

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

Reference: WO4/55HE  
Date: 27 September 2004  
Response By: 29 October 2004  
Further Information: Alison Allan

### **WIDENING ACCESS STRATEGIES 2004/05 (INCLUDING DISABILITY PROVISION DEVELOPMENT PLANS)**

I wrote in July informing you of institutional allocations under the Widening Access Fund for 2004/05, and that we would shortly be requesting a progress reports on 2003/04 activity and implementation plans for widening access strategies and plans for provision for disabled students for 2004/05. We also informed you that we would require a reply by the end of October.

The July letter noted that as premium funding for disabled students would account for all but £3,000 of the £500,000 the Council invests in disability support through recurrent funds, the Disability Provision Development Fund would not operate in 2004/05. However, institutions are still expected to provide a disability provision development plan, either integrated within the overall widening access strategy or as a separate attachment to the strategy. The plan should include the use of the premium funding for disabled students, as well as activities being supported from other institutional resources.

Details of the reporting requirements which will provide a basis for releasing allocations from the Widening Access Fund for 2004/05 are given below. (See Annex A for allocations.)

#### **PROGRESS REPORTS 2003/04**

A full account should be given of progress against the Widening Access Strategy/Disability Provision Development Plan for 2003/04, 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 2003/04, institutions were specifically asked to:

- 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.

Institutions should therefore ensure that progress on these two 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, Disability Premium and Disability Provision Development Fund allocations for 2003/04 were used. This should be set out in the expenditure tables at **Annex B**. Significant in-year changes in plans/use of funding should be noted and explained.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PLANS 2004/05**

These should include the programmes and activities which institutions intend to undertake within their widening access strategies/disability provision development plans during 2004/05, with measurable or verifiable targets and timescales. The plan should demonstrate how the institution's activities will enable it to contribute to meeting the Welsh Assembly Government's aspirations and targets for widening access. The plan should also demonstrate the relationship between the institutional widening access strategy and the strategy of the *Reaching Wider* partnership of which the institution is a member. As in 2003/04, institutions should continue to include actions to address race equality issues as an integral part of the widening access strategy. The institution should consider, whether within its widening access priorities and programmes, the strategy makes provision for Welsh-speaking students or Welsh-speaking communities.

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 C**.

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 B and C.

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, including, in some cases, across the whole of Wales. The Council's February 2004 remit letter noted that the Minister was keen to see "a holistic approach to widening access". The Council will therefore continue to monitor 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.

Institutions are requested to submit their reports to Alison Allan by **29 October 2004**. Provided no issues requiring further information are identified, allocations will be released in two equal instalments in December 2004 and March or April 2005.

2004/05 is the final year of the three-year plan cycle for widening access strategies from 2002/03 to 2004/05. When we receive institutions' reports in October, we will prepare a sector summary looking at activities and developments over this period, which will help inform the preparation of strategies over the next period. We plan to issue the summary in January 2005. When we consider the arrangements for the new cycle commencing in 2005/06, we expect to incorporate widening access strategies into the annual monitoring statement.

Yours sincerely

**PHILIP GUMMETT**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**