

Annex 3

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Interdependent Initiatives

In order to successfully introduce its transparent, open and equitable planning and funding system, ELWa has ensured that interdependent initiatives are developing simultaneously and with regard one for the other. Such initiatives are described below:

The Credit & Qualifications Framework for Wales

In her 2002-03 Remit Letter to ELWa, the Minister requested ELWa *to overhaul the approach to formal and informal learning and introduce a credit and qualifications framework and use the opportunity to the full to generate flexible points of entry and ladders for progression*. In order to fulfil this request, all accredited learning in Wales is being gradually brought into a single unifying structure – the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The framework is based on two concepts – the volume of learning achievements (credit) and the demands made by that learning on the learner (level) to create a system that embraces all types and styles of learning, and all qualifications. The CQFW will provide a critical foundation enabling individuals and organisations to fulfil their potential; enabling participation and recognising and rewarding learning achievement. The credit framework will not replace existing qualification frameworks covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but embrace them.

By recognising ‘bite sized chunks’ of learning, the credit framework will enable learners to study more flexibly, accumulating small achievements towards qualifications. The framework will also recognise partial achievement by learners. In this way barriers to progression will be removed and individual learners will be able to accumulate credits to meet their own specific needs.

A copy of the CQFW Implementation Plan which identifies the way forward is attached and available at www.elwa.ac.uk/credit-framework

The Lifelong Learning Wales Record and Pupil Level Annual Schools’ Census (PLASC) data collection systems

It is important that ELWa has consistent data on all post-16 provision and the need for

good quality data extends beyond ELWa. The National Assembly recognised this need and established a Steering Group to oversee the development of separate databases for school pupils and post-16 learners using common principles and definitions to ensure the databases could be inter-linked. The intention is that these databases will meet the needs of all parties requiring data on learning in Wales. Eventually, it is hoped that this will enable progression to be tracked from schools into the learning undertaken post-16. Links are being maintained with higher education with the aim of ensuring a full picture of post-16 learning (including HE) is available.

The post-16 database is intended to satisfy a wide range of data needs both for ELWa and others (eg National Assembly, Estyn, WDA, researchers). ELWa requires data:

- in order to undertake regional and national planning
- as a basis for allocating and monitoring funding
- to support policy development
- to assist in quality improvement
- to monitor and analyse performance including the extent to which targets are being met
- to publish information about post-16 learning in Wales
- to enable ELWa to support its case to the National Assembly for an appropriate level of funding for post-16 learning
- to supply the National Assembly with the data it requires

The Quality Framework

ELWa views improving the quality of learning as a top priority; it is currently developing a rigorous quality assurance strategy. The strategy will define ELWa's approach to:

- maintaining quality;
- raising standards; and
- ensuring continuous improvement.

ELWa recognises that it can only do this through those who deliver learning, and together with partners who work in the field. By 2005 ELWa aims to fund only effective providers who demonstrate high levels of performance. It expects all providers to:

- achieve good or outstanding grades in Estyn inspections;
- demonstrate good learner completion, retention, attainment and progression rates;
- deliver value for money; and
- add value to the learning experience and achieve good levels of customer satisfaction.

The Quality Framework's underpinning principles are to:

- i. focus on identifying and meeting the needs of the customer (the individual learner, business or community)
- ii. seek maximum value for money in the activities funded by ELWa
- iii. reward high quality, and promote continuous improvement, so that the aim for excellence becomes a way of life for providers
- iv. ensure that quality procedures are applied consistently to all provision, recognising differing delivery contexts
- v. build on past experience and good and effective practice
- vi. minimise bureaucracy and administrative burdens on providers, while assuring accountability for public funds

Specific links between the quality and funding strategies include:

- the required improvement of grade 4 or 5 provision within a reasonable timescale, and steps to be taken to withdraw the relevant funding if improvement is not demonstrated; and
- Investing in Quality, a three-year support and development programme to help providers improve their performance and offer staff development opportunities.