

WALES NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2009

WELCOME

Welcome to the first Academy Wales newsletter for 2009.

Institutions in Wales will shortly receive a copy of their engagement with the Academy during 2007–08. These reports detail the growing range of activities such as the number of Fellows of the Academy the institution has, key departmental Subject Centre contacts, attendance at Subject Centre events, staff receiving news bulletins, grants and funding obtained.

At the sector level we have established an action set looking at the First Year Student Experience led by Karen Fitzgibbon at the University of Glamorgan (see below for details). The research-teaching nexus has also been identified as a priority and Graham Rogers and Simon Haslett of the University of Wales, Newport are leading an action set on this. Assessment, education for sustainable development and global citizenship and evaluating learning and teaching strategies are also priorities.

Subject Centres continue to work at the discipline level with colleagues in schools and departments across Wales. The Academy continues to work supporting Welsh and Welsh medium.

FIRST YEAR STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACTION SET

At a meeting hosted by Aberystwyth University, the Welsh Institutional Group (WIG) agreed that the number one sector priority for Welsh HEIs was the first year student experience.

With all Welsh HEIs invited to be involved, Bangor University, Aberystwyth University, Cardiff University, the University of Glamorgan, Glyndwr University, Swansea University, the University of Wales, Newport and UWIC have contributed to sharing current initiatives to support the first year. At the group's inaugural meeting hosted by Cardiff University it was agreed that two themes – 'student engagement' and 'communities of practice' – were central to the first year experience and that the best way to facilitate the data gathering was to use a wiki. Selected through a voting system, the next step of the project is to identify case studies from the current practices to share across the sector.

RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS ACTION SET

Identified as a priority by WIG, the University of Wales, Newport is leading this action set which aims to explore current approaches in Welsh HEIs and help develop a better understanding of effective practices which nurture this relationship and how those can benefit the student learning experience. Supported by the Academy's Professor Alan Jenkins, the group's first meeting will take place at Newport on 27 February, 2009. For further details please contact Gabriel Jeziarski (gabriel.jeziarski@heacademy.ac.uk).

ASSESSMENT

The Academy will be running three events on assessment and feedback in Wales this year. In addition, to facilitate the sharing of practice the Academy is setting up a wiki and inviting all Welsh HEIs to provide a link to their assessment policy, any other relevant resources and to highlight up to three key strategic issues relating to assessment and feedback that currently provide a challenge to them, such as the first year, retention and progression, the use of technology to enhance assessment and feedback for staff and students, and exploring student expectations. In addition Aberystwyth University has offered to host a meeting for senior managers, heads of educational development and students to discuss strategic issues. This builds on the Academy's work to date collating over 40 assessment case studies (www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/assessment) and projects (www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/resources/projects/welsh_assessment_projects).

GWELLA: ENHANCING LEARNING AND TEACHING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Since March 2008, the Academy has been supporting institutions in Wales with the development and implementation of technology enhancement activities through the Gwella Programme. This is a strategic initiative between the Academy and HEFCW in support of HEFCW's 'Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology: a Strategy for Higher Education in Wales'. The strategy has five broad Enhancement Themes, each with specific indicators of success:

- Enhancement of learning, teaching, assessment, the curriculum and core processes
- The optimum learning experience
- Enhanced flexibility and accessibility of provision
- Effective dissemination and sharing of current and good practice
- Ownership

Seven Welsh HEIs have engaged in the first phase of enhancement activities in 2008. Four other institutions have been conducting an e-learning benchmarking exercise during this time, also supported by the Academy. These institutions will join the enhancement phase of the Gwella programme from March 2009. The Academy is supporting Gwella until early 2011, when HEFCW plans to undertake a review of the 2008 Strategy.

In March 2008, the Academy established a weblog to provide a communication and support platform for participating institutions (<http://elearning.heacademy.ac.uk/weblogs/gwella/>). At a Gwella programme meeting in October 2008, discussions were based on an Appreciative Inquiry approach which provided a framework for introducing the different institutional enhancement activities, articulating a vision for technology-enhanced learning and teaching in Wales, designing a means of achieving that vision, and sharing intended actions from the day. There is a summary of the meeting and key points from the discussion on the Gwella weblog.

The Academy has recently produced an interim report for HEFCW on the enhancement activities and progress towards the implementation of the 2008 Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology. The report can be accessed from <http://elearning.heacademy.ac.uk/weblogs/gwella/?p=68>.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP (ESDGC)

A sector-wide audit of the curricula being taught in Welsh HEIs has been undertaken using a tool developed at Cardiff University, STAUNCH (Sustainable Teaching Audit for University Curricula in Higher Education). Working closely with colleagues from the ESRC Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS) at Cardiff University and HEFCW, the Academy will be analysing the audit reports and feeding back to the sector. The Academy is facilitating an all-Wales ESDGC HE Network Group which met recently at the universities of Bangor and Swansea simultaneously by video conference. The details of the report will be presented to an ESDGC conference at Swansea in June or July 2009.

