

Annex A. Learning and Teaching Strategy Guidance

Context

1. In 2007 we invited institutions to submit learning and teaching strategies to cover 2007/08 to 2009/10. The Higher Education (HE) Academy's analysis of these strategies concluded that all the strategies were fit for purpose, with a variety of formats used¹. It identified that learning and teaching were in good health in the Welsh HE sector, with institutions paying great attention, and providing considerable resource, to enhancing learning and teaching.
2. The majority of institutions provided strong central direction and regulation within their strategies. Almost all the strategies referred to the importance of student representation in the context of learning and teaching. Institutions were aware of emerging policy contexts in the rest of the UK. The analysis concluded that institutions should be 'well placed to take advantage of demands for workplace learning.'
3. Most strategies included reference to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UK-PSF), with most strategies indicating that continuing engagement with the HE Academy would focus on Academy-accredited PGCert/DipHE programmes and fellowship of the Academy. Only a limited number referred to work with the Academy's Subject Centre network.
4. The analysis identified that the strategies did not provide a full picture of how institutions link teaching and research, and did not tend to fully identify how the learning and teaching strategies linked with other key institutional strategies and policies. Additionally, the strategies contained little information on evaluation.

Initial guidance

5. Your Learning and Teaching Strategy should be a highly strategic document which identifies the institutional aspirations and direction of travel in relation to the learning and teaching experience. As such, it will reflect institutional objectives and activities more broadly than solely those funded by the HEFCW Learning and Teaching Strategy allocations.
6. Your strategy should underpin your institutional strategic plan. It should be consistent with, and link to, related institutional policies and procedures, as detailed earlier in this circular. We expect you to identify the mechanisms by which you will measure progress and success.

¹http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/nations/wales/welsh_IT_Strategies_english_pdf

7. We anticipate that you will set out how the institution plans to respond to Assembly Government policies and priorities, including the delivery of *For Our Future* expectations. Your strategy is the means by which you will ensure these areas develop in a manner according with your institution's market and mission.
8. In developing your strategies we anticipate that you will:
 - Identify clear aspirations;
 - Identify the institutional agenda for actions and direction of travel;
 - Ensure consistency between your institution's mission and its Learning and Teaching Strategy;
 - Identify how the Learning and Teaching Strategy links with other related strategies, approaches and policies;
 - Take account of current and emerging priorities, including how you will contribute to the delivery of *For Our Future* expectations;
 - Indicate how you will take account of existing and emerging Welsh Assembly policies and strategies;
 - Ensure that the strategy complies with legislation relating to equalities, including the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and reflects the objectives and priorities of institutional equality schemes and policies;
 - Make links between the information set required as part of the Institutional Review: Wales process and the Learning and Teaching Strategy;
 - Identify how the strategy and its development fit into your institution's planning and resource allocation process.
9. Your strategy should also clearly identify how it will be monitored and evaluated.
10. We also draw your attention to the Higher Education Academy's web pages on implementing and embedding learning and teaching strategies.

Priorities

11. We see the current and emerging priorities for the HE sector in Wales regarding learning and teaching as including those identified below. These incorporate the *For our Future* objectives relating to the learning and teaching experience, which benefit one or both priorities of social justice and supporting a buoyant economy.

Quality enhancement themes

12. We have asked the HE Academy to co-ordinate work on quality enhancement themes on a pan-Wales basis as part of a programme for *Future directions for Higher Education in Wales*. Your Learning and

Teaching Strategy should enable you to be sufficiently agile to respond to themes identified through this programme and help take the sector forward in achieving the vision identified. The first theme, to run from 2010/11 to 2011/12, is 'Graduates for our future,' with three strands:

- Students as partners;
- Learning in employment;
- Learning for employment.

Ensuring that the student learning experience is of high quality

13. This is one of the five strategic themes within our Corporate Strategy. You should identify how the outcomes of reviews, such as the institutional review: Wales (IR) process, Estyn inspections, and quality assurance mechanisms of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies are addressed via the strategy, in order to maintain and enhance quality.

