

NSS 2007 – providing more information than ever before

All universities and colleges that have taken part in the 2007 National Student Survey (NSS) will have data published on the new Unistats web-site – providing more information than ever before to help potential students make choices about what and where to study.

Over 177,000 students gave feedback on the quality of their courses in this year's NSS, 20,000 more than in 2006. The 2007 NSS was the third annual survey of students' views and was conducted in 147 universities and colleges, achieving a 60 per cent response rate.

Results will be published in early August, at subject level, on the Unistats web-site for all higher education institutions in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and some in Scotland.

Course quality

The feedback provided by final year undergraduate students gives potential students and their advisers a snapshot of the quality of courses, teaching and resources, amongst other things, so that they have even more information to help make study choices.

Wes Streeting, Vice-President (Education), National Union of Students, said: 'The high response rate to the survey demonstrates that final year undergraduates are committed to helping the next intake of students make informed choices.'

Simpler site

The Unistats web-site has been developed by the university and colleges admissions body, UCAS (with Hotcourses), and replaces the existing TQI web-site. It will

also feature other statistics to help students make choices about what and where to study. The new site will be easier to use with improved navigation, simplified text and closer links to the UCAS web-site, so that potential students on the UCAS site can view the Unistats data when making their choices about higher education.

UCAS will write to institutions to outline how they can access their results prior to publication in August.



Photo by John Houlahan www.vifitness.co.uk

Students at the University of York (pictured) have been keen to express their views in the NSS, returning consistently high response rates each year – this year at 71 per cent.

Inside issue 69

2 New HEFCE Chair

3 New Burnley campus

4 Employer engagement

5-8 **hefce** UPDATE

LLNs supplement

9 Streamlining accountability

10 Cutting emissions

11 EMS improving

A wealth of experience

The newly-appointed Chair of the Board of HEFCE, **Tim Melville-Ross**, will bring a wealth of experience from the worlds of business and education.

Mr Melville-Ross has been appointed Chair with effect from 1 January 2008, taking over from David Young who has held the post since 2001.

Black cabs

He is currently Chair of the Council of the University of Essex and of Manganese Bronze Holdings PLC, the manufacturer of London's black cabs.

He recently retired as Chair of Investors in People UK and was awarded a CBE for services to workplace learning and development.

Mr Young's term as Chair of HEFCE has been extended for a further three months until Mr Melville-Ross can take up his post.

Ed Smith has also been reappointed for a further term on the HEFCE Board.



Tim Melville-Ross

Strategy group on the right TRAC

HEFCE has set up a forum of vice-chancellors and senior managers to discuss how the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) should be developed to support policy making, funding decisions, institutional decision-making and satisfy accountability requirements.

The forum known as the TRAC Strategy Group is being chaired by Steve Smith, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter.

'TRAC has already helped the sector better understand its costs and demonstrate to others that they can trust us with their money supporting investments of over £1 billion,' he said.

'We need to build on this success by exploiting the potential of TRAC better than we are at the moment and becoming more sophisticated in our understanding and use of the information. We know other countries are developing systems based on TRAC – we need to stay ahead.'

The group will advise on how TRAC data can best be used to inform policy on the total funding of higher education teaching, and the needs of sustainable teaching and research. It will also consider the wider implications of reporting TRAC data on the costs of teaching in the context of the higher education sector coming under the increased influence of market forces and the possible further deregulation of student fees.

Further information about the group's programme of work is on the HEFCE web-site under [Finance/fundinghe/transparencyreview](#)



Photography: Matt Henman

Eleonora Dall'Asta (front) and Joanna Pacheco in Sequins and Sawdust a circus show by Circus Space and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. The two schools are part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, a HEFCE-funded institution made up of eight affiliates which offer vocational training in dance, drama and circus arts. Sequins and Sawdust was performed in Bristol and London.

HEFCE's London move

Creating a modern office that is inclusive, welcoming and flexible was the brief when HEFCE planned its move from the 28th to the 12th floor of Centre Point. Sustainability was also a key factor in the design and redevelopment.

At the start of the year HEFCE was offered the chance to move to new, more cost-effective, offices. The new offices, which opened on 8 May, offer senior managers and others who attend meetings at HEFCE improved facilities, including more adaptable spaces, a wi-fi network and improved video-conferencing.

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New £10 million university campus in Burnley

The University of Central Lancashire is creating a £10 million higher education centre on a new campus in Burnley with support from HEFCE.

The university facility is part of a £100 million investment in the Princess Way site which will contain the new campus of Burnley College, the university centre and an enterprise park to provide new employment opportunities.

