

REGIONAL HE / FE STRATEGY

SOUTH WEST WALES

October 31st 2011

New Regional Strategy to cover a three-year period from 2011/12 to 2013/14

Section A - Vision

To develop an accessible, equitable, sustainable and high quality HE system for South West Wales which will deliver clear and tangible benefits for learners and will enhance economic and social capital.

Delivering the Vision:

Partner institutions within the region will deliver the vision through establishing appropriate educational models and structures which will contribute to the growth of the regional economy: encouraging indigenous business growth and inward investment.

Working together with our partners, Higher and Further Education Institutions will aim to:

Provide a wide range of HE opportunities across the region;

- Support a strong, competitive economy based on high-level skills and a continuously renewed capacity for innovation;
- Help to sustain a high quality of life;
- Be accessible and effective agents for social mobility;
- Develop a vibrant civic and cultural life drawing upon both our languages.
- Prioritise the Welsh Government goals of achieving a buoyant economy and social justice.

Partner institutions acknowledge and embrace the need to work together effectively and efficiently, building on a history of collaboration, to remove nugatory duplication where it exists and to be responsive to the needs of our learners. The provision of part-time learning opportunities will be crucial in order to meet the challenges of demographic change, and the Welsh Government goals of achieving a buoyant economy and social justice. Face-to-face delivery remains significant, but will increasingly be accompanied by more flexible distance-learning provision which will give enhanced flexibility to local employers as well as to local learners, and will ensure reach to individuals and communities that are geographically isolated

Such a vision will compliment the aspirations of individual institutions to deliver excellence.

Our Objectives:

The region intends to achieve this mission by pursuing the following objectives:

1. To be comparable to other regions of the UK (and beyond) in quality, standards, effectiveness, and cost;
2. To provide a mix of different courses and modes of delivery, within accessible and progression routes, to meet a range of aspirations;
3. To provide both a window and door to the wider world, attracting talented individuals learning from best practice globally, raising the international awareness and employability of local students, and promoting commercial links;
4. To be proactive and effective in reaching out to communities and workplaces across the region with appropriate courses and opportunities;

5. To have the resilience to respond flexibly and rapidly to the external funding environment within and without Wales;
6. To extend learning opportunities through the medium of Welsh;
7. To continue to enjoy the benefits of high-quality governance;
8. To work effectively (seamlessly for the learner) as Higher and Further Education partners and with schools in the region to ensure that the aspirations of learners are raised to match their talent and potential across all sectors of society;
9. To recognise that HEI"s and FEC"s in SWW do not, and should not, provide a service that is exclusive to local learners
10. To facilitate student choice by ensuring clarity over the vocational/professional/academic mix of different courses;
11. To proactively engage with employers and simplify business access to services provided by Further and Higher Education; and
12. To deliver further and higher Education"s activities in a way that is complementary to supporting economic regeneration;
13. To respond to Welsh Government initiatives related to the further development of Foundation Degrees;
14. To address the social and economic importance of retaining franchised credits within South West Wales;
15. To provide progression from 14-19 learning pathways to HE as an extension of local curricula for learners.

The Regional Strategy acknowledges that the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Swansea Metropolitan University, the University of Wales and Coleg Sir Gar and Pembrokeshire College are actively engaged in a process that could result in the formation of a „dual sector University" that will reconfigure the HE/FE landscape in SW Wales. Progress with the emerging reconfiguration of provision will be reviewed to ensure it delivers the vision and objectives of the SW Wales Regional Strategy.

Section B – Audit of Current Provision Including Areas of Duplication

1. In May 2010 the University of Wales: Trinity Saint David Group, Swansea Metropolitan University and Coleg Sir Gar and Pembrokeshire College published a statement of intent to establish a 'dual sector University' in the region. The shared vision for the creation of a 'dual sector University' has moved substantially during the recent period and is now underpinned by far reaching Memoranda of Agreement between the institutions. A 'dual sector University' is defined as a group structure which brings together both further and higher education institutions within a geographical region. It establishes a dual-sector configuration to take forward shared resources, planning, academic and research activity and shared management structures to deliver tangible benefits for learners.

As part of these developments the merger of the UOWTSD and SMU will be achieved by August 2012.

Progress with the establishment of a 'dual sector University' will be kept under review within the region. As part of this, regional partners will ensure that accessible and integrated progression routes are maintained between the region's FE Colleges and both the HEIs within the 'dual sector University' and Swansea University.

The aim is to create a HE landscape in SW Wales that is better placed to achieve HEFCW's own aspiration as expressed in their statement issued on the 22nd December 2010 of each region having "research intensive (in which we will increasingly focus our QR funding in support of sustainable excellence and relevance to Welsh Government objectives) and strong community / widening access focussed provision".

2. The 'dual sector University' will, prior to merger, rationalise its programme structure model, regulations, procedures and practices so that all students study and are assessed within the same academic framework. During 2012/13, the first year of the merged operation, there will be a full audit of all programmes offered across the university to identify similarities. These will be reviewed in detail and revised appropriately so that programmes of the same or similar title are identical wherever and in whatever mode they are delivered. At the same time, alternative delivery locations and modes will be reviewed and rationalised to realise the most efficient and effective delivery schedule without prejudicing access by students.

Work with Swansea University to review programmes across the region will be fed into the latter stages of the process described above to achieve a streamlined portfolio throughout the region, taking account of the needs of differing student profiles and circumstances.

3. Regional partners will, subject to advice on the UUK Competition Law briefing note, review provision, seeking to identify maximum complementarity. This work will be supported by an operational group of planning professionals from the partner institutions.

The review will be completed and findings and actions will be reported by the end of July 2013. This timescale reflects the intensive management input required by the dual-sector partners in taking forward actions 1 and 2 above during the planning period and the management focus in Swansea University aimed at delivering growth in scale and strength.

In reviewing these subject areas we will aim to ensure coherent regional provision. The report will include any plans for new provision that the partner institutions have, including the Open University.

The review will take account of the factors listed in Appendix 1 in considering the spread of HE provision across subjects and locations within the region and in decisions on “nugatory duplication”. It will consider the need for economies of scale and the potential for new models of provision through which delivery may be undertaken at varied locations without duplication of staffing or infrastructure and the key role of the OU in meeting the needs of geographically constrained learners.

Section C – Progression Routes

1. This strategy will build on the full mapping of progression routes undertaken as part of the Regional Planning process in 2010. Please find attached as Appendix 2 a summary of current non-traditional CQFW progression routes
2. Regional partners will consider the outcomes of two projects in making informed decisions in relation to progression routes during the three year planning period. Specifically these are the work that is being undertaken by the Regional Network Advocate Provider for South West and Mid Wales, based within the Regional Learning Partnership and the Colegau Cymru - CQFW progression routes project being led for the region by Coleg Sir Gar. The approach will support Strategic Leaders as a tool to inform decision making and support regional planning particularly linked to education, skills development, training and business support.
3. Regional providers will continue to work collaboratively in order to target action on progression routes, including part time routes, for students with non-traditional level 3 qualifications defined as - foundation course at HE level, BTEC & SQA equivalents; foundation course at FE level; access course; GCSE/O Level qualifications only; other non-advanced qualification; NVQ/SVQ level 2; accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (APEL/APL) and mature students admitted on the basis of previous experience (without formal APEL/APL) and/or institutions own entrance examinations. This focus will help in the short term to support increased recruitment of students from low participation groups and communities. Our target for this is to achieve the following proportions of students with non-traditional level 3 qualifications through to year 2013/14:
 - Other undergraduate HE provision [CQFW levels 4 & 5] 30%
 - Undergraduate HE provision [CQFW level 6] 14%
4. Important in terms of this objective is the high level of other undergraduate [CQFW level 4 & 5] provision in the region which in 2009/10 was 25% of the HE provision in SW Wales compared to 22% in Wales and 20% in the UK. The regional partners will seek to maintain provision at this level, subject to the withdrawal of Glamorgan credits, in line with learner demand and employer skills requirements, including further developments in relation to Foundation Degrees.
5. The delivery of HE in the region's FE Colleges is important in encouraging the participation students from non-traditional backgrounds. The FE Colleges deliver progression routes in their areas of expertise largely at the CQFW level 4 and 5. This provides a HE environment in FE with flexible delivery servicing local community needs. Foundation Degrees build on this, formally establishing progression routes between FE and HE, including both full and part-time modes of study.

