

## Cylchlythyr | Circular

# Outcomes of the consultation on governing body annual assurance statements related to quality

**Date:** 03 April 2017  
**Reference:** W17/07HE  
**To:** Regulated institutions in Wales  
Other interested parties  
**Response by:** No response required  
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This circular provides the outcomes of the consultation provided in [W16/38HE: Consultation on governing body annual assurance statements related to quality](#).

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please email [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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## Introduction

1. This circular provides the outcomes of the consultation provided in [W16/38HE: Consultation on governing body annual assurance statements related to quality](#).

## Background

2. Responses to HEFCW's consultation on the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales<sup>1</sup>, confirmed HEFCW's proposal to place greater emphasis on the role of governing bodies for providing assurances about quality and standards matters.
3. Therefore, subsequently HEFCW published circular W16/38HE.
4. HEFCW's Quality Assessment Committee provided advice to Council on the outcomes of the consultation. Council has considered this, and agreed the outcomes.

## Consultation outcomes

5. We received 10 responses to the consultation. A brief summary of the response to each question, together with the outcomes is provided below. The statements are summarised at **Annex A**. **Annex B** provides a more detailed breakdown of responses received, together with respondents.

### General comments

6. The development of the Quality Assurance Framework in Wales was welcomed.

Q1. Do you think we should include the statement that: The governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes? This included evidence from the provider's own periodic review processes, which fully involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review

7. The majority of respondents agreed with the proposal. However, a number of respondents recognised that the quality assessment framework in Wales might make this unnecessary. There was a suggestion that the statement could be amended to one confirming that the governing body had received a report following the external quality assurance review, and that an action plan had been put in place as appropriate. Respondents also raised the importance of understanding the differences in reporting and regulation in

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<sup>1</sup> As summarised in [W16/29HE: Outcomes of the Consultation carried out on the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales](#)

further education institutions (FEIs), and concerns about burden for these institutions.

8. Conclusion: the statement would be amended to confirm that the governing body had received a report taking account of the external quality assurance review, and that action plan(s) had been put in place as appropriate.

*Statement 1:*

**The governing body has received a report taking account of the external quality assurance review, and an action plan has been put in place and implemented as appropriate, in partnership with the student body.**

Q2. Do you agree that we should include the statement that: The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate?

9. All respondents agreed with the inclusion of this statement. Some suggestions were made, including combining statements 1 and 2, and amending statement 2 to emphasise that the methodologies should be kept under review. Respondents recognised the importance of demonstrating that sound evidence had been used to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes.
10. Conclusion: this statement should be included.

*Statement 2:*

**The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.**

Q3. Do you agree that we should include the statement that: The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately (set and) maintained?

11. The vast majority of respondents agreed with the inclusion of this statement. Issues raised included that the emphasis should be on the maintenance of standards, as the external review would consider the standards for setting awards. It was also noted that providers with degree awarding powers (DAPs) might collaborate with another awarding body, eg for research degrees.
12. Conclusion: this statement should be included.

*Statement 3:*

**The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately (set and) maintained.**

Q4. Do you think that we should include the statement that: The governing body has received a report that confirms that the provider continues to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015)?

13. The majority disagreed with the inclusion of this statement on the basis that external quality assurance review would provide this confirmation in Wales. However, a minority considered that the statement should be included to achieve comparability with England.
14. Conclusion: this question would not be included for Wales, given the different requirements under the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

Q5. Do you agree that we should include the statement that: The governing body has considered a report on the annual dialogue between the institution and the student body, scrutinised student survey outcomes, and put action plans in place in partnership with the student body?

15. All respondents agreed that this statement should be included. It was suggested that the wording should be clarified to recognise that the governing body itself would not put the action plans in place. Respondents considered that this approach would extend and strengthen student engagement and deepen partnership working between providers and their student body. They also suggested that it would be helpful to confirm that student surveys was broader than the National Student Survey (NSS).
16. Conclusion: the statement should be included, with amendments to the wording.

*Statement 4:*

**The governing body has considered a report on the annual dialogue between the institution and the student union or equivalent, scrutinised student survey outcomes and confirmed that action plans had been put in place and implemented, in partnership with the student body.**

Q6. Do you agree that we should include the statement that: The governing body has received a copy of the relationship agreement between the institution and the student union, and a copy of the student charter, both of which have been reviewed within the past year?

17. The vast majority of respondents agreed with the inclusion of this statement. It was suggested that 'student union' be rephrased to 'student body' to reflect that not all institutions had student unions, but still engaged with the student body. It was also proposed that the governing body should review the documents, or a summary of the changes, or receive confirmation that they had been reviewed.

Conclusion: this question should be included.

*Statement 5:*

**The governing body has received a copy of the relationship agreement between the institution and the student union or equivalent, and a copy of the student charter, both of which have been reviewed within the past year.**

**Taking the outcomes forward**

18. The governing bodies of regulated institutions will be asked to provide responses to the assurance questions in December 2017. These statements will relate to 2016/17. It is intended that 2017/18 will be a development year. Therefore the December 2017 responses will be provisional and will inform an evaluation of the exercise. This will inform the full implementation of these arrangements in 2017/18 (responses to be submitted in December 2018).

**Further information / responses to**

19. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (029 2085 9731; [cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk)).