

William Powell AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

21 May 2014

Dear William

**Petition – P-04-532 Involving lecturers to ensure a Further Education
Inspection Framework that is fit for purpose**

Thank you for your letter dated 30 April 2014.

Firstly, it might be helpful if I explain the reasons we are adapting inspection practices in relation to the inspection of further education institutions (FEIs). The sector has changed significantly or is to change due to the mergers of FEIs, the introduction of new funding and governance arrangements and the introduction of learning area programmes (LAPs). Because of these changes, the current inspection framework needed to be refreshed. Neither were there FEIs due for inspection over the next period so we are able to take time to consult over the pattern for the future.

Although Estyn has begun work on the new inspection arrangements the outline plans are still at an early stage of development. Inspections under the new arrangements will begin in autumn 2015 with a pilot inspection in the spring of 2016.

In general and irrespective of changes to inspection arrangements, we consult widely with our stakeholders. We hold a national stakeholder event in February at which we discuss developments with key officers from representative organisations, including the professional associations and trade unions. Throughout the rest of the year we hold sector network meetings at regular intervals with representatives from each of the education and training sectors for more in-depth discussions. Further to this we offer to meet with representative organisations at their own events or to meet key officers to discuss any areas of mutual interest.

We do not normally use an advisory group as part of our planning of new inspection arrangements for providers. We normally only use stakeholder consultations in conferences and in stakeholder group meetings and we plan to use similar consultations for FEI inspections. However, major policy changes are happening in FE at a strategic level in relation to funding and governance arrangements which inspectors need to understand fully. That is why we have set up an advisory group comprising five senior representatives of ColegauCymru and one representative from Welsh Government (DfES) to advise and inform us about how these policy changes are likely to have an impact on strategic planning and governance and to discuss the implications for inspection. We do not consider it is relevant for UCU to be included in this particular group.

They will of course continue to be fully included in our wide-ranging consultations with all stakeholders who have an interest in new inspection arrangements, including practitioners.

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers have already indicated that they are content with these consultation arrangements for the development of FE inspection.

Even at this early stage, consultations have already included professional associations and trade unions. UCU attended Estyn's national stakeholder event in February 2014 and in the post-16 workshop provided some helpful comments on our proposals for the inspection of FEIs. Subsequently Lisa Edwards, an officer from UCU, contacted Estyn requesting information about the advisory group on 13 December 2013 and on 14 January 2014. We responded to Lisa Edwards on 14 January and 20 January 2014 confirming that UCU will have the opportunity to comment on the proposals after the initial drafting work has taken place as will ATL and any other professional association or union through Estyn's stakeholder network meetings.

In addition to this we have met twice with the UCU at their offices in Bridgend and another meeting with union officials and members is planned for Saturday the 21st June. We have listened to the points they raised in January about the issues facing lecturing staff in FE institutions and have invited the UCU to present further views. We have discussed with them how they will contribute to the consultation process.

We have also already held meetings and information sessions and led an open discussion in seminar group at the ColegauCymru annual conference on 13 May 2014. A consultation day is planned in July to meet college curriculum leaders and we will also consult more widely through our post-16 stakeholder network over the next few months as soon as we have outline proposals to discuss.

The petition raises concerns that the voice of the lecturer will not be heard in the consultation process. We believe that the processes we have put in place will give opportunities for lecturing staff to contribute their views to the process fully.

One of the significant developments associated with the new inspection arrangements will be the increased use on inspection teams of peer inspectors who have up to date, first-hand experience of classroom practices and the needs of learners. College lecturers are the key source of these peer inspectors. We intend to extend our 'pool' of peer inspectors for FE so that we create a cadre of specialist peer inspectors who will work with us to inspect the learning areas. The 'subject' specialist peer inspectors will be curriculum leaders and lecturers who can bring the learning area coverage that we will require. These are staff who are experienced in observing their peers teach and are aware of current classroom practice. We will also train a group of leadership peer inspectors, drawn from senior staff in FEIs to focus on governance and management.

Estyn puts the learner at the heart of the common inspection framework. All our inspection work focuses on the extent to which learners achieve and the overall education experience they receive from providers. We welcome the views of teaching professionals on the issues that will improve learner achievement.

Since you have noted that the Petitions Committee is writing to the Minister for Education and Skills, I am copying my reply to the Minister so that the way that Estyn approaches the planning of changes to the FEI and wider education inspection framework is clear.

Yours sincerely



Ann Keane
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of
Education and Training in Wales

c.c. Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills