

Corporate Strategy – Responses to consultation

1 July 2010

On 8 March 2010, Circular W10/08HE *Developing the HEFCW Corporate Strategy 2010-11 to 2012-13* attached for consultation the draft HEFCW Corporate Strategy 2010-11 to 2012-13 which included proposed indicators for assessing progress against the delivery of the Strategy and *For our Future* objectives. The Circular invited views from higher education institutions (HEIs), directly funded further education colleges (FECs) and other interested parties.

We received 10 responses to the consultation, five of which came in after the deadline for submission and were therefore unable to fully inform the development of the Strategy. These responses have now been collated. In the main the structure of the responses followed the example questions posed in the Circular and therefore this is how they have been analysed and recorded.

Is the strategy radical enough?

In general the feeling was that the draft Strategy was not radical enough and indeed should explicitly state the vision of a restructured sector and desirable attributes of that vision. One response suggested that collaborations are not a substitute for reconfiguration and that some reconfiguration was essential. Several responses suggested that Wales has too many or too many small universities to be competitive. There was suggestion from another that the draft was strong on rhetoric but thin on substance.

Unsurprisingly the individual institutions did have their own particular areas of concern, one being preoccupied with their disagreement with the regional planning proposal, and two stressing the absolute essential retention of institutional autonomy.

One respondent was concerned that there was little balance between international and local focus and felt that the emphasis was too firmly based on (Welsh) Assembly Government priorities.

Are the seven strategic objectives the correct ones?

There was no indication that there was any difficulty with the seven objectives, although the responses did contain some concern that the seven objectives were similar to those in the “old” strategy. Some alternative wording was provided which, it was suggested, would dispel the history and connotations of some terms. However, there was no consensus on this and the suggestions were diverse and individual. In the main, this section was used to provide detailed comments about how each respondent felt about each objective and voiced their own particular views about each one, in relation to their institution. Several responses queried the use of the words ‘to ensure’ or ‘to deliver’ in the objectives.

Are there any gaps?

Much of this question was answered in the responses to the previous one about the strategic objectives. The consideration of those points tended to stray into areas where respondents felt that a particular issue or theme had been left out of the text about the strategic objective. As previously noted there was negligible consensus in these areas and the responses depended on the size and mission of the institution. Several responses requested more information about the evidence base supporting the Strategy.

The responses did identify some areas which were felt lacking in the Corporate Strategy as a whole, as below. However, apart from the issue of citizenship, which featured more than once, these were individual comments and were not a consensus:

- Citizenship
- Cultural awareness and identity
- Change in demographics
- Notice that there is already a high quality student experience in Welsh HE
- Widening Access to postgraduate education
- Health/medicine and the 'quality of life' agenda
- Internationalisation
- Greater clarity on HEFCW's role
- A greater focus on partnership working with the further education sector.

Do the indicators, collectively, give a sufficient sense of whether or not the HE system is performing well?

See analysis in separate document.