

Council meeting*For information***SOAC annual report 2018/19 and minutes of meeting held
8 November 2019****Agenda: 27
HEFCW/20/17**

Disclosable

23/01/2020**1 Issue**

- 1.1 This paper provides the unconfirmed minutes of the Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee (SOAC) meeting held on 8 November 2019 for information. The item also includes the annual report from the SOAC for 2018/19.
- 1.2 SOAC is one of the Council's standing committees. The Committee's remit is to advise Council on all matters relating to student opportunity and achievement in higher education. These items include Welsh Medium, widening access, public information, equality and diversity, and skills and employability. SOAC aims to ensure that higher education in Wales meets the needs and expectations of learners and other stakeholders.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council is invited to:
- i. note the unconfirmed minutes of the SOAC meeting held on 8 November 2019;
 - ii. note the SOAC annual report for 2018/19.

3 Council members' interests

- 3.1 We are not aware of any Council members' interests relevant to the issues covered by this paper.

4 Further information

- 4.1 Contact Nicola Hunt (029 2085 9735; nicola.hunt@hefcw.ac.uk).

5 Minutes of the SOAC meeting held 8 November 2019

- 5.1 The unconfirmed minutes of the November SOAC meeting are attached at **Annex A**.
- 5.2 Members may particularly wish to note the following points:
- The advice from members on how HEFCW might respond to the findings of the EHRC report *Tackling racial harassment: universities challenged* (**Minute 2** refers).
 - The advice from members on the development of HEFCW's Strategy Equality Plan (SEP) 2020-2024 (**Minute 5** refers).
 - The Committee's response to the key findings of the Wales Audit Office draft report *Future Generations: a plan for well-being and health in higher education*. This included a recommendation that HEFCW should encourage interdisciplinary approaches to developing well-being in Welsh higher education (**Minute 6** refers).
 - The steers from members in relation to the mental health and well-being needs of degree apprentices (**Minute 7** refers).
 - The suggestions for content of the forthcoming publication on Graduate Skills and Employability (**Minute 8** refers).
 - Advice relating to the HEFCW review of part-time provision in Wales (**Minute 9** refers).
 - Advice from Members in relation to developments in public information and the National Student Survey (**Minute 12** refers).

The Council is invited to note the unconfirmed minutes of the SOAC meeting held on 8 November 2019.

6 SOAC annual report

- 6.1 **Annex B** provides the SOAC annual report for 2018/19, which was considered by SOAC at its November meeting. Members agreed that the report accurately reflected the work of the Committee for 2018/19, which included discussions on the implications of Brexit on the student experience, student well-being and health and the review of the outcomes of the Reaching Wider programme.

The Council is invited to note the SOAC annual report for 2018/19.

7 Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this paper.

8 Communications implications

- 8.1 There are no immediate communications implications arising from this paper.
- 8.2 The outcomes of the review of part-time provision in Wales may give rise to some communications activity, such as online blogs, articles or HEFCW news items.

- 8.3 We will consider further how to respond to the EHRC report following the advice of SOAC Members; this may lead to future HEFCW guidance being developed or best practice being communicated via a dissemination event.

9 Impact Assessment

- 9.1 The issues set out in this paper do not need to be impact assessed by HEFCW.

10 Risk Assessment

- 10.1 Risks related to the issues set out in the paper are outlined below:

| Risk | Controls |
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| <p>If one or more institutions, or the sector collectively, fail(s) to continue to widening access significantly there will be reputational damage to the sector and financial implications for institutions/the sector and socio-economic issues if WA cohorts are not recruited/recruited by institutions outside Wales.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fee and access plans make provision for improving equality of opportunity and widening access • Analyse and monitor fee plan performance • Fee and access plan reporting annually to WG • Continue to emphasise WA strategic approaches • RW Programme strengthened with HEP match-funding • Continue to support and monitor RW partnerships • Monitor HESA, UCAS and related data. • Monitor HEFCW National Measures relating to WA • Widening Access Programme of Action submitted to Welsh Government • Assess WA performance and implications through IRR process • Discussions with the sector on WA aspects of their Strategic Planning and Engagement documents (SPEDs) • Liaise with WG officials to align strategies. • Discussions with sector on their fee and access plans as required (2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20). • Annual fee and access plan consultation seminar with institutions held. |
| <p>If one or more institutions fail to fully meet the requirements of equalities legislation then there will potentially be reputational and financial damage to the institution and the sector.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going engagement with Advance HE (EDI) and other UKFCs to enhance sector performance and practice. • Ongoing engagement with regulator, EHRC, to take account of its monitoring outcomes. • Funding of Advance HE EDI to support HEFCW in meeting E&D priorities. • HEFCW represented on Advance HE (EDI) Welsh Liaison Group. • Advance HE (EDI) Welsh Liaison Group meets regularly to discuss issues and share best practice. • Annual reporting to SOAC includes discussion of E&D statistics and issues. • Report annually to Management Team, SOAC and Council on SEP and HEFCW's annual equalities report and to Management Team on policy implementation • Contributed to UK published research into use of agencies in senior management appointments and securing staff diversity in HE. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED and IRR letters to HEIs indicate where further engagement on E&D matters is required; • Fee and access plan guidance includes focus on equality of opportunity and groups under-represented in HE, including those with protected characteristics • Engage with EHRC Wales as regulator, to inform policy development • SEP objectives prioritise sector issues, including equal pay. • Report to WG annually on senior pay. • Published guidance on gender pay. • Invited well-being and health strategies from 2020-21. • Encouraged institutions to adopt #stepchange and Suicide-Safer UK good practice frameworks from 2019/20 • Include well-being and health in Student Charters from 2019/20. • Monitor progress through published HEFCW Annual Equality Report • Liaison with Welsh Government officials on E&D, including as they relate to VAWDASV and Nation of Sanctuary plan. |
| <p>If one or more HE providers in Wales do not have effective processes to support graduates to be equipped for the world of work, then that may result in poorer employment outcomes for graduates, as well as a negative reputation for individual providers and the HE sector in Wales.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with skills and employability agenda in HEIs • HEI Institutional visits • Meetings with skills and employability leads in HEIs on a regular basis aimed at stimulating improvement in HEI outcomes • Monitoring corporate strategy targets for employment and employability; • Assess and monitor fee and access plans that include skills, employability and enterprise activities and targets; • Regular dialogue with Welsh Government officials • HEFCW role on Graduate Outcomes Survey Steering Group • Advocacy role for HEFCW in Graduate Outcomes Survey |
| <p>If the approach to planning, monitoring and funding the Degree Apprenticeship pilot is not managed and implemented effectively, then HEFCW will not be able to fund Degree Apprenticeships and / or the programme will not be delivered in line with WG expectations.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Welsh Government officials to develop overarching systems that allow qualifications at level 6, and potentially above, to sit on apprenticeship frameworks • HEFCW observer on the Apprenticeship sub-group of WESB, Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board (WAAB) • Ensure that stakeholders are engaged in the process • Close working with Welsh Government officials to oversee degree apprenticeship developments. • Approval by a panel, including an industry representative and WG, of all degree apprenticeships proposals. • Regular monitoring of degree apprenticeships delivered by HE providers. • Sharing good practice amongst HEIs delivering Degree Apprenticeships • Engagement with stakeholders, e.g. HE RSP Reps Group, Degree Apprenticeship Working Group • HEFCW role in QAA Advisory Group |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• HEFCW input into WG's Evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeships Pilot |
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