



## Europe Note

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For information

# Results of the 2009 UK HE Europe Unit survey on UK HEIs engagement in European HE developments - Wales

### Introduction

1. This E-note reports on the outcomes for Wales of the Europe Unit's survey of UK higher education institutions (HEIs) in 2009. This document is best read alongside the survey results for the whole of the UK. Survey responses demonstrate that Welsh HEIs continue to have high levels of engagement with the European higher education agenda. The Europe Unit would like to thank HEIs for their assistance in responding to the survey.
2. The data from the survey was collected over the period from September 2009 to January 2010 using an online survey tool. Separate E-notes for Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, and the whole of the UK are available from the Europe Unit website.  
[www.europeunit.ac.uk](http://www.europeunit.ac.uk)

### **Analysis of respondents**

3. 10 HEIs in Wales responded to the survey giving an 83% response rate (100% in 2007)<sup>1</sup>. This is a higher response rate than the UK national average (59%), Scotland (64%) and England and Northern Ireland (55%). 70% of respondents from Wales were from HEI Registry departments. The remaining responses came from representatives across other categories/departments.

### **Diploma Supplement**

4. Seven HEIs issue the Diploma Supplement (DS) to students graduating in Wales, the same number as in 2007.
5. Of those HEIs that do issue the DS, 100% do so automatically to students graduating with an Bachelors or Masters degree, while 58% issue it to Foundation Degree graduates. 43% issue the DS to doctoral graduates, 29% automatically, and 14% on an ad-hoc basis. In all cases, a paper-based format is used, with no institutions issuing the DS electronically<sup>2</sup>.
6. 71% of HEIs issuing the DS use the standard format developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES (43% in 2007). The UK national average is 81%, 87% in England and Northern Ireland, and 43% in Scotland.
7. All HEIs that do not issue the DS quote IT difficulties as the main reason. The second reason is that HEIs are awaiting developments in the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) before committing to produce a DS.
8. 40% of respondents have received a DS from HEIs elsewhere in Europe (49% in the UK, 67% in Scotland, and 47% in England and Northern Ireland), while 30% have received one from another HEI in the UK. 40% have not received a DS from anywhere. 60% find that the DS is a useful tool for evaluating students' achievements and supporting admissions procedures, no HEIs answered that they did not find it useful.

### **Credit**

9. 80% of respondents use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for the purposes of credit transfer. Of those respondents that use ECTS for credit transfer and accumulation, 25% also use it for credit accumulation. This is a higher usage of ECTS than the national average (56% for transfer, 25% for accumulation).
10. Institutions that do not use ECTS reported that this was due to a lack of demand from students and stakeholders, and stated that they already use a credit system that is compatible with ECTS. This suggests a greater confidence among institutions about the compatibility of UK credit systems and qualifications frameworks with overarching European systems<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was sent to 12 HEIs in Wales in 2009 compared to 15 HEIs in 2007. The different responses rates

<sup>2</sup> Only eight HEIs in the UK issued the DS electronically in 2009, up from three in 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The UK HE Europe Unit published guidance on the relationship between UK arrangements for academic credit and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). [http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe\\_unit2/resources/E-09-06\\_ECTS\\_Users'Guide.pdf](http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe_unit2/resources/E-09-06_ECTS_Users'Guide.pdf)

### **Masters programmes**

11. All Welsh respondents offer Masters programmes. 20% offer two-year Masters degrees only, the remaining 80% offer one-year full time equivalent and two-year courses.
12. As in the rest of the UK, Masters programmes that are traditionally of two years duration (MRes, MPhil) are increasingly being offered as a one-year course, eg 60% of Welsh respondents offer a one-year MPhil.
13. Examples of other types of programmes being offered include one, two, and three-year MBAs and other part-time Masters programmes lasting between 18, 24 and 36 months.

### **Integrated Masters programmes**

14. Five HEIs offer full-time Integrated Masters programmes, all of whom offer MEng degrees. The MChem and MMath are next most popular degrees (three HEIs), followed by the MChem (two HEIs). The UK national average is 58%, 56% in England and Northern Ireland, and 67% in Scotland.
15. One respondent offers Integrated Masters programmes in Architecture (MArch) and Environmental Science (MESci).
16. 80% of Welsh HEIs providing Integrated Masters programmes award a Masters qualification only at the end of the Masters stage of the programme as opposed to 20% of HEIs offering both qualifications at the Masters stage<sup>4</sup>.
17. No HEIs responded to say they incorporate work and/or teaching placements (both within the UK and elsewhere in Europe) into the summer vacation. No respondents extended the timescale for submission of the dissertation to extend the duration of the Integrated Masters degree programme.
18. All institutions responded that they allocate a minimum of 60 ECTS credits at Masters level<sup>5</sup>

### **Recognition of Welsh qualifications**

19. 30% are aware of difficulties experienced by Bachelors and Masters graduates in gaining access to further study. 10% are aware of Masters (1 year FTE) graduates experiencing difficulty in gaining employment in the public and private sectors. When asked to mention the areas where difficulties are most often experienced, four HEIs responded that recognition difficulties are sometimes experienced in Spain, Greece and North America.

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<sup>4</sup> Europe Unit guidance to UK HEIs in 2005 recommended awarding two degrees (Bachelors and Masters) at the end of the Integrated Masters degree to support recognition of the qualification in Europe as a Masters degree.  
[http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe\\_unit2/resources/E-05-12.doc](http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe_unit2/resources/E-05-12.doc)

<sup>5</sup> The ECTS credit range for a second cycle qualification in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) is between 60-120 ECTS (with 90-120 being the most common range).

20. When asked if the Bologna Process reforms and EU initiatives (DS, ECTS, development of HE qualifications frameworks etc) have improved the situation regarding the recognition of UK degrees in Europe, all HEIs responded that the situation was maintained or had improved.

### **Staff and student mobility**

21. In order to gauge the UK HE sector's potential to contribute to the goal outlined in the Leuven Communiqué (20% of graduates in the EHEA to have had a mobility experience by 2020), the Europe Unit asked institutions if they had measures in place to promote staff and student mobility. 80% of respondents have measures in place to promote staff mobility, 90% have measures to promote student mobility, 10% have no measures in place to support either. This is similar to the UK average.

22. 50% mentioned the Erasmus programme specifically, but the survey results show that Welsh HEIs have incorporated mobility policies into wider international strategies. Ways of doing so include the creation of a management group for international education and exchange, promotion of mobility opportunities at student recruitment fairs and open days, and individual institutional collaborations with overseas partners.

### **Joint degrees**

23. The 2009 survey asked HEIs to identify in which regions they had joint degree partners<sup>6</sup>. Three HEIs award a joint degree or multiple/dual/double degree in conjunction with one or more HEIs. All those respondents that issue joint or multiple/dual/double degrees do so in conjunction with a HEI in Europe, and two also do so in conjunction with another HEI in the UK. No respondents reported collaboration with a HEI outside Europe. Examples of degrees include joint Masters degrees and an Erasmus Mundus Masters programme.

### **Institutional Strategies**

24. 90% of respondents in Wales have an International Strategy (75% in 2007), 22% of whom have included European affairs in its remit. There was one institution with an independent European strategy (40% in the UK). European issues covered in International Strategies appear to cover teaching and research activities, as well as institutional collaborations on other issues. Two HEIs specifically mention recruitment of European students as a strategic objective.

25. 70% (33% in 2007) have assigned a particular staff member/committee/group with responsibility for Bologna Process issues. This compares well with the UK national average of 58%, 55% in England and Northern Ireland, and 71% in Scotland. This is a clear reflection of the growing importance of the Bologna Process agenda in Wales and the wider UK. Each institution has taken a very different approach, with a broad range of academics and administrators involved.

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<sup>6</sup> In the 2007 Europe Unit survey, HEIs were first asked if they had the power to award joint degrees. The question was not asked in 2009 to try and reduce the number of questions in the survey.