

<p>Cyngor Cyllido Addysg Uwch Cymru Higher Education Funding Council for Wales</p> 	<p>Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee</p> <p>Disclosable</p>
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Unconfirmed notes of the meeting of the Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee held on 10 February 2015 at the HEFCW offices, Cardiff

Present

Members Professor Robin Williams (Chair)

Bryn Jones – Chair, Wales Industrial Liaison Officers Network (WILOs)
 Professor Hilary Lappin-Scott - Swansea University
 Peter Quantick – representing Welsh Higher Education European Liaison Officers (WHEELOs)
 Alexandra Saxon – Research Councils UK
 Professor Nigel Scollan – Aberystwyth University
 Professor David Shepherd – Bangor University
 Professor Mark E Smith - representing HEFCW Council
 Professor Stephen Tomlinson – representing HEFCW Council

Attendees Dr Rachel Bowen, Federation of Small Businesses Wales
 Brian Herbert, DfES

Observers Phil Allen - Welsh Government (DEST)
 Professor David Langley – Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales
 Sue Morgan – Welsh Government (DEST)
 Dr Carolyn Reeve, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
 Amanda Wilkinson – Universities Wales

Officers Jackie Cresswell-Griffith – Head of Skills and Employability
 Bethan Owen – Director of Institutional Engagement
 Dr Tove Oliver – Senior European and International Manager
 Dr Alyson Thomas – Head of Research, Innovation & Engagement
 Linda Tiller – Senior Research Manager

Apologies Chris Meadows – business representative, IQE plc
 Professor Kevin Morgan - Cardiff University
 Professor Mike Scott – Universities Wales nominee

1 Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed the following to their first meeting of the Committee:

- Professor Nigel Scollan (Aberystwyth University) - academic member for innovation and engagement
- Professor David Langley (Director of Research Operations and Delivery, Office of the Chief Scientific Advisor) – Observer.

1.2 The Chair also welcomed:

- Dr Rachel Bowen, Policy Manager, Federation of Small Businesses Wales. Rachel was attending as a guest member, pending completion of arrangements for her appointment as the representative for small businesses.
- Brian Herbert, Finance and Corporate Services Division, DfES, who was attending in connection with the two International items.

1.3 The Chair also recorded the Committee's thanks to the following members, whose periods of appointments would come to an end in March 2015:

- Professor Kevin Morgan
- Professor Mike Scott.

2 Notes of the Meeting held on 16 October 2014

2.1 The notes of the meeting held on 16 October 2014 were accepted as a true record.

3 Matters Arising

a) WHEB Strategic Plan to 2018

3.1 Tove Oliver reported that the strategic plan had been presented, and that arrangements were progressing well.

Action

It was agreed that a more detailed update would be circulated to members after the meeting.

b) RIE – HEFCW's Role and Action Plan to 2015/16

3.2 Following consultation with the sector by email, [HEFCW's Role and Action Plan to 2015/16 for Research, Innovation and Engagement](#) had been finalised and published on the HEFCW website.

4. Outcomes of 2014 Research Excellence Framework

4.1 Linda Tiller gave a short presentation on the outcomes for Wales of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. (*Copy available on the Committee Extranet.*) Key points included:

- The proportions of 4* and 3* in the overall quality profile for Wales had increased significantly
- The overall quality profile for Wales was now virtually identical with that for the UK as a whole, whereas in the RAE proportions of 4* and 3* had been noticeably below the UK
- Wales had performed particularly well on impact. The proportion at 4* was slightly higher for Wales (49%) than for the UK as a whole (44%)
- Conversely, Wales' performance on environment was slightly below that for the UK as a whole
- There had been a significant improvement in the volume of staff at 4* and at 4* and 3* combined. However, the total volume of staff submitted to the REF by Welsh universities was 26% lower than in the 2008 RAE.

4.2 The Chair commented that there was a lot of good news from Wales' performance in the REF, but that it was important to identify the issues which needed to be addressed for the future.

4.3 The following points were made in discussion.

a) *Impact*

- The sector's strong performance on impact will help demonstrate the value of the research base to the Welsh Government.
- It is quite possible that the weighting for the impact element may be increased from 20% to 25% in the next REF. There is also some speculation that an additional, higher quality level might be introduced for impact in future.
- Some institutions in Wales are concerned that they have already used up their best examples of impact in the 2014 REF. However, David Langley commented that this concern is also shared by institutions across the UK.
- It is generally anticipated that it will be possible to re-submit impact case studies to the next REF, provided that significant new impact has occurred during the next assessment period. If so, that would help address the previous concern.

