

## **Higher Education Funding Council for Wales**

### **Paper for National Assembly for Wales, Education and Lifelong Learning Committee:**

**10 December 2003**

#### **Reconfiguration and Collaboration**

##### **Background**

1 The Council responded to Reaching Higher, the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for higher education, by establishing, in August 2002, a Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund. The Council appreciated that reconfiguration was central to that strategy; moreover, it was aware that the Assembly Government had undertaken to make substantial funds available for reconfiguration and collaboration.

2 The Council sees the Fund as the principal vehicle for reshaping the sector in the medium term. In March 2003, the Assembly Government announced £6 million for the Fund for 2003-04 with indicative sums of £8 million and £28 million for 2004-05 and 2005-06 respectively.

3 This paper is in three parts: Part 1 deals with the Fund in 2002/03; Part 2 details the process used for assessing proposals; and Part 3 outlines the arrangements for making applications to the Fund in future. Annexes A and B cover, respectively, the outcomes of proposals to the Fund in 2002/03, and the assessment process.

##### **Part 1: The Fund in 2002/03**

4 The Fund was established to support the reshaping of the sector in the interests of achieving major performance gains and enhanced competitiveness. The amount of funding available in 2002/03 was £5.3 million, £2.3 million from the Council's baseline grant and £3 million additional, above-baseline grant from the Assembly expressly for reconfiguration and collaboration.

5 Altogether 20 proposals were submitted for consideration. Their total cost was £13.6 million. 10 proposals were supported. The successful proposals, together with the amount of funding allocated to them, are set out at Annex A.

6 The proposals supported were each subject to varying degrees of development and refinement to reach the stage where agreement on funding could be concluded. Central to this process was the specification of targets against which progress and outcomes could be monitored and evaluated, and a profile of funding established.

##### **Part 2: Assessment in Progress**

7 Proposals were assessed by a small panel with Council and independent membership. The panel made recommendations to the Council. The detail of the process that was followed, and which is to continue into the future, is set out in Annex B.

### **Part 3: Future Applications to the Fund**

8 The Council expects, in a number of cases, to receive proposals to build on work supported to date. However, it is also open to receive fresh proposals. The Council will receive and consider proposals as they arise: there will be no set dates in the year for submission.

9 The Council has sought to encourage collaborative activity in provision through the medium of Welsh and is already supporting some work of this nature through its Structural Change Fund, the precursor to the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund. It would welcome further proposals which would expand Welsh-medium provision, provided they were of a substantial nature.

10 Institutions considering applying for support from the Fund receive guidance in preparing their documents. They are also encouraged to make early contact with the Council's Executive to discuss their proposals.