

To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales

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Response By: 23 September 2005
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OVERSEAS RESEARCH STUDENTS AWARDS SCHEME (ORSAS): REVISED ARRANGEMENTS IN WALES

- 1 As you will be aware from the joint letter of 20 June from the four UK higher education funding bodies (Circular W05/36HE), arrangements for the Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme (ORSAS) are to be revised with effect from 2006/07. This letter provides more detailed information about the operation of the revised arrangements in Wales, drawing particular attention to actions which institutions will need to take in 2005/06 in order to select their award holders for 2006/07. It also provides information about transitional arrangements which will apply in 2005/06.

REVISED ARRANGEMENTS

- 2 As already indicated, the national competition which was conducted in Spring 2005 to select the new ORSAS awardholders for the 2005/06 academic year was the last such competition. For 2006/07 onwards, institutions across the UK will be responsible for the selection of their own awardholders, against assured formula-based allocations.

Allocations

- 3 In Wales, institutions' allocations for 2006/07 will be based on the average value of the ORSAS payments which they have received over the three years 2002/03 to 2004/05, subject to provision for a minimum level of award, as described below. **These allocations will cover both new awards and renewals** (continuing awards).
- 4 All institutions which have received any ORSAS funding during the three years 2002/03 to 2004/05 will receive a minimum award equivalent to the cost of one award at that institution. This will ensure that institutions which have held only one or two awards during the qualifying period will receive a meaningful level of funding. Such institutions will be able to offer either one new one-year award annually or, in the case of three-year awards for PhD students, one new award every three years.

- 5 Indicative allocations for 2006/07 are shown at **Annex A**. There are a few cases where invoices for some students offered new or continuing awards for 2004/05 have not yet been received. In these cases, figures will be adjusted to reflect any further payments made in response to invoices submitted before the end of August 2005.
- 6 The Council will confirm the ORSAS allocations for 2006/07 in April 2006, following the announcement of the distribution of its grant-in-aid for that year. The timing of announcements of allocations in subsequent years will be similar. This will enable institutions to maintain the existing ORSAS timetable, should they so wish, in which offers of new awards are made in April or May each year.
- 7 It is envisaged that, in subsequent years, institutions' allocations will be uplifted in line with GDP, subject to the availability of resources.

Terms of Funding

- 8 The terms of the funding are unchanged, and can be summarised as follows:
 - The objective of the ORSAS scheme is to encourage high quality overseas postgraduate research students to undertake their research in the UK.
 - The funding should be used to provide awards to full-time postgraduate research students who are classified as Overseas for tuition fee purposes.
 - Awards must consist of the difference between the home tuition fee for postgraduate research students and the institution's Overseas tuition fee for the relevant subject.
 - Awards can be held for a maximum of three years.
- 9 Following the allocation of awards on the basis described above, institutions may, in some cases, be left with a balance of funding which is insufficient to support a further full award. In such cases, this balance of funding should not be used to fund a partial award, but should be carried forward for use in the following year.
- 10 ORSAS awards must be funded solely from the institution's earmarked ORSAS allocation. Awards funded from other sources should not be associated with the ORSAS name.
- 11 Award maintenance issues (such as students' leave of absence, suspensions, transfers and withdrawals) will be managed by each institution in line with the objectives of the scheme and the terms of funding listed above.

Selection of Candidates

- 12 As previously notified, institutions will be responsible for selecting their own award holders for 2006/07 and beyond. **Institutions will therefore need to take action in the 2005/06 academic year in order to select their new award holders for 2006/07.** The new arrangements should imply little additional work for institutions beyond the formalisation of the procedures which they have used in the past to select candidates for submission to the national ORSAS panels. These arrangements will also have the benefit of enabling institutions to operate on the basis of assured funding.
- 13 As in previous years, award holders should be selected solely on the basis of academic excellence, having regard to relevant equal opportunities legislation.

- 14 The details of operational arrangements will be left to institutions' discretion. However, we will provide institutions with a generic application form template which they may choose to adapt for their own use.
- 15 Following completion of their selection procedures, institutions will be expected to notify all successful and unsuccessful applicants of the outcomes.

Renewals

- 16 As noted above, institutions' formula-based allocations will cover both new and continuing awards. Before allocating new awards for 2006/07 (and subsequent years) institutions should therefore first establish how many of their existing awards will require renewal, as this will determine how much of their allocation is available for new awards.
- 17 This is equivalent to the provision which applied under the previous arrangements, whereby institutions were required to provide the ORSAS office at UUK with information about planned renewals in Spring each year.

