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Executive Summary

This E-Note summarises the main results for England and Northern Ireland of the UK HE Europe Unit survey on European HE developments.

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Results of the 2007 UK HE Europe Unit survey on European HE developments – HEIs in England and Northern Ireland

Introduction

1. This paper reports on the outcomes for England and Northern Ireland of the UK HE Europe Unit's¹ 2007 survey on UK higher education institutions' (HEIs) engagement in European HE initiatives.
2. Separate Europe Notes report on the results for the UK, Wales, Scotland and GuildHE members. Visit:
http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/news/europe_note_archive/2007.cfm

Welsh respondents

3. 153 UK HEIs received the survey and 92 responded, giving a response rate of 60% - 53% in 2005.
4. 68 HEIs² in England and Northern Ireland received the survey and responded giving a 57% response rate – 42% in 2005. This is similar to overall UK response rate, the response rate in Scotland (62%), but lower than the Welsh response rate (100%).
5. 49% of respondents from England and Northern Ireland were from HEI Registry departments. The remaining responses came from representatives across other categories/departments.

Diploma Supplement

6. 99% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland are aware of the Bologna Process requirement to issue the Diploma Supplement "automatically and free of charge to students graduating in 2005".

¹ The Europe Unit is a sector-wide body working in the interests of UK higher education. It has three objectives: to raise awareness of the European issues affecting UK higher education; to coordinate the UK's involvement in European initiatives and debates; to strengthen the position of the UK higher education sector in debates over the Bologna Process and EU policies and initiatives. For more information visit: www.europeunit.ac.uk

² This figure includes 11 GuildHE institutions.

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7. 57% of respondent in England and Northern Ireland currently issue the Diploma Supplement - a substantial increase compared to 2005 when 20% of respondent institutions in England and Northern Ireland issued it. The 2007 rate is similar to the rate the UK (60%), Wales (58%), and Scotland (62%).
8. Most respondents in England and Northern Ireland automatically issue the Diploma Supplement to students graduating with an undergraduate and postgraduate level qualification. Seven HEIs issue the Diploma Supplement automatically to doctoral graduates and fifteen do so for students graduating with a foundation degree.
9. The majority of respondent HEIs in England and Northern Ireland that do not yet issue the Diploma Supplement intend to do so in the coming years, 88% by 2009.
10. Of those issuing the Diploma Supplement, 59% use the standard format developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES³ - the same rate as in the UK, 63% in Scotland, and 43 in Wales.
11. A majority of English and Northern Irish respondents have encountered difficulties with implementing the Diploma Supplement. 72% cited IT systems as the main difficulty, 66% data quality, availability and comparability, 56% costs and 44% the lack of a formal UK-promoted template. 22% mentioned security as a difficulty.
12. For those respondent HEIs not issuing the Diploma Supplement, IT difficulties appear to be the main reason cited for not doing so (76%).
13. The majority of respondents in England and Northern Ireland have sought advice to overcome difficulties in producing the Diploma Supplement. Of these 47% have sought help from other HEIs, 19% from the Bologna Experts, and 13% have contacted the Europe Unit.
14. Twenty-four respondents in England and Northern Ireland have received the Diploma Supplement from other HEIs, compared to two in Scotland and three in Wales. 79% of respondents stated that the Diploma Supplement was useful in evaluating students' achievements and supporting admissions procedures and 75% stated they had not experienced difficulties in interpreting information provided on the Diploma Supplement.
15. 71% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland produce transcripts of graduates that accord with the Minimum Data Set provided within the Progress File Guide. 70% do so at UK national level, 75% in Wales and 70% in Scotland.

³ This survey was submitted prior to the publication of the final report prepared by the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Steering Group – the Burgess Group.

Credit

16. The survey shows that 92% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland credit rate their courses – compared to 66% in 2005. 93% do so in the in the UK, and all respondents in Scotland and Wales. Over half respondent institutions (53%) with credit rated programmes use European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for either transfer or accumulation.
17. 65% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland that do not use ECTS as their main credit transfer system record ECTS equivalent credits against the credit system in use. The UK national average is 63%, 64% in Scotland and 50% in Wales.

Joint degrees

18. 72% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland have the power to award joint degrees or multiple/dual/double degrees. The UK national average is 73%, 83% in Wales, and 77% in Scotland.
19. Of those English and Northern Irish respondents able to award joint degrees, 71% do so in collaboration with an institution in the UK, 69% with an institution in one of the 46 other Bologna Process countries and 65% with an institution outside European Higher Education Area.
20. Of those English and Northern Irish respondents awarding multiple/dual/double degrees, 69% do so in collaboration with an institution in one of the 46 other Bologna Process countries, 57% with an institution outside the European Higher Education Area and 55% with an institution in the UK.

Masters programmes

21. 91% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland offer Masters programmes - 92% in the UK, and in Scotland and all respondents in Wales. The majority of Masters programmes in England and Northern Ireland are one-year full time equivalent but in some disciplines up to 23% are two-year full time equivalent in some disciplines – up to 22% in the UK. Survey responses suggest that Masters degrees vary greatly in their duration. Programmes available range in duration from 15, 18, 19 and 36 months, to three or five year part-time or flexible distance learning.

Integrated Masters programmes

22. 60% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland offer full-time integrated Masters. The UK national average is 59%, 70% in Scotland and 50% Wales.
23. 61% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland stated that they had not made changes to integrated Masters programmes in response to Bologna Process developments. This is similar to the UK national average (67%). In Scotland 78% of HEIs made no changes and 67% in Wales.
24. Four respondents (10%) has incorporated teaching into the summer vacation. Nineteen respondents (46%) have incorporated industrial placements with assessed and credit-rated outcomes and three have extended the timescale for submission of the dissertation to extend the duration of the programme.

25. 78% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland providing integrated Masters award a Masters qualification only at the end of the Masters stage of the programme - 81% in the UK, 83 in Wales and 78% in Scotland. Three HEIs award the Bachelor qualification after the Bachelor stage and the Masters qualification after the Masters stage and six respondents offer both the Bachelor and Master qualifications at the end of the Masters stage.
26. 80% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland providing integrated Masters programmes stated that they did allocate a minimum of 60 credits at Masters level. Eight respondent HEIs (15%) in England indicated that they do not.

Recognition of Masters degrees

27. 69% of HEIs in England and Northern Ireland offering one-year full time Masters programmes are not aware of any difficulties experienced by their graduates in gaining recognition of their award for access to further study or employment in either the public or private sector. Five respondents indicated difficulties for graduates going on to further study. One respondent indicated known recognition difficulties experienced by one-year full time Masters graduates for employment in the private sector, and four respondents indicated known recognition difficulties for employment in the public sector.
28. 63% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland offering Integrated Masters programmes are not aware of any difficulties experienced by their graduates in gaining recognition of their award for access to further study or employment in either the public or private sector. One respondent cited known recognition difficulties experienced by Integrated Masters graduates for employment in the public sector, two for graduates going on to further study and none indicated recognition difficulties for employment in the private sector.

Institutional Strategies

29. 75% of respondents in England and Northern Ireland have an International Strategy (73% in the UK, 75 in Wales and 77% in Scotland) and 39% have a European strategy. Of those respondent HEIs with a European strategy, 28% have it embedded in their international strategy (29% in the UK, 33% in Wales, and 46% in Scotland) and 12% have it separate from their international strategies (12% in the UK, 17% in Wales, and 8% in Scotland).
30. Sixteen respondents (24%) in England and Northern Ireland have a Bologna Process Coordinating Group or Taskforce – the same rate as in the UK. 33% have one in Wales and 15% in Scotland.