6. FEC"s are concerned that the loss of the University of Glamorgan credits from the region may significantly reduce the delivery of this level of provision. Dialogue will be maintained with HEFCW and DfES on this issue.
7. The region's FEC"s will deliver the agreed outcomes of the collaborative £15.3M ESF funded Skills for Industry Project. This will provide important non-traditional progression routes for employed learners within the region in line with employer skills needs. The project will especially focus on employed learners who do not have a qualification.
8. The region will continue to grow postgraduate provision to ensure progression routes through HE.
9. All HEIs in the region have committed to improving student support and retention in their Fee Plans. To this end we will work together to share good practice through cross sector workshops supported by the region's SLA funded Staff Development Unit. HEIs within the region will better the HESA institution non-continuation benchmarks by 2013/14

Section D – New HE Provision Required

1. Regional partners will continuously update evidence on learner and employer demand within the region. Evidence will include the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) report The National Strategic Skills Audit for Wales 2011 (June 2011) . Important in terms of employer demand the regional partners will submit a bid to HEFCW to improve our joint capacity to produce, interpret and make better use of evidence to inform the planning and delivery of regional provision by the 30th November 2011 as outlined in paragraphs 20 to 25 of the HEFCW Regional Planning circular. This will crucially include improving our regional capacity and capability to better use available labour market intelligence on higher level skill requirements to inform our planning. This will complement and 'add value' to the work cited in section C. Collectively the intelligence will offer the opportunity to access knowledge of the key sectors and industries with projected growth. To assist in the establishment of this overview, six Sector Skill Council (SCC) cluster seminars are being facilitated by the Regional Network Advocate Provider to enable the SSCs to present their most recent research on employer's skills demands for now and into the next decade. Plans are currently being finalised for scheduling in January and February 2012.
2. In light of this local evidence and the full consideration of the factors listed in Section B, Appendix 1 the region will continue to rationalise its existing provision and develop new programmes across all the levels of HE.
3. In Section B the important impact that growing overseas recruitment has on HE in terms of the overall student experience and the sustainability of regional provision was highlighted. In light of this the region will continue to grow overseas recruitment from the 2009/10 baseline of 1,913 FTEs to 2,500 FTEs by 2013/14, this will bring SW Wales in line with the UK average.
4. Institutions within the region are working to identify areas where the breadth of Welsh-medium modules available can be increased from 2011/12 onwards particularly in relation to the SWW priority subject areas. The extent of Welsh medium provision in SW Wales will be increased to deliver a growth of 240 students who take some part of their course through the medium of Welsh from the 2009/10 baseline by 2013/14.
5. The review of overall regional provision in 2009/10 demonstrates that postgraduate taught (PGT) provision as a proportion of overall HE provision within SW Wales is lower than that in Wales and the UK. The regional partners will review this level of provision to understand this discrepancy and to ascertain where a growth in PGT level programmes is required to meet regional employer skills needs. Target a growth of 250 FTE students by 2013/14.

6. The continued growth of postgraduate research (PGR) student FTEs is seen as critical in terms of meeting employer high level skills needs within the region linked to the growth of industrial clusters. PGR numbers are also crucial in terms of achieving good results in the Research Excellence Framework 2014 which in turn will impact on the ability of HEIs to grow RCUK research income. The target is to continue to grow PGR numbers from the 2009/10 baseline of 973 FTEs to achieve 1,150 FTEs by 2013/14

7. HE and FE providers in the region are committed to contributing to the For Our Future targets for part-time provision. The prospects for growth in part-time provision will be clearer following the outcomes of the review of PT funding methodology

