

## Considerations for HEFCW Disability Equality Scheme Evaluation

**Below are our initial thoughts on the report's recommendations for HEFCW. We would value your views to inform our final response.**

### **1. Consider how best to help HEIs prioritise and implement the recommendations suggested in this report.**

In the summer we invited HEIs to report formally on how they will be taking forward the recommendations in their reports; all have responded.

In addition we have visited almost all institutions to discuss in detail the results of their individual DES reviews and examine the way forward.

October's sector-wide seminar provides further opportunity for HEIs collectively to examine priorities and share good practice.

### **2. Continue to offer direct intervention with the provision of advice and guidance to those HEIs where compliance levels are low and monitor their progress towards achieving compliance.**

*As 1. above*

**3. Consider how to best provide indirect interventions such as sector wide briefings and seminars to address specific issues concerning all or most of the HEIs raised in this report as requiring attention. Seminars could be organised in thematic cross cutting topics as suggested in this report, e.g. utilising existing expertise to help develop and deliver all aspects of SES; producing more user friendly and widely publicised schemes and plans; SMT engagement and institutional ownership of the SES.**

In addition to the seminar in October:

- Welsh Liaison Group: an advisory group run by ECU in Wales, to which HEFCW contributes, to provide an opportunity for equality and diversity specialists and those with responsibility for equality to discuss issues of common interest and share information. The group represents a collective voice for equality and diversity in higher education institutions in Wales. We suggest that we work closely with the WLG to ascertain the priorities of the sector to inform our future work, including future research projects, seminars, etc.
- We will, with our colleagues in Widening Access, be holding a sector event on understanding, and meaningfully using, equality data.
- The ECU provides timely and invaluable guidance to the sector by way of their project and publication work, and from time to time organise seminars, consultation events, and conferences. These are open to Welsh HEIs, and in some cases specifically for them (e.g. equal pay conference 2008; Swansea consultation event on response to Single Equality Bill)

**4. Determine, in consultation with the HEIs, which recommendations are best delivered through a disability specific approach and which by a single generic equality approach.**

We believe that institutions should decide themselves if, and when, they wish to deliver their disability equality commitments by way a disability-specific scheme or as part of a wider, over-arching pan-equality scheme.

**5. Continue to support opportunities for networking, staff development and knowledge transfer through existing channels such as the Welsh Liaison Group and Skill Wales. This will help deliver the advice, guidance and support HEIs have requested in relation to disability equality, for example around analysis of information and involvement of disabled people.**

Agree.

We believe the Welsh Liaison Group continues to provide a valuable forum for networking and best-practice sharing opportunities for the sector, as well as potentially informing Welsh-specific ECU projects.

We sit on Skill Wales Branch Committee, and contribute to Skill UK's HE Working Party.

**6. Work with senior managers and governing bodies in HEIs to continue to raise the profile of disability equality issues and to consider strategies to help embed the delivery and implementation of the scheme (and action plan).**

In terms of the DES review, subject to any further agreed actions at today's seminar we anticipate there might be the need to undertake further work with the sector on the three key areas of concern arising from the review – impact assessment, the involvement of disabled people and meaningful use of data.

More generally, through our new Institutional Risk Review process [details of which were published in our 'Strategic Engagement' circular in June, W09/20HE] we will be assessing, inter alia, how governing bodies are engaging on E&D issues, including arrangements to ensure that their institution's are meeting legislative requirements.

**7(a). Work with HEIs to support and deliver effective and appropriate collaborative activity.  
For example consider: sharing practical solutions for developing SES, procedures which work and effective scheme design.**

DES review is evidence of this. We also discussed at our seminar what additional, practical help might be beneficial for institutions to develop Single Equality Schemes.

**7(b). Work with HEIs to support and deliver effective and appropriate collaborative activity.  
For example consider: the most effective ways for HEIs to disseminate and share good practice, policies, procedures, and the results of innovation projects.**

Current avenues include:

- Welsh Liaison Group meetings
- Skill meetings.
- Best practice guidance and research projects, in particular those put out by ECU
- Wales-specific projects (e.g. on equal pay (via ECU); WUMS)

Should we look at others?
<b>7(c). Work with HEIs to support and deliver effective and appropriate collaborative activity. For example consider: sector wide or north/south activities to encourage collaboration and to deliver more effective community engagement for example: activities to involve more disabled people, events with the further education sector, and work with other public bodies, charities and voluntary organisations.</b>
Involvement – possible event with EHRC?  Sector-wide involvement event(s) once a year - including other public bodies to get alternative perspectives and approaches?
<b>8. Provide support to HEIs to consider the resource implications of delivering disability equality in future and cost effective ways to deliver the interventions to move forward with these concerns. This might include how to meet the costs of: reasonable adjustments for staff and students; involving more disabled people; delivering impact assessments; and implementing disability action plans.</b>
We welcome your views on how we can take this consideration forward.
<b>9. Consider approaches to help those HEIs who wish to move beyond compliance by supporting the development of action research projects to further advance disability equality.</b>
We welcome your views on how we can take this consideration forward.