HEFCE is providing £9 million to support the project. Other funders include: the Learning and Skills Council, the North West Development Agency, the university and the college. Burnley Borough Council is also supporting the scheme.

Malcolm McVicar, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Central Lancashire, said: 'The new campus will build on the long-standing relationship between the university and Burnley College, and maximise the contribution that higher



Computer visualisation of the entrance to the new college building.

education growth can make to urban regeneration and community integration.'

Professor David Eastwood, Chief Executive of HEFCE, said: 'This scheme will create innovative ways of delivering further and higher education to local people, taking account of the needs of local businesses and the diversity of the local communities.'

The university envisages over 1,000 students on degree and foundation degree courses on the campus by 2010. One of the aims is to allow the academic institutions involved to act as catalysts for increasing educational aspirations, educational attainment and higher education participation in East Lancashire which is lower than the English average.

Further progress on funding for teaching

Following a very positive response to its second consultation on the proposed changes to the way it funds teaching, HEFCE is set to put some of the changes in place ready for the 2008-09 academic year.

At least 70 per cent of respondents to the consultation in January agreed with almost all of HEFCE's proposals.

The consultation set out the decisions HEFCE has made about assumed fees and requested views on:

- the development of a new system of targeted allocations
- recognising flexible study patterns
- further development of the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) for teaching – known as (TRAC)T.

Targeted allocations

Targeted allocations of funding will replace the current system of premiums from 2008-09. They are intended as streams of recurrent funding which will enable HEFCE to effectively support, promote and protect important features of higher education such as part-time study and foundation degrees.

Flexible study

From 2009-10, HEFCE will provide funding for the proportion of study that each student completes in any year, even if they do not complete all of their intended course of study for that year, subject to a minimum of 20 credits. This funding is intended to support universities and colleges that want to develop flexible study paths that meet the needs of students and employers.

TRAC(T)

HEFCE is currently developing TRAC(T) – a national framework for costing teaching. This will help institutions better understand their own costs and provide information which will contribute to the teaching funding review.

Next steps

This second consultation concludes the first cycle of the teaching funding review which was instigated to make sure that the way HEFCE funds teaching is fit for purpose, in the short term following the introduction of variable tuition fees and longer term after the Government's review of fee regulations in 2009.

HEFCE will shortly publish the outcomes of the consultation in more detail on the web-site. The consultation document (HEFCE 2007/02) is available on the web under Publications.

Hugh Tollyfield focuses on employer engagement

Hugh Tollyfield has joined HEFCE as a special adviser on secondment from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) helping to develop the Council's employer engagement agenda.

He is working at HEFCE's offices for six months and is focusing on:

- ensuring the higher education sector, HEFCE staff and the DfES have the same clear understanding of how to achieve growth in employer co-funded courses
- developing demand by working with major employer representative bodies and the Sector Skills Councils
- identifying what can be achieved in the next 10 years.

'Universities and colleges are already doing some excellent work to engage with employers but scaling this activity up, and making it a

proposition which employers are willing to pay towards, presents a challenge at individual institutional level,' he said.

'It will, almost certainly, require changes in funding rules and operational guidance on HEFCE's part, and the support of all of the agencies in the sector to create the environment in which institutions can succeed.'

Leitch

At the DfES Hugh set up and developed the employer training pilots and then the Train to Gain programme. He also worked with the TUC to set up UnionLearn and more recently led the DfES' higher education input into the Leitch Review.

HEFCE's Chief Executive, Professor David Eastwood said: 'Hugh has worked on employer-related issues for some time and brings particularly valuable expertise in, and



understanding of, what is a complex and changing policy agenda.'

Sector meetings

Hugh is currently meeting vice-chancellors and a wide range of colleagues in HEIs and FECs as well as sector agencies, employers and policymakers. He is keen to meet as many interested parties as possible. To set up a meeting with Hugh e-mail him at h.tollyfield@hefce.ac.uk

Land-based studies: stable and sustainable

A review of land-based studies in higher education in England has concluded that the land-based studies sector is stable and sustainable despite its complexities.

The independent review, for HEFCE, found that land-based studies is unusual in that a large proportion of provision is delivered through further education colleges (FECs) and relies on an industry mostly made up of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Broad range

Commissioned as part of HEFCE's strategically important and vulnerable subjects programme, the review covered a broad range of educational and training provision at undergraduate and postgraduate level

Facts about land-based studies programmes

- There are around 12,000 full-time equivalent land-based studies students.
- 30 higher education institutions (HEIs) and FECs account for around 75 per cent of provision; FECs around 40 per cent.
- Three specialist colleges – Harper Adams University College, the Royal Agricultural College, and Writtle College – account for 20 per cent of student places.

in HEIs and FECs, industrial links and economic and business developments.

