

Annual Review of Higher National provision in Licensed Higher Education Institutions in Wales

1. Introduction

This review covers Edexcel's Higher Education programmes delivered under licence at Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Wales¹ for the academic year 2006/7. Licensed HEIs are termed licensed institutions. There are seven licensed institutions in Wales, these are listed at Annex A.

A separate review of Higher National provision in Wales is produced again this year because of the difference in funding arrangements for Higher National programmes in Wales and Higher National programmes in England and Northern Ireland. In Wales, funding for Higher Nationals is mainly channelled to HEIs by HEFCW, and there is very limited direct funding for Higher Nationals in Further Education Colleges (FECs). This means that all Higher National programmes in Wales are either run at the licensed institutions or on a collaborative basis at partner FECs.

The review is structured as follows:

- Section 2 briefly summarises the background to the QA protocols for licensed institutions
- Section 3 presents data on types and numbers of programmes, and numbers of Higher National diplomates (awards)
- Section 4 summarises other data recorded on the Institutional Review Reports (IRRs)
- Concluding remarks are given in section 5.
- Proposed amendments to the IRR proforma are set out in section 6

2. Background

This is the third year for the Edexcel reporting protocols for Higher National provision under licence, introduced in 2005. In summary, the procedures are:

- In accordance with the terms of Licence Agreement, each licensed institution is required to submit an annual Institutional Review Report (IRR), covering its provision under licence, including that offered in collaborative partner institutions.
- Licensed institutions may use one of two methods of reporting for the Institutional Review Report. Method 1 is to use a bespoke proforma, supplied by Edexcel. Method 2 is to provide a portfolio of evidence from internal documents, covering the same quality points as the proforma. However, experience and feedback gained from the 2004/5 review indicated that completion of the Edexcel proforma (Method 1) was considered less onerous than compiling the portfolio of evidence (Method 2) and, consequently, licensed institutions were encouraged to use method 1 for their 2005/6 and 2006/7 IRRs. A copy of the 2006/7 IRR proforma is included at Annex B.
- Edexcel, in consultation with licence institutions and the QAA, devised this reporting protocol as part of its quality assurance procedures for Higher National provision delivered under licence at Higher Educational Institutions. This annual review is therefore used by Edexcel, the QAA and other interested parties as a means of monitoring the health of Higher National programmes under licence in Wales.

¹ A separate Annual Review covering licensed institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is available from Edexcel.

3. Licensed institution responses

Guidance issued to licensed institutions asked for their IRRs to be submitted to the University Chief Examiner by 31st March 2008.

IRRs from five licensed institutions in Wales arrived by the due date, and the two remaining IRRs were received by the 17th April. As was the case last year, six licensed institutions reported using the Edexcel proforma (Method 1) and one institution provided a commentary, which was broadly based on the IRR proforma. All seven IRRs were submitted electronically.

Although two institutions did not submit their IRRs by the due date, given the exceptionally early Easter break, the fact that all IRRs from licensed institutions in Wales were received by the 17th April is commendable.

It is worthy of note that the 1st and 2nd IRRs were received on the 14th and the 29th February 2008.

3.1 Higher National awards for the 2006/7 academic year

Data provided by licensed institutions in Wales on the number of Higher National awards in the 2006/7 academic year were grouped into Edexcel sector codes as shown in Table 1, which gives the distribution of Higher National awards across the 11 sectors. For comparison purposes, data for 2005/6 and 2004/5 are also included in this table.

