

**PART-TIME UNDERGRADUATE FEE WAIVER
SCHEME 2008/09**

Meeting
23/10/09

Agenda Item
19

DISCLOSABLE
Reference No
HEFCW/09/93

1 Issue

This paper reports the outcomes of the Council's Part-Time Undergraduate Fee Waiver Scheme in 2008/09. The paper is for information only.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

There are no direct Corporate Plan implications for this table. This paper is produced annually to report on expenditure under the Part-Time Undergraduate Fee Waiver Scheme.

3 Recommendation(s)

The Council is invited to:

- i. note the contents of this paper.

4 Timing for decisions

There are no decisions arising from this Council paper.

5 Council members' interests

No conflicts of interest have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

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7 Background

The letter of guidance which accompanied the Council's 1998 grant settlement drew attention to part-time fee remission for students on benefit or low income as one of a number of improvements to student support arrangements intended to further the Government's commitment to widening access. As a result, the Council developed the Part-Time Fee Waiver Scheme which has operated since 1999/2000. The amount of funding available for the scheme in 2008/09 remained at the same level as the previous year, £1.5million.

8 Details of the scheme

- 8.1 The Scheme contains three strands of funding: one for fee waivers; one for a contribution to the costs of administering the scheme at 4% of the value of fees waived, up to a maximum of £5,000; and one for promotion of the scheme up to £4,000 per institution.
- 8.2 Allocations for fee waivers and the associated administration costs are made in December on the basis of estimates of expenditure provided by institutions. Estimated expenditure is compared with actual expenditure at the end of the academic year and any difference between the two values is recognised by making appropriate adjustments to the payment of grant for fee waiver for the following year. Payments for the promotion of the scheme are made in July on the basis of claims supported by invoices.

9 Outcomes of the scheme

- 9.1 **Annex A** gives details of the amounts estimated and the amounts actually spent on the scheme. Fourteen institutions claimed between them a total of £609,105 for estimated fee waivers, along with £20,979 for estimated administration costs. Actual spend was higher than the estimates at £730,801 and £23,538 respectively. Some 1,978 students were expected to benefit from the scheme; the actual number was 2,123. Seven institutions waived fees worth more than they had estimated.
- 9.2 **Annex A** also gives details of the amounts claimed for promotion of the scheme in 2008/09 out of the £4,000 available per institution. Thirteen institutions claimed a total of £43,481.
- 9.3 **Annex B** compares 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 data. Numbers of students benefiting from the scheme in 2008/09 increased by 74%. Alongside this the value of fees waived in 2008/09 rose by 54% (following an increase of 46% in 2007/08). As this is the first year that the Open University in Wales has been eligible to participate in the scheme the higher claim level was perhaps to be expected.
- 9.4 Fees worth £730,801 were actually waived by institutions in 2008/09. The associated administration and promotion costs were £23,481 and £43,481 respectively. This gave a total expenditure of £797,820 in 2008/09, which represents an increase of 49% on the total expenditure for 2007/08.

9.5 Throughout the sector, 2,123 students benefited from the scheme in 2008/09, 901 more than in 2007/08 and 887 more than 2006/07. 1,956 (92%) were mature students, that is 25 years or over and 1,437 (68%) were female. **Annex C** provides further details. Students claimed eligibility for the scheme on the basis of various criteria which are also shown in Annex C.

10 Financial implications

The payments to institutions for 2008/09 were adjusted to take account of the difference between the estimated and actual amount of fees waived in 2007/08. As a result £604,388 was actually paid to institutions in 2008/09. In total £895,612 was returned to the contingency budget in 2008/09. The larger claims which were required in 2008/09 (compared to the original estimates) will be reflected in the 2009/10 payment in December 2009.

11 Communications implications

There are no communication implications arising from this paper.

12 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

The Part-Time Undergraduate Fee Waiver scheme offers fee remission for students who are unemployed and actively seeking work or who are in receipt of Department for Work and Pensions benefits. It is designed to serve as an instrument for helping to combat social exclusion and to assist more people to obtain vocational qualifications. As such the scheme is intended to contribute towards widening participation, improving access and increasing rates of retention and achievement.

13 Risk Assessment

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
If the scheme is not monitored and marketed, there is a risk that opportunity for students in a position to benefit from its provision may be lost.	Scheme is monitored and marketed as detailed in this paper.