

Press release

Date: 23 July 2010

Title Promoting the knowledge economy in Wales

More university places have been made available in science subjects from the 2010/11 academic year in order to support Welsh Assembly Government plans for economic renewal.

Universities in Wales have been invited by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to convert some existing student places into STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects, following widespread employer calls for more graduates in these subjects.

HEFCW will provide additional funding to universities to prioritise recruitment to these subjects, identified by the Welsh Assembly Government as areas of shortage.

This announcement follows the statement on 14 July by the Education Minister that there will be a limit on full time undergraduate numbers from 2011/12, and builds on an investment of £1 million in a joint programme involving Welsh and English universities to raise the level of school students' interest in STEM subjects.

Professor Philip Gummatt, Chief Executive of HEFCW said: "This new initiative is part of a range of HEFCW measures to ensure that Welsh Assembly Government priorities for higher education – particularly the promotion of subjects of benefit to the economy, widening access, and Welsh medium provision – are not adversely affected by the need to manage total undergraduate numbers. In the current financial climate, we have to prioritise our funding and focus more on the areas of most importance to Wales."

Notes

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The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body. We strategically use resources from the Welsh Assembly Government and others to:

- secure higher education learning and research of the highest quality
- make the most of the contribution of higher education to the culture, society and economy of Wales
- ensure high quality, accredited teacher training across Wales.

We also provide advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of higher education institutions in Wales.

STEM - science, technology, engineering and mathematics

HEFCW's new initiative will enable additional funded places for STEM provision which meets *For our Future* priorities to be available in Wales.

HEFCW will provide additional limited funding to cover the difference between the costs of the original student places and the eligible STEM course. The funding will be capped at £250,000 in total and all the requests for funding support to transfer credits to STEM will be subject to a competitive process.

For more information, see HEFCW circular [W10/25HE: Redistribution Exercise 2010/11](#).

These subjects, which are generally more expensive to provide, are crucial to supporting a buoyant economy in Wales – one of the aims of the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for higher education, *For our Future*.

National HE STEM programme: www.hestem.ac.uk/