Table 1: Higher National awards for 2006/7, 2005/6 and 2004/5, by sector, including awards under licence in collaborative partners overseas

Sector	HN awards 2006/7	HN awards 2005/6	HN awards 2004/5
100: Land & Countryside	127	118	149
200: Business	516	518	498
300: Computing & Information Technology	277	485	523
400: Construction & Built Environment	200	266	353
500: Art & Design	202	320	219
550: Media & Performing Arts	38	146	16
600: Hospitality & Catering	40	39	20
650: Leisure & Tourism	153	133	199
700: Engineering	671	892	1193
900: Science	79	47	61
950: Health & Social Care	83	143	124

The total number of Higher National awards for the 2006/7 academic year was 2386², comprising 915 awards delivered by licensed institutions and 1471 awards delivered by their collaborative partners. This means that 38.35% of Higher National awards were

² Note, that for the 2005/6 and 2004/5 academic year, the total number of Higher National awards under licence in Wales was 3107 and 3355 respectively.

delivered in licensed institutions in Wales. In addition, there were also 103 Professional Development awards made by licensed institutions in Wales.

One institution in Wales does not operate any Higher National programmes with collaborative partners and one institution in Wales only offers Higher National programmes with its collaborative partner ie, no Higher National programmes are delivered on the institution's campus.

A further breakdown of the 2006/7 awards data presented in Table 1 into HND and HNC awards reveals that:

1. The ratio of HND and HNC programmes *awarded* by licensed institutions was 1257:1129, which means that 52.68% of all HN awards by licensed institutions in Wales were HND. The corresponding figure for 2005/6 was 64.05%.
2. The ratio of HND and HNC programmes *delivered* in licensed institutions was 629:286, which means that 68.74% of awards delivered in licensed institutions in Wales were HND. The corresponding figure for 2005/6 was 63.97%.
3. The ratio of HND and HNC programmes *delivered* in collaborative partner colleges was 628:843, which means that 4.69% awards delivered in partner colleges were HND. The corresponding figure for 2005/6 was 64.14%.

As was the case for 2004/5, a number of Higher National awards were gained by students studying programmes run on a collaborative basis in overseas centres. For 2006/7, this involved one licensed institution in Wales, amounting to 114 HND awards, 84 Computing and 29 Engineering. This figure is much lower for 2006/7 than it was for 2005/6, when there were 687 overseas awards, comprising 506 awards for engineering programmes and 181 awards for computing programmes. The main reason for this fall in overseas awards was because the examination boards for these programmes were delayed beyond the 2006/7 IRR submission date.

Neglecting the 114 HND overseas awards, the numbers of awards, by sector, made to students studying in Wales is given in Table 2. Again, to enable comparison, the figures for 2005/6 and 2004/5 are included in this table.

Two of the seven licensed institutions in Wales have a relatively small numbers of Higher National students ie, less than 45 Higher National awards in 2006/7. All other licensed institutions in Wales had more than 175 Higher National Awards in 2006/7. One institution reported 50.29% of the total higher national awards made by licensed institutions in Wales, which is 52.42% of the number of higher national awards made to students studying in Wales.

Table 2: Higher National awards in 2006/7, 2005/6 and 2004/5, for students studying in Wales

Sector	HN awards 2006/7	HN awards 2005/6	HN awards 2004/5
100: Land & Countryside	127	118	149
200: Business	516	518	498
300: Computing & Information Technology	193	304	290
400: Construction & Built Environment	200	266	353
500: Art & Design	202	320	219
550: Media & Performing Arts	38	146	16
600: Hospitality & Catering	40	39	20
650: Leisure & Tourism	153	133	199
700: Engineering	642	386	529
900: Science	79	47	61
950: Health & Social Care	83	143	124
Totals:	2272	2420	2458

3.2 Award trends

Further analysis of the data presented in Tables 1 and 2 enables some conclusion to be drawn. For example:

- For the 2006/7 academic year, overall licensed institution awards in Wales fell by 739 awards (30.97%). Excluding overseas collaborative awards, this fall was only 148 awards, which represents a 6.12% reduction.
- Four sectors: Engineering; Land & Countryside; Leisure & Tourism and Science; recorded increases in the number of awards for students studying in Wales. Notably, the Engineering sector award total increased by 66.32% with respect to the 2005/6 figure and was 21.36% higher than in 2004/5.
- The number of awards for the Business and Hospitality & Catering sectors remained approximately constant, whilst the remaining five sectors recorded reductions in the number of awards, namely; Media & Performing Arts (-73.97%); Health and Social Care (-41.95%); Art & Design (-36.87%); Computing and Information Technology (-36.51%) and Construction & Built Environment (-24.81%).

