

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

Reference: W06/33HE
Date: 11 August 2006
Response By: 25 August 2006
Further Information: Cliona O'Neill
Tel: 029 2068 2283
e-mail: cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk

Plans for the National Student Survey and the Teaching Quality Information web-site

1. The National Student Survey (NSS) and Teaching Quality Information (TQI) form part of the Institutional Review: Wales process, and were launched last year following a pilot phase. Both the TQI and the NSS are being reviewed to ensure that they are meeting their objectives and to identify improvements. We also have plans to improve the TQI and NSS in the short term, before the review concludes, responding to early feedback.
2. This letter outlines our plans for TQI and NSS in the short term. The main points, and specific actions for institutions, are as follows:
 - institutions should prepare for the preview and publication of the 2006 NSS results on the TQI web-site in August;
 - to access the more detailed results of the NSS, via the Ipsos MORI Dissemination Web-site, they should return the form at Annex B to Ipsos MORI by **25 August 2006**;
 - we are currently re-commissioning the TQI web-site and it will be relaunched during summer 2007, with a stronger user focus;
 - it is proposed that the NSS will be repeated during 2007;
 - institutions are invited to a conference in England in November to discuss the future of the TQI and NSS (see the enclosed leaflet).
3. More details of our plans for the NSS and TQI are outlined below and in Annex A.

2006 TQI update and 2006 NSS outcomes

4. The TQI web-site (www.tqi.ac.uk) will be updated during August 2006 to include some presentational changes in response to early user feedback, and incorporating the results of the 2006 NSS. The 2006 NSS received a positive endorsement from students, with a 56 per cent response rate. We had expected the response rate to be lower than last year, as Ipsos MORI undertook more limited follow-up by telephone in 2006, because of concerns raised by some students last year that this was intrusive. Nevertheless, a wider range of results will be reported this year on the TQI site, by combining data across the two years of the survey where necessary. More details, including arrangements to preview the results, are at Annex A.
5. More detailed results of the NSS will be available to institutions and student unions via the Ipsos MORI NSS dissemination web-site. To access this information, please sign the form at Annex B and return it to Ipsos MORI by 25 August 2006.

Quality assurance framework review in England

6. The Quality Assurance Framework Review Group (QAFRG) in England is currently evaluating the TQI and NSS initiatives and is due to report by October 2006. The review has considered user reactions to the TQI site, the impact on institutions, and the potential interest of employers in the information. The reports considered by the Group will be available on the HEFCE web site when the QAFRG is published and will be of interest to institutions in Wales.

TQI and NSS developments for 2007

TQI web-site

7. It is clear from the feedback so far that substantial refocusing of the TQI site is needed, to meet the needs of applicants and their advisers. Therefore we are re-commissioning the site, to be relaunched in summer 2007. We intend that the new site will be more focused on users and will be more closely linked to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) web-site. This re-commissioning process may have some implications for institutions, in terms of moving to a new system of uploading reports (see Annex A).
8. In tandem, we are considering some of the data protocols that apply to the TQI site, including the range of subject categories based on the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) that are available to users, the options for aggregating across years and

subjects, and the reliability thresholds. We will consult the sector on any proposed changes to these protocols in autumn 2006, and apply them to the relaunched site.

National Student Survey

9. The NSS will be repeated in 2007 across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and some institutions in Scotland, in collaboration with the National Union of Students. This will establish a three-year dataset that can be used to identify changes in student opinion, and potentially to report on smaller areas of provision by combining data across years. The 2007 survey will have a similar format and timetable to the 2006 survey; we will publish details of the arrangements later this year.

Yours sincerely

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

Philip Gummert