.

I attach a copy of our circular for reference.

This document will also appear on the HEFCW web site.

Yours sincerely

**PROFESSOR PHILIP GUMMETT
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This circular sets out the key features of the mechanisms for supporting excellent teaching to be adopted for higher education (HE) in Wales from 2004/05 onwards.
- 2 It provides a brief analysis of the responses to the HEFCW consultation on the options available to the Council for supporting excellent teaching (Circular W03/41HE), and an outline of related developments to be undertaken throughout 2004.

BACKGROUND

- 3 Circular W03/41HE, '*Consultation on the options available to the Council for supporting excellent teaching*', was published in June 2003. The circular proposed a number of options under the headings of sectoral, institutional and individual staff level developments.
- 4 The consultation process ended late September 2003. Seventeen responses were received. A list of respondents is attached as **Annex A**. The Council's Quality Working Group (QWG), with membership from the HE and FE sectors in Wales and NUS Cymru, analysed a detailed summary of the consultation responses at its meeting in November 2003, attached as **Annex B**.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 5 There was broad support from respondents for the explicit links made between demonstrated excellence in teaching, reward/promotion schemes, and institutional mission statements, strategic planning and human resource strategies. Respondents welcomed the consultation as an attempt to begin to redress the imbalance between teaching and research. Strong support was expressed for making excellence in teaching a demonstrably genuine criterion for promotion. Also welcomed was the recognition that the systematic professional development of academic staff is critical to the continuous enhancement of the student learning experience.
- 6 There was endorsement for prioritising funding at sectoral and institutional levels, with support for collaborative activities highlighted. Respondents commended the options identified for promoting action along pedagogic and subject enhancement themes, and encouraged the Council to utilise existing bodies such as the new Higher Education (HE) Academy (see para.13) when defining an enhancement agenda for higher education across Wales.
- 7 Overwhelming support was also expressed for the continuation of funding through learning and teaching strategies, building on the already successful development arising out of the Council's Learning and Teaching Fund. This mechanism was felt to be sufficiently flexible to take account of variations between institutions in Wales.

COUNCIL RESPONSE

- 8 At its meeting in December 2003 the Council considered and approved the QWG's recommendations, for introduction from 2004/05, for a three-year period in the first instance. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning was notified in December 2003 that the Council had agreed to support the following three mechanisms for rewarding excellent teaching, with particular emphasis upon Institutional Learning and Teaching and Human Resources Strategies, subject to availability of funds:

- a. Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies
- b. Institutional Human Resource Strategies – teaching-led promotions
- c. Thematic and Subject Enhancement

MECHANISMS FOR REWARDING TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies

- 9 The Council has agreed that the existing fund to support institutional learning and teaching strategies (currently £525k) will be enhanced to £800k, to take account of the new requirements for placing greater emphasis on teaching quality and the continuous enhancement of the student learning experience. Institutions will be asked to submit a three year learning and teaching strategy in 2004/05 to access an institutional allocation. A circular inviting institutions to submit updated learning and teaching strategies to the Council will be published in April 2004. It will set out allocations to be made available to institutions in 2004/05 to support the implementation of their strategies.
- 10 It is intended that, subject to the outcome of a separate consultation (Circular W04/07), the new three year learning and teaching strategy will be monitored by means of an annual monitoring statement. This will include a breakdown of expenditure, at the end of each academic year. Subject to the availability of funds, external consultants will be commissioned to analyse and give feedback on the strategies.

Institutional Human Resource (HR) Strategies – teaching-led promotions

- 11 The Council will encourage institutions to reward teaching through their HR strategies, specifically by making excellence in teaching a demonstrably genuine criterion for promotion. In the first instance, the Council will build on its current HR strategies initiative to assist institutions in the development of their HR strategies through the provision of consultancy advice. Institutions will be asked to submit revised HR strategies in 2004, with consultants commissioned to provide independent advice and guidance on their further development, including a specific analysis of how promotion policies will provide evidence of demonstrable commitment to teaching excellence. Promotion plays such a key role in academic career development that this new requirement for evidence that excellence in teaching really does count will, the Council believes, be an important lever for change. The Council would be content to see institutions use some part of their learning and teaching strategy funding to support teaching-led promotions.

Thematic and Subject Enhancement

- 12 The Council has agreed to support sectoral collaboration through Wales-wide enhancement activities, similar to those being introduced in Scotland. This will provide opportunities for the sharing of good practice across Wales, and beyond. The Council has agreed that the new Higher Education Academy should play a role in sectoral thematic and subject enhancement activities in Wales. Evidence of action flowing from these activities would be sought through subsequent institutional learning and teaching strategies.

HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) ACADEMY

- 13 The Council agreed, in principle, in January 2003, to support the formation of the UK-wide HE Academy. The Academy will incorporate the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE), as well as

some aspects of activity hitherto undertaken by the Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA). We expect the HE Academy to play an important part in raising the status and professionalism of teaching in higher education.

- 14 Council officers will, in discussion with the other funding bodies and the HE Academy, agree budget and remit arrangements. The outcome of these discussions will be published in due course.

NEXT STEPS

- 15 A circular clarifying arrangements for the next learning and teaching strategies will be published in April 2004. Details of developments linked to HR strategies and the work of the HE academy in supporting sector wide quality enhancement in Wales will be published in the near future.

ANNEX A

LIST OF RESPONDENTS TO CIRCULAR W03/41HE 'CONSULTATION ON THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COUNCIL FOR SUPPORTING EXCELLENT TEACHING

Cardiff University

Coleg Llandrillo

Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) & The Welsh
Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (WEAUC)

Estyn

Institute of Learning and Teaching In Higher Education Welsh Member's Forum

Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, Wales

NATFHE Wales Office

North East Wales Institute of Higher Education

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Swansea Institute of Higher Education

Trinity College Carmarthen

University of Glamorgan

University of Wales College, Newport

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

University of Wales, Aberystwyth

University of Wales, Bangor

University of Wales, Lampeter

Annex B

OUTCOMES OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COUNCIL FOR SUPPORTING EXCELLENT TEACHING (W03/41HE)

PRINCIPLES FOR REWARDING HIGH QUALITY TEACHING

Question 1: Do you support the principles to be considered by the Council when recognising and rewarding high quality teaching in Wales?

- 1.1 Broad support was expressed for the principles outlined in the consultation document. Many respondents welcomed the explicit links between demonstrated excellence in teaching and reward/promotion schemes, and institutional mission statements, strategic planning and human resource strategies. It was also emphasised that that prioritisation of funding should primarily be at sectoral and institutional levels, rather than focusing upon individuals, with support for collaborative groups requested. Comments were expressed that greater emphasis should be placed on developing and supporting teaching excellence in addition to its recognition and reward.
- 1.2 Concern was however expressed by many that the existing resource allocation to this area was inadequate and additional resources would need to be made available.
- 1.3 The Council was asked to examine whether it had a specific Assembly requirement to explicitly link funding to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) quality. Measures should be considered and implemented, if appropriate.

MECHANISMS FOR REWARDING HIGH QUALITY TEACHING

Question 2: Your views are invited on the pros and cons of each of the options identified, in terms of the impact on the individual, the institution and the sector as a whole.

Sector Level Developments

Option 1: Thematic and Subject Enhancement

- 2.1 Sectoral collaboration through regular Wales-wide enhancement activities for the sharing of good practice across Wales, or even beyond, was supported. Indeed this was the preferred option of many of the respondents. However, it was noted that as institutional priorities are built around different paradigms, careful thought would be needed before a funding mechanism was introduced which supported collaborative teaching and learning activities.
- 2.2 Suggestions were made that HEFCW could provide support at the sectoral level through the dissemination of good practice, feedback sessions or annual conferences based on the

outcomes of QA processes and progress. This would facilitate dialogue in diverse areas. The Council was encouraged to identify current, successful examples of the transferability of good practice and build on those arrangements.

- 2.3 Options to promote action along pedagogic and subject enhancement themes were favoured and a sector wide staff development programme organised by representative groups (such as the ILTHE/LTSN) was supported. Many respondents were anxious that the Council should not duplicate the existing good work undertaken through LTSN and the ILTHE. Assurances were requested that the Council would not duplicate, but continue to utilise these existing bodies for work in this area through the new UK Wide Higher Education Academy
- 2.4 Respondents suggested that they could envisage institutions being invited to submit collaborative proposals for funding from a defined budget. It was suggested that proposals would need to include FE college partners, where appropriate, if they were to be genuinely cross-sector. A small amount of money should also be set aside to compensate individual institutions where staff contribute to proposed Wales wide developments.
- 2.5 Some respondents questioned whether the Council was the most appropriate organisation for setting a sectoral agenda for collaborative activities. They questioned on what basis the Council would evaluate bids from HEIs. Furthermore, the idea of the Council defining a national programme and checking how HEIs are following it was felt unlikely to provide a strategy which promoted creativity and innovation. It was also noted by a smaller number of respondents that sectoral collaboration would be difficult to achieve and implement.