Following the publication of the review, HEFCE will be talking to the Learning and Skills Council, government departments, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and others to ensure better communication and a more

joined up way of working to ensure continued sustainability for land-based subjects in higher education.

The report is available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/Research & evaluation and there is more information about land-based studies under About us/Strategically important and vulnerable subjects.

Easing the burden

A new process for universities and colleges to demonstrate their proper use of public funds in a more streamlined way is set to come into force in August 2008.

The new accountability framework has been developed through extensive consultation and piloting within the higher education sector and consists of three elements:

- higher education institutions (HEIs) to submit their annual accountability reports and information in December each year
- HEFCE officers to undertake a five-yearly assurance review – normally a one-day visit
- a data audit programme.

Single conversation

The work has incorporated the idea of a 'single conversation' – a defined period each year when HEIs submit all their information. This will be December each year.

As HEFCE Chief Executive, Professor David Eastwood commented: 'HEFCE probably now operates as the lightest touch regulator in the public sector.' The Council has been working on reducing the burden of accountability on HEIs for many years. A lighter burden is more efficient for institutions and for HEFCE.

'This new process does not just mean a lighter accountability burden but it will also reassure investors that HEIs are being run properly and will save them money. Between 2000 and 2004 the cost to HEIs of accountability work fell by 25 per cent,' said Paul Greaves, HEFCE's Head of Assurance.

The Council is looking to develop this process further by working with the National Audit Office and others. It is also reviewing its financial memorandum with HEIs and will consult the sector on this in the autumn.

Further details are available in 'Accountability for higher education institutions: New arrangements from 2008' HEFCE 2007/11, on the web under Publications.

Going live

The Higher Education Empirical Research Database will be up and running and available free to all users in June.

The database is web-based and holds published empirical research on higher education topics so that higher education policy bodies as well as staff and researchers in the sector can keep abreast of, and avoid duplicating, academic and policy research.

It is maintained by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information and sponsored by:

- Department for Education and Skills
- GuildHE
- Higher Education Academy
- HEFCE
- Universities UK.

HEFCE has supported the database project since 2003 and commits around £30,000 to it annually.

Information about how to access the database will be posted on the sponsors' web-sites during June. In the meantime, if you would like further information about the database, please e-mail cheri@open.ac.uk.

Another shot in the arm

As part of a national scheme to help senior clinical academics develop their careers, HEFCE has announced 38 new clinical senior lectureship awards at 12 universities.

'These new clinical senior lectureships will provide excellent career opportunities for our best clinical academics. Senior clinical academics provide a crucial role combining research and teaching with clinical care', said Professor Sir John Tooke, Dean of the Peninsula Medical School and chair of the selection panel. 'Their contribution is vital in securing advances in healthcare for patients.'

Professor David Eastwood, Chief Executive of HEFCE, said: 'HEFCE's participation in this scheme reflects our commitment to working with partner bodies to improve the strength and sustainability of the national research base. I am delighted that the awards have again attracted very strong applications in a range of specialisms, helping to develop the careers of future leaders in world leading clinical research.'

HEFCE and local NHS trusts have committed £100 million to fund up to 200 posts through five annual rounds of awards, with this year's awards being the second round. The scheme is part of a broad programme initiated by the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (www.ukcrc.org).

The complete list of awards is available on the HEFCE web-site under Research.

THES awards

HEFCE is backing the Times Higher Education Supplement award for the Widening Participation Initiative of the Year for 2007, which recognises the most imaginative and innovative project to encourage potential students from non-traditional backgrounds to enter higher education.

The award is open to all HEIs in the UK with the deadline for entries being 29 June.

Universities and colleges will be shortlisted in September with HEFCE Chief Executive Professor David Eastwood presenting the award in November.

For information on how to enter, go to www.thes.co.uk/Awards/2007/

Cutting carbon emissions and saving money

Nearly half of the UK's universities are now saving money and reducing their carbon emissions by working with the Carbon Trust's Higher Education Carbon Management programme. Participating institutions receive practical support from the Carbon Trust to reduce the emissions that the university can control, such as those coming from offices, residential accommodation, leisure buildings and vehicle fleets.

