

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on HEA's activity in Wales during 2014-15 (1 August 2014 – 31 July 2015). In particular the report highlights the work of the Future Directions project.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the report.

## 3. 2014-15 UK-wide priorities

- 3.1 Following consultation and feedback from with the sector, the HEA has worked to support development across four distinct workstreams:
- Curriculum design: addressing graduate attributes, inter-culturalism, digital literacy and sustainable development, discipline-specific skills and interdisciplinary learning.
  - Innovative pedagogies: exploring inclusive and diverse student engagement.
  - Student transitions: focusing on inclusivity, flexibility, widening access, equality and diversity. It also explores retention and student mobility and examines the impact of policy reform.
  - Staff transitions: promoting the HEA's work on teaching excellence, professionalisation, reward and recognition, including the use of the UKPSF in promotions criteria.
- 3.2 The HEA also continued to deliver a number of core activities funded by its subscribers including:
- Accreditation;
  - Recognition;
  - National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS);
  - Student Surveys;
  - Partnerships;
  - Consultancy Services.

## 4. HEA Wales support

- 4.1 From November 2014 to July 2015, Dr Stephen Bostock was the primary representative of the HEA in Wales. Dr Bostock attended the HEFCW SETQC and the UnisWales LTAG meetings and is responsible for liaison with UnisWales, NUS Wales and WISE Wales, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, the OER/P Group, the Learned Society, and the QAA. He chaired the Future Directions Steering Group (FDSG).

- 4.2 The HEA's Partnership Managers also provided support to Welsh institutions by understanding their needs and directing them to relevant work undertaken by the HEA and the sector more broadly.
- 4.3 The HEA holds a termly meeting of the Welsh Institutional Group (WIG) which provides HEA subscribers with a forum in which to shape the work of the HEA in Wales. The WIG also helps the sector by identifying issues common to the majority which can then be taken forward by the HEA on their behalf. During 2014-15, Liz Thompson provided support to Glyndwr, Bangor, Aberystwyth and GLLM in the north, and Melvyn Smith provided support for institutions in south Wales. Melvyn Smith continued to provide support for all institutions following Liz Thompson's retirement, in the interim, until a new successor to the post was appointed. During 2014-15 all institutions in the north were visited by Liz Thompson and Stephen Bostock, and all institutions in the south were visited by Melvyn Smith and Stephen Bostock.
- 4.3 Administrative support is now provided from York, contactable through the wales@heacademy.ac.uk email address. Initially an attempt was made to identify administrative support from a host institution but this was not cost effective.

## 5. Delivery of HEFCW's 2014-15 grant letter requirements

5.1 HEA continued to deliver support for the requirements outlined in the 2014-15 HEFCW grant letter through it's:

- Continued support for the Future Directions programme and HEA's Welsh Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) network (including coordinating the meetings, and providing secretariat support). Following the election of a new chair, the ESDGC has a new Terms of Reference and new membership, and from 2015-16 will be called the HE Future Generations Group (HEFGG), in line with new legislation.
- Continued support for student engagement and participation in Wise Wales (including participating in the network and support for the Wales Students as Partners Network). Dr Bostock was a member of the WISE steering group and attended the NUS 'Partnership for Wales' conference on 3 June in Neath. The two WISE partnership consultants led a workshop at HEA strategic enhancement event in Cardiff on 2 July.
- Continued engagement with Welsh stakeholders, networks, and priorities, including the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Higher Education Wales Open Educational Resources/Practice Group, and working with the Learned Society of Wales on taking forward Welsh language and Welsh studies. The HEA Wales web site is now rewritten and bilingual.

## 6. Support for Future Directions workstrands and related programmes

### Background information

6.1 Future Directions is the enhancement programme in Wales. It emerged from the first all-Wales biennial conference, at Glyndwr University, Wrexham in spring 2012. The programme

is driven by the priorities in Welsh Government policy for Higher Education, notably *For Our Future* in 2009 and then *Policy Statement on HE* in 2013, and the concerns of universities as expressed by the L&T Advisory Group (LTAG) of UnisWales and HEFCW.

