

**To: Heads of higher education
institutions in Wales**

Reference: W05/33HE
Date: 31 May 2005
Response By: 30 September 2005
Further Information: Alison Allan
Emma Raczka

**WIDENING ACCESS STRATEGIES/DISABILITY PROVISION DEVELOPMENT PLANS
AND WIDENING ACCESS FUND ALLOCATIONS FOR 2005/06**

I enclose details of institutional allocations under the Widening Access Fund for 2005/06 (**Annex A**).

We indicated earlier that, as 2004/05 was the end of the previous three-year plan cycle for widening access strategies, we would ask institutions to submit new full three-year widening access strategies (including disability provision development plans) for 2005/06 to 2007/08 (Circular W05/17HE).

However, a number of factors have led us to conclude that it would be better to delay the request for a year:

- i) The process of reviewing the HEFCW Race Equality Scheme has identified widening access as an area of high relevance for race equality which should be subject to impact assessment when policy is developed or reviewed. The circular requesting new three-year widening access strategies will be one of the key mechanisms for disseminating the Council's policies on widening access. We wish therefore to take the opportunity to review our approach before requesting new strategies;
- ii) The recent publication of the Rees report on the Devolution of the Student Support System and Tuition Fee Regime in Wales. We imagine that institutions will wish to take on board the report outcomes and the Assembly's response when developing their approach to widening access;
- iii) The study of the costs of widening access in Wales, which has been commissioned as an extension of the study undertaken in England by JM Consulting, is nearing completion and the Council expects to consider the report later this year;

- iv) The need to allow institutions time to consider how they will take account of the implications of the 2005 Disability Discrimination Act in planning their support for disabled students over the longer term (see **Annex B**).

We trust that you will agree that, in the circumstances, it is better to delay the submission of three-year plans for a year. We are therefore asking institutions to provide progress reports on 2004/05 activity and funding, and to set out implementation plans for 2005/06, as a basis for releasing Widening Access Fund allocations for 2005/06. (2005/06 progress will now be reported on separately next year, not as part of the Annual Monitoring Statement in July 2006.)

PROGRESS REPORTS 2004/05

A full account should be given of progress against the Widening Access Strategy/Disability Provision Development Plan in 2004/05, including the achievement of in-year targets, as well as progress towards longer-term targets and the aims and objectives of the strategy.

In providing implementation plans for 2004/05, institutions were specifically asked to:

- demonstrate how the institution's activities would enable it to contribute to meeting the Welsh Assembly Government's aspirations and targets for widening access.
- demonstrate how links were being made between the institutional widening access strategy and the institution's membership of its *Reaching Wider* partnership.
- provide a statement on how matters relevant to *race equality* were being taken forward as an integral part of the widening access strategy.
- consider, whether within its widening access priorities and programmes, the strategy made provision for Welsh-speaking students or Welsh-speaking communities.

Institutions should therefore ensure that progress on these aspects is included within the overall progress report.

In addition to the progress report, an account should be given of how the institution's Widening Access Fund, Widening Access Premium and Disability Premium allocations for 2004/05 were used. This should be set out in the expenditure tables at **Annex C**. Significant in-year changes in plans/use of funding should be noted and explained.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANS 2005/06

Implementation plans for widening access/disability provision development for 2005/06 should include the programmes and activities which institutions intend to undertake, with measurable or verifiable targets and timescales.

As in 2004/05 we would ask institutions to pay attention in their plans to:

- demonstrating how the institution's activities will enable it to contribute to meeting the Welsh Assembly Government's aspirations and targets for widening access.

- the relationship between the institutional widening access strategy and the strategy of the *Reaching Wider* partnership of which the institution is a member (see below).
- addressing relevant race equality and *other equalities issues* as an integral part of the widening access strategy/disability provision development plan.
- provision within widening access priorities and programmes for Welsh-speaking students or Welsh-speaking communities.

Institutions may also wish to consider the implications for future planning of producing a Disability Equality Scheme by December 2006.

The Council's remit letter for 2005-06 draws attention to:

- supporting the delivery of local authorities' Community Strategies;
- engaging with relevant Community First Partnerships, where appropriate, to assist in the delivery of Community Action Plans.

We are aware that institutions are involved in a broad range of community initiatives and partnerships, including with local authorities and within Community First partnerships. However, we would be grateful if institutions could highlight in their plans, within the context of widening access, actions on their part which specifically relate to the two areas above, particularly where this involves engagements not encompassed within the Reaching Wider partnerships. These are areas where we expect to see strong linkages between widening access and third mission strategies.

