WIDENING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIES 2006/2009

13 July 2006   **Ref: W06/27HE**

To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales;
Principals of directly funded further education colleges

Summary: This circular invites institutions to submit to the Council Widening Access Progress Reports and Disability Development Plans for 2005/06 and new Widening Access Strategies, including Disability Development Plans for 2006/09.

Response by: 10 November 2006

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INTRODUCTION

1. This circular invites institutions to submit:
    i.   New triennial Widening Access Strategies for the period 2006/07 to 2008/09. Institutions are asked to include, either as part of their strategies, or separately, plans to support students with disabilities.

    ii. Progress reports on the utilisation of their 2005/06:
        °   Widening Access Strategy Funding
        °   Widening Access Premium Funding including
            Communities First Premium funding and
            Students with non-Traditional Qualifications Funding
        °   Disabled Students Premium Funding
        These reports represent the final year's work undertaken for the strategy period: 2002/03 to 2005/06.

2. **Annex A** provides details of 2006/07 institutional allocations for:
    °   Widening Access Strategy Funding
    °   Widening Access Premium Funding including
        Communities First Premium Funding
        Students with non-Traditional Qualifications Funding and
    °   Disabled Students Premium Funding

3. A summary of responses to HEFCW's race and other equalities impact assessment within the widening access policy area is attached as **Annex B.**

4. Institutions are *not* requested to report progress against the allocation announced through circular W06/08HE (£750k in total to support the development of a widening access articulation agreement with Reaching Wider regional Partnerships, and other priorities). This funding should be spent by the end of July 2007. Reports on this allocation will be requested in 2006/07. However, institutions may note that articulation agreements have been requested by **21 July 2006**.

BACKGROUND TO THE REQUEST FOR STRATEGIES

5. We require institutions to submit widening access strategies on a triennial basis, with annual progress reports. This is to enable us to understand institutions' strategic direction and performance and to check that institutions are making adequate contributions, individually and collectively, towards the widening access targets outlined in the Assembly's *Reaching Higher* strategy to 2010/2011. The strategies are also important documents to inform strategic dialogue between institutions and ourselves.

6. A number of key policy developments have influenced widening access activities and strategies since the submission of the current three year institutional strategies (2002/03 to 2004/05), and the one year planned extension (2005/06). Institutions will be aware of these policy developments, outlined in **Annex C,** and their impact on widening access strategy development.

TIMEFRAME

7. **New strategies will be expected to look ahead at least to the end of 2008/09 and to plan in detail for 2006/07.** Each institution will be asked to roll the plans forward a year, through the new annual monitoring statement (AMS) accounting for progress against the previous year's targets and for expenditure. The new AMS reporting format will require robust, initial target-setting and financial planning, but 'lighter touch' annual reporting against the agreed targets and allocations.

INSTITUTIONS' MISSIONS WITHIN THE WIDER POLICY CONTEXT

8. We are aware that institutions' strategies will also reflect their own missions and circumstances. Institutions will, therefore, want to determine their contribution towards achieving the overall

goals of widening access to higher education for under-represented people in Wales. Elements of this work might include:

°   Educational aspiration-raising activities
°   Developing skills and confidence to increase students' potential to success in higher education
°   Developing policies and support for looked after children and care leavers.
°   Providing progression routes to and through higher education
°   Fair admissions and retention policies.

9.   Collaborative work with Reaching Wider regional Partnerships and other stakeholders could increase the impact of widening access provision, particularly in Communities First and other targeted areas. Similarly, some institutions may be considering further how their widening access provision might relate to the Assembly's broader vision for the sector's reconfiguration and collaboration, with its emphasis on networks of excellence.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

10.   Widening access work with students with disabilities provides equality of opportunity for those who have the potential to benefit from it. For this reason we are continuing to request that institutions submit their Disability Development Plans with their widening access strategies. Institutions may decide whether they wish to integrate the Disability Plans within the Widening Access Strategies or keep them separate. Whichever approach is adopted, we would welcome evidence of coherent relationships between work with students with disabilities and other widening access groups. Institutions will want their work in this area also to assist them in meeting their responsibilities under disability legislation, including the development of a Disability Equality Scheme.

11.   We expect that institutions will want to clearly identify, with their strategies, specific activities relating to students with disabilities, together with appropriate arrangements for their planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RACE

12.   As noted in the previous strategy guidance, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 specifies that public authorities, including both HEFCW and HEIs are bound by the Act's general and specific duties. HEIs are required to prepare and maintain a written race equality policy.

