

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

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Response By: No response required

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WELSH VIDEO SERVICES NETWORK: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

I am writing to you to bring you up to date with recent developments in respect of the Welsh Video Services Network (WVN). These include the allocation of further funding to the WVN service following an independent review of the WVN; the introduction of a simultaneous Welsh interpretation service; and the upgrade of certain studio equipment.

The review of the WVN, which was carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research, has now been completed. It identified a great deal of good practice in the use of videoconferencing by many institutions in Wales but also found a need for support to develop a wider use of the studios for teaching and learning activities. The review identified considerable cost savings obtained by using videoconferencing rather than attending meetings. It recommended the extension of the project to enable the benefits of videoconferencing to be fully realised by all institutions. HEFCW has accepted these recommendations and will be continuing to support the WVN, at least until 2008. The report is available on the WVN website <http://www.wvn.ac.uk/review>.

Following a successful pilot, work on the introduction of an interpretation service, which will be known as WVN-Rhwydiaith, is nearing completion. It should be operational for the start of coming academic year. Using the latest Voice over IP (VoIP) technology, the service will allow a single interpreter to cover videoconferences across a number of sites enabling proceedings to be available to participants in a choice of two languages. One videoconferencing studio at each institution will be enabled to use the WVN-Rhwydiaith service. A briefing day, to launch WVN-Rhwydiaith, will be held in mid November. The WVN Support Centre will be contacting institutions directly with details when the arrangements for the briefing day have been finalised.

Some of the equipment in the videoconferencing studios is now outdated. The Council has provided funding, for all centrally funded studios, for the replacement of existing VCR units with DVD/VCR units to enable users to play and record DVDs as well as videos. There will also be software changes which will allow the DVD/VCR units to be controlled using the studio control touch screen which is also being upgraded to provide a bilingual interface. At the same time, additional memory is to be installed into the videoconferencing equipment, which will enable the unit to restart and operate more quickly. The WVN Support Centre will

be contacting the nominated member of staff with responsibility for the studios to arrange for a visit to undertake these upgrades in the next few weeks. During this visit they will also be testing the interactive whiteboards to identify those that need replacing, as it is suspected that a number of the whiteboards have a degenerative fault affecting their accuracy.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the WVN contact at each institution. They should contact the Support Centre if they have queries about the upgrading of equipment or the briefing day for the launch of WVN-Rhwydiaith.. Please contact me if you require further information about the review of the WVN.

Yours sincerely,

Frances Good
Head of Statistics and Information Services