

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Developing a Higher Education Strategy for Wales

Date: 30 September 2016
Reference: W16/33HE
To: Heads of higher education providers in Wales and other interested parties
Response by: **04 November 2016**
Responses to: sheridan.nott@hefcw.ac.uk

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This circular presents for consultation a draft higher education strategy for Wales which has been prepared to align with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015.

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Introduction

1. This circular presents for consultation a draft higher education strategy for Wales which has been prepared to align with the principles of the Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Development of the draft HE Strategy

2. HEFCW has been remitted by the previous Minister for Education and Skills in March 2016 to 'work in partnership with providers to develop a Strategy for Higher Education in Wales looking forward over the next decade'ⁱ. An initial draft of the Strategy should be submitted to the Cabinet Secretary by the end of December 2016.
3. The proposed HE Strategy was referenced throughout the remit letter with a range of areas of policy to be included, some of which were quite detailed and others high level. In addition, some references were clearly directed at sector performance and others related specifically to HEFCW. Following the election, further clarification was gained in subsequent discussion with the new Cabinet Secretary. Agreement was achieved that the strategy should cover the ten-year period to the end of 2026; be high level; and based on the seven well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015ⁱⁱ (the Act). This draft higher education strategy is for the Welsh Government.
4. Although higher education providersⁱⁱⁱ are not subject to the provisions of the Act, this legislation applies to public bodies such as HEFCW, as well as to Welsh Government itself. The intention behind the draft strategy is to show how the higher education system in Wales currently meets, and could further meet, the needs of Wales over the next ten years as set out in the Act. The draft strategy also recognises the key international role of Welsh higher education providers and the benefit that brings to Wales.
5. Taking account of these steers, and meetings with key stakeholders, the following approach has been taken to developing the strategy: which
 - Should cover a ten-year period;
 - Is intentionally high level;
 - Is aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015);
 - Is focussed on the demand from Wales for higher education rather than the supply;
 - Is about the 'what' and not the 'how';
 - Is inclusive of further education but not explicit in its coverage, whilst we await the Welsh Government's response to the Review of the Oversight of Post-Compulsory Education and Training in Wales^{iv}
 - Is supported by the strategies of other bodies, which would be the delivery agents (including HEFCW's new corporate strategy to be developed for April 2017).

6. In the spirit of collaborative working, in July, HEFCW officers met with Universities Wales, Colleges Wales and NUS Wales to discuss the drafting of the Strategy. These were very useful meetings which helped to gain buy in to the direction of travel noted above. HEFCW officers also met with the Future Generations Commissioner to discuss the development of the strategy.
7. On the advice of Universities Wales, HEFCW has contacted a range of people who would be able to provide expert comment on the initial draft. In particular, we were looking for comments on key sources of evidence of demand and informed opinion about future directions. Those responses have informed the development of the draft strategy.
8. In addition, in developing this draft, HEFCW officers took account of the outcomes of the meetings with stakeholders and a summary of the strategic intentions and performance indicators of the universities in Wales (noting that many institutional strategies complete in 2017). Officers took note of For our Future - the 21st Century Higher Education Strategy for Wales^v (2009); the Higher Education Policy Statement^{vi}(2013); Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021^{vii}, and the Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales^{viii}.

The Draft Higher Education strategy

9. An initial draft of the strategy, cast against the seven well-being goals, is attached at **Annex A**. This also includes reference to the sustainable development principle, which is about the behaviours underpinning the seven goals (eg about balancing short and long term needs and involving people with an interest). This evidences how the strategy has been developed taking account of the principle.
10. The aim has been to identify, with a strong evidence base, under each of the seven goals:
 - What will Wales need?
 - What does the HE system currently provide?
 - What else is needed (what are the challenges to which we need the system to rise?)
11. The current draft includes strategic intentions for HE over the next ten years. Annexed to the draft is a list of the 46 national indicators for the Future Generations Act. Higher Education could be seen to contribute directly to some of these indicators but will also contribute indirectly to many. For that reason, no additional measures or targets are included in this draft strategy: we suggest that measures and targets would be developed when we consider with stakeholders how the strategy is to be delivered.

Consultation

12. Taking account of the steers and advice from stakeholders, we have prepared a draft of the HE strategy for consultation. Comment are invited on the draft. This is an initial draft and there is scope to alter this prior to submission.
13. To supplement the process of consultation, we have scheduled a consultation event to take place in Cardiff on Wednesday, 19 October 2016. The Cabinet Secretary will give a keynote address and those attending will benefit from further information about the Well-being of Future Generations Act and have an opportunity to inform the further development of the strategy. A Panel Session will provide an opportunity for contributions from stakeholders. As well as presentations, the event will include workshop work, the purpose of which will be to gain contributions to identifying the demand for higher education, as well as thoughts on the way forward.
14. HEFCW has been asked to submit a draft strategy. The final version will be a Welsh Government higher education strategy for Wales and thus the draft may be subject to further development or amendment after submission.
15. Please submit any comments on the strategy under the following headings:
 - (a) Have any key areas of potential demand been missed (please provide evidence to back up your suggestion)?
 - (b) Are there any gaps in how the higher education system needs to respond to the demand identified?
 - (c) Are the statements of intention appropriate?
 - (d) Are there any statements of intention that should be added or removed?
 - (e) Are there any equality and diversity, Welsh language, or sustainability issues relating to the strategy which you have identified?
 - (f) Have you any further comments on the draft strategy?
16. In considering your responses to the consultation, please note that we aim to keep the final draft strategy fairly succinct and focussed on what would be deliverable. In addition to information about gaps, we would welcome responses which identify areas which might be removed. The strategy relates to the HE system and is sector wide, rather than focussing on the needs of a particular provider or providers. We have not referenced individual organisations or agencies which might be involved in delivering the strategy, as that would cover the 'how' more than the 'what'.

Timetable/ responses to

17. Responses should be submitted to sheridan.nott@hefcw.ac.uk by **Friday, 4 November 2016**. The draft strategy will be submitted by HEFCW to the

Cabinet Secretary by the end of December 2016 following consideration by HEFCW Council at its November meeting.

Further information

18. For further information, contact celia.hunt@hefcw.ac.uk (tel 029 2085 9730) or steven.williams@hefcw.ac.uk (tel 029 2085 9744).

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http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/about_he_in_wales/WG_priorities_and_policies/HEFCW%20Remit%20Letter%202016-17.pdf

ii <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf>

iii We use the term higher education providers to mean universities, colleges and designated alternative providers that deliver higher education.

iv <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/reports/review-of-the-oversight-and-regulation-of-post-compulsory-education-and-training-in-wales/?lang=en>

v <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/forourfuture/?lang=en>

vi <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/highereducation/policy-statement/?lang=en>

vii <http://gov.wales/about/programme-for-government/?lang=en>

viii <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/highereducation/review-of-he-funding-and-student-finance-arrangements/?lang=en>