

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg
Uwch Cymru
Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales

Cwrt Linden
Clos Ilex Llanisien
Caerdydd CF14 5DZ
Ffôn 029 2076 1861
Ffacs 029 2076 3163
www.hefcw.ac.uk

Linden Court
Ilex Close Llanishen
Cardiff CF14 5DZ
Tel 029 2076 1861
Fax 029 2076 3163
www.hefcw.ac.uk

hefcw

Cylchlythyr

Circular

Estate Strategy Guidance

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To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in
Wales
Response by: No response required
Contact: Name: Chris Cowburn
Telephone: 029 2068 2247
Email: chris.cowburn@hefcw.ac.uk

This circular sets out the details of a requirement on institutions to develop estate strategies which are consistent with the guidance contained in Annex A and to report annually on progress made in implementing the key elements of the strategy and detailing any revisions or updating. This circular requires institutions to submit a new estate strategy approved by the governing body within one year of submitting a revised or new strategic plan to HEFCW.

This document is available online, in large print, Braille, on CD and on audio CD and cassette. Should you or someone you know require this in an alternative format, please contact us on (029) 2068 2225 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.

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Introduction

1. This paper sets out revised procedures and timescales to ensure that estate strategies are appropriately linked to institutional strategic planning processes, and more fully reflect on the estates implications arising from the significant changes both emerging and planned within the HE sector in Wales.

The new detailed guidance included at Annex A is based on the procedures and processes adopted by Swansea University working with HEFCW in the development of their new estate strategy in 2010. This guidance replaces previous advice contained within Circular W05/14HE

Background

2. Effective and efficient management of the HE estate underpins delivery of the objectives for the sector set out in the HEFCW Corporate Strategy in a number of ways. The quality and functional suitability of the estate plays an important role in delivering high quality learning and research, as well as being an important component in the student experience with increasing evidence of rising student expectations in terms of both the quality and range of facilities offered on campus. Achieving an affordable estate is an important aspect in the financial management of an institution given that estates expenditure typically represents over 10% of overall expenditure. The configuration, quality, size, and location of the estate also has a significant role in contributing to social justice through the provision of accessible and convenient space, as well as contributing to the wider role of the institution as a corporate citizen through the provision and sharing of facilities with the local community. The estate also plays an important role both in marketing the university and in exemplifying core values for example sustainability, or innovation.

Reasons for the new guidance

3. HEFCW has issued this guidance because of changes to the national and regulatory context which affect the timing and content of strategy development. The main changes which have been reflected in the new guidance are:-
 - New arrangements for the preparation of strategic plans are being finalised and will be published shortly, estate strategies need to be consistent with this change.
 - Circular W09/20HE sets out HEFCW's current approach to institutional risk review which integrates financial health assessment with a range of other key risk areas including estates. Estate strategies need to consider and if appropriate respond to the key performance indicators identified in this document.

- Sustainability has now become central to estate strategy development. It has wide ranging implications for estate development and management, including standards for new building projects, space planning, carbon, and affordability.
- The Welsh Government's 21st century higher education strategy and plan for Wales, *For our Future*, emphasises the importance of providing the infrastructure to deliver the twin pillars of social justice and supporting a buoyant economy. Many of the actions identified in this policy and within the HEFCW Corporate Plan will have significant implications for the estate in both the medium and longer term.
- The increasing emphasis on regional planning, collaborative asset management and greater integration of HE with FE will have implications for the development of the estate. There is an increasing expectation that universities' role as corporate citizens is demonstrated through their contributions to local communities and the wider society. The estate has a key role in demonstrating this both in its design, and its ability to provide additional services and facilities to local communities and the economy.
- The student experience and the role the estate plays in supporting this will become increasingly important as increased student fees are introduced, and the expectations of students continue to rise. The quality of academic, residential, and recreational infrastructure as well as the quality of academic provision will be fundamental to the reputation of an institution.
- Institutions are encouraged to consider, develop and utilise shared service arrangements both within the HE sector and in the wider public sector where appropriate.

Priorities for future estate strategies

4. In response to these changes HEIs will need to ensure that their future estate strategies demonstrate the following qualities:-
 - Support and are directly linked to national, and regional agendas;
 - Are consistent with strategic institutional objectives;
 - Help to deliver environmentally sustainable estates;
 - Deliver functional and attractive facilities that are maintained in good condition and are affordable; and

- Identify proposals, budget costs and a clear timetable for the future development of the estate.

Actions required in response to this circular

5. No immediate response is required to this circular. Higher education institutions in Wales other than the Open University in Wales, and the University of Wales are required to submit a new estate strategy approved by the governing body in accordance with the attached guidance within one year of being requested to submit a new or significantly updated strategic plan to HEFCW either as part of the HEFCW institutional planning requirements, or where a new strategic plan is developed by an institution in response to a changed institutional vision, merger, or collaborative arrangement. An annual update on progress in implementing the estate strategy, any changes or new issues will be required as part of the strategic planning process. Further information on this will be contained within a future strategic planning circular.

Further information

6. For further information, contact Chris Cowburn (tel 029 2068 2247; email chris.cowburn@hefcw.ac.uk).