Diverse student body in Welsh universities

Thursday, 15 April 2010

The latest UK-wide figures about the make-up of the higher education sector show that universities and colleges in Wales continue to perform well in recruiting students from under-represented groups.

Wales has similar or higher proportions of students from most under-represented groups in higher education (HE) compared to the UK as a whole.

The annual performance indicators shows Welsh HE’s achievements in widening participation among groups which traditionally have had less experience of higher education, with particular successes in enrolling young full-time undergraduate entrants from state schools or colleges and low participation neighbourhoods, and full-time undergraduate students who received a disabled students’ allowance.

Of particular note for Wales in 2008/09 were:

- 93.5% of young full-time undergraduate entrants to Welsh higher education institutions (HEIs) in 2008/09 were from state schools or colleges, a similar proportion to last year and greater than the UK as a whole at 89.0%. Six HEIs had proportions that were significantly higher than the benchmark.

(www.hesa.ac.uk/pi, Table 1b)
• For young full-time undergraduate entrants to Welsh HEIs in 2008/09, the proportion from socio-economic classes 1 4, 5, 6 & 7 was 33.0% which was similar to the proportion for the UK as a whole at 33.1%. (Table 1b)

• The proportion of young full-time undergraduate entrants to Welsh HEIs in 2008/09 from low participation neighbourhoods was 10.4%, an increase since last year and similar to the UK as a whole at 10.5%. (Table 1b)

• 7.4% of part-time undergraduate entrants had no previous HE experience and were from a low participation neighbourhood in 2008/09, an increase on last year and a similar proportion to that for the UK as a whole at 7.3%. (Table 2b)

• The proportion of full-time undergraduate students in Welsh HEIs in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA) is 5.8% and continues to be greater than the proportion for the UK as a whole, at 4.7% in 2008/09. The proportion of part-time undergraduate students in receipt of DSA has risen since last year and is 1.8%. This proportion is lower than for the UK as a whole at 2.6%. (Table 7)

The figures continued to underline the challenges of retaining non-traditional students in higher education:

• The proportion of full-time first degree entrants to Welsh HEIs in 2007/08 that were not in HE in 2008/09 was 9.2%, a decrease since last year. Although still higher than the proportion for the UK as a whole at 8.6%, the difference between Wales and the UK has narrowed since 2007/08. (www.hesa.ac.uk/pi Table 3a)

• The proportion of young full-time first degree entrants to Welsh HEIs in

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2007/08 from low participation neighbourhoods that were not in HE in 2008/09 was 11.0%, a decrease since last year and although still higher than that for the UK as a whole at 9.6%, the difference between Wales and the UK continues to narrow. (Table 3b)

- For mature full-time first degree entrants to Welsh HEIs in 2007/08 with no previous HE qualification, the proportion that were not in HE in 2008/09 is 15.9%, a decrease on last year and although still higher than for the UK as a whole at 14.6% the difference between Wales and the UK has narrowed since 2007/08. For those with a previous higher education qualification, 11.6% were no longer in HE which is less than the proportion for the UK as a whole at 12.4%. (Table 3c)

- The proportion of part-time first degree entrants to Welsh HEIs in 2006/07 no longer in HE in 2008/09 was 30.1% compared to 35.3% for the UK as a whole. The figure for those aged thirty and under at 29.9% was similar to that for those aged over thirty at 30.1%. For the UK as a whole the proportion aged thirty and under, at 36.9%, was greater than that for those aged over thirty, at 33.9%. (Table 3e)

Professor Philip Gummett, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: “The figures underline Wales’s commitment to offering opportunities to those who can benefit from higher education, and show how our universities’ achievements deliver the Welsh Assembly Government’s social justice agenda.

“The figures underline the work that Welsh institutions put in to raise aspirations and create new pathways to higher education, and we commend them for their recruitment of, for example, disabled students, students from low participation neighbourhoods and mature students.

“We acknowledge that retaining non-traditional students can sometimes be more challenging, and we are optimistic that with additional support, expertise and courage, universities will make progress in this area. We have been
particularly heartened that every single HE institution in Wales has now achieved the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark for Care Leavers, which recognises universities’ commitment to providing support and additional funding for people of all ages with a care background.”

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Notes:

Contacts for further information

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Performance Indicators

Full text and tables of Performance Indicators in Higher Education in the UK 2008/09 can be found on the HESA website at www.hesa.ac.uk/pi. The table references are in the text above.

The Performance Indicators are published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on the behalf of the four UK higher education funding bodies (Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Scottish Funding Councils (SFC), and in Northern Ireland the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

Research and employment indicators are being published in July so are not included in this summary.

Changes to the UCAS question regarding NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification) for applicants in 2008/09 mean that comparisons of this data with earlier years are not appropriate, therefore performance indicators on participation of students from NS-SEC classes 4, 5, 6 & 7 have been published separately in 2008/09 in table 1ai, 1bi and 1ci.

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/08/09/changes
Information on non-continuation two years following year of entry for part-time first degree entrants has been published for the first time in 2008/09 in table 3e.

Due to the introduction of the new HESA student record in 2007/08, the quality of some of the data was not as high in this year as it was previously. In 2008/09 the quality has improved but consideration should be given to data quality issues for 2007/08 when making comparisons with earlier years’ performance indicators.

Scotland is not included in the UK figures for the following tables:
T1a, T1b, T1c (low participation neighbourhood figures only)
T2a, T2b, T2c
T3b

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body which administers funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government to support:
- education in higher education institutions (HEIs);
- research undertaken by HEIs; and
- higher education courses at further education colleges.
HEFCW also accredits providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissions research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, HEFCW advises the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.