Section E – Widening Access

1. The successful South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership (SWWRWP) will operate as the lead oversight group within the Region on Widening Access. Funded by the HEFCW Reaching Wider Initiative, the partnership includes Swansea University, Swansea Metropolitan University, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, The Open University in Wales, Coleg Sir Gâr, Gower College Swansea, Neath Port Talbot College, Pembrokeshire College, Careers Wales West and schools in South West Wales. The formal link to the RLP HE/FE Group has been established through the formal membership of the Chair of the SWWRWP on the HE/FE Group and through the RLP Manager attending all SWWRWP meetings. Attendance of the Workers Education Association South Wales General Secretary, the OUiW and representatives from Swansea University's Department of Adult and Continuing Education will also ensure that the needs of adult learners are covered in developments as we move forward.
2. The regional widening access group will develop an initial action plan by July 2012 for the delivery of a coordinated programme of educational interventions in Communities First wards in SW Wales. The target which is in line with the SWWRWP plan is for interventions in 19 wards in 2012/13 and in all 39 wards by the end of 2013/14.
3. The plan will include specific interventions in priority subject areas as defined by HEFCW and the Welsh Government
4. The plan will integrate multi- provider delivery and ensure the regional coordination of initiatives funded through:
 - SWWRWP
 - Institutional Fee Plans
 - Institutional Widening Access Strategies
 - Other ESF funded projects such as HE STEM and Technocamps
 - RLP's Regional Adult Community Learning Work plan.
5. The overall target is to increase the participation of students from the Communities First areas of Wales in other undergraduate (CQFW levels 4 & 5) and undergraduate (CQFW level 6) from the 2009/10 baseline of 2,086 FTEs in 2009/10 to 2,290 FTEs by 2013/14

As a secondary target regional partners will work to ensure that the participation of students from Communities First areas in priority subjects defined here as STEM, tourism, transport and travel, modern foreign languages, creative arts and design and education increases by a further 50 student FTEs from the 2009/10 baseline of 872 FTEs to 922 FTEs by 2013/14

Section F – Joint Regional Work with Employers

1. Regional partners will continue to work with HEFCW to develop a Dragon Phase 2 Project that will include the OUiW and the region's FE Colleges. This work is ongoing at the time of submission of this Regional Strategy document. Full details of collaborative work in this area are provided in the jointly-developed South West Wales Innovation and Engagement Strategy recently submitted to HEFCW. The institutions have a history of constructive engagement in this area which provides a platform for development.

2. The regional partners intend to approach the planning of employer engagement by building on existing patterns of engagement with the private and public sectors (including the health and social care sector) and will be further informed and shaped by reference to the Welsh Government priority sectors in Economic Renewal: A New Direction :
 - Advanced materials / manufacturing
 - Creative industries
 - Energy and environment
 - Financial and professional services
 - ICT
 - Life sciences

Plus the three new sectors as suggested by the Minister:

- Tourism
- Agriculture
- Construction

Initial work undertaken is a review of grassroots engagement between academics and employers in the subject areas / research clusters that underpin the priority sectors in order to ascertain the regions current strength and capacity. The outcomes of this initial review are attached as Appendix 3. This listing is not fully complete but provides a useful illustration of the work to be undertaken. We will build upon these extensive existing strengths both in terms of skills development and the exploitation of knowledge within the region.

3. The review will also take account of the findings of UKCES in the report The National Strategic Skills Audit for Wales 2011 (June 2011)

4. To support the growth of R&D investment into the region from MNEs it is imperative to continue the growth in research income. The target is to increase research income from the 2009/10 base of £23M to £39M by 2013/14

5. Swansea University will continue to progress the Science and Innovation Campus and Institute of Life Science developments within the region. Building upon the University's rapid research-led growth and its existing R&D relationships with MNE's such as Rolls Royce and Tata the aim is to provide the region with a research, innovation and educational complex that will extend STEM provision and have a significant impact on the regional and Welsh economy. Swansea University will progress these developments with others within the region and with the full support of the Welsh Government. Existing strengths in STEM and these planned future developments will contribute to the Welsh Government aim, as expressed in the Economic Renewal Programme, to secure "anchor companies" in Wales.
6. The 'dual sector University' institutions will continue to build on the success of their programmes funded projects and research in the creative industries, in particular through the Creative Industries Research and Innovation Centre (CIRIC) located in SMU. An Interreg bid has been submitted for a further project, Advanced Communication Technologies (ACT), based on the achievements of both Moving Image Wales (MIW) and Creativity and Innovation in Micro Enterprises (CIME) and focussing on the creative use of new media technologies and processes for marketing and innovative communication. An application for the extension of funding for MIW has also been made to support and develop further media and film companies in Wales. In addition there continues to be considerable demand for the expertise in the field of 'creativity into enterprise and industry', not only through the delivery of programmes and workshops for SMEs but also by the Welsh Government and Westminster advisory groups, the UN and organisations such as the QAA.
7. Regional partners will continue to collaborate with MNEs and SMEs in the region on the development of bespoke postgraduate programmes and in skill development at all levels with a particular focus on the Welsh Government priority sectors.
8. In terms of meeting employer skills requirements the link to progress with the development of foundation degrees and other WBL schemes across the region as outlined in Sections C and D should be noted. Also the £15.3M ESF funded Skills for Industry Project that will be delivered through collaboration by the region's FEC's plus the £8M ESF funded LEAD Wales programme designed to develop and enhance the leadership skills of owners of SME's
9. The three sectors recently added to the Economic Renewal Programme priorities are tourism, construction, food and farming. The RLP's Regional Learning & Skills Observatory will continue its 'roll out' of these priorities and act as a central data repository to be a key planning tool for curriculum development as well as responding to regional employer needs. Complementing this work will be the submission of a funding proposal to HEFCW to further build the region's joint capacity to produce, interpret and make better use of evidence to inform the planning and delivery of regional provision.

The RLP's Regional Employer Engagement Task & Finish Group will continue to work closely with key initiatives such as the Dragon Innovation Partnership and Skills for Industry to ensure that there is a strategic commitment to regional employer engagement in defined areas including: research & development; knowledge transfer; business development and; workforce development. Pivotal to the commitment of delivering this is engagement of the region's anchor companies.

10. Regional partners will ensure the coherence of institutional student employability initiatives as outlined in institutional fee plans in order to achieve the SW Wales average proportion of leavers obtaining first degrees from full-time courses who were employed, studying or both six months is greater than the UK average in 2013/14. Currently this is 90.4%.
11. In support of the employability target the region will continue its excellent record in relation spin-off companies and staff and graduate start-ups still active after three years [46% of the Welsh HEIs in 2009/10] growing these from 138 in 2009/10 to 188 by 2013/14
12. The regional partners are increasingly focussed on entrepreneurship as a key driver to improve student employability. The Institute for Entrepreneurship and Leadership (IfEL), based at Swansea University, provides focus and academic and administrative support for the delivery of "executive" and leadership development programmes, focused on practitioner managers and business leaders with particular emphasis on those in SMEs. IfEL will promote the development of management and leadership skills and appropriate skills development activity for students, to complement the scientific and technical support that the university can provide as the university seeks to engage with and support local business, particularly those in the six Welsh Government "leading sectors" (Economic Renewal Programme, 2010).

Building on this we will develop plans to establish a "Welsh Enterprise Academy" in the region based at Swansea University which will house students aged 16+ from across Wales who wish to start on their journey into entrepreneurship. During their time at the academy they will complete a 2 year "enterprise course" which will consist of qualifications from Edexcel together with other additional qualification (to be discussed and agreed) which will provide the students with a 3 A Level profile enabling them to enter University to continue their journey. Housing the academy at the University will enable students to work with large and SME businesses therefore opening up opportunity for work placements etc. This project will support the transformation agenda with cross over into all sectors and industry.

SMU is currently in the process of developing a module „Entrepreneurial Educators“, building on the internationally recognised work it has pioneered in this area. It is envisaged that such a module could be incorporated in all or any programme offered across the region as an elective for which students could receive separate certification.

Section G – Shared Services

1. The SWWHEP shared services project resulted in extensive and successful operational collaboration across the three HEIs that have provided improved efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of back office services and significant benefits to students and staff. It is the intention of SW Wales HEIs to build upon these experiences in conjunction with FE Colleges within the region as we look forward over the next three years of the Regional Strategy.
2. Regional partners are considering the submission of a bid for HEFCW pump-prime funding to extend the successful Staff Development collaboration, currently funded via an SLA agreement by the three HEIs, to staff from the region's four FE Colleges.

The original Staff Development collaboration was designed to strengthen and enhance staff training capacity and outreach. The partnership achieved a significant degree of increased inter-institutional exchanges, in terms of staff taking the opportunities provided through the joint training programme – as advertised through the Update brochure – to attend training offered in partner institutions. Another growth area was the take-up of opportunities in the partner institutions to embark upon degree studies covered by the reciprocal arrangements to reduce, or in most case, remove, and tuition fee costs.

The extension of this collaboration to staff in the region's FE Colleges will deliver important economies of scale and will realise wider benefits in terms of up-skilling staff and establishing important linkages between HE and FE. It will encourage the two way exchange of practice and will develop communication of staff in the two sectors within subject areas as staff embark upon degree studies. To illustrate, as noted in Section B, point 9 all HEIs in the region have committed to improving student support and retention in their Fee Plans. To this end we will work together to share good practice through cross sector workshops supported by the Staff Development Unit

3. Regional partners are also considering the possibility of developing a shared Welsh translation service, and shared training to build Welsh-language staff capacity.
4. Institutions within the „dual-sector University“ will continue to integrate their back office services. At operational level a number of shared appointments have been made recently by the two universities: for example, a shared Director of Finance and a shared Staff Development Officer. Particular areas for immediate progress will include :

- The further development of shared estates programmes across the three institutions
 - Joint Marketing activities in relation to HE publications, prospectuses and advertising.
 - Joint employer engagement activity
 - Cross institution collaboration on quality assessment with staff members contributing to committee and operational activity within partner institutions.
 - University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Coleg Sir Gar staff development activity
5. Such developments as discussed in this section are at an early stage, as HEFCW have only recently (14th October 2011) notified institutions of the closure of the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund to new proposals, and amendments to the criteria for support used in the assessment of proposals to the Strategic Development Fund.

Section H – Governance

1. Coleg Sir Gar will continue to act as the region's administrative lead supporting the strategic co-ordination and implementation of the Regional Strategy. Working alongside, the Regional Learning Partnership will co-ordinate and facilitate the development, review, submission and implementation of the Regional Strategy under the leadership and direction of the RLP HE / FE Sub-Group
2. A HE, FE Regional Planning Board [the Regional Learning Partnership South West Wales RLPSWW) HE/FE Sub-Group] has been established within the SW Wales Region with project management support provided by the Regional Learning Partnership (RLP). The HE/FE Group's membership includes the heads of all HE and FE providers in the region. The OUiW is now a formal member of the RLP. The Group meets regularly and will continue to work together to achieve an increasing level of active consensus in respect of the regional HE agenda.
3. The successful South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership (SWWRWP) is now operating as the lead oversight group within the Region on Widening Access. The formal link to the RLP HE/FE Group has now been established through, membership of the Chair of the SWWRWP on the HE/FE Group and through the RLP Manager attending all SWWRWP meetings. Attendance of the Workers Education Association South Wales General Secretary and members of the Swansea University Department of Adult and Continuing Education and the Open University in Wales will also ensure that the needs of adult learners are covered in developments as we move forward.
4. An operational group of planning professionals from the member institutions has also been established with the remit to review relevant data and to develop and monitor the Regional Strategy in detail for submission and approval by the HE/FE Group. Input from this group has added considerably to the project management / planning capacity of the RLP and will help to ensure the sustainability of the partnership into the future.
5. The RLP HE/FE Sub Group has noted the position of Coleg Ceredigion which sits in the north in terms of HEFCW HE/FE regions. Geographically, Ceredigion has HE institutions in two regions, the north and the south west and in the 2010/11 regional strategy, the College worked across those two regions in terms of its HE/FE partnerships. However, Coleg Ceredigion has decided to concentrate developments in respect of HE/FE strategy in the north in 2011/12. Notwithstanding this, and because of its unique geographical position and the fact that the Lampeter campus of Trinity St David's sits in Ceredigion, the College will maintain a relationship with the South West region in respect of HE/FE strategy as an 'associate member' of the South West region.