Institutional Level Developments

Option 2: Institutional Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategies

- 3.1 Overwhelming support was expressed for the continuation of funding through Learning and Teaching strategies, building on the already successful development arising out of the HEFCW Learning and Teaching Fund. This option was seen to enable institutions to facilitate internal allocations according to priorities, and reward teaching excellence at appropriate levels. The mechanism was felt to be sufficiently flexible to take account of the variance between institutions in Wales, while also recognising the importance of institutional autonomy.
- 3.2 Respondents did not support direct funding of individual departments, but requested an increased level of institutional funding be allocated through the existing method. The Council was asked to ensure that the funding mechanism established did not disadvantage smaller institutions, which would cast doubt on value for money in relation to the effort necessary in preparing enhancement strategies. The opportunity for institutions to bid to a central fund was seen by some to offer additional opportunities for small institutions to benefit from a greater resource than that available from a 'pro-rata' mechanism.
- 3.3 This option was favoured for driving closer the integration of teaching and learning with institutional and/or HR strategies and may require institutions to define more precisely their proposed learning and teaching developments within institutional aims. Fostering links with institutional HR strategies was seen as being laudable and should form part of institutional strategies where appropriate to them. Respondents were also pleased to see recognition of systematic professional development of academic staff as being critical to the continuous enhancement of the student learning experience.

Option 3: Institutional Human Resource Strategies – Teaching-Led Promotions

- 4.1 Respondents welcomed this proposal as attempting to begin to redress the imbalance between teaching and research promotion. Strong support was expressed for making excellence in teaching a demonstrably genuine criterion for promotion, though this should not mean promotions are ‘teaching led’.
- 4.2 Existing good practice in relation to teaching-led promotions was identified in responses, much of which was linked to promotion schemes. Respondents welcomed additional funding to allow greater institutional flexibility to address local initiatives.
- 4.3 The Council was encouraged by many to allocate a sum of money to each institution (pro rata to student numbers) to reward and promote teaching, however it was noted that this could result in smaller institutions never receiving sufficient funding to make a difference. One institution also felt that it would be difficult to see how the Council could sustain a programme of funding teaching led promotions given the year-on-year cumulative commitment this would entail.
- 4.4 Respondents were divided as to whether this option was best achieved within institutional HR strategies, with those against the proposal arguing that development work by its very nature involves risk and will produce some outcomes of varying success. They stated that this will often be independent of the teaching ability of the individual involved. Such work should not be inhibited by the formality of a staff appraisal interview.
- 4.5 It was identified that there was a real problem in obtaining clear and reliable evidence of teaching quality. It was noted that teaching quantity was easier to judge. Respondents also expressed difficulty envisaging how the Council could compare institutional performance in this area. Furthermore one response pointed out that this option could encourage individual staff competition rather than collaboration.
- 4.6 It was also unclear how this mechanism would ensure that staff who teach at HE and FE level would be included.

Option 4: Institutional Human Resource Strategies – Other Than Promotion

- 5.1 Again respondents highlighted a range of reward mechanisms that did not involve promotion, such as teaching prizes, awards and fellowships that were currently available within institutions across Wales.
- 5.2 It was suggested that financial support should be made available, via institutions, for individuals in developing, applying and sharing pedagogic developments.
- 5.3 Institutions should be provided with a degree of autonomy to decide themselves how any additional resources should be deployed. This financial assistance could also be made available to encourage newer staff to apply for awards, even if they are not yet eligible for promotion.

- 5.4 It was noted that linking funding to specific initiatives could, however, remove institutional flexibility and increase the burden of monitoring and other associated administration on institutions. Furthermore, the Council may have difficulties comparing institutional performance in this area.

Individual Staff Level Developments

Option 5: National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS)

- 6.1 Caution was urged that a Wales only version of NTFS was unlikely to gain widespread visibility in the UK, particularly as the current HEFCE scheme was viewed by respondents as having little impact, and could be seen to be tokenistic, providing little value for money. Another concern was that the HEFCE NTFS raised the profile of the individuals concerned, but did not achieve the wide spread results desired amongst teaching professionals.
- 6.2 No strong views were expressed by respondents as to whether the Council should or should not buy into the National scheme, currently administered by the ILTHE on behalf of HEFCE.

Question 3: You are also asked to consider the most appropriate ways for the Council to release funding linked to each of the options identified.

- 7.1 Pro-rata allocations rather than competitive bidding rounds were preferred by most respondents.
- 7.2 Effective mechanisms for releasing funding were seen by respondents to be primarily linked to institutional Learning and Teaching and HR strategies. It was suggested that bespoke documents should be avoided if possible.
- 7.3 Furthermore, it was suggested that the Council should ensure that an explicit statement be made that institutions would need to demonstrate that academic staff regardless of the contract type (i.e. FT, PT, fixed term) would be included in the various reward schemes.

Question 4:

Are there any other funding mechanisms that should be considered by the Council?

- 8.1 Respondent did not offer any alternative funding mechanism to the Council. One response, however, suggested that the Council could consider the establishment of a staff development college for Wales.