The proposed use of the institution's Widening Access Fund, Widening Access Premium and Disability Premium allocations should be set out in the expenditure tables at **Annex D**.

We are aware that some institutions will already have been considering their strategies for the next three years ahead or may roll forward three-year/longer-term plans each year. You may, if you prefer, submit a full longer-term strategy. In this case, we ask you still to complete the expenditure tables in Annexes C and D.

Institutions are requested to submit their reports to Alison Allan by **30 September 2005**. Provided no issues requiring further information are identified, allocations will be released in two equal instalments in November 2005 and March 2006.

REACHING WIDER PARTNERSHIPS

The Council expects the Reaching Wider partnerships to lead to an increasingly co-ordinated and collaborative approach to widening access both within the geographical areas which the partnerships serve and across the boundaries of partnerships.

Circular W05/20HE, which provided a summary of the 2002/03 to 2004/05 widening access strategies, noted that:

On the whole institutions see their role within the *Reaching Wider* partnerships as enhancing their institutional widening access activities, with frequent references to work they are undertaking through the partnerships. . . . However, as yet, it is less clear how far the concept of the *Reaching Wider* partnership as a potential overall focus for widening access within the partnership area is permeating through individual institutions, or how far institutions would feel able to co-ordinate a broader range of complementary widening access work from their portfolio of institutional activity within the partnership framework.

In the Council's remit letter for 2005-06, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning states:

I would like you to work closely with the partnerships to improve the co-ordination of widening access initiatives across Wales and to ensure a clear alignment between institutional widening access strategies and the partnerships' strategies to bring added value.

As well as working with the partnerships as indicated above, the Council will continue to monitor through institutions' widening access strategies the extent to which the establishment of the *Reaching Wider* partnerships is influencing widening access activities within institutions more generally, particularly in ensuring coherence and complementarity between institutional strategies and *Reaching Wider* programmes, and in fostering collaborative developments.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Gummert', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PHILIP GUMMETT

NOTE: ANNEXES C & D ARE FOR INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS ONLY AND HAVE NOT BEEN INCLUDED.

WIDENING ACCESS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2005/06

Institution	Eligible Students	Total Enrolments	Eligible Enrolments as % of Institution's Total Enrolments	90% pro-rata to Eligible Students (£)	10% pro-rata to Eligible Enrolments as % of Institution's Total Enrolments (£)	Total Allocation (£)
University of Glamorgan	3,081	13,109	24	366,538	21,237	387,775
University of Wales, Aberystwyth	775	7,771	10	92,200	8,849	101,049
University of Wales, Bangor	696	6,303	11	82,801	9,734	92,535
Cardiff University	1,575	16,520	10	187,373	8,849	196,222
University of Wales, Lampeter	522	3,346	16	62,101	14,158	76,259
University of Wales Swansea	1,487	9,160	16	176,904	14,158	191,063
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	1,157	6,842	17	137,645	15,043	152,688
University of Wales, Newport	1,704	6,991	24	202,720	21,237	223,957
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education	763	4,606	17	90,772	15,043	105,815
Swansea Institute of Higher Education	821	4,487	18	97,672	15,928	113,600
Trinity College, Carmarthen	290	1,548	19	34,500	16,813	51,313
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	49	440	11	5,829	9,734	15,563
Total	12,920	81,123	193	1,537,055	170,783	1,707,839

Note: Figures may not add to totals because of rounding adjustments

ANNEX B

2005 DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

The 2005 Disability Discrimination Act strengthens existing legislation. The Act includes a new **positive duty** for public authorities (PAs), which include HEIs, to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. HEIs will need to take action to eliminate discrimination, and to go further and remove barriers to the participation of disabled people, as well as promote equality of opportunity and embrace diversity.

The **general duty** on public authorities means that, in carrying out their functions, HEIs must have due regard to:

- The need to **eliminate discrimination** that is unlawful under the Act;
- The need to **eliminate harassment** that is unlawful under the Act;
- The need to **promote equality of opportunity** between disabled persons and other persons; and
- The need to take steps to **take account** of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons **more favourably** than other persons.

The **specific duty** for public authorities means that HEIs will need to take early action to ensure they have produced a **Disability Equality Scheme** by December 2006, which will show how they intend to fulfil their duties under the Act. Doing this will include assessing the impact of institutional policies on disabled people and involving disabled people in developing the scheme. Public authorities, including HEIs, are encouraged through the legislation to become models of good practice in disability equality.