Listening and responding to the student voice

14. *For our Future* places a particular emphasis on the student voice. The Wales Initiative for Student Engagement (WISE) engages students as active participants in the development, delivery and management of their own educational experience. In addition, the NUS Wales 'Have your Say' programme aims to enhance student representation.
15. You should identify how the outcomes of the National Student Survey, including those for learners with protected characteristics, are addressed via your Learning and Teaching Strategy. One of the measures in our Corporate Strategy is that 'the three year rolling average score for Wales in the National Student Survey 'overall satisfaction' question will be equal to, or greater than the comparative score for the UK.'

Develop greater diversity and flexibility in programme design, duration and delivery to match need and demand.

16. You should identify in your strategy how the institution maximises diversity and flexibility in order to meet the needs of employers and students. This includes via:
- the accreditation of prior learning;
 - part-time learning;
 - work-based learning;
 - foundation degrees;
 - alternative mechanisms of assessment;
 - the inclusive curriculum;
 - use of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales to accredit small amounts of learning.

Technology-enhanced learning and teaching

17. We published our strategy for the enhancement of learning and teaching through technology (TEL strategy) in April 2008². In addition we provided institutions with funding to implement the strategy via the Gwella project³ and via the JISC Building Capacity: Wales project⁴.
18. We expect you to identify within your learning and teaching strategies how you plan to take forward the outcomes of these funded projects in a manner that delivers the aims of the TEL strategy. This may also include via employability skills, including digital literacy. We expect to see specific targets related to this area.

Strengthen the contribution of higher education to workforce development

19. You should identify how your institution contributes to workforce development, including through:
 - engaging with employers in curriculum design;
 - providing students with the opportunities to develop employability skills via the curriculum;
 - foundation degrees;
 - flexible provision;
 - work-based learning;
 - accreditation of prior learning;
 - employability statements on the Unistats websites.

Public information

20. We anticipate that, in developing your Learning and Teaching Strategy, you will consider how you address systematically the provision of public information for potential and current students, including information on the costs of study.
21. A consultation will be carried out in England and Northern Ireland on public information, including the provision of key information sets (KIS) at course level by September 2012. We anticipate carrying out a consultation on a KIS for Wales in Spring 2011, once the outcomes of the consultation for England and Northern Ireland are available.
22. We carried out work on the cost of study in Wales in 2009/10, and recommended that that institutions provide information on the following:
 - necessarily incurred costs, by the end of June 2010, to give the 2010/11 intake access to general information on costs of study;

²Circular W08/12HE

http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2008/w08%2012he%20circ.pdf

³ http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2007/w0750he%20circ.pdf

⁴ <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/bcap.aspx>

- mandatory costs, by the end of October 2010, to enable the 2011/12 intake to compare the cost of different programmes; and
- optional costs, by the end of June 2011, to inform the module choices of new and continuing students⁵.

Develop a regional dimension to planning and delivery of higher education

23. In Circular W10/16HE⁶ we invited one strategy from the partners in each of the three identified regions by 30 November 2010. Circular W10/28HE⁷ provided further information on the funding and support to facilitate the development and implementation of regional strategies.
24. Given the significance of these developments, we expect that you will identify how your Learning and Teaching Strategy relates to the regional strategies, including:
- how the Learning and Teaching Strategy relates to your role in, and contribution to, the regional strategy;
 - collaboration, including joint provision;
 - rationalisation, including the reduction of unnecessary duplication;
 - progression.

Managing full-time undergraduate student numbers

25. Circular W10/26HE⁸ provided a consultation on the principles to manage full-time undergraduate student numbers from 2011/12. This was developed in response to the Welsh Assembly's remit requirement that the Council should take the necessary measures to ensure that institutions minimise the recruitment of students beyond agreed numbers. You may wish to integrate your strategic response to these principles into your Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Enable study through the medium of Welsh to take place in a wider range of programmes and locations in Wales

26. Our Corporate Strategy identifies that we will work to establish the Coleg Ffederal, now called Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, to extend the range of Welsh medium provision. It identifies a target that the number of Welsh domiciled students at Welsh higher education institutions and further

⁵ Circular W10/07HE

http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2010/w10%2007he%20provision%20of%20information%20for%20students%20on%20costs%20of%20study.pdf

⁶http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2010/W10%2016HE%20Regional%20strategy%20guidance.pdf

⁷http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2010/W10%2028HE%20Regional%20Strategies%20for%20the%20Planning%20and%20Delivery%20of%20HE%20%20Funding%20and%20Support.pdf

⁸http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2010/W10%2026HE%20Consultation%20on%20the%20principles%20to%20manage%20student%20numbers%202011_12.pdf

education institutions undertaking some element of their course through the medium of Welsh will rise from 4,667 in 2008/09 to 5600 in 2012/13.

