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Circular

Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology: refreshing the strategy

Date: 21 September 2011
Reference: W11/32HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in
Wales
Response by: No response required
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In publishing the strategy for enhancing learning and teaching through technology for higher education (HE) in Wales from 2007/08 to 2016/17 we recognised that it would need to be reviewed at regular intervals. This circular provides an update to the strategy to take account of changes in technology, the policy context and the HE funding regime.

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Introduction

- 1 The period since the publication of the ten year [Strategy for Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology](#) (ELTT) from 2007/08 to 2016/17¹ has been one of substantial change for the higher education (HE) sector. This includes substantial changes to the HE funding regime and student fees from 2012/13, which will impact on the role of HEFCW. The regionalisation agenda and the reconfiguration of the sector² have come to the fore, and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has been established. Social networking, cloud services, mobile technologies, shared services and open educational resources are becoming ever more prominent, and technologies are transforming some areas of HE.
- 2 There have also been changes to the policy context of HE. In particular, the publication of [For our Future - The 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales](#), [Delivering a Digital Wales](#) and the associated [Digital Wales Delivery Plan](#) are relevant to ELTT. We have published our guidance for learning and teaching and widening access strategies³, which integrated ELTT, and asked institutions to ensure their strategies were sufficiently agile to take account of the outcomes of the review of the ELTT strategy.
- 3 In publishing the ELTT strategy in 2007/08 we recognised that it would need to be reviewed at regular intervals to take account of such changes. This short but focussed document provides an update to the strategy. Our vision remains the same, ie that enhancing learning and teaching through technology be considered a normal part of mainstream provision, processes and practices.

Background

- 4 The ELTT strategy had five objectives:
 - the enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment, and of core processes;
 - an enhanced student learning experience based on robust technology, including encouraging developments at the forefront of this provision;
 - increased flexibility and accessibility of provision, including facilitating Welsh medium education and taking full account of equality and diversity;
 - effective collaboration and sharing of current and good practice within Wales, the UK, Europe and globally, and at all levels; and
 - engagement of the sector with the strategy.

¹Circular W08/12HE

²wales.gov.uk/consultations/education/heinwales/?lang=en

³[Circulars W10/41HE and W11/17HE](#)

- 5 HEFCW provided funding to support the implementation of the strategy⁴. This included an allocation to each HEFCW-funded HE institution⁵ and consultancy support, visits and feedback, arranged by the HE Academy, funded separately by HEFCW. The programme of work funded through this initiative became known as [Gwella](#). The final [Gwella report](#) is available on our website. Institutions which had not already participated in an e-Learning benchmarking exercise led by the Academy had to do so in order to access their institutional allocation.
- 6 HEFCW subsequently funded the institutions' participation in the [Building Capacity \(Wales\)](#) programme. This aimed to help institutions make best use of existing resources developed in JISC and HE Academy projects in order to meet defined institutional needs and align with their approach to ELTT. The [final report](#) of the Building Capacity (Wales) programme is available on our website.

Review of the strategy

- 7 In 2011 JISC Advance commissioned [Aspire](#) to conduct the review of the ELTT strategy on behalf of HEFCW. [Aspire's report](#) is available on our website. The outcomes of this review were considered by representatives from the Higher Education (HE) Academy, [JISC Regional Support Centre Wales \(RSC Wales\)](#) and HEFCW, and have informed the development of this circular.
- 8 The review confirmed that the emphases on enhancement and mainstreaming, and on supporting and enhancing learning/teaching rather than on technology, should continue. Therefore, we expect you to build on your achievements in mainstreaming and sharing to date by maintaining and evidencing the continuous improvement and collaboration, both within and between institutions, which you have so successfully established. This includes ensuring that the potential role of technology in enhancing all of all your institution's activities is considered holistically in the context and is an integral part of cross-institutional planning.
- 9 The emphasis has shifted to a more evidence-based approach for all the longer term indicators of success. We do not believe it is appropriate to identify additional indicators for the next three years. Instead, we would like you to focus on gathering, refining, and providing the evidence to support the achievement of the strategy's objectives, and report this through the deliverables and measurable outcomes in the annual monitoring statements for your Learning and Teaching Strategy. You will also need to evidence the sustainability of your approach to ELTT. We have refined the longer-term indicators where appropriate, to reflect changes in technology and the HE environment since 2007/08.

⁴ Circular [W07/50HE](#)

⁵ With the exception of the Open University in Wales, the funding for which was ring-fenced at that time

Updates to the objectives of the strategy

- 10 We continue to encourage you to make use of external agencies, such as JISC, including the RSC Wales; the HE Academy; and the Welsh Video Network, in achieving the updated objectives of the strategy detailed below.
- 11 You should consider these objectives in the context of the needs of the diverse student body, including the diversity of their experience of technology.

Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and of Core Processes

i. Emphasising learning rather than technology

We confirm that the emphasis should remain on how technology can enhance learning, teaching and the overall student experience, and how it can have a transformative impact, eg in areas such as curriculum design, assessment and feedback, and flexibility.

ii. Mainstreaming the role of technology in enhancing learning, teaching and assessment

We confirm that you should continue to ensure that the informed consideration and application of appropriate technologies to enhancing all your learning and teaching related activities is (or becomes) part of your mainstream analysis, planning, design, implementation and evaluation processes.

iii. Staff development

You will need to ensure that professional development opportunities for staff are evidence-based and include scholarly and academic literacies appropriate to the digital age. You should determine how learning, teaching and staff development may be enhanced through the use of technology where possible and appropriate.

iv. Enhancing other core processes through use of technology

We confirm that you should continue to make normal the seeking of enhancements to other core processes eg student selection, enrolment, and assessment, through the use of technology. These will also impact upon, and can transform, the student learning experience of higher education.

An Enhanced Student Learning Experience, including increased flexibility and accessibility of provision

v. Enhancing the student learning experience

We recognise the continued role of technology in understanding and meeting the needs of diverse learners and ensuring parity of learning experience by developing student scholarly/academic literacies appropriate to the needs of our increasingly digital world. We expect you to evidence how you are using technology to develop creative and innovative ways of engaging with students as partners.

vi. Increased flexibility and accessibility

Technology has a role in increasing accessibility and flexibility above

and beyond benefiting individuals with particular needs. An increased emphasis on accessibility and flexibility also makes sound business sense. We recognise the role of technology in supporting student transition and progression, including learning in employment. We confirm the continued importance of technology in increasing accessibility and flexibility of learning and support, including addressing equality and diversity, Welsh medium learning, and fostering lifelong learning.

vii. Research

We confirm that you should continue to carry out, utilise and share outcomes of research to identify how the student experience may be enhanced through technology to maximise benefit, avoid duplication, inform decision-making and build capacity.

viii. Benchmarking provision

We confirm the importance of analysis and reflection in planning, as was realised through the benchmarking exercise at each institution, and the importance of maintaining continuous improvement which developed as a consequence. We anticipate some evidence of ongoing, albeit periodic, analysis and reflection although we are not prescribing the form that this will take. We acknowledge the benefits of a common benchmarking methodology, but recognise that you may wish to make independent arrangements.

Effective Collaboration and Sharing of Current and Good Practice

ix. Collaboration

Collaboration has become increasingly important in terms of the regional agenda, the establishment of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and opportunities offered by cloud computing, shared services and open educational resources. You need to consider cross-functional collaboration, eg between library and information services / other student services, and academic departments. You also need to address the fact that library and information services/ other student services may need to support different types of collaborative partnerships in future.

x. Maintaining competitiveness

We confirm that you should continue to use technology to support and enhance your institution's mission and remain competitive.

Institutional engagement

xi. Institutional engagement with the strategy

We confirm that we expect you to continue to engage with this strategy. However, we do not believe it is necessary to maintain separate targets for this objective.

Refreshing the indicators of success

- 12 We have refreshed the long term indicators of success to take account of the review of the strategy and the change in the HE context since publication of

the strategy. As mentioned above, we do not believe it necessary to maintain the indicators for institutional engagement with the strategy as Aspire's review demonstrated that this has been achieved.

- 13 We will continue to ask you to identify targets for enhancing learning and teaching through technology within your annual monitoring statements for your Learning and Teaching Strategies.
- 14 We expect you to take an evidence-based approach to derive appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative evidence for the achievement of these indicators by 2016/17.

Enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment, and of core processes. HEIs can evidence:

- ongoing evaluation of enhancement of learning and teaching through technology;
- how technology has been used to facilitate the development of new pedagogic practices and assist in curriculum transformation;
- ongoing evaluation of enhancement of core processes, through the use of technology;
- that professional development opportunities for staff are evidence-based and include scholarly and academic literacies appropriate to the digital age;
- that learners and staff at all levels agree that technology is used in a relevant and beneficial way, while being integral to effective operation of the institution.

An enhanced student learning experience, including increased flexibility and accessibility of provision. HEIs can evidence:

- where and how technology supports an enhanced student experience;
- strategic understanding of the importance of technology in enabling flexibility and accessibility of learning;
- timely adoption of appropriate technologies, with quality materials provided for all learners;
- that technology is used appropriately to strengthen and enhance Welsh medium learning, address equality and diversity, and foster lifelong learning;
- that technology is integrated into operational processes for increased flexibility and accessibility of learning;
- that the student experience has been enhanced through working collaboratively and sharing experiences and outcomes.

Effective collaboration and sharing of current and good practice. HEIs can evidence:

- the benefits of collaborative activity, resulting in effective dissemination, sharing and promotion of good practice in the use of technology to enhance the student experience;

- increased collaboration within and between institutions in Wales, the UK and globally, including open educational resources, shared services and cloud computing as appropriate;
- their use of technology to maintain competitiveness and increase the contribution of HE to the knowledge economy.

Reviewing the Strategy

- 15 We will carry out a further review of this strategy in 2013/14. We will expect institutions to contribute to this review and evidence progress they have made in achieving the long term indicators.

Impact assessment

- 16 We are committed to advancing equality and diversity. In addition to meeting our statutory responsibilities, our intention is to drive cultural change and proactive approaches to ensure that equality and diversity issues are fully integrated into our own and the sector's policies and practices and meet Welsh Government priorities. Our Equality Scheme confirms our commitment and statutory responsibilities regarding the 2010 Equality Act. As part of our policy development process we have undertaken initial screening to consider the impact of this document on learners with protected characteristics and groups underrepresented in higher education, and whether it requires a full equality impact assessment. The outcomes of this screening are available upon request.
- 17 We also considered sustainability matters as part of the impact assessment screening of this document. You will need to ensure that sustainability is adequately addressed within ELTT developments, and that they are consistent with and links to the policies, values, and actions set out within your institution's own sustainability policy and environmental management plan.

Further information

- 18 For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).