

Cylchlythyr | Circular

HEFCW's role in Educational Oversight: outcome of consultation, and procedures

Date: 24 February 2021
Reference: W21/06HE
To: Heads of regulated higher education providers in Wales
Heads of institutions which have been specifically designated by HEFCW for student support
Response by: No response required
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This circular sets out HEFCW's role regarding educational oversight, together with the outcomes of the consultation carried out via circular W20/41HE.

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Introduction

1. This circular sets out HEFCW's role regarding educational oversight, together with the outcomes of the consultation carried out via Circular W20/41HE.

Background

2. The Educational Oversight body is the body that has responsibility for undertaking assessments to confirm that all of the sites of an education provider wishing to be a sponsor meet acceptable educational quality standards.
3. Sponsors must maintain their Educational Oversight for all their sites throughout the duration of their student sponsor licence. The sponsor must notify its Educational Oversight body of its plans to begin teaching at a new site, take any steps required by the body to maintain its Educational Oversight, and provide evidence of this if required by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).
4. The sponsor must ensure that any teaching partner, exceptional arrangement or site it wishes to add to its student sponsor licence meets the Educational Oversight requirements set out in this guidance.
5. HEFCW has had previous confirmation from the Home Office that the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales meets its requirements for educational oversight. This means that regulated institutions in Wales meet the quality requirements for student sponsor licences.
6. Following advice from HEFCW's Quality Assurance Committee, in 2019 HEFCW requested to be named the Educational Oversight body for both regulated and specifically designated providers in Wales applying for a student sponsor licence, confirming that we would liaise with the QAA as appropriate.
7. We proposed that the QAA should remain the Educational Oversight body for institutions which were neither regulated by HEFCW nor had specific designation in Wales.

Educational oversight

8. We published our Educational Oversight procedures for consultation in December 2020 as circular [W20/41HE](#). These are taken into account in the final version of our procedures, which are provided at **Annex A**.
9. We received six responses to the consultation. Respondents are listed at **Annex B**.

10. HEFCW's Quality Assurance Committee advised on the responses and any amendments to be made to the procedures.

Do the procedures fully capture HEFCW's role in relation to Educational Oversight?

11. All respondents agreed that the procedures captured HEFCW's role in relation to educational oversight. In addition, the following points were made:
 - The procedures provided an effective overview – albeit the nuance of processes on the ground is missing (triennial assurance visit, governors assurance report were not detailed).
 - For QAA to remain as the Educational Oversight body for institutions neither regulated by HEFCW nor specifically designated in Wales was critical for the perception of parity and quality of Welsh HE.
12. Conclusion: the procedures fully captured HEFCW's role. The procedures were intended to capture HEFCW's role rather than the operation of the broader quality assurance processes, and therefore it would not be helpful to include additional information on other processes within the procedures. HEFCW will continue to recognise the role of the QAA as the Educational Oversight body for institutions which are neither regulated by HEFCW nor specifically designated in Wales.

Are there any gaps in the draft procedures?

13. Five respondents reported that they did not see any gaps. One respondent noted that the updated Home Office guidance removed reference to 'legacy sponsor' status and replaced the terminology of 'Tier 4 licence' with student sponsor licence.
14. Conclusion: there were no gaps in the procedures. The terminology in **Annex A** was updated to reflect revisions to the Home Office guidance.

Is further clarity needed on any aspect of the procedures?

15. Three respondents indicated that no further clarity was needed at this time, with one noting that the procedures were further supported in the Home Office guidance. The following points were made by other respondents:
 - Further information on how the Educational Oversight role, working alongside the Home Office Higher Education Assurance Team audits would be welcome, and what the status of both would be.
 - The guidance was broadly clear, but there was perhaps a confusion between the two documents [i.e. the HEFCW procedures and the student sponsor guidance] of the terms 'acceptable' educational quality standards, and 'appropriate baseline requirements' which could be made clearer.
 - The procedures should be updated to reflect the terminology in the updated Home Office guidance.

16. Conclusion: the terminology within the HEFCW document was updated. The procedures were intended to capture HEFCW's role rather than the operation of the broader quality assurance processes, and therefore it would not be helpful to include additional information on other processes within the procedures.

Will the procedures have any effect (either positive or adverse), on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and/or treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

17. No responses identified any effect in these areas.
18. Conclusion: no amendments were needed in relation to this question.

Do these proposals have any positive or negative impacts or unintended consequences in terms of equality and diversity and the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act's seven wellbeing goals, Sustainable Development Principle and five ways of working?

19. No responses identified any impact in these areas.
20. Conclusion: no amendments were needed in relation to this question.

What positive or adverse effects will these proposals have on:
• opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and
• treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

21. No responses identified any impact in these areas. The following point was noted:
- Individuals will be able to converse in either Welsh or English whilst engaging with staff who undertake the work under consideration
22. Conclusion: no amendments were needed in relation to this question.

Could these proposals be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects

23. No responses identified any impact in these areas, with one respondent noting that changes to the procedures relating to the role of HEFCW were unlikely to have any increase or decrease in effect.
24. Conclusion: no amendments were needed in relation to this question

Further information

25. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

26. We have carried out an impact assessment screening to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We also considered the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the HE sector in Wales and potential impacts towards the goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 including our Well-Being Objectives. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about impact assessments.