

News release

Date: 11 July 2018

Title: Project puts Wales at the forefront of using student data to provide support

HEFCW is to part-fund two years of a new three-year project to help universities and colleges to analyse student data to help improve support, so that students experience better learning outcomes.

The Learning Analytics Cymru project, which will fund higher education providers over three years to work with Jisc's learning analytics service, will enable institutions to recognise data patterns in order to help students to understand their own learning needs and identify areas for improvement, which should increase retention rates and better deliver widening access priorities.

This will include an app for students to allow them to track their own progress to target areas for improvement.

The analysis of learning patterns will also provide anonymised nationwide insights into: what causes different educational outcomes for students; the success or otherwise of student support interventions; and tracking improvements in learning and teaching on individual programmes.

Higher education providers will be encouraged to share expertise, and become even more flexible, confident and innovative in using teaching enhanced learning in both Welsh and English.

Dr David Blaney, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: “As we reported last month, our ten-year plan to improve the use of teaching technologies in universities has had a positive impact on the higher education sector. We are now confident that the learning analytics phase of developments in this area over the next three years will give institutions additional insight to improve the outcomes of learning for their students.

“We have been pleased that our partners at Jisc have been working with their members in higher education since 2014 on how to interrogate and analyse data effectively to inform future strategies. This not only provides a better experience for students, it also helps institutions to maintain their competitive edge.

“Student data collected by universities and colleges has huge potential to help tackle big issues such as improving learner retention, boosting attainment and providing a high quality learning experience. The pace of adoption in this pan-Wales project will be accelerated by communities sharing good practice, making us the most advanced UK nation in this area.”

Alyson Nicholson, Head of Jisc Wales, said: “Higher education institutions in Wales have a strong tradition of working together on innovative approaches aimed at improving learning outcomes and the student experience. We are looking forward to working with the sector so that they can make the most of the data they collect to ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.”

Gwyneth Sweatman, NUS Wales President, said: “Going to university is - without exception - a transformational experience, and everyone should be able to benefit from that experience no matter what their background. Importantly, however, it’s not just about getting in. It’s also about getting on. That’s not only good for students, but also for universities, for communities, and for the whole of Wales. I’m looking forward to seeing how providers work with Jisc to ensure that

every citizen of Wales is able to have the life-changing opportunity of a university education, if that is the right path for them.”

Ends

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Notes

HEFCW will fund half the cost to HE institutions of the Jisc learning analytics service over two years, with the institutions committing to continuing to pay for the service for an additional year. HEFCW will also fund additional support from Jisc for the institutions.

The proposed programme of work will support Welsh HE providers to further progress their strategic use of learning analytics to meet their institutional goals to support students. The core of the programme is a supported, and part-funded, implementation of the Jisc learning analytics service for all Welsh HE institutions and for the two regulated FE institutions, if they wish to participate.

The work begins with a readiness and piloting stage, from a discovery phase and readiness assessment through to cultural set-up, design and implementation, data integration and finally evaluation.

About HEFCW

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales – HEFCW – is the public body that sits between universities and the Welsh Government. We regulate fee levels at higher education providers, ensure a framework is in place for assessing the quality of higher education and scrutinise the performance of universities. We

distribute resources for higher education teaching and research, and help to deliver Welsh Government priorities for higher education for the wider benefit of society and the economy.

About Jisc

Jisc is the UK's expert member organisation for digital technology and digital resources in higher education, further education, skills and research. Our vision is to make the UK the most digitally advanced education and research nation in the world.

We play a pivotal role in the development, adoption and use of technology by UK universities and colleges. We support the use of technology to improve learning, teaching, the student experience and institutional efficiency, as well as more powerful research.

At the heart of Jisc's support is Janet – the UK's world-class National Research and Education Network (NREN). Owned, managed and operated by Jisc, Janet comprises a secure, state-of-the-art network infrastructure spanning all four nations of the UK.

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