Phase one

The University of Sussex took part in the first phase of the programme which identified ways to reduce carbon emissions by more than 3,900 tonnes and save £450,000 in energy costs over five years.

Paul Feast, Head of Estates and Infrastructure at the University of Sussex commented: 'Through working in close partnership with the Carbon Trust, we now have a strategy and a set of practical actions that are helping us to be more energy efficient. The changes that are being made will save

us considerable amounts of money and will also mean that we are doing our bit to cut carbon emissions.'

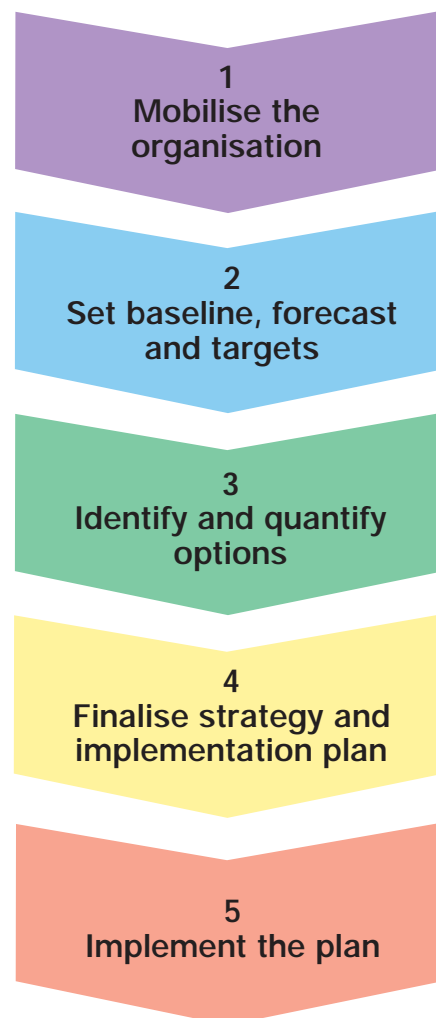
Key priority

Richard Rugg, Programme Manager at the Carbon Trust, said: 'Cutting carbon emissions as part of the fight against climate change should be a key priority for publicly funded bodies like universities. Our programme is designed to help the higher education sector to overcome obstacles that can get in the way of better energy management, such as lack of resources and finance.'

A five-step process (see right) guides universities through a systematic analysis of their carbon footprint and offers practical support in identifying carbon saving opportunities, developing an emissions reduction implementation plan, provision of analysis software, workshop support for staff and senior management training.

The programme is now in phase three and the Carbon Trust is recruiting institutions for the next phase in 2008.

For further details see www.carbontrust.co.uk/carbon/he.



Research weightings review

The money that HEFCE provides to universities and colleges under quality-related research (QR) funding is weighted by the relative costs of research in different subjects.

The Council is set to review these subject cost weightings so that they accurately reflect the up-to-date costs of research. The reviewed weightings will then be used to inform funding from 2009-10.

Up-to-date

HEFCE will collect research data from a sample of higher education institutions (HEIs) across England. It

will be inviting selected HEIs to participate during June and work on the review will start over the summer.

In order to minimise the burden of administration on those HEIs taking part in the review, data will be collected during 2008 using existing methods in place for the Transparent Approach to Costing for Teaching, known as TRAC(T). This information will then be processed to re-evaluate subject cost weightings by the end of 2008.

For further information please contact Jenni Rogers: j.rogers@hefce.ac.uk

'Universities that Count' - benchmarking report

English HEIs have benchmarked their environmental and corporate responsibility performance against UK businesses.

Funded by HEFCE's Leadership, Governance and Management Fund, Leeds Metropolitan University in partnership with Business in the Community (BiTC) and the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) have tested whether the BiTC's Corporate Responsibility Index and Environment Index are useful tools for the higher education sector.

The project concludes that the indices have much to offer the sector.

The report is available at www.eauc.org.uk

EMS – getting better all the time

Most UK universities and colleges are improving the performance of their estates but there is still the opportunity to do more, according to a recent report.

The latest annual report on estate management statistics (EMS) in the UK covers the 2004-05 financial year and shows improvement in:

- income generated per m² of floor space
- backlog maintenance costs and affordability
- income per bed space for residential property.

However, the report cites the main priority areas as being:

- achieving a higher quality estate
- achieving further space efficiencies – particularly in support and office space
- improving environmental performance.

Opportunity

Professor John Raftery, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University and Chair of the EMS steering group commented: 'There is a tremendous opportunity for senior management to use focused performance indicators to drive up the quality of the student experience while driving down backlog maintenance and running costs.'