A number of additional observations can be made on the data presented here.

1. The reduction in awards for students studying in Wales (148) accounts for 26.57% of the fall in awards for England Wales and Northern Ireland.
2. The 66.32% increase in Engineering Sector awards (ie, 256 additional awards in 2006/7) represents 76.88% of the increase in Engineering Sector awards for England Wales and Northern Ireland.

3. The Construction and Built Environment sector awards in Wales fell by some 24.81% (a reduction of 60 awards), whereas for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, a rise of 14.8% (ie, an increase of 206 awards) was observed.

It is possible to rank the sectors by number of awards, which by considering Table 2, is computed and shown in Table 3. Here the figures show some changes in rank order from those for 2005/6, in particular, the Engineering sector moving to the top ranking, and the Media & Performing Arts sector falling from 6th to bottom of the rank order. The bifurcation between larger and smaller sectors occurs after the Business sector³, such that the Engineering and Business sectors account for 50.96% of the Higher National awards in Wales.

Table 3. Rank order of sectors, by percentage of total awards

Sector	% of HN awards 2006/7	% of HN awards 2005/6	% of HN awards 2004/5
Engineering	28.25	15.95	21.5
Business	22.71	21.4	20.3
Art & Design	8.89	13.22	8.9
Construction & Built Environment	8.80	10.99	14.36
Computing & Information Technology	8.49	12.56	11.8
Leisure & Tourism	6.73	5.5	8.1
Land & Countryside	5.59	4.88	6.06
Health & Social Care	3.65	5.9	5.0
Science	3.48	1.94	2.48
Hospitality & Catering	1.76	1.61	0.81
Media & Performing Arts	1.67	6.03	0.65

Recruitment to sub-degree provision is a difficult area because of demographic trends and easier access to degree programmes. It is considered that this is the main contributor to the 6.12% reduction in Higher National awards reported in Table 2.

Registration figures from licensed institutions in Wales for Higher National programmes for 2007, 2006 and 2005 starts were 3318, 2994 and 3531 respectively, and the downward trend in Higher National awards in Wales may be lower for 2007/8. It is also worth noting that Higher National registrations for 2007 starts are currently (August 2008) standing at 31214 for UK/Ireland and 22851 for International, giving an overall total of 54065. The breakdown of the 31214 UK/Ireland registrations is 13783 for licensed institutions and 17231 for colleges in the UK and Ireland. Corresponding figures for 2006 were 33428 registrations for UK/Ireland and 22015 for International, giving an overall total of 55433. These data show that Higher National registrations are reasonably healthy and that the 2007 registrations are only very slightly down on those for 2006. It should also be noted that the registration figures given here are for the first year of two-year programmes, so

³ Note that the bifurcation point for Higher National awards England, Wales and Northern Ireland occurs after four sectors, with the Business, Engineering, Construction & Built Environment and Computing & Information Technology sectors accounting for 68.21% of the total Higher National awards.

a reasonable estimate is that more than 60000 students are currently studying Higher National programmes in the UK and Ireland.

4. Institutional Review Reports

The information presented in this section has been compiled from the IRRs submitted and from correspondence between licensed institutions and the University Chief Examiner.

4.1 Academic standards, assessment and student performance

All licensed institutions in Wales stated that External Examiners had confirmed that the standards set for their Higher National programmes were appropriate for the level of the qualification, and that the standard of student performance was at a level appropriate for the programmes studied.

4.2 Quality assurance

All licensed institutions in Wales provided information about their quality assurance processes, in some cases citing institutional web pages where more detailed information was available.