13.   Work with black and other ethnic minority communities is a priority identified in the *Reaching Higher* widening access targets. Moreover, institutions will want to ensure that particular challenges faced by black and other ethnic minority groups are appropriately supported through their widening access strategies. Therefore, we would expect to see activities targeted at under-represented black and other ethnic minority groups within widening access and other strategies. Joint work with regional Reaching Wider Partnerships to meet the needs of these groups, plus collaboration with individuals, groups and organisations are likely to be essential features of such strategies

14.   Circular W06/08HE suggested that, in 2005/06, institutions might wish to use part of the allocation released through this circular to further develop race and other equalities policies and targeted actions in relation to widening access. Institutions will also want to ensure that their work in these areas is linked to their institutional race equality policies and action plans.

WELSH LANGUAGE AND WELSH MEDIUM ACTIVITY

15.   In their widening access activities, institutions will want to take account of the needs of Welsh speakers, Welsh learners and Welsh speaking communities. This can include education aspiration-raising and confidence building activities to enhance access to higher education, including Welsh medium education. Increasingly, in developing and implementing their widening access strategies, institutions should be looking to mainstream Welsh language

activity and make the links with institutional Welsh medium strategies and Welsh language schemes.

STUDENT RETENTION

16.   We welcome the fact that most institutions already include student retention issues within their widening access strategies. We are sure that all institutions will want to do the same; thus positively responding to the Assembly's *Reaching Higher* strategy statement that *'Widening access to those who were traditionally under represented in higher education brings new challenges for student retention.'*

17.   Where measures are taken to improve retention, particularly with traditionally 'hard to retain' groups, we would wish to see clear targets for their implementation and monitoring. Where institutions plan further student retention work this should also be set out in the strategy, together with planned timescales and measurable targets for delivery.

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND FUNDING

18.   We look to institutions to underpin their strategies with robust financial planning. For example, plans should identify a range of funding sources and specify how each source will be used to fulfil specific aspects of the strategy. The funding identified should include the following:
   °   HEFCW Widening Access Funding
   °   Widening Access Premium Funding including
        Communities First Premium and
        Students with non-Traditional Qualifications Funding
   °   Disabled Students Premium Funding
   °   The part-time fee waiver-waiver scheme, together with
   °   Any contributions from an institution's fee plans, its own resources and from
   °   External funding or sponsorship.

19.   Within institutions' widening access strategies we anticipate an increase in Council funded activities being focused on the *Reaching Higher* widening access target groups.

20.   **The Widening Access Premium Funding, including the Communities First Premium and the Funding for Students with non-Traditional Qualifications** is intended to recognise the extra costs incurred in recruiting, supporting and retaining students of all ages from backgrounds without a tradition of HE. Therefore, premium funding might be directed at, for example, targeted admissions arrangements, targeted recruitment campaigns and appropriate support and counselling services.

21.   **The Widening Access Strategy Allocations** are calculated on the basis of the number of 'low affluence' postcode student enrolments, in each institution, which are eligible for the Widening Access Premium. Ninety per cent of the available funding is allocated pro-rata to an institution's 'low affluence' student enrolments and ten per cent pro-rata to the percentage of the institutions' total eligible enrolments which the 'low affluence' enrolments represent. Where an institution's allocation would fall below £15,000, using this formula, a minimum allocation of £15,000 is made. The total sum available for 2006/07 is £1,742,852.

22.   This funding is intended to support pre-entry programmes which raise educational aspirations and skills and increase participation in higher education from under-represented groups. Activities undertaken will reflect each institution's mission, but might include, for example: the development and delivery of community teaching programmes, particularly non-award bearing courses. Institutions may wish to extend existing schemes and activities for people of all ages in school, college or the community and/or work collaboratively with their regional Reaching Wider Partnership to add value to its provision.

23.   There will continue to be no clear boundary between the two funding streams. However, within the context of institutions' own missions and priorities we would expect to see an appropriate balance between 'Premium' and 'Widening Access' type activities.

24. **Premium Funding for Students with Disabilities** is based on the number of students at each institution in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance. The total sum available for 2006/07 is £602,800.

TARGETS

25. Specific and measurable short- and long-term targets are essential for measuring progress towards, and the achievement of, strategy aims. Targets should, therefore, include both short- and longer-term targets. Short-term targets might include, for example: numbers of targeted pre-entry activities offered, numbers of participants enrolled, numbers progressing from widening access activities, the provision of additional facilities or support for students with disabilities, anticipated timescales and outcomes for named projects. Longer-term targets and measures, both qualitative and quantitative, should indicate how institutions expect their activities to make progress towards the *Reaching Higher* widening access targets and their own widening access mission aims during the strategy period (2006/07 to 2008/9).

