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Cylchlythyr

Circular

Establishment of a ceiling in full-time undergraduate student numbers from 2011/12

Date: 24 March 2010
Reference: W10/11HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Response by: No response required
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This circular provides information to the sector of proposed discussions for establishing a ceiling on full-time undergraduate student numbers for 2011/12.

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Introduction

1. This circular provides information to the sector of the intention to establish a ceiling on full-time undergraduate student numbers for 2011/12, following the 2010-11 Remit Letter request that HEFCW should take the necessary measures to ensure that institutions minimise the recruitment of students beyond agreed numbers.

Background

2. Institutions will be aware that discussion into establishing a ceiling on full-time UG student numbers was first heralded in the 2005/06 institutions' *Financial Memorandum part 2: Annual schedule for the financial period 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006* which outlined the funding and associated funded numbers for the academic year 2005/2006.
3. These documents alerted institutions that the demand led nature of the student finance budget could well result in financial implications for the Assembly budget arising from recruitment of full-time students over and above HEFCW funded places. At this point the Assembly Government was anxious to explore how there may be movement towards an agreed mechanism by which there may be collective management of the risks, and asked HEFCW to discuss the issue with HEW and to prepare advice on the matter. In advance of any conclusions being reached, institutions were asked to bear these developments in mind when recruiting students and act with appropriate prudence
4. Conclusion of these initial discussions resulted in the publication of Circular W06/26HE (Annex A) which informed the sector that although there should be no separate ceiling on recruitment for FT UG students, there was an expectation that institutions would continue to act prudently in respect of future recruitment patterns.
5. This expectation of prudence has been reiterated, annually, in the institutions' *Financial Memorandum part 2* and in the Recurrent Grant circular.

“Ministers decided that HEFCW should continue to exercise control through the number of funded students in the system but that there should be no separate ceiling on recruitment of full-time undergraduate students. W06/26HE made clear, however, that this stance was predicated on institutions not seeking to expand full-time undergraduate numbers in excess of the normal broad growth trajectory for the sector. This expectation is re-iterated here. This is a matter which we will keep closely under review and, depending on the numbers of students recruited this autumn, action may need to be taken for subsequent years.”

6. Where institutions appear to be acting imprudently on their recruitment, or in their forecasting, we have included this in our feedback on the strategic plans.

Remit Letter 2010-11

7. From 2010-11 HEFCW has been remitted to take the necessary measures to ensure that institutions minimise the recruitment of students beyond agreed numbers which means that we are now revisiting the decision taken in 2006, not to impose a ceiling on full-time undergraduate recruitment. We will be now in discussions with Welsh Assembly Government officials to determine a suitable mechanism to apply from 2011/12, along with possible actions to take in respect of entry for 2010.
8. At the point that these discussions result in a proposed mechanism to operate the ceiling (in terms of the baseline information to be used, the level of tolerance that will be applied and the level of penalty) we intend to consult the sector and seek views on the recommendations.

Further information

9. For further information, contact Leanne Holborn (tel 029 2068 2259; email leanne.holborn@hefcw.ac.uk).