4.3 Good practice

This is an area which was given insufficient attention in the IRRs submitted for the 2004/5 review, and last year's review encouraged institutions to highlight examples of good practice, particularly resulting from External Examiners' reports or from internal and external review of programmes.

The majority of IRRs received for the 2006/7 annual review contained examples of good practice that had been highlighted by External Examiners in their annual reports to licensed institutions. By the very nature of annual reports, such comments are related to specific programmes and it is difficult to extract generic examples of good practice for the sector. However, some common themes identified in last year's report have again been highlighted and new themes have emerged: Items 1 to 5 below list the areas of good practice identified in last year's report and which were highlighted in IRRs received for this annual review. Item 6 is new for 2006/7. Item 7 was raised in the 2006/7 annual review for England Wales and Northern Ireland and is included here for information.

1. Praise by External Examiners for constructive feedback on students' assessed work
2. The opportunities for students to progress on to higher-level programmes
3. Policy and procedures documents for collaborative programmes, which supplement other university codes of practice and tailor university policy specifically to the needs of the collaboratively provided programmes
4. Inculcation of an HE ethos through annual joint meetings of staff from the university and franchise partners seeking to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment practices are consistent across programmes and collaborative partners.
5. Modification of External Examiner report proformas, asking External Examiners to comment specifically on Higher National programmes
6. Professional practice underpinning practical activities together with assessment assignments that are well-framed in industrial scenarios

4.4 Changes and enhancements

Reports varied from details of validation of new programmes, revalidation of existing programmes and lists of programmes being discontinued, to details of new collaborative arrangements. It is interesting to see how institutions take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the Licence Agreement to develop Higher National programmes which articulate to their degree programmes and/or innovative a new programmes. Examples of such Higher National programmes include: Network Management and Security; Beauty Therapy and Spa Management; Housing & Sustainable Communities; Photojournalism; Activity & Play Leadership and Technical Theatre.

4.6 Major issues

Several IRRs included comments in the *Major Issues* section of the IRR. However, these generally related to relatively minor observations from External Examiners and usually included the institutions' response and actions taken to address the issues raised. It is suggested that the guidance notes for this section (section 5) on the IRR should be amended to indicate that only major issues need to be reported.

It is pleasing to record that there were no significant major issues identified in the IRRs received for this annual review.

5. Concluding remarks

In completing this annual review of licensed provision of Higher National programmes, it has been possible to build upon the experience gained from the first two annual reviews, covering 2004/5 and 2005/6. In particular, analysis of awards data enables a clearer picture of the range of Higher National awards, (HNC and HND) and also provides the basis for some thoughts on trends. However, it should be remembered that with only three annual reports available it is unsafe (statistically) to base any predictions on the data gathered to date. In addition, the analysis presented in this review is solely based on data and other information provided in the IRRs and, as such, cannot encapsulate the detail which institutions will hold. In order to gain a better appreciation of the significance of awards data contained in IRRs, it is proposed that the awards sections of the IRR proforma for 2007/8 is amended, asking institutions specifically to comment on significant changes in award patterns.

Discussions with a number of licensed institutions on the usefulness of the various sections on the IRR identified the need for a section where institutions could outline their future plans for their HN provision. It is proposed that the IRR proforma for 2007/8 will have an additional section added to allow for this.

Finally, the effort, time and care spent by institutions in completing IRRs and their timely submission is gratefully acknowledged. From the information provided by institutions, it is clear that there is effective stewardship of the Edexcel/BTEC brand and the Higher National awards offered by licensed institutions in Wales.

6 Proposed amendments to the IRR proforma

Four amendments to the IRR proforma are proposed:

1. Invite institutions to comment on significant changes to award patterns, to be added to the awards data section of the proforma
2. Amend the guidance notes for Section 5 on the proforma to indicate that only major issues need to be reported.
3. Introduce an additional section so that institutions can provide information on long term plans for Higher National provision.

Annex A: Licensed institutions in Wales

Note: Four licensed institutions in Wales changed their names during the 2007/8 session. Their new names are included here, with a footnote giving their previous names.

Aberystwyth University ⁴
Bangor University ⁵
Glyndwr University ⁶
Swansea Metropolitan University ⁷
University of Glamorgan
University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC)
University of Wales, Newport

⁴ Previously known as University of Wales Aberystwyth

⁵ Previously known as University of Wales Bangor

⁶ Previously known as North East Wales Institute of Higher Education

⁷ Previously known as Swansea Institute of Higher Education

ANNEX B: 2006/7 Annual Institutional Review Report of Edexcel Licensed Centre BTEC programmes

This annual Institutional Review Report (IRR) should relate to all BTEC programmes run as institutional awards under the Licence Agreement

(in most cases this will mean Higher National programmes).

Please send your IRR to the Edexcel University Chief Examiner to arrive before the end of March 2008

Note that any of the following tables may be scrolled if necessary.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAMME DETAILS

Centre:	Centre number:
Review sent by:	Date of submitting IRR:
Position in institution	E mail address:
Name of Committee/Board approving submission of the IRR	

FOR EACH BTEC PROGRAMME RUN AT YOUR CENTRE, PLEASE GIVE:

Title of programme: Notes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Indicate with a * programmes that are also run at partner institutions.</i> 2. <i>For integrated HNC/D programmes please indicate HNC and HND awards separately eg. 12/21 for 12 HNC and 21 HND awards).</i> 	Number of students receiving award in IRR period	Comments: <i>Please add comments as necessary. In particular, if no awards are made for any programmes.</i>

FOR EACH BTEC PROGRAMME DELIVERED BY A COLLABORATIVE PARTNER CENTRE, PLEASE GIVE:

Partner institution Title(s) of programme(s) run at institution	Number of students receiving award in IRR period	Comments:

ANNUAL REVIEW OF BTEC PROGRAMMES

1 ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT

Do the External Examiners for each programme covered by the Licence Agreement confirm that the standards set are appropriate for the level of the qualifications?

YES/NO

If this is not the case for any programme give details here and refer to Section 5 if appropriate.

2 ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Do the External Examiners for each programme covered by the Licence Agreement confirm that the standard of student performance is at a level appropriate for the programme they have studied?

YES/NO

If this is not the case for any programme give details here and refer to Section 5 if appropriate.

3 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS FOR BTEC PROGRAMMES

Describe briefly how the institutional quality assurance processes used for producing this report provide an effective focus on the programmes covered by this review and ensure consistency of practice across all programmes. (Include the procedures in place for franchise programmes, where relevant). If this focus is apparent from your published quality assurance review and monitoring procedures, simply attach these procedures to the Review (or provide an electronic link to them).

4 SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AND ENHANCEMENTS

Give any significant changes in provision, such as newly validated Higher National programmes, changes in franchise position, cessation of programmes, etc. Also, any enhancements to individual programmes you wish to report.

5 MAJOR ISSUES

Summarise the situation over any major issues with regard to the BTEC programmes, including issues that have arisen from External Examiners' reports and with respect to student experience (including teaching and learning resources and issues from programme committees):

- unresolved issues raised in previous session(s): action taken
- new issues and action planned to resolve them: where possible, state where the responsibility lies for action and give a time scale.

6 GOOD PRACTICE

Give any examples of good practice at institutional level in relation to BTEC programmes that you wish to draw to the attention of Edexcel, including examples of good practice raised by External Examiners, and Internal and External Reviews of BTEC programmes.

Assessment, Learning and Teaching:

7 OTHER COMMENTS

Mention any points you may wish to make that would not otherwise be covered in the report. If you have received any relevant (non-confidential) reports during the year from bodies external to your institution (eg Collaborative Audit, Professional Accreditation reports, etc.), use this Section to make any comments, or to provide a reference to such reports.