

Cylchlythyr

Circular

Widening Access to Higher Education Allocations 2010/11 and Related Information

Date: 30 July 2010
Reference: W10/30HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in
Wales
Response by: No response required
Contact: Name: Jane Johns
Telephone: 029 2068 2219
Email: jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk

This circular provides information on institutions' widening access strategy development in the context of *For our Future: the 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales*. It sets out the 2010/11 allocations to be made to institutions to support their implementation of widening access strategies and it offers some brief guidance on our expectations for reporting progress and expenditure through the annual monitoring process.

This document is available online, in large print, Braille, on CD and on audio CD and cassette. Should you or someone you know require this in an alternative format, please contact us on (029) 2068 2225 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



Introduction

1. This circular:
 - a. provides some information on institutions' widening access strategy developments in the context of *For our Future* implementation;
 - b. sets out the 2010/11 allocations to be made to institutions to support their implementation of widening access strategies;
 - c. offers brief guidance on our expectations for reporting progress and expenditure through the annual monitoring process.

Background

2. Institutions submitted to us their widening access (WA) strategies for the period 2006 to 2009 and, normally, new strategies would have been invited from 2009/10. However, in circular W08/22HE, we set out the reasons why we considered it advisable to defer the submission of new three-year widening access strategies.

The Policy Context

3. At the time of writing, our widening access and Reaching Wider initiative planning is taking place as part of our broader implementation of *For our Future, the 21st Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Higher Education* (November 2009). In this strategy period we are required to renew our approach to widening access.
4. Our Corporate Strategy (2010-11 to 2012-13) recognises that widening access policy, which includes the Reaching Wider initiative, is one of our five strategic themes and defines the aim of widening access as to '*ensure equity, opportunity and success in higher education*'.
5. The Corporate Strategy sets out our widening access targets. The primary target for widening access continues to be focused on Communities First (CF) areas. It measures improved access and progression for people in locations where such opportunities are low, including the Heads of the Valleys, and it is a proxy measure of social class. The new Communities First target is ambitious and it seeks:

A 10% rise in the proportion of all Welsh domiciled students studying higher education courses at higher education institutions and further education institutions in Wales who are domiciled in the Welsh Communities First Areas from 15.6% in 2008/09 to 17.2% in 2012/13.

6. The Communities First measure provides some continuity for planning and delivery, given that these areas have been the focus of our widening access work since 2002. The CF measure also continues to provide a Wales-specific focus to our work, while complementing other UK-wide performance

indicator data. However, the new Communities First measure has been developed as follows:

- a. it now focuses on all the CF areas, rather than the previous 100 most deprived wards;
 - b. it takes account of all students, including postgraduates, rather than just new first year entrants, giving a better measure of HEIs work in both the recruitment and retention of Communities First learners;
 - c. it retains a focus on the proportion of students, rather than absolute student numbers, as we wish to ensure the overall percentage of widening access students does not fall, particularly given funding and capping limitations.
7. The second widening access measure focuses on the number of students successfully completing their learning objectives. This measure recognises the importance of widening access to and through higher education and improving learning success. This measure seeks:

A 2.7% rise in the module completion rate for undergraduate enrolments in Welsh higher education institutions from 87.6% in 2008/09 to 90% in 2012/13.

8. The measurement of module completion, rather than non-continuation which is the UK performance indicator, recognises (i) the use of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and (ii) HEFCW's funding by credit. This enables Welsh HEIs to offer flexible, modular provision which allows students to move in and out of learning, according to their learning needs and lifestyle. The measure takes account of both full- and part-time undergraduates. We believe that, in focusing on the learning success of all students, institutions will improve module completion rates for widening access students.
9. In addition to these measures, we will also continue to monitor the sector's performance against other widening access indicators, including the recruitment and retention of disabled students, minority ethnic students, care leavers, and students' age, gender and class profiles, in addition to other relevant UK performance indicators.
10. The development and delivery of widening access beyond 2010 will need to take account of the *For our Future* expectations in relation to developing a regional dimension to the planning and delivery of HE. Therefore, it will be helpful to take account of circular W10/16HE in this context.

Widening Access Allocations 2010/11

11. Turning to widening access allocations, we publish annually:
- a. Institutions' Widening Access Strategy allocations;
 - b. Widening Access Premium allocations and funding for students with non-traditional qualifications; and

c. The Disabled Students Premium.

12. The sum available for Widening Access Strategy allocations in the academic year August 2010 to July 2011 is **£2,016,595**. However, we would emphasise that this sum is provisional. We draw this to your attention because until our 2011-12 financial year settlement is confirmed (covering the period April 2011 to March 2012) we do not know the resource available to us to fund the academic year allocation between April 2011 and July 2011. It is possible that some in year revision may be required.
13. Institutions' allocations for 2010/11 are set out in **Annex A**. The total allocation is greater than the 2009/10 allocation (£1,866,597) for two reasons:
 - a. in 2010/11 it includes, for the first time, an Open University in Wales allocation;
 - b. the allocation for students recruited from a low affluence background and/or from Communities First areas has been increased from £215 per student to £285 per student.
14. This per student increase is the result of Council agreeing an additional £2m to increase the widening access premium in line with *For our Future* widening access priorities. This £2m has been used to (i) maintain the disabled students premium at £220 per student and (ii) to increase funding to support students from low affluence backgrounds/Communities First areas.
15. As in previous years, we will make Widening Access Strategy allocations in two equal instalments in **November 2010** and **March 2011**. We will release the March 2011 payment subject to the receipt of satisfactory annual monitoring statements in November 2010 and available funding.