- 6.2 To address these priorities, from 2010 to April 2014 Future Directions had the theme of 'Graduates for our Future,' with three work strands: Students as Partners; Learning for Employment; and Learning in Employment. After the spring 2014 conference at Aberystwyth, this was replaced by the theme 'Global Graduates: Enabling Flexible Learning' with three new workstrands: Distinctive Graduates; Inspiring Teaching; and Learner Journeys. Areas of focus include internationalisation, employability, curriculum design and the recognition and promotion of teaching.

### **2014-15 activity**

- 6.3 In October 2014, the Future Directions Steering Group (FDSG) was held at Bangor. The attendance was poor and gave rise to concerns that the momentum of the programme had been lost while the HEA was recruiting to vacant posts. In particular, the progress made by workstrand leaders was not as great as had been anticipated prior to the summer and it was clear that HEA support for workstrand activity, even administrative, was vital.
- 6.4 As a result, a second meeting was called in December to reinvigorate the Future Directions programme. With Stephen Bostock's appointment in November 2014, the HEA re-engaged with all workstrand leaders, established the state of play and barriers to engagement in institutions. The meeting in December was well attended and demonstrated renewed commitment.
- 6.5 At a third meeting in January, Professor Danny Saunders summarised his evaluation report on Future Directions, published during the summer of 2014. The report showed progress had been made against the workstrands with planning now starting for the next Future Directions conference in 2016 and exploration of ways in which HEA events in Wales and wider could be used to disseminate the innovative enhancement work undertaken in Wales. A summary of the work strand activities and their likely impacts, mapped against Welsh Government's HE policy, was presented at the FDSG in January 2015.
- 6.6 Following discussion at the LTAG on 19 March decision, the HEA, HEFCW and UnisWales (LTAG) issued a public statement on 18 May 2015 (provided below), highlighting that the Future Directions programme would complete its work by the end of academic year 2014-15 and the HEA would shift its focus to supporting Welsh universities more directly:

*The Higher Education Academy, HEFCW and Universities Wales have agreed that the current workstrands in the Future Directions programme should complete their work by the end of academic year 2014-15. The partners wish to thank the leaders and members of the workstrands for their contributions to the quality enhancement of higher education in Wales. A meeting of the Universities Wales Pro-Vice-Chancellors' Learning and Teaching Advisory Group in September will agree how the work of Future Directions can be taken forward during the next academic year.*

- 6.8 The three Future Direction work strands continued to meet regularly and develop their work until July 2015. They were led by Professor Jo Smedley of USW (Learner Journeys), Lloyd Williams of USW (Distinctive Graduates) and Graham Lewis of Aberystwyth (Inspiring

Teaching). All the workstrands continued to have representation from all the Wales institutions providing higher education.

### **Ongoing dissemination and impact**

- 6.9 In 2013-14 the HEA supported institutional Future Directions teams through small project grant funding of £2,500 to support new enhancement activities related to Future Directions. The institutional reports on these activities were submitted in 2014 and disseminated through a bilingual publication, on the HEA Wales web site.
- 6.10 Following its success as a stimulus for new enhancement activities, the HEA repeated the grant funding with all Welsh HEPs (with the exception of the OU Wales) receiving project grant funding of £2,500. The projects supported one or more workstrands in each institution, and in some cases are coordinated across institutions. These projects will continue to be support, with projects reporting to the HEA on their completion in April 2016.
- 6.11 With the decision of LTAG in March to end them prematurely, the workstrands have considered how their interests might be continued. The Learner Journeys workstrand has made links with the CADARN project with headquarters in Aberystwyth and their video outputs may be housed there. The Distinctive Graduates workstrand is in discussion with the CRA about a Wales regional network. The Inspiring Teaching workstrand is discussing how to become a permanent Wales network to support teacher development. The workstrands also led sessions at a half-day teaching conference in Lampeter on 6 May and in Cardiff on 2 July (see below).

## **7. Additional HEA Support**

### **Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) group**

- 7.1 The HEA continued to support the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) group in Wales. Although the group paused during late 2014, it continued to meet through a support from the HEA's Wales administrative team. Following the appointment of a new chair, Einir Young (Bangor University), the Terms of Reference and membership were revised, as the group was renamed the HE Future Generations Group (HEFGG) – in line with recent Welsh legislation.

### **Student Engagement**

- 7.2 While there was an initial attempt to convert the previous Students as Partners work strand into a Students as Partners Network, with the expansion of the NUS WISE Wales project it became more efficient to have WISE Wales provide support to the three work strands by organising and supporting student members. Dr Stephen Bostock represented the HEA on the WISE Wales steering group, and attended the annual NUS conference Partnership for Wales, on 3 June. The WISE partnership managers led a workshop at the HEA event on 2 July in Cardiff, Higher Education Matters in Wales.

### **Strategic enhancement programmes:**

- 7.3 In 2014-2015 the HEA ran six strategic enhancement programmes (SEPs) to support Higher Education Providers through a structured development programme to further enhance the student learning experience in strategic priority areas. Across the UK 100 institutional teams engaged with one of six enhancement programmes. Welsh institutions participated in the SEPs addressing challenges regarding:
- Internationalisation – 1 Welsh HEI involved;
  - Employability – 2 Welsh HEIs involved;
  - Career progression and staff transitions – 1 Welsh HEI involved.

### **HEA strategic enhancement events**

- 7.4 These events addressed priorities highlighted by stakeholders in Wales, although were open to colleagues across the UK.
- 7.5 The first event, *Successful students: enhancing employability through enterprise education*, was held on 4 December 2014 at Park Plaza, Cardiff.
- A new HEA resource *Enhancing employability through enterprise education* was launched at the event. It included a range of case studies of good practice, which showcased practices in Bangor, Cardiff and UWTSd;
  - The keynote presentation was given by Andy Penaluna Professor of Creative Entrepreneurship at University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSd);
  - Neil Coles (Cardiff University) provided an input to a workshop on enhancing employability through enterprise education.
  - approximately 80 delegates attended, and 100% of those who responded to the feedback survey said they enjoyed the event (with 60% strongly agreeing).
- 7.6 The second HEA strategic enhancement event, *'Higher education matters in Wales'* was held on 2 July 2015 at the Thistle Hotel Cardiff.
- Two of the Future Direction work strands Distinctive Graduates, and Learner Journeys, showcased their activity in the workshop sessions. (Unfortunately the third workstrand, Inspiring Teaching was unable to present for logistical reasons).
  - Issues prominent in Wales HE were represented by workshops on the National Student Survey, on teaching engineering, and on student partnership (by the NUS WISE partnership managers).

### **HEA surveys 2014-15**

- 7.7 Welsh institutions have been active in their involvement in HEA surveys during 2014-2015. Eight institutions took part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), seven took part in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and one institution took part in the United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKES).

### **Stakeholder engagement**

- 7.8 Dr Bostock attended and represented the HEA at various events including:
- A keynote at the Bangor University Future Directions conference, 8 June;
  - Coordinating the Lampeter workshops on 6 May;
  - Attending the GLLM HE conference on 29 June; OER15 on 14 April; WISE steering group meetings; ESDGC 16 June;

- Taking part in student forums for the Distinctive Graduates work strand, and being one of the workshop leaders of the Distinctive Graduates session in Cardiff on 2 July;
- Visiting all the HEPs, with partnership managers, and almost all their campuses;
- Attending SETQC in February;
- Presenting to the QAA ahead of the Wales Advisory Committee, and Colleges Wales HE group on 17 April.

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 The HEA continues to work closely with institutions to address HE priorities in Wales through its work during 2015-16.

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