27. The Coleg is in the process of being established, and will start its work from April 2011. We anticipate that your Learning and Teaching Strategy will link with your strategic approach to Welsh medium provision in helping to achieve this target.

The professionalisation of teaching

28. We expect that your Learning and Teaching Strategy will include identification of how you address the UK Professional Standards Framework. This was developed by the HE Academy on behalf of the sector and is currently in the process of being reviewed.

Internationalisation

29. Our corporate strategy identifies that we will:
- support the Welsh Assembly Government's international strategy;
 - ensure that higher education institutions contribute effectively to the Bologna process and linked European developments.
30. We anticipate that your Learning and Teaching Strategy will link with your approach to internationalisation.

Education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC)

31. *For our Future* identifies an aim of promoting the role of higher education providers as Corporate Citizens. In addition, Wales is one of the few nations with a formal commitment to sustainable development. HEFCW has worked with HEIs to enable them to review where ESDGC is incorporated in the curriculum, collate current practice and share best practice. We anticipate that your Learning and Teaching Strategy will underpin your approach to ESDGC.

Monitoring and evaluating the strategies

32. As part of the AMS process we need you to set out a number of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) targets within your strategy for the short term (2011/12) and medium term (2012/13 onwards). A template identifying areas for which we require targets will be provided in our supplementary guidance in April 2011.
33. We recognise that you may wish to modify the medium term targets in your annual monitoring statements through identification of SMARTer targets for the coming year as you progress through the period of the strategy.

34. We will share the strategies with the Higher Education Academy to enable them to provide an overview report for the Welsh higher education sector, as was done for the strategies for 2007/08 to 2009/10 and 2004/05 to 2006/07.

Annex B Widening Access Strategy Guidance

Context

1. Institutions submitted to us Widening Access Strategies for 2006/07 to 2008/09 and circular W08/22HE outlined the reasons why we considered it advisable to defer the submission of new three-year strategies in 2009/10.
2. In 2008/2009, we invited the Higher Education Academy to review widening access strategies and Reaching Wider proposals. We recommend that institutions take account of the Academy's findings and recommendations in developing their new strategies⁹.
3. The Academy's recommendations for HEIs, Reaching Wider Partnerships, HEFCW and the Welsh Assembly Government included six recommendations for HEIs' widening access developments which we have taken into account in formulating this guidance. The recommendations include:
 - working towards a whole institution approach to widening access;
 - ensuring clear senior management leadership to promote cultural change;
 - working with staff to integrate widening access and equality and diversity in all policies, functions and activities;
 - systematically collecting and monitoring widening access data to inform planning and development;
 - using data to evaluate impact;
 - providing sustained opportunities for listening to the student voice.
4. Subsequently, *For our Future: the 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales*, HEFCW's Corporate Strategy 2010-11 to 2012-13 and *HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education* (known as our *Approach*) set the strategic context and widening access-related expectations for this new Widening Access Strategy period, as indicated in the Background section of this circular¹⁰.
5. Our *Approach* identifies the following widening access strategic objectives in this period to:
 - prioritise recruitment from Communities First areas;
 - improve access for groups under-represented in higher education;
 - prioritise student learning success and retention;
 - support fair access to the professions, high level skills and the priority sectors;

⁹ A review of Welsh Institutional Widening Access Strategies 2006/07 to 2008/09 and the Reaching Wider Funded Proposals 2008/10 see:

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/wales/ourwork/wideningaccess>

¹⁰ These documents are referenced earlier in this circular.

- encourage flexible learning opportunities, including part-time;
 - secure clear articulation and progression pathways into higher education;
 - maximise the potential for collaborative, cross-sectoral, multi-agency approaches;
 - deploy resources to deliver our widening access objectives;
 - apply a regional framework to target widening access more effectively;
 - improve the evidence base to support widening access and impact assessment.
6. You may find it helpful to read this guidance in conjunction with our *Approach* as we look to the sector, with other partners, to deliver these priorities and contribute effectively to the *For Our Future* strategy aims of supporting social justice and a buoyant economy.
7. In developing strategies, you should take account of broader UK and Assembly Government strategic developments impacting on widening access, some of which are identified in our *Approach*.
8. To support widening access developments, our initial proposals for changing the funding system for higher education include changes to widening access funding¹¹. We have proposed embedding the existing Additional Support for Part-Time Students into Widening Access Strategy funding. We are modelling this proposed change and further information is available in **Annex C**¹². Embedding this funding in widening access strategies from 2011/12 will increase the funding and strategies should include specific actions to address the needs of part-time learners.

Funding

9. We look to institutions to take account of a range of funding sources and to specify how each source will contribute to fulfilling specific aspects of the strategy. The funding identified might include the following:
- Widening Access Strategy funding;
 - Teaching Funding, including Widening Access and Disabled Students premium;
 - Additional Support for Part-time Students and Fee Waiver scheme, together with;
 - any contributions from an institution's fee plans;
 - an institution's own resources; and

¹¹ See the HEFCW circular W10/37HE: *Initial proposals for changing the funding system for HE in Wales*

¹² See Annex C for further information on the changes to the Additional Support for Part-Time Students

- external funding or sponsorship.
10. Widening Access Strategy funding recognises the additional costs institutions incur in widening access to and through higher education. This allocation is intended to support targeted, strategic interventions for widening access students of all ages from Communities First areas and other under-represented groups, including individuals with protected characteristics¹³. We expect that such interventions would raise educational aspirations and skills and increase participation in higher education, higher level skills and the priority sectors.
 11. In this strategy period we will fund widening access strategies more explicitly against Community First from 2011/12, as noted in Circular W10/37HE. Funding support for non-traditional qualifications, previously identified separately, will now be included within the funding arrangements for widening access strategies.
 12. In 2010/11 we removed the requirement to report on the use of widening access premium funding and disability premium funding. However, premia allocations reflect performance against specific targets. Therefore, institutions should use this strategy to maximise performance against the premia-related targets.
 13. Widening access and increasing the diversity of our institutions' populations should not be dependent on continued growth in student numbers. However, we recognise that limited growth in student numbers creates additional complexities for widening access planning and delivery. To enable you to maintain progress in widening access to and through higher education from our target groups we have reviewed our widening access funding streams and we published our initial proposals for funding changes¹⁴. We are modelling an increase in funding directed towards our widening access priorities.

Initial guidance

14. Given the widening access implications of: *For Our Future*; our Corporate Strategy commitments; our *Approach*; *the Higher Education Academy's review*; and wider policies and priorities impacting on higher education, we are requesting new-style strategies in two parts. We anticipate that the first section will be brief, no more than **five pages** long, and would include concise statements relating to:

¹³ Protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010 include: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships

¹⁴ See circular W10/37HE <http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications/circulars/circulars.aspx>

- i. your institution's **mission and purpose** as it relates to widening access;
 - ii. the widening access **strategic aims and objectives** for *at least* the three-year strategy period, including equality and diversity-related priorities;
 - iii. the **rationale** for the aims and objectives, including underpinning evidence of learner demand and/or labour market information;
 - iv. the role in, and contribution to, the **regional strategy developments**;
 - v. strategic alignment with **Reaching Wider Partnerships'** planning and delivery;
 - vi. the **management** and **other structures** that will ensure institutional commitment to, provide leadership for, and drive cultural change in, WA policies and practices;
 - vii. how admissions and equality and diversity-related policies will ensure **fair and transparent practice** and deliver **equality of opportunity**.
15. We expect you to publish this first section, and we will monitor this through the AMS process. We consider that publishing this part of the strategy will:
- ensure that all institutional staff are aware of, and can contribute to, whole-institution approaches to widening access;
 - provide a mechanism for disseminating widening access policies and practices to regional and other partners and partnerships, including Further Education Institutions, Communities First Partnerships, 14-19 Partnerships, Adult Community Learning Partnerships and Careers Wales; and
 - showcase higher education's commitment to widening access, social justice and promoting a buoyant economy.
16. In the second section of the strategy you should provide further information on the management of institutional widening access policy and practices during this strategy period including:
- i. Providing a **critical assessment** of the institution's widening access policies and practices between 2006/07 and 2010/11, including but not limited to: institutional data analysis; key outcomes; lessons learnt; and areas for further development;
 - ii. outlining the **alignment** between widening access developments and the institution's broader policies relating to admissions, student success and retention, student support, learning and teaching, etc.;
 - iii. outlining the distinctions and relationship between widening access and **marketing and recruitment** activities;
 - iv. identifying the institution's **key target groups**;

- v. identifying **SMART measures of success** and the **anticipated impact** on key target groups for at least each year of the strategy period;
 - vi. analysing **risk** and the management of risk.
17. In this section you should summarise the key delivery strands. This might include:
- the package of provision in **Communities First areas**; including progression routes to and from this provision and community/other partners involved in delivery;
 - **outreach and workbased learning provision**, noting subject/skills strands and progression opportunities to and from this provision;
 - **vocational learning and skills-focused** opportunities particularly work-based learning, Foundation Degree developments, HE in FE, bite-sized chunks of learning within the Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQFW);
 - **part-time provision and support**, including a target for increasing part-time student numbers over this strategy period;
 - **strategic and sustained activities**, rather than 'one off' interventions which are not embedded in programmes of continuous engagement with potential learners and thus unlikely to have significant impact or create cultural change;
 - **collaborative, multi-agency** developments which respond to the regionalisation agenda or other priorities, alignment with Reaching Wider provision or other partners and partnerships, and the value added by closer working relationships;
 - **formal agreements**, such as compacts or specific admissions offers with target groups to support progression;
 - **Fair access to the professions, higher level skills and the priority sectors**. It is particularly important for research-focused institutions to play a full and appropriate part in widening access;
 - **Welsh medium and bilingual WA provision** including taking account of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol developments and increasing awareness of, aspirations for, and the confidence and skills to enable success in, Welsh medium/bilingual HE;
 - **HE information, advice and guidance**, including fees and funding guidance to ensure that potential applicants are fully informed of subject and course contents and fee and funding structures;
 - **student learning, success and retention** interventions which are underpinned by robust data collection and analysis to improve performance and deliver improvement;
 - links with **equality schemes** and institutional **equality and diversity objectives** to take full account of the needs of learners with protected characteristics and share effective practice;
 - improving the **collection and utilisation** of widening access **monitoring and tracking systems**, evaluation evidence and equality

impact assessments to: examine the potential and actual impact of interventions, policies and practices; to identify trends and priorities for interventions and change; and to enhance performance;

- promoting and disseminating **effective practice** to raise the profile of widening access in Wales, the UK and internationally.
18. We will share both parts of the new strategies with the Higher Education Academy and/or other evaluators to inform the further development of widening access strategies, policies and practices.
19. We will look to support strategies which:
- Are embedded within the institution's and region's mission and purpose;
 - demonstrate a **coherent portfolio** of provision with opportunities for continuous engagement with learners;
 - are able to demonstrate **value for money**;
 - demonstrate robust plans for supporting part-time students supported by the Additional Support for Part-time students;
 - are able to evidence or respond adequately to **learner demand** or **labour market intelligence**;
 - are able to demonstrate **collaboration** and **multi-agency approaches** to enhance the learner experience, where appropriate;
 - include measures of success based on **strategic outcomes** which evidence change rather than on short-term, operational outputs;
 - demonstrate robust institutional arrangements for ensuring strategies are monitored, reviewed and developed;
 - embed **programmes of continuous engagement**, rather than large-scale, 'one-off' interventions;
 - are able to provide sustained opportunities for widening access students to meaningfully **engage in decision-making processes**.