REVIEW OF WELSH HEIS' WIDENING ACCESS AND REACHING WIDER STRATEGIES

A review of Welsh HEIs' widening access strategies is being undertaken by an academy team led by Howard Colley, with support from Academy colleagues Helen May and Liz Thomas. The review will provide a UK-wide perspective on disability and widening participation. The work involves analysis of the widening access strategies of all Welsh institutions and the Reaching Wider plans of the four regional consortia. In addition, the Academy review will take account of earlier reviews carried out for HEFCW by Arad Consulting.

RAISING THE STATUS OF TEACHING: REWARD AND RECOGNITION

DEPARTMENTAL REWARD AND RECOGNITION PILOT PROJECTS

In summer 2008, the Academy funded a pilot project to explore the potential for some form of recognition for departments, Schools or groups of staff in relation to their commitment to learning and teaching, their own professional support and development, and to the quality of the student learning experience. The HEIs involved in Wales were Cardiff University and UWIC, as well as St Mary's University College, Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland.

Following a meeting in November 2008, interest in the principle of group reward and recognition was such that it has been decided to extend the project into phase 2 in order to investigate what such a scheme would mean in practice.

REWARD AND RECOGNITION FOR TEACHING PROVIDED BY THE ACADEMY'S SUBJECT CENTRES

The Academy Scotland team has compiled a briefing to highlight the range of opportunities afforded by the Higher Education Academy's Subject Centres for rewarding and recognising excellence and supporting developments in learning and teaching. The briefing will also be of interest to staff working in Wales, who are also ineligible to apply for the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme. It is intended to provide a helpful guide for both academic and support staff. The briefing is available to download from www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/research/rewardandrecog.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT CONSULTANCY SERVICE

The Academy has launched a consultancy service to allow the sector to benefit from the extensive experience of work-based learning practitioners. This service offers hands on, tailored advice and includes an initial period of consultancy paid for by the Academy. For example, the University of Plymouth has benefited from help in creating a set of quality assurance procedures appropriate for CPD and short courses.

We are also keen to add colleagues from Wales to our growing database of consultants. If you have at least five years of experience of supporting institutions and/or individuals in any area of employer engagement then we would be keen to hear from you. For more information about the service please see www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/engagement or contact Martin Cordiner (martin.cordiner@heacademy.ac.uk).

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (PDP) UPDATE

The Academy, in partnership with the Centre for Recording Achievement, will be supporting an all-Wales workshop, expected to be hosted in the South West of Wales. For further details please contact Gabriel Jezierski (gabriel.jezierski@heacademy.ac.uk).

The Academy has recently published a revised edition of the Personal Development Planning and Employability guidance booklet. The booklet aims to provide a snapshot of evolving thinking and practice that is intended to provide new perspectives on PDP and to improve practice. It builds upon and extends the structure of the first edition by considering the development of PDP within a more explicit careers-oriented frame and a modified categorisation for the case studies. It also updates the case study and institutional material and places it in a more evaluative context. It also tracks the ways in which some of the case studies have evolved since the previous publication. Copies are available on request from publicationmailings@heacademy.ac.uk.

WELSH MEDIUM SUBJECT CENTRE WEBPAGES

As part of its ongoing commitment to implementing its draft Welsh Language Policy, all Academy Subject Centres' webpages now have (or will have shortly) at least one page in Welsh, building on the work of those Subject Centres that already had, in some cases, significant amounts in Welsh. For links to the Academy's Subject Centres please see www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/networks/subjectcentres.

SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND POLITICS (C-SAP) PROJECT FUNDING 2009

C-SAP funds are available to all staff in Welsh universities and colleges delivering HE programmes in Sociology, Anthropology and Politics and in cognate interdisciplinary areas. The project funding is intended to foster a proactive approach to change in learning and teaching.

C-SAP is seeking to fund a project up to a maximum of £7,000. The successful project will address one of the following internationalisation themes:

- Supporting international students
- Staff and student mobility
- Curriculum development
- Supporting international staff

- Effects of globalising study
- Interpreting policy through practice

Applications from consortia of departments or those that seek to link disciplines are welcomed. The closing date for receipt of expressions of interest is midday on Friday 27 March 2009. All applications must be completed on the appropriate application form.

For further information and an application form see the C-SAP website at www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk or contact us at enquiries@c-sap.bham.ac.uk or on 0121 4147919.

SPOTLIGHT ON WORKING WITH DEPARTMENTS IN ENGINEERING AT WELSH HEIS

The Engineering Subject Centre has enhanced its engagement with HEIs in Wales which offer engineering programmes through a series of visits, award of mini-project funding, and the appointment of two Welsh-based associates.

The Centre launched the initiative in 2007–08, making visits to departments, by invitation, at Bangor, Glyndwr (formerly NEWI), Cardiff, and Newport. At these visits, the Centre was able to promote in particular its provision of pedagogic resources, its opportunities for funding, and plans for further working in Wales that include its special mini-project call and the invitation for nominations to appoint Welsh-based associates.

FUNDED MINI-PROJECTS

The special call to Wales for mini-project bids was open exclusively to fund pedagogic research and development projects in any one or more of four priority areas of enhancement nominated for 2008–9. From the bids received, the Centre has currently awarded funding to Loretta Newman-Ford (lnewman@glam.ac.uk), Steve Lloyd and Steve Thomas at Glamorgan (under the theme of work-based learning, enterprise and employability), and to Peter Theobald (theobaldps@cardiff.ac.uk) at Cardiff (under the theme of assessment and feedback).

The HoneyBee programme at the University of Glamorgan co-ordinates and supports a range of bespoke work-based learning (WBL) opportunities for engineering undergraduates. The original scheme was developed to enhance student employability and encourage employers in the Objective One Wales region (an area of social and economic deprivation) to recruit graduates. The aim of the mini-project is to increase business competitiveness and ultimately to reduce the 'brain drain' phenomenon (where individuals with technical skills/knowledge move away to find work elsewhere), by evaluating the current programme and its impact, and implementing enhancements that will subsequently inform both Glamorgan's work-based learning provision and other HEIs aspiring to establish and embed WBL.

The mini-project at Cardiff University's School of Engineering aims to develop a framework for the assessment of students' individual projects. The study will explore the robustness of individual project assessment process and practice, the subjective nature of which – in addition to the involvement of many staff – means that this assessment is susceptible to inconsistency. The study will therefore explore the validity and reliability of the local individual project assessment process, to make enhancements for the adoption of an Assessment Framework that will fit within the Cardiff University Assessment Strategy, and which can be adopted and adapted by other HEIs.

The deliverables from these mini-projects are expected to have significant local

impact, but they are also intended to be generic and, as such, readily transferable for implementation at other HEIs. The Centre therefore expects to make the outcomes available through its website (see: www.engsc.ac.uk/us/fundopps/wales.asp), and by dissemination at event(s) to be organised in consultation with Academy Wales.

APPOINTMENT OF WELSH-BASED ASSOCIATES

The Centre has also sought to enhance and sustain its engagement in Wales through the appointment of two Welsh-based Associates: Daphne O'Doherty at Cardiff University, and Joe Tatler at Glyndwr University, Wrexham. The Centre now has a team of 12 Associates appointed on contract from HEIs around the UK who are working as advocates of the Centre in the delivery of its mission and strategic aims. (see www.engsc.ac.uk/us/associates/index.asp).

Daphne O'Doherty (odohertydm@Cardiff.ac.uk) is a Senior Lecturer at the Cardiff School of Engineering, Cardiff University (for more information please see www.engsc.ac.uk/us/associates/whoswho.asp). Her work as an associate has already included her participation at the Centre's Assessment of Learning Outcomes (ALOE) Conference in November 2008. She is currently drafting a web-based questionnaire that will be sent to Engineering Schools in the UK to evaluate the level and extent of student involvement in both module and programme development. In addition, she is having discussions with the project team in Cardiff University looking at student involvement across all the university's activities, aiming to identify areas for future collaboration, firstly at Cardiff and subsequently across Welsh HEIs.

Joe Tatler (j.tatler@glyndwr.ac.uk) is Principal Lecturer and currently Head of Engineering at Glyndwr University (see www.engsc.ac.uk/us/associates/whoswho.asp). His work as an associate will be in setting up a working group to look into work based learning (WBL), to bring together colleagues at Welsh HEIs that have already, or would like to, introduce WBL. The particular focus will be in establishing and promoting initiatives whereby WBL becomes recognised for accreditation purposes. Joe has a further interest in exploring the integration of practical work from programmes of study with problem based learning, and the use of practical work to enhance students' learning experience.

It is likely, therefore, that both Daphne and Joe will be in touch with you on these aspects of WBL, student involvement, and adoption of EBL, to discuss how you might work with them in developing and implementing this expertise in Wales.

