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Dr Kathryn Jenkins
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Date 14th June 2005
Our reference JC/0032/fgb
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Audit Committee report on procurement in the higher education sector in Wales: Welsh Assembly Government's response

Your letter of 25 May 2005 requested my advice on the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the recommendations made by the Audit Committee in its report, *Procurement in the Higher Education Sector in Wales*.

The Assembly Government has responded positively in agreeing to all ten of the recommendations, and has provided a full explanation for each response. As expected, it will rely mainly on the planned "procurement fitness checks" at each higher education institution to identify the necessary improvements, and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales has undertaken to monitor the implementation of the resulting action plans. In particular, the Assembly government has agreed to set a specific savings target of at least three per cent for each institution, to be achieved over the three-year period to 31 July 2008, and to measure savings using the method recommended by the Welsh Procurement Initiative. The Council will also attach terms and conditions to its financial support that will permit it to withdraw funding as a last resort, if institutions fail persistently to co-operate with the reasonable expectations of the Council in respect of procurement. This was a particular concern of the Committee at the evidence session in December.

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The Assembly Government has agreed to update the Committee on progress in April next year, and I will be happy to advise you again when that report is received. The Wales Audit Office will regularly review progress in implementing the report's recommendations, and I will let you know of any areas where we consider that the Committee may wish to take further action.

Yours ever,

Jeremy

Jeremy Colman
Auditor General for Wales