The University of Southampton won a prestigious Green Gown Award this year for its combined heat and power system. The £3 million system reduces the university's carbon emissions by over 2,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year. Pictured is one of the generators with Southampton's Energy and Design Engineer Mark Turner (left) and Neil Smith, the university's Environment Manager. The Green Gown Awards are part of the Higher Education Environmental Performance Improvement project and recognise innovative sustainable action by universities and colleges across the UK.

The report shows the trends over the two years to 2004-05:

- property costs went up 11 per cent – less than income per m² which rose by 13.5 per cent
- the cost per student rose 9 per cent – less than both property costs and income – reflecting better space management
- student numbers increased while space per student went down by 3 per cent
- the proportion of the higher education estate that is in good condition went up by three percentage points to nearly 70 per cent.

'The EMS is an extremely valuable and sophisticated tool, raising awareness of the good things that are being achieved (see picture caption) and more importantly those areas where more can be delivered,' said Andrew Nightingale, Director of Estate Management at the University of Essex and former Chair of the Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE).

'Performance in higher education estates: EMS annual report 2006' HEFCE 2007/08 is available on the web-site under Publications.

HE in FECs conference

'All higher education provision in further education colleges, be it small or large must be strategic, of high quality and appropriately resourced,' said Professor David Eastwood, HEFCE's Chief Executive speaking at the second joint HEFCE/Association of Colleges (AoC) conference.

He recognised the importance of collaborative provision in low participation areas, citing examples

from Cornwall, the East of England, Cumbria and the Thames Gateway.

Ruth Thompson, Director General for Higher Education, DfES; Dr John Brennan, Chief Executive of the AoC; and Professor Gareth Parry, School of Education, University of Sheffield were also keynote speakers at the conference. The event focused on the potentially different higher education learning environment signalled in the

Leitch Report and the Further Education and Training Bill, with greater emphasis on employer engagement and learner choice.

Copies of presentations and notes from the conference are available on the HEFCE web-site under Events.

HEFCE will publish an analysis of the responses to its consultation on policy for higher education in further education colleges over the summer.

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ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2007



Pictured left to right: Richard Lambert, Director General, CBI; Professor David Eastwood, Chief Executive, HEFCE; Baroness Blackstone, Vice-Chancellor, University of Greenwich; and Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

Radical change or continuity?

This was the question posed at the HEFCE 2007 annual conference debate. This year's conference aimed to explore the challenges for the higher education sector in meeting the needs of society, of business, and of the workforce; and to discuss the best ways for HEFCE and institutions to work together to meet those challenges.

At the start of the debate Sir Christopher Frayling, Rector of the Royal College of Art presented the case for radical change, seconded by Karen Price, Chief Executive of e-skills UK, the Sector Skills Council for the IT and telecoms sector. Speaking in favour of continuity were Baroness Blackstone, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Greenwich, seconded by Bryan Sanderson, former Managing Director of BP, and former Chair of the Learning and Skills Council.

The debate looked at the best way forward. A show of hands at the end of the debate produced a clear majority in favour of 'radical change', but summaries by the key speakers revealed much common ground. As one delegate commented: 'I am passionately for

radical change, which is why I'm voting for continuity – we already have a broad, progressive, challenging and I believe profoundly radical agenda.'

Key speakers at the conference included Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills; HEFCE Chief Executive Professor David Eastwood; and Professor Tim Wilson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire.

Of the 132 English higher education institutions, 113 were represented at the conference. For further details of the conference including audio highlights and extracts from the discussions and speeches see the HEFCE web-site under Events.

Success for HEIDI

Over 110 universities and colleges have subscribed to the Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI), which enables them to view and download a variety of higher education data from one place.

HEIDI holds live data including the main Higher Education Statistics Agency datasets; application information from UCAS, the universities and colleges admissions service; performance indicators; key financial indicators; and sustainability statistics.

It was launched in April and has been a great success in attracting subscriptions from the vast majority of higher education institutions (HEIs).

The data can be used by individual HEIs to benchmark themselves against the sector or other HEIs with similar profiles. – It is also valuable in helping senior planners and managers make policy and finance decisions.

In the coming weeks data from the National Student Survey and higher education management statistics will be loaded onto the system for users to access.

The HEIDI was developed with the support of the four UK funding bodies; HEFCE invested £322,000 via the Leadership, Governance and Management Fund.

For a free four-week trial of the system e-mail heidi@hesa.ac.uk

hefce Council Briefing

Council Briefing is published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

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