

Meeting	Agenda Item	Reference No
04/07/14	21	HEFCW/14/61

1 Issue

- 1.1 This is the annual report of complaints received against HEFCW, and allegations received regarding the HEIs funded by HEFCW, during the financial year (FY) 2013-14.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Council receive an annual report on the number of complaints against HEFCW, and allegations about institutions funded by HEFCW, received in the previous financial year.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council is invited to note that:
- i. There were no complaints against HEFCW received in FY 2013-14.
 - ii. There were no allegations concerning an institution received in FY 2013-14 that fell within the boundaries of HEFCW's responsibilities.

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 No decisions required. This report is received annually by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and by Council.

5 Members' interests

- 5.1 No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

- 6.1 Contact: Dale Hall (Tel 029 2068 2280; dale.hall@hefcw.ac.uk) or Ewen Brierley (Tel 029 2068 2291; E-mail: ewen.brierley@hefcw.ac.uk).

7 Background

Complaints about HEFCW

- 7.1 The *HEFCW Complaints Policy* sets out how we will deal with any concerns or complaints about our services. The Policy, which is based on the model Concerns and Complaint Policy produced by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, was approved by Council at its meeting on 11 May 2012. It is available on the HEFCW website at: About Us > Our responsibilities > Complaints about HEFCW.
(www.hefcw.ac.uk/about_us/our_responsibilities/complaints_about_hefcw.aspx)

Allegations about institutions funded by HEFCW

- 7.2 HEFCW's assurance service occasionally receives allegations of financial irregularity or impropriety, mismanagement, waste and fraud in higher education institutions. We have a procedure to manage our response to such allegations, *Allegations concerning institutions funded by HEFCW*, which is available on the HEFCW website at: Working with Higher Education Providers > Institutional assurance > Allegations concerning institutions.
(www.hefcw.ac.uk/working_with_he_providers/institutional_assurance/allegations_concerning_institutions.aspx)
- 7.3 Complaints by staff or students concerning a particular institution are to be addressed through the institution's own internal complaints and appeal procedures.
- 7.4 The Financial Memorandum between HEFCW and HEIs sets out requirements for the governance and management of institutions. Where allegations are received that these requirements are not being met, HEFCW must satisfy itself that the matter has been investigated, appropriate action taken, and relevant people informed.

8 Complaints about HEFCW in 2013-14

- 8.1 There were no complaints about HEFCW received during financial year 2013-14.

The Council is invited to note that no complaints about HEFCW were received during FY 2013-14.

9 Allegations against HEIs in 2013-14

- 9.1 HEFCW has received a number of communications from individuals relating to complaints against HEIs. However, upon consideration, there were no allegations against any HEIs funded by HEFCW received during FY 2013-14 that fell within the boundaries of HEFCW's responsibilities and procedure on handling allegations.

The Council is invited to note that no allegations concerning institutions funded by HEFCW were received during FY 2013-14 that fell within the boundaries of HEFCW's responsibilities

10 Financial and resource implications

There were no financial costs incurred during the year in relation to complaints and allegations.

11 Communications implications

There are no specific communication implications arising from this paper. The HEFCW Complaints Policy is available on the HEFCW website in English and Welsh.

12 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

The HEFCW Complaints Policy was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening in April 2012 prior to its approval by Council in May 2012.

13 Risk Assessment

Risk	Action to address risk
Complaint or allegation against HEIs not managed in accordance with the procedures, or incorrect decision made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints against HEFCW that cannot be dealt with informally are co-ordinated by the Council Secretary. • Allegations against HEIs co-ordinated by the Head of Sustainability and Assurance. • Periodic reminders to staff about complaints and allegations procedures.
Complaints against HEFCW not in line with public body guidance and Complaint Chair recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Panel Chair recommendations addressed. • Public Services Ombudsman for Wales guidance used as the basis for HEFCW's revised Complaints Policy in 2012. • Revised Complaints Policy was Equality Impact Assessed.