- David Shepherd emphasised that impact needs to be actively managed in institutions, and that this is resource-intensive.
- Hilary Lappin-Scott commented that the sector had responded nimbly to the impact agenda, whereas some institutions elsewhere had not taken as much care in drafting their impact submissions as Welsh HEIs had done. Those institutions would undoubtedly make a greater effort next time, and so the Welsh HE sector would need to try and up its game even further.
- Members expressed some concerns that changes in funding arrangements, including the withdrawal of Innovation and Engagement Funding, might adversely affect the sector's impact performance in future. It was noted that institutions in England would use equivalent HEFCE funding to support impact case studies. In connection with that point, Phil Allen commented:
 - that he would welcome a discussion on how the next A4B programme could be aligned with the next REF.
 - that it would be helpful to establish how many 2014 REF impact case studies were based on developments funded from initiatives such as A4B, KTP, etc.

b) Environment

- David Shepherd commented that joint submissions – whether between different institutions, or between different disciplines - tended to perform better on environment than single-department submissions. Hilary Lappin-Scott confirmed that critical mass was a key factor in the assessment of environment, and so joint submissions helped provide the necessary scale.
- The Chair suggested that consideration should be given to how to encourage more joint submissions in the next REF. David Shepherd commented that an early commitment to joint submissions is essential, in order to allow time for genuinely joint activity to develop.
- It was noted that there was a strong correlation between good environment scores and investment in staff, high quality infrastructure and new buildings. There was a concern that the slightly lower score for Wales on environment might reflect a lack of investment.
- Mark Smith commented that there was an extremely strong correlation between environment scores and levels of Research Council funding, and that a vibrant postgraduate community is also important. This presents a challenge for the future, as Research Council funding (including Doctoral Training Centres) is becoming increasingly focused on fewer institutions.

c) *Volume*

- The volume of staff submitted by Welsh HEIs to the REF was 26% lower than in the 2008 RAE, whereas the total volume for the UK as a whole had remained broadly constant. The Chair commented that this is a difficult issue to address, although it was noted that the Welsh Government's Sêr Cymru and Spearhead initiatives are both designed to help boost numbers of STEM researchers.
- There was some discussion of an alternative model for REF, which would require the submission of all eligible staff. Whilst some members considered that this would be simpler and fairer, it was noted that this could lead to game-playing with the contractual status of staff.
- It was noted that Wales had generally come out well in league tables based on quality/Grade Point Averages alone, but less well on league tables which also took account of staff volume. It remained to be seen which of these two approaches would feed through into the more general University league tables.

d) *Outputs*

- The HE funding bodies have introduced a requirement for journal articles submitted to the next REF to be published in an open access format. It will be essential to make sure that all institutions in the sector are taking the necessary actions to comply with this requirement.

e) *Panels*

- The Welsh HE sector should ensure that substantial numbers of credible candidates are nominated as panel members for the next REF in order to maximise participation from Wales.
- Members of 2014 REF panels should be invited to report back on the insights which they have gained into the process (respecting confidentiality restrictions).

f) *Further Analysis*

- It would be useful to benchmark the performance of individual Welsh HEIs relative to members of their mission group, or other suitable comparator institutions.
- HEFCW's analysis of REF performance should be pulled together into a single document.

Action

- i. Discuss with Phil Allen how next A4B programme might help support REF impact agenda*
- ii. Seek to establish how many 2014 REF impact case studies were based on developments funded from initiatives such as A4B, KTP, etc.*
- iii. Organise event for 2014 REF panel members to share good practice and insights with a wider audience*
- iv. Draw together HEFCW's analysis of REF performance into a single document*

5 HEFCW's draft response to the Diamond Review

- 5.1 The Committee considered HEFCW's draft response to the Review of HE Funding and Student Finance (the Diamond Review).
- 5.2 Bethan Owen introduced the paper, which had already been considered by the Council and the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC). She invited the Committee to comment, in particular, on: the research and innovation section (paragraphs 63 to 75); the length of the document; and the conclusions section.
- 5.3 It was noted that SETQC had commented that the research and innovation section was "punchy", and did not consider that the document was too long overall.
- 5.4 The following points were made in discussion:
 - The Committee advised that the research and innovation section should not be shortened. It was considered that the existing level of analysis was necessary in order to make the case.
 - The Chair reported that he had been involved with the Learned Society's submission to Diamond. His experience was that the review panel was interested in suggestions for potential solutions, and he asked whether the HEFCW submission should also propose a specific solution. The Committee considered that it would be difficult for HEFCW to propose a single solution, but suggested that the paper could outline a number of possible options and provide some evaluation of them.
- 5.5 The following drafting amendments were suggested:
 - The withdrawal of the Innovation and Engagement Fund has the following additional implications:

- It disadvantages the Welsh HE sector relative to England, which still retains its Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF).
- It limits the sector's ability to match-fund external projects and nurture partnerships with industrial partners
- It could potentially damage the sector's impact performance in the next REF
- It has potential implications for the wider research environment, which already performed slightly below the UK level in the 2014 REF.
- In relation to the section on the importance of QR funding, the paper should also
 - Make more prominent reference to the role of QR in the dual funding system
 - Refer to QR's importance in safeguarding the sustainability of the research base: under Full Economic Costing arrangements, Research Councils fund 80% of the full cost of research undertaken through their grants, with QR funding being available to meet the balance.
 - Provide more detail about the decline in Wales' share of total UK QR funding, possibly including comparative figures for other parts of the UK.

6 Universities Wales International Activity

- 6.1 The Committee considered an update on Universities Wales (UnisWales) international activities including, in particular, the 'Global Wales' initiative.
- 6.2 Amanda Wilkinson reported that it is intended to adopt a partnership approach to international HE in Wales, involving the Welsh universities, British Council Wales and the Welsh Government (including DfES and Visit Wales), HEFCW, and UnisWales. This would promote joined-up activity and sharing of resources. The proposals for 'Global Wales' had been approved by UnisWales Committee the previous week, and had also been well-received by the International Unit.
- 6.3 Sue Morgan reported that the Welsh Government was looking at a collaboration with MIT, and she offered to provide further details.
- 6.4 The Committee:
- Noted the activities described in the paper
 - Endorsed the initial proposals for HEFCW's contribution to Global Wales to provide intelligence/data analyses.

Action Point

Sue Morgan to provide UnisWales with further information about Welsh Government's proposed collaboration with MIT.

7 International Position Statement

- 7.1 The Committee considered HEFCW's draft International Position Statement. It was noted that the paper had already been presented to SETQC, and had been well-received.
- 7.2 Tove Oliver introduced the paper and invited the Committee to suggest which of the thematic and policy priorities HEFCW should focus on over the next two or three years.
- 7.3 Amanda Wilkinson commented that the paper demonstrated the extent to which the international agenda is embedded across the breadth of HEFCW's activities. She noted that there are major issues relating to Europe, and it may be necessary to consider where HEFCW can add most value – for example by providing appropriate policy steers. There is also a need to clarify the respective roles of HEFCW and UnisWales in co-ordinating delegations.
- 7.4 Hilary Lappin-Scott suggested that key priorities should be: providing students with opportunities to broaden their horizons; and maximising research grant capture from EU sources.

8 Vitae and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: update

- 8.1 The Committee considered a paper which provided an update on the research careers support programme, Vitae, and sought the Committee's endorsement of proposals for future funding of Concordat implementation.
- 8.2 Several members commented very positively on the valuable role which Vitae performs. There was general agreement that it would be useful for HEFCW and the other HE funding bodies to continue to engage with Vitae as proposed in the paper.
- 8.3 It was noted that, in the longer term, there could be potential issues about the sustainability of Vitae if significant numbers of institutions opted out of the new subscription-based membership arrangements.

Action

The Committee strongly endorsed HEFCW's continued engagement with the implementation of the Concordat through the provision of additional support to Vitae's UK-wide programme of activity.

9 BIS Science and Innovation Strategy

- 9.1 The Committee considered a paper which summarised some of the key elements in the new UK Science and Innovation Strategy, *Our Plan for Growth*, which had been published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in December 2014.
- 9.2 The Committee noted, in particular, the sections relating to capital funding, the Nurse review of the Research Councils, and the Dowling review of collaboration between business and industry. The call for evidence for the latter closed in early March.
- 9.3 Mark Smith commented that many of the investments announced in *Our Plan for Growth* are England-only developments, and he asked whether HEFCW and Welsh Government had considered the implications of this. It was agreed that this aspect of the document should be examined in more detail.

Action

HEFCW to identify which of the developments in Our Plan for Growth are England-only and which are UK-wide, and to consider any issues arising from this.

10 Minutes of the Meeting of SETQC held on 1 October 2014

- 10.1 The Committee received, for information, the minutes of the meeting of HEFCW's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC) held on 1 October 2014.

11 Any other Business

- 11.1 No other business was raised.

12 Dates of Future Meetings

- 12.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on:
- Thursday, 15 October 2015