MONITORING

26. From 2006/07 progress reports will be requested using the annual monitoring statement format. Institutions will find this reporting format lighter in touch. However, it will mean that institutions are expected to provide challenging and robust targets for the strategy period which we will agree with institutions and monitor progress against. A copy of the annual monitoring format is attached as **Annex D.**

27. Further guidance on the key framework elements which we would expect to see in a Widening Access Strategy is attached as **Annex E.** However, if the strategy is to be a relevant, working document, it must be tailored institutions' own missions. Institutions are, therefore, welcome to add to the framework individualising it as appropriate.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

28. Prior to the submission of the new widening access strategies, HEFCW officers will endeavour to meet with appropriate widening access staff in each institution to discuss any issues arising from their strategy planning. In addition, HEFCW's new Disability and Diversity Coordinator, Ms Vicki Burge, will be available, from July 2006 to work with institutions to provide advice on how to apply strategically HEFCW's Disability Premium Funding, within the context of developing institutional Disability Equality Schemes.

29. Institutions are requested to submit **three copies** of their strategies (one of which should be unbound) plus an electronic copy by **Friday 10 November 2006.**

30. Strategies should be submitted to Emma King, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Linden Court, The Orchards, Ilex Close, Llanishen, Cardiff, CF14 5DZ, email: Emma.King@hefcw.ac.uk. Allocations will be made in two equal instalments in September 2006 and March 2007.

31. Strategies are invited by November 2006, but first tranche payments will be made in September 2006. As mentioned in the background to this strategy request (**paragraph 5**), strategy information enables us to assess activity in the sector and demonstrate accountability for the use of public funds. Therefore, a strategy which does not provide a sufficient basis for the Council to make these assessments may result in 2006/07 allocations from the Widening Access Fund and Disability Provision Development Fund being withheld until further information is provided. We, therefore, reserve the right to claw back funding from the second tranche payment should strategies not be satisfactory or AMS targets not be agreed.

ANNEXES 5

ANNEX A	Details of 2006/07 institutional allocations for: ° Widening Access Strategy Funding ° Widening Access Premium Funding including the Communities First Premium and Students with non-Traditional Qualifications Funding ° Disabled Students Premium Funding
ANNEX B	A summary of responses to HEFCW's race and other equalities impact assessment
ANNEX C	An outline of policy areas which impact on widening access strategy developments.
ANNEX D	The annual monitoring format (AMS) to be used for monitoring progress against targets and for expenditure from 2006/07.
ANNEX E	Guidance on submitting: The 2006/09 widening access strategy including: ° The 2006/09 Disability Development Plan for work ° 2006/07 implementation plans for Widening Access and Disability Premium Funding ° The 2005/06 widening access progress and expenditure reports ° The 2005/06 Disabled Students Premium progress and expenditure reports
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
A copy of the *Going To University to Care* recommendations for HEIs published by the Frank Buttle Trust.	

WIDENING ACCESS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2006/07

Institution	Low Affluence Postcode Students	Eligible Enrolments	Low Affluence Postcode Enrolments as % of Institution's Eligible Enrolments	90% pro-rata to low affluence Postcode Students (£)	10% pro-rata to low affluence Postcode Enrolments as % of Institution's Eligible Enrolments (£)	Total Allocation (£)
University of Glamorgan	3,532	14,042	25	400,562	22,230	422,793
University of Wales, Aberystwyth	803	7,924	10	91,068	8,892	99,960
University of Wales, Bangor	688	6,137	11	78,026	9,781	87,807
Cardiff University	1,750	17,972	10	198,467	8,892	207,359
University of Wales, Lampeter	457	2,889	16	51,828	14,227	66,056
University of Wales Swansea	1,635	9,560	17	185,425	15,117	191,063
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	1,092	6,686	16	123,843	14,227	138,070
University of Wales, Newport	1,780	7,026	25	201,869	22,230	224,099
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education	924	4,998	18	104,790	16,006	120,796
Swansea Institute of Higher Education	825	4,400	19	93,563	16,895	110,458
Trinity College, Carmarthen	287	1,710	17	32,549	15,117	47,665
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	58	494	12	6,578	10,671	17,248
Total	13,831	83,838	196	1,568,568	174,285	1,742,852

RACE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK

INTRODUCTION

1   This paper presents a summary of responses to HEFCW's consultation on its race equality impact assessment (W06/05HE).

BACKGROUND

2   Within the arrangements for its Race Equality Scheme, HEFCW undertook a race equality impact assessment in the widening access policy area. The purpose of the impact assessment was to explore issues related to increasing the number of under- represented students from black and other ethnic minority (BME) communities entering higher education in Wales, including: entry barriers, retention, academic achievement and graduate employment.

3   HEFCW undertook a quantitative analysis of monitoring information and invited the sector, in circular W06/05HE, to consult with their equal opportunities or other committees where possible, to provