

Appendix 2

Cutting duplication could produce £15 million savings for Higher Education

Source: **Department for Education and Skills**

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Better co-ordination of inspection and data collection in higher education could save at least £15 million annually.

That is the estimate in the first report from the Higher Education Regulation Review Group (HERRG), which includes front-line higher education administrators and has been looking at ways of reducing bureaucracy.

The Group believes that there are unnecessary burdens on institutions caused by multiple funding bodies across government having their own reporting, data collection and inspection/audit requirements for higher education. The group have recommended a concordat between the funding bodies, whereby the HE Statistics Agency would become the single source of base data, and the Quality Assurance Agency would supply basic inspection and quality assurance. HERRG will seek to broker such a concordat in the coming year.

Launching the report, Chair of HERRG Patricia Hodgson said:

"Progress is being made in reducing bureaucracy, and there is evidence of good intentions, but we think there is scope to go further and faster with better coordination. This is a potential "win-win" for government, funding bodies, and universities, if all are willing to work for it".

Responding to the report, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education Bill Rammell MP said:

"I welcome the first annual report from HERRG. The Group has rightly set out a challenging agenda for government and its agencies, and for universities themselves. A concordat approach to securing savings without compromising quality standards, should enable us to make real progress and I am committed to working with them and other partners in the coming year".

Minister of State for NHS Delivery Lord Warner said:

"The Healthcare Concordat is a highly significant achievement in its own right. It has produced real benefits since its launch last year and the Healthcare Commission continues to make progress in reducing unnecessary bureaucracy. Quality assurance of healthcare education imposes a bureaucratic burden on universities, so Skills for Health is playing its part with streamlined processes that ensure continued fitness for purpose through its Partnership QA Framework. We are keen to continue working with HERRG on further improvements."

Universities UK President Ivor Crewe said:

"We very much support the reasoning behind the group's recommendations. Universities have made huge strides in improving their quality assurance arrangements, and we are sure that our members will want to play their part in creating the conditions where a concordat can work effectively"

The report sets out the key principles agreed by the HERRG:

- The core aim is better processes that reduce the cost of reporting and inspection, freeing universities to get on with their main jobs
- Unless or until an institution is at risk of failure, funding bodies should expect to place greater reliance on management, audit and governance arrangements within colleges and universities themselves, with extra reporting by exception and only where justified by extra risk.
- Universities and colleges must guard against 'gold-plating' in meeting regulatory demands.

The report also sets out the Groups' achievements which include working in collaboration with the Higher Education Funding Council for England, resulting in a change in its approach to funding, monitoring and data collection:

- Cutting the number of special funding streams requiring separate bids from institutions to a maximum of six over time;
- Moving to a 'single conversation' with universities and colleges using their own annual forecasts, abolishing multiple date demands during the year, except for institutions at risk and;
- Monitoring by exception, so that institutions need only report on failures to meet particular regulatory requirements.

NOTES TO EDITORS

This Press Notice applies to England.

HERRG was established by the Department for Education and Skills in summer 2004. Members are drawn from the ranks of senior university managers. It has a two year lifespan and has a mandate to: review policies for their regulatory impact on Higher Education in England regardless of departmental origin; to explore existing areas of bureaucratic demand and; to recommend ways of doing things better. HERRG's first annual report is available at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/hegateway/hereform/improvingregulation/index.cfm>

Dame Patricia Hodgson, DBE, began her career as a producer and journalist, later becoming Director of Policy & Planning at the BBC in the nineties and Chief Executive of the Independent Television Commission until the start of last year. She is Chair of the Higher Education

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Regulation Review Group, a Governor of the Wellcome Trust, and a non-executive director of the Competition Commission and of GCap Media Group plc. She has been a Visiting Bye-Fellow of Newnham College, Cambridge, during the Lent and Easter terms 2004, and is a Member of the Statistics Commission and the Commission for Standards in Public Life

The Healthcare Concordat was launched in April 2004 and co-ordinated the activities of a wide range of bodies responsible for inspecting, regulating and auditing healthcare. The Healthcare Commission continues to lead the programme of implementation with its partners to further free those who care for patients from any unnecessary collection of data and inspection visits.

The Department of Health developed a Partnership Quality Assurance Framework, responsibility for which transferred to Skills for Health in October 2004. Through partnership working, this work programme is seeking to ensure that consistent, integrated quality assurance processes and outcomes inform the development and delivery of patient focused learning. HERRG has been liaising closely with Skills for Health as they take forward development and implementation of their QA and enhancement framework and has involved both Skills for Health and the DH in work on its own concordat approach.

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