

## ***HEFCW Corporate Strategy 2013-14 – 2015-16***

### **Foreword**

[Foreword to be added from Chair and CEO including explanatory information].

### **Review of environment and performance against the last strategy**

[Brief review to be added, with link to latest data].

### **Our Vision:**

Sustainable, accessible, internationally excellent higher education in Wales

*We will develop and sustain accessible, internationally excellent higher education in Wales, for the benefit of individuals, society and the economy, in Wales and more widely*

### **Our Mission**

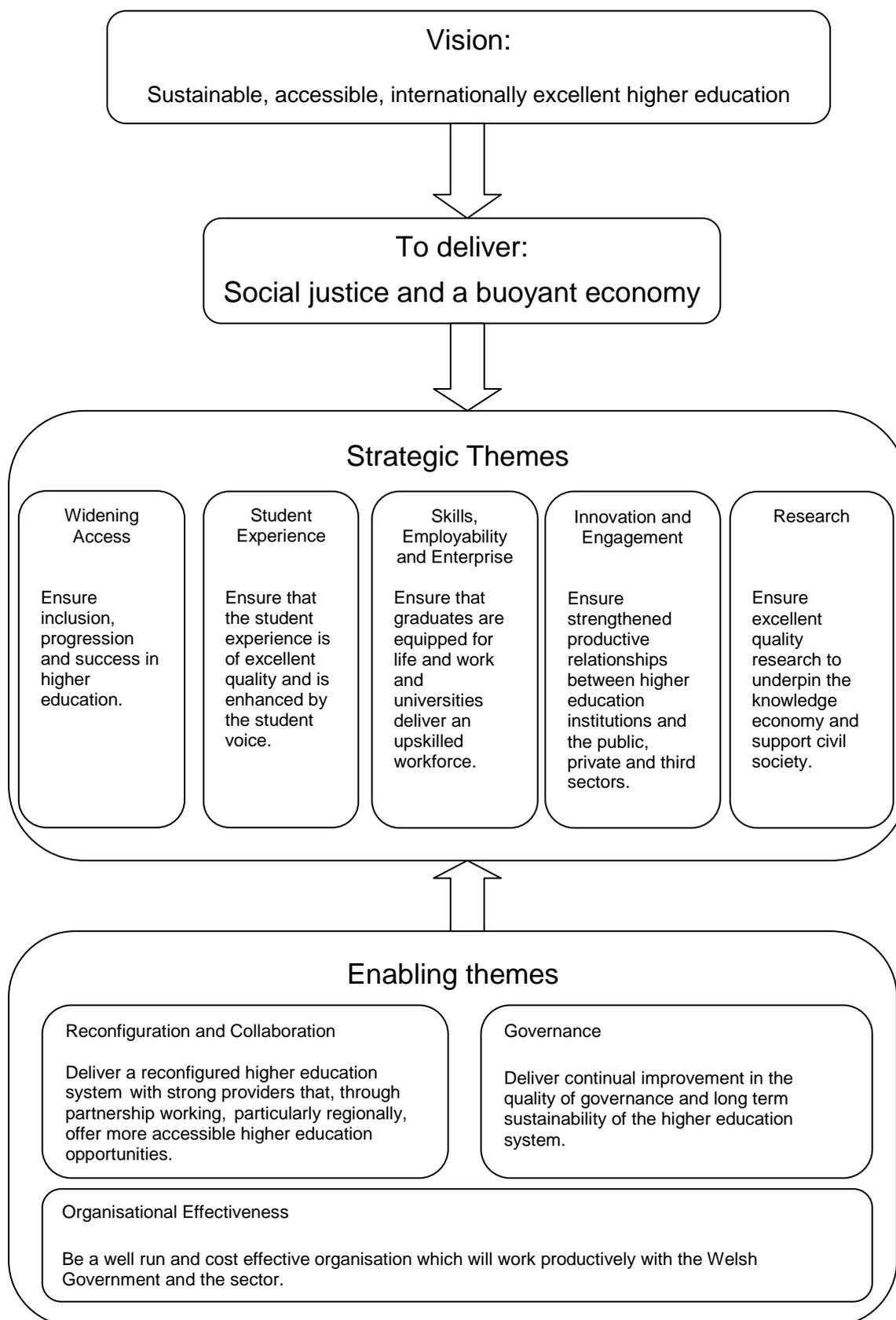
*We aim to*

- *Secure an excellent quality higher education student experience and excellent quality research;*
- *promote to Welsh Government, employers and the wider public, the contribution of higher education in Wales;*
- *ensure universities and colleges deliver Welsh Government priorities for higher education*

*In order to*

- *Enhance social justice;*
- *Support a buoyant economy*

## Our strategic framework



## Key Strategic Themes

### Widening Access

*Objective: Ensure inclusion, progression and success in higher education*

Social justice is a key Welsh Government priority and widening access to higher level learning has an important contribution to make to this aim. The Welsh sector performs well against UK performance indicators in this area but we want to see a continuing drive for further improvement for learners of all ages and backgrounds building on, and promoting, inclusive and diverse learning communities, which provide equality of opportunity for all. Having refocused our approach and funding arrangements for widening access, we will encourage higher education providers to maximise their resources through collaborative provision and to demonstrate the impact and success of widening access to and through higher education.

There will be increased emphasis on part-time (including innovative approaches to flexible and work-based provision), fair access, including access to the professions, retention and learner success. Building on our advice to the Minister on part-time employer focussed provision and progression from FE, we will implement our action plan for improving part-time provision. We will maintain our focus on under-represented communities, including the Communities First clusters, to address inconsistencies in inclusion, progression, social mobility and success for those from areas of multiple deprivation in Wales as well as addressing child poverty.

A regional dimension to the planning and delivery of higher education will enhance progression to, through and beyond, higher education, by the end of the strategy period, including in the Heads of the Valleys area. Productive partnership working, including with further education and other post-16 providers will be increased. We will work with Welsh Government officials and the sector to ensure equality of opportunity, including through fee plan and support arrangements

In the area of Widening Access we will work particularly towards the following *For our Future* expectations<sup>1</sup>:

- Participation is maximised through different and more flexible ways to experience higher education, including through part time study
- Inconsistencies in access and opportunity are addressed

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<sup>1</sup> The *For our Future* expectations listed under each Strategic Theme are taken from the expectations given in bold in *For our Future* or include text from *For our Future*.

## Student Experience

*Objective: Ensure that the student experience is of excellent quality and is enhanced by the student voice*

National Student Survey results for Wales indicate high levels of student satisfaction<sup>2</sup>. Similarly high levels of satisfaction have been found in surveys of the international student experience in Wales. These results demonstrate the priority placed in Wales on the quality of the student experience. They also reflect close working with students as partners in their learning experience. *For our Future* puts a particular emphasis on the student voice. We will continue to ensure that the student voice enhances higher education, including through our partnership working with the National Union of Students (NUS) Wales, and others supporting the Wales Initiative for Student Engagement (WISE).

Through our approach to quality enhancement<sup>3</sup>, we will encourage institutions to continuously enhance the student experience for the diverse student population, including through responding to the student voice, for example via the National Student Survey, and supporting sector agencies which are able to provide UK wide approaches to working with the Welsh higher education system. We will work with the sector to ensure that it engages effectively with the Professional Standards Framework and the new Quality Code for Higher Education. We will work with partners to ensure that prospective and current students have appropriate information about higher education, including through Key Information Sets, and on the costs of study.

We will carry out a further review of our strategy for enhancing learning and teaching through technology<sup>4</sup> to reflect new and innovative forms of learning and we will continue to support Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship through sector networks. We will work with providers to encourage innovation in programme design and modular approaches to improve the flexibility of provision, building on

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<sup>2</sup> [unistats.direct.gov.uk/](http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/)

<sup>3</sup>

[www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars\\_2010/W10%2002HE%20Mechanisms%20for%20Supporting%20the%20Enhancement%20of%20Learning%20Opportunities.pdf](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2010/W10%2002HE%20Mechanisms%20for%20Supporting%20the%20Enhancement%20of%20Learning%20Opportunities.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars\\_2008/W08%2012HE%20circ.pdf](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2008/W08%2012HE%20circ.pdf)

the existing advantages of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and accreditation of prior learning.

During the period of the strategy we will continue to support Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to extend the range of Welsh medium provision and increase student participation in Welsh medium higher education.

Working with the Welsh Government and our partners, we will support the sector's delivery of the International Action Plan for Wales, particularly in respect of making Wales an attractive destination for international students and staff, as well as promoting internationalisation across HE for the benefit of the student community as a whole.

In line with our statutory responsibilities, we will fund and accredit initial teacher training and work with partners to secure high quality provision to meet Welsh Government targets.

In terms of the Student Experience, we will work particularly towards the following *For our Future* expectations:

- Continuing efforts are made to deliver an excellent student experience
- Enable study through the medium of Welsh to take place in a wider range of programmes and locations in Wales
- Ensure that the student voice strengthens higher education

## **Skills, Employability and Enterprise**

*Objective: Ensure that graduates are equipped for life and work and that universities deliver an upskilled workforce*

In partnership with Higher Education Wales, CBI Wales and NUS Wales we will implement our Skills and Employability Framework. This has been designed in the context of the Welsh Government's ambitions to give students of Welsh HE an extra 'edge' that can make them more attractive to employers and more able to compete in the global economy. It is also intended to reinforce the messages graduates are already receiving about the value of the employability elements of their courses in terms of their employment chances (especially within the new student fees environment). Better design, development and delivery of higher education provision (both full time and part time) to more fully reflect the demands and requirements of employers will be key to early progress.

The Framework commits us to work in partnership to improve the job-related skills of all our graduates and offer new opportunities to re-skill and up-skill the current workforce (not least through revitalising part time study options). It calls on universities, student unions, employers and other partners to build on the diversity, innovation and flexibility already inherent in the higher education system and improve the employability and enterprise skills we give our graduates. This will both equip them for immediate employment and prepare them for the changing demands of our future knowledge-based economy.

Our GO Wales programme is fundamental to the delivery of the Framework. We will continue to deliver GO Wales in its current format until the end of 2013 and at the same time look for opportunities for further European funding to re-invigorate the programme so that it continues to play a vital part in enhancing the skills and employability of students and graduates in Wales. We will implement our action plan for part-time provision which supports the upskilling of those in work, including for postgraduates, through employer-led courses and bite-sized provision, and advancing continuing professional development.

We will continue to support flexible HE provision (including foundation degrees and work-based learning) via our regional agenda and our support for the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI). We will continue to work in partnership with the Welsh Government in the delivery of its *Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy*. We will continue our focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM),

responding to the Science for Wales (SfW) strategy, on Modern Foreign Languages through our support for the Welsh Government's *Making Languages Count* Strategy, and on Welsh Studies, including the study of Welsh history and literature, culture, society and politics. In addition we will work with partners to deliver the International Action Plan for Wales, which recognises the value of international placements in developing employability skills.

In the area of Skills, we will work particularly towards the following *For our Future* expectations:

- A greater proportion of the population achieves higher level skills
- Develop greater diversity and flexibility in programme design, duration and delivery to match need and demand
- Improved part-time learning opportunities are offered
- Employability is a key outcome of the higher education experience
- Strengthen the contribution of higher education to workforce development

## **Innovation and Engagement**

*Objective: Ensure strengthened productive relationships between higher education institutions and the public, private and third sectors*

Higher education already plays a key role in supporting both economic and social well-being in Wales. However, more needs to be done to meet the needs of employers and society more generally to ensure that knowledge developed in higher education can be made accessible for development in the business and other communities, both in Wales and further afield.

We will drive forward our work with the sector, alongside activity led by the Welsh Government. In particular, we will support new investment opportunities in Wales by securing a closer working relationship between HE and businesses, including those operating overseas. We will encourage the development of a more effective portal for higher education services targeted at employers and work with institutions to increase their volume of knowledge exchange activities, including via the further commercialisation of research outputs. We will also work with higher education providers on a regional basis to develop their links with local employers, further education providers, local government and other public sector bodies to enhance their cultural and civic roles, as well as their contribution to economic development. With the Welsh Government and other partners we will support the sector's delivery of the International Action Plan for Wales. We will also work with the Welsh Government to support the delivery of its Innovation Strategy.

In the area of Innovation and Engagement we will work particularly towards the following *For our Future* expectations:

- The economy is supported by strengthened and systematic knowledge exploitation
- The cultural and civic role of higher education is enhanced

## Research

*Objective: Ensure excellent quality research to underpin the knowledge economy and support civil society*

We remain committed to securing sustainable excellent research in higher education by strengthening the quality and quantity of the research base in Wales, while striving for more logical and coherent critical mass. We will direct funding accordingly, guided by the outcomes of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), which may well result in a consolidation of research funding and support around fewer universities which are able to demonstrate sustainable excellence in research. We will also work with the Welsh Government to support the implementation of *Science for Wales (SfW)*, with a view to increasing the sector's access to Research Council and other sources of external funding, particularly in the three SfW Grand Challenge areas (life sciences and health; low carbon, energy and environment; and advanced engineering and materials). To this end we will work closely with Wales Higher Education Brussels.