Additional Guidance

16. In reviewing existing strategies to develop plans and targets for 2010/11 we anticipate issuing guidance for new widening access strategies in April 2011.
17. The key priorities of *For our Future* are contributing to social justice and a buoyant economy. To steer our widening access policy developments in this period we have focused on three of the *For our Future* priorities (references in brackets below):
 - maximising participation through different ways to experience higher education, including part-time study (paragraphs 4 and 5);
 - addressing inconsistencies in access and opportunity (paragraphs 6 to 8); and
 - renewing our approach to widening access to HE (paragraph 54);
18. In developing widening access during 2010/11 we recommend that institutions take account of these *For our Future* widening access priorities.

19. Furthermore, we *strongly* encourage institutions to consider how they evidence the impact of their widening access work. Evidence of impacts will need to be robust, longitudinal and contain both quantitative and qualitative data. Evidencing the impact of widening access will be a further indicator of institutions' success in contributing to social justice. Moreover, in the current economic climate, where all budget lines are provisional and subject to change in year, robust evidence of impact will contribute to the case for retaining and, where possible, increasing this funding stream.

2010/11 Annual Monitoring Statement and Target Setting Guidance

20. The widening access AMS templates were circulated electronically to institutions on **9 July 2010**. The templates contain the 2009/10 targets, which institutions set themselves previously. Institutions are requested to report their performance against the 2009/10 targets submitted to us in November 2009 and to set ambitious, but realistic targets for 2010/11, taking account of new directions of travel indicated by *For our Future* and our Corporate Strategy.
21. In reflecting on previous AMS widening access target-setting and reporting, we strongly encourage institutions to focus more on identifying the **strategic outcomes** they intend to achieve rather than on lower-level delivery outputs. To achieve this, institutions should set approximately **three to four high-level, measurable targets** under each, prescribed heading (pre-entry, entry, continuing and outreach) where relevant. As well as enabling officers to make realistic comparisons between institutions' reports, it will also allow institutions to demonstrate more clearly the strategic intentions of their widening access work. In the 2009 AMS submissions not all targets were measurable nor did they contribute to clarifying the strategic direction of travel.
22. For some institutions, identifying meaningful strategic outcomes in 2010/11, as noted above, will require a step change. We appreciate that limiting the number of targets will mean that institutions do not report progress on all widening access activities. However, we welcome institutions informing us, separately and on an ad hoc basis, about widening access project developments, new web links, forthcoming press releases, etc, in addition to the AMS reporting.
23. 2010/11 targets should:
- reflect institutions' key strategic widening access priorities for the period;
 - specifically focus on significant new developments;
 - identify plans to support alignment with regional Reaching Wider Partnerships and the regional dimension developments; and
 - focus on developments which respond to *For our Future* expectations outlined above.

24. Widening access strategies include support for disabled students for which we pay the Disabled Students Premium. In 2009/10, AMS reporting varied in the extent to which institutions set targets and reported progress against this element. In 2010/11 target setting and reporting we require a clear indication of institutions' strategic intentions in this area.
25. Some widening access strategies (2006 to 2009) included a section on retention and several Welsh HEIs are currently participating in the Higher Education Academy's national retention programme *What Works?* (see www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/teachingandlearning/inclusion/retention for more information).
26. Those institutions that did not include references to retention should set at least one target which indicates how their retention-related work will be developed and progress measured in 2010/11. This will begin to articulate the relationship between widening access and student retention, achievement and success, and to take account of the *For our Future* expectation that there is:

'a stronger focus on helping those who access higher education to successfully complete their learning objectives'. (p. 15, para 54)
27. All institutions should include a target that demonstrates their ongoing commitment to retaining the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education.
28. In setting targets, institutions should take account of widening access-related guidance in HEFCW's 2010-11 remit letter particularly, but not exclusively, paragraph 8 and 12. The remit letter is published on our website at www.hefcw.gov.uk/publications/corporate_documents

Annual Monitoring Statements Returns

29. Our May 2010 Annual Monitoring Statements circular (W010/14HE) notes that institutions should submit the following in the autumn:
 - **one** hard copy of all AMS reports to be collated by each institution and sent to the HEFCW office;
 - **one** electronic version of all AMS to be emailed to: AMS@hefcw.ac.uk.

Further information / responses to

30. For further information, contact Jane Johns (tel 029 2068 2219; email jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk).

Widening Access Strategy Allocations 2010/11

Institution	Eligible Students	Total Students	Eligible Students as % of Total Students	90% pro-rata to Eligible Students £	10% pro rata to % of Eligible Students to Total Students £	Total £
University of Glamorgan	3,875	15,603	24.8	428,834	25,421	454,255
Aberystwyth University	824	7,815	10.5	91,189	10,792	101,981
Bangor University	851	6,490	13.1	94,177	13,422	107,599
Cardiff University	1,917	18,375	10.4	212,148	10,679	222,827
University of Wales, Trinity St David	820	4,631	17.7	90,747	18,124	108,871
Swansea University	1,608	9,681	16.6	177,952	17,002	194,954
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	1,252	7,072	17.7	138,555	18,121	156,676
University of Wales, Newport	1,907	7,069	27.0	211,042	27,613	238,655
Glyndŵr University	827	5,090	16.2	91,521	16,631	108,152
Swansea Metropolitan University	918	4,459	20.6	101,592	21,073	122,665
The Open University in Wales	1,601	7,193	22.3	177,178	22,783	199,960
Total	16,400	93,478	197.0	1,814,935	201,661	2,016,595

* Totals may not sum due to rounding