SUPPORTING DEPARTMENTAL CHANGE INITIATIVE

The Centre would specifically like to promote its current, UK-wide initiative on "Supporting Departmental Change" to engineering departments in Wales. The initiative involves the Centre, through its core and associate staff, working closely with a department to look at effecting change and facilitating staff development on a chosen aspect of learning, teaching and assessment practices. From initial discussions and mutual agreement with the department, the Centre will run a bespoke workshop from its portfolio of workshop topics, establish an action plan for change, and will support your department in progressing and effecting that change. Further details on the initiative are available at www.engsc.ac.uk/an/departamental-change/index.asp.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above contact Simon Steiner by email (simon@engsc.ac.uk) or by phone on 01509 227174.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

DELIVERING PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES IN SOCIAL WORK

11 MARCH 2009, CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

This event is designed to provide staff offering professional doctorates in social work with an opportunity to hear about research, share experiences and discuss best practice. Bookings close on 28 February 2009. Visit:

www.swap.ac.uk/events/swapevents/110309swdoc.html

E FOR ENHANCEMENT : CONFERENCE ON TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2 APRIL 2009, CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

Enhancement is the focus of this national conference on learning and teaching in Welsh Higher Education, enabled – not driven – by the use of technology. Funded by HEFCW and organised in association with JISC RSC Wales and the Higher Education Academy, the conference will bring together a wide range of staff from all Welsh HEIs and support organisations, to explore current good practice and innovation. This will help to drive forward enhancement in HE in Wales.

Further information and booking details will be available via the RSC Wales website (www.rsc-wales.ac.uk) during February/March. For more information please contact Lis Parcell, RSC Wales (email e.j.parcell@swansea.ac.uk; tel 01792 513261 or mob 07970 939550).

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-LEVEL LEARNING FOR THE WORKFORCE IN WALES

7 APRIL 2009, UWIC LLANDAFF CAMPUS, CARDIFF

Dissemination of a HEFCW-funded 18 month project involving eight Welsh HEIs to identify and offer solutions to challenges facing HEIs in Wales in their work towards greater involvement in workforce development, and a feasibility study into the formation of an all Wales centre for work-based learning undertaken by a team from Middlesex University led by Professor Carol Costley and Professor John Stephenson. The work consists of a series of reports on areas such as: Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (APEL) and HE; third sector management development; effective partnerships with SSCs; the role of foundation degrees in HE; learning contracts and mentoring in HE; barriers to employer engagement with HE.

The conference will allow practitioners to gain an insight into the findings of the series of reports undertaken by teams from HEIs across Wales. In addition to workshops based around the reports there will be an opportunity to participate in a question and answer session on issues highlighted. The Q&A panel will consist of invited representatives of such organisations as WESB, UALL Cymru, HEFCW, Academy Wales and LLUK.

For more details on the conference or to book a place please contact Anne Brooks at UWIC (tel. 02920 416073; email abrooks@uwic.ac.uk).

28-29 APRIL 2009, ST DAVID'S HOTEL AND SPA, CARDIFF

The Fourth Annual Conference of the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Business Management Accountancy and Finance (BMAF) will be run in conjunction with the University of Glamorgan Business School. The conference's central theme will be Engaging Employers. Visit: www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/events/conference

5TH ANNUAL ESCALATE ITE CONFERENCE

15 MAY 2009, GLYNDŴR UNIVERSITY, WREXHAM

This year's ESCalate ITE conference is entitled 'Initial Teacher Education – Towards a new era', and seeks to enhance the student teacher's experience by advancing skills in the pedagogy of teacher education. It is aimed at all practitioners working in Initial Teacher Education from the four countries of the UK and all other agencies with a professional interest in teacher education. Visit: <http://escalate.ac.uk/5089>

BOLOGNA AND EUROPE: BENEFITING THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

18 MAY 2009, CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

Jointly organised by the British Council and the Higher Education Academy, this event will look at the benefits students studying in Welsh HEIs can derive from studying abroad and how students from abroad can enrich the student learning experiences of home students.

NEWPORT NEXUS CONFERENCE 2009:

LINKING RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

15–16 JUNE 2009, UNIVERSITY OF WALES, NEWPORT, CAERLEON CAMPUS

17 JUNE 2009: POST-CONFERENCE FIELD VISITS

Jointly convened by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and Research and Enterprise Department (RED). Proposals for symposia and suggestions for keynote speakers are invited. Symposia may focus on any research and enterprise and/or learning and teaching theme, but examples that explicitly link research/enterprise and teaching are particularly welcomed. The deadline for proposals for symposia, papers, posters and field visits is Monday 2 March 2009.

For further information and proposal forms please see www3.newport.ac.uk/displayPage.aspx?object_id=9856&type=SEC.

RESOURCES

Taking control of the research skills agenda in Wales report

www.heacademy.ac.uk/aboutus/wales

To contribute to future editions of this newsletter, please contact Laura Hodsdon (laura.hodsdon@heacademy.ac.uk).