Publicity

- 18 Institutions will be expected to continue to refer to the availability of ORSAS awards in their postgraduate prospectus and other relevant promotional material. Additionally, the UK higher education funding bodies are developing a website which will provide information about ORSAS in order to maintain the visibility of the scheme at the UK level. The website address is www.orsas.ac.uk.

Payment Arrangements

- 19 HEFCW will pay institutions' formula-based allocations in full in October each year, commencing in October 2006.
- 20 It will no longer be necessary for institutions to issue invoices to secure the payment of their awards.

Monitoring Arrangements

- 21 Institutions will be asked to provide HEFCW annually with a list of their ORSAS award holders - new and continuing – and the value of awards paid. This information will be collected retrospectively in July each year, commencing in July 2007 with the list for 2006/07.

TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Payment of Outstanding Awards for 2004/05

- 22 The ORSAS office, based at Universities UK, which has been responsible for processing institutions' invoices for ORSAS payments, will close on 31 August 2005, having processed all invoices submitted for 2004/05 awards. From that point, any questions relating to the policy and funding of the scheme in Wales should be addressed to HEFCW.

Payment for 2005/06

- 23 2005/06 will be a transitional year: the formula-based allocation arrangements described in paragraphs 3-7 above will not yet have come into effect, but the ORSAS office will have closed. In that year, HEFCW will make a payment to institutions in October 2005 which will consist of 85% of the value of the new awards offered to successful candidates in the 2005 competition and 100% of the value of the renewals for 2005/06 which institutions have already notified to the ORSAS office. (The figure of 85% for the initial payment for new awards reflects the fact that, normally, a proportion of the awards offered through the competition are not taken up.)
- 24 In July 2006, HEFCW will ask institutions to confirm the value of new and continuing awards actually taken up during 2005/06, and will then generate a single adjustment payment or reclaim funding as applicable.
- 25 From 2006/07 onwards, the formula-based payment arrangements described above will come into effect.

REVIEW

- 26 The revised arrangements have been approved for three years in the first instance, from 2006/07 to 2008/09 inclusive, and will be subject to review in 2007/08. Assuming continuation of the scheme beyond 2008/09, HEFCW may modify its allocation formula at that point to take account of changes in institutions' shares of PGR funding and overseas student numbers.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTACTS

- 27 Institutions eligible to receive formula allocations for ORSAS in 2006/07, as listed at Annex A, are asked to provide the Council with the name and contact details of an ORSAS co-ordinator, to whom any further information can be sent.
- 28 As indicated in paragraph 18, the funding bodies are developing an ORSAS website. We would like to include a generic email contact address for each eligible HEI to which applicants can direct any queries about ORSAS, including requests for information about application procedures. We do not propose to list any personal email addresses or telephone numbers on the website.
- 29 Eligible institutions are asked to forward the following information to Emma Morris (emma.morris@hefcw.ac.uk) by **Friday, 23 September 2005**:
- contact details for the ORSAS co-ordinator (for use by HEFCW only)
 - if possible, a generic email address for ORSAS queries (for inclusion on the new ORSAS website)

Yours sincerely



PHILIP GUMMETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

OVERSEAS RESEARCH STUDENTS AWARDS SCHEME

INDICATIVE FORMULA ALLOCATIONS

INSTITUTION	ORSAS FUNDING				INDICATIVE ALLOCATIONS 2006/07
	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	AVERAGE 02/03 – 04/05	
	£	£	£	£	£
University of Glamorgan	5,455	0	0	1,818	6,220
University of Wales, Aberystwyth	41,720	48,750	43,650	44,707	44,707
University of Wales, Bangor	12,630	17,480	24,860	18,323	18,323
Cardiff University (inc former UWCM)	193,570	198,410	235,473	209,151	209,151
University of Wales, Lampeter	7,260	7,120	0	4,793	4,793
University of Wales Swansea	60,761	72,540	72,790	68,697	68,697
North East Wales Institute	0	4,200	4,320	2,840	4,320
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	0	3,643	0	1,214	3,723
TOTAL	321,396	351,843	381,093	351,543	359,934

NOTES:

- i) ORSAS Funding = the amounts actually paid by HEFCW to institutions for the year in question. It excludes any awards which were not taken up.
- ii) Three institutions qualify for funding at the level equivalent to one award at that institution – University of Glamorgan, NEWI and RWCMD. These institutions will be asked, in due course, to confirm the level of their home and overseas fees so that the Council can check that their awards have been set at the appropriate level.