Recognising the importance of postgraduates to the future of the Welsh economy and the desirability of increasing the size of the postgraduate community in Wales, we will continue to provide strategic support for postgraduate research

We will expect higher education institutions to take an increasingly strategic approach to their management of research, and to developing research agendas jointly with potential users. We intend to work with the Leadership Foundation for HE on the further development of research leadership skills.

At the same time, we will also recognise the role of research more widely where supporting social justice and well-being, and enabling civic renewal and regeneration are key Welsh Government priorities.

In terms of research, we will work towards the following *For our Future* expectations:

- Research activity thrives and is effective
- Increase the impact of university research, through targeting support on areas of strength and national priority, and especially through collaboration

## Enabling Themes

### Reconfiguration and Collaboration

*Objective: Deliver a reconfigured higher education system with strong providers that, through partnership working, particularly regionally, offers more accessible higher education opportunities.*

*For our Future* expects a step change in performance of higher education in Wales. Overall we think that too many of our universities are too small by UK standards, and that we have too many institutions, raising challenges over competitiveness, sustainability and range of provision.

In addition, embedding a culture of collaboration, working together more productively, and eradicating unnecessary competition will be essential to ensuring that the higher education system remains sustainable in a strongly competitive UK and international context. This includes the development of a significant regional dimension to delivery. We will seek continued development of this regional dimension based on structures now in place to ensure that local and regional needs and priorities are better identified and met.

In terms of Reconfiguration and Collaboration we will work particularly towards the following *For our Future* expectations:

- Increased collaboration among higher education providers and between higher education and other providers, with a particular focus to be placed on appropriate reconfiguration of the higher education sector
- A regional dimension to planning and delivery of higher education

## Governance

*Objective: Deliver continual improvement in the quality of governance and long term sustainability of the higher education system.*

We recognise the essential role of governors in setting the strategic direction of autonomous institutions and in monitoring and holding executive teams accountable for the performance of institutions. In addition to their responsibilities to their own institutions, we also believe governing bodies have an important role to play in taking a holistic view of how the higher education system can best meet the needs of Wales, as well as taking account of UK and international factors which provide opportunities for their institutions. Governing bodies need to reflect appropriately the diversity of the communities they serve, demonstrate the necessary vision and leadership, and provide support to executive teams to move beyond the constraints of current, essentially historical, sector structures and practices where doing so will strengthen Welsh higher education provision.

We will develop further our strategic engagement process with higher education institutions, one aim of which is to strengthen governance across the sector. We will support collaborative work between institutions in their efforts to improve governance, leadership and management, and the sharing of resources to improve efficiency and effectiveness, gaining from UK-wide approaches. We will continue to build on existing good practice, identifying current and future governance developmental needs and promoting or encouraging new programmes of development and frameworks of support.

In the area of Governance we are working particularly towards the following *For our Future* expectations:

- Promote the civic role of higher education providers
- Review institutional governance in higher education

## **Organisational Effectiveness**

*Objective: Be a well run and cost effective organisation which will work productively with the Welsh Government and the sector.*

HEFCW is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body with statutory responsibilities to administer funds made available by the Welsh Government to support education and research by higher education institutions in Wales, and certain higher education courses at further education colleges. We also accredit providers of initial teacher training for school teachers and commission research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

We strive to use the resources available to us to support the sector, through strategies and initiatives, as well as through the development of robust transparent funding methods, designed to ensure the most efficient and focussed use of those resources. Our administration of fee planning secures equality of opportunity for students and the promotion of higher education by HE providers in Wales.

We also have statutory responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity, including performance in the higher education sector. Our Strategic Equality Plan 2012-13 – 2015-16 includes equality objectives and an action plan for the period. Our statutory responsibilities also cover freedom of information and data protection.

We aim to be an employer of choice. We believe our employees are our most valuable asset. The achievement of our purpose and vision can only be met if we make full use of and foster the resources and talents presented through our staff. This can only be done by recognising and valuing individual differences in employees and potential employees, and how these differences may be harnessed to build a strong and diverse organisation.