

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

Reference: W06/20HE
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Response By: 21 July 2006
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RACE EQUALITY POLICIES, ACTION PLANS AND REPORTS

Introduction

Further to HEFCW circular W06/15HE *Strategic Planning and Related Requests 2006*, this circular letter reports further on the Council's monitoring arrangements for institutional race equality policies and reports, and notes future arrangements.

Race Equality Policy Annual Reports 2005

I attach feedback on race equality annual reports submitted in 2005. This has been prepared in consultation with the Equality Challenge Unit. However, many of the areas raised in the Council's feedback on 2004 submissions, which was sent to heads of institutions, did not appear to have been taken into account in 2005 reports. This may have been due to the timing of publication last year (March 2005), perhaps post-dating the preparation of some institutions' annual reports. It might also have been due to dissemination processes within institutions, indeed a number of institutional equal opportunities officers were unaware of the feedback last year.

Given the need to reiterate points made last year, rather than preparing a new document, the 2004 document has been expanded to include comments on 2005 submissions. To improve dissemination, this document is being placed on the HEFCW web site and distributed as a circular. However, given the later publication of this feedback in 2006, which may again post-date the preparation of institutional reports, officers have been considering how to improve arrangements to support institutions in preparing and developing race equality policies, action plans and annual reports.

Race Equality Policies, Action Plans and Reports 2006

Recognising the difficulties in preparing specialised feedback; the delays in its publication; and questions raised about the alignment between HEFCW monitoring processes and institutional reporting schedules, we intend to commission specialist consultancy support for institutions in 2006 to analyse documentation submitted and give individualised feedback. This approach will also recognise the wide variation in institutional procedures and practice in terms of compliance with statutory requirements in this area.

The evaluation will be partly designed to ensure that all institutions are now compliant with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA) and identify ways in which they might individually and/or collectively develop. The exercise will also review current approaches and identify good practice across the sector in both race equality and equality and diversity practice more generally.

Circular W06/15HE invited institutions to submit full copies of race equality policies, action plans and annual reports with their strategic plans, **that is by 21 July 2006**. Following analysis of this documentation, it is intended that consultants will visit each institution to discuss current practice in race equality and other areas of equality and explore areas for further development. Individual institutional feedback reports will be prepared on areas which require further attention to ensure compliance with the RRAA; areas of good practice; and possible areas of direction for further development, including taking account of, or aligning with, current and forthcoming legislation in other areas of equality and diversity. It is not intended that policies should be graded but any areas of non-compliance with statutory requirements should be clearly identified.

In addition, consultants will be asked to prepare a sector-wide report on areas of good practice and recommendations for future action to enhance practice, and present this to a sector seminar.

Further information will be circulated in August 2006.

Consultation Outcome

You may be aware that we undertook a Race Equality Impact Assessment in the area of widening access. I am now able to report back to you on the outcomes of the impact assessment and attach a summary of responses. This will be taken into

account in preparing the guidance to institutions on widening access strategies, to be published later this month.

Yours sincerely

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

PHILIP GUMMETT