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To: aimhigher
Subject: Aimhigher Practitioner Bulletin - February 2006

Aimhigher... Practitioner bulletin

Welcome to the February edition of the Aimhigher practitioner bulletin, designed to provide all those working for Aimhigher with relevant programme news and details of national resources.

If you have comments or suggestions on the content of the practitioner bulletin or website, or any other communications enquiries, please contact the National Communications Resource Team (NCRT) on 0117 929 7096 or email aimhigher@harrisoncowley.com.

Aimhigher: guidance for submitting strategic plans 2006-08

HEFCE has now published the planning guidance, which is available to download from the practitioner website. Hard copies of the guidance were distributed to partnerships, HEIs and HEFCE-funded FECs at the end of January and partnerships' revised strategic plans are due for submission by 31 March 2006.

Click on the link below to download a copy of the guidance.

http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resource_material/about_aimhigher/future_of_aimhigher.cfm

Aimhigher payment proforma 2006-08

A payment proforma for August 2006 - July 2008 is now available to download from the practitioner website. The first worksheet gives full details of how to complete the proforma and guidance on allocating funding within partnerships can be found in the planning guidance. For more information or to download a copy of the proforma, click on the link below.

http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resource_material/about_aimhigher/funding.cfm

Aimhigher monitoring template 2005-06

The monitoring template for 2005-06 is now available. The updated template has been modified to allow a more consistent approach that emphasises reporting on impacts rather than activities. For more information or to download a copy of the template, click on the link below.

http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resource_material/monitoring_evaluation/monitoring.cfm

Evaluation reports published

An interim report on the first four area studies conducted by EKOS Consulting (Strand 3 of the Aimhigher Evidence Programme) is now available - click on the link below and select Strand 3 to download a copy of the full report or executive summary. These area studies are based on a series of stakeholder interviews, supplemented by socio-economic analyses of each of the four partnership areas and a review of relevant strategy documents.

A report on the survey of educational providers conducted by Sheffield Hallam University (Strand 4) has also been published. The survey indicated that the Aimhigher programme has been a primary facilitator in the growth of widening participation activities, especially in the post-1992 universities and further education colleges. Click on the link below and select Strand 4 to download a copy of the full report or executive summary.

Preliminary findings from the National Foundation for Educational Research's tracking surveys of young people (Strand 1) are now available. Click on the link below and select Strand 1 to download a report summarising key findings for practitioners.

Findings from all three strands have been used to produce a summary report with details of which Aimhigher activities were considered most and least effective - click on the link below to download a copy. Partnerships may find it provides them with some evidence base for their Aimhigher plans for 2006-08.

Although Aimhigher is being evaluated at a national level, regions and areas are monitoring the impact of Aimhigher in the short term, medium term and long term (Strand 5) and their findings will help to inform strategic planning for 2006-08. Areas and regions are asked to share their evaluation experiences, tools and findings by sending them to Judie Jancovich at HEFCE on j.jancovich@hefce.ac.uk.

http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resource_material/monitoring_evaluation/evaluation.cfm

Student Finance campaign update

On 9 January the DfES launched a PR campaign entitled 'Freedom and Independence', based on the results of a survey undertaken with 16-19 year olds. The survey results showed that today's teens are independent, in-control decision-makers, with long-term plans and budgets. These results were combined with student finance messages, highlighting that the new student finance support package enables students to progress to HE and achieve their goals by removing the financial barrier and enabling them to be more financially independent.

In addition to achieving coverage in national and regional titles, the DfES also organised a day of radio interviews with Bill Rammell, Minister for Higher Education and Tim Campbell, winner of the 2005 Apprentice TV programme, which were aired on a significant number of radio stations across England. Bill Rammell also participated in a live webchat to answer questions submitted by parents and students.

The PR campaign continues during February and March with ongoing work to sell in student finance messages across print media and the generation of case study material. A second burst of radio advertising targeting potential students began on 6 February and will run for three weeks, using the same advert which aired in November.

For more information about the Student Finance campaign, click on the link below.

http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resource_material/national_campaigns/student_finance.cfm

Aimhigher key messages

The DfES is currently developing a core script of key messages that can be used as a common point of reference for all Aimhigher communications and tailored for use by regional and area partnerships. These messages will be tested amongst all of the key target audiences for Aimhigher, including practitioners, to ensure that they are effective.

A number of practitioners have requested that separate messages be developed for use with schools and colleges, in light of the New Relationship with Schools and reductions to the Aimhigher budget. In order to identify the different audiences within schools and colleges and the motivators and barriers for each, the NCRT will be interviewing a cross-section of practitioners about their experiences of working with this sector, before developing a set of draft messages.

For more information or to contribute to this process, please contact the NCRT on 0117 929 7096 or email aimhigher@harrisoncowley.com.

Foundation Degrees campaign update

The next phase of Foundation Degrees advertising has now begun, aimed at raising awareness amongst employers and potential students. Radio and national press advertising will run for four weeks and trade press advertising will run through to the end of March. In addition, a Foundation Degree media centre is now available, containing a bank of case studies and other resources such as press notices and brand guidelines.

For more information about the campaign, including details of where the adverts will be appearing, click on the link below.

http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resource_material/national_campaigns/foundation_degrees.cfm

Forthcoming events

The following events may be of interest to Aimhigher practitioners:

Raising Achievement & Aspirations Through Football – Conference (2 March)

This one-day conference at Derby County Football Club will focus on the achievements of 'Raising Achievement & Aspirations Through Football' - one of the Aimhigher national projects awarded HEFCE funding from July 2004 until March 2006.

Aspire Aimhigher Conference (15 March)

This conference at London's South Bank University will disseminate the lessons learnt from Aspire's work on progression pathways, giving practical examples of ways to address the barriers and encourage young people to achieve their goals.

Admissions to Higher Education 2006 (4-6 April)

The Careers Research and Advisory Centre, in association with UCAS, is hosting the 41st Admissions to Higher Education conference at the University of Nottingham in April. Including keynote speeches from Bill Rammell, Minister for Higher Education and Anthony McClaran, Chief Executive of UCAS, this is widely regarded as the best event in the calendar for careers, admissions and guidance professionals.

For more information about these events, click on the link below.

http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/events/practitioner_events.cfm

Aimhigher student portal

HEFCE is looking for volunteers to advise HERO on the next phase of development of the Aimhigher student portal (www.aimhigher.ac.uk). Initially this would involve a one-day meeting which will take place in London in March.

Whether you are a web-master, or simply have experience of using the Aimhigher portal, HEFCE would like to hear from you. They would particularly appreciate your views on a range of issues that HERO is considering taking forward, and would also like to hear your views on your experiences of the portal so far.

If you would like to take part, or for further information, please contact Alasdair Liddell at HEFCE on 0117 931 7312 or email a.liddell@hefce.ac.uk.

Survey of English HEIs – activities placing students into schools

In August 2005, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) commissioned a survey of English universities to gain an insight into the range, type and rationale of activities they are delivering which place HE students into schools/colleges. The survey, which included contributions from Aimhigher practitioners, was distributed to all HEIs in England and was completed by 65 universities (51% of the sample).

Click on the link below to download an overview of the findings.

http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resource_material/monitoring_evaluation/evaluation/survey_of_heis_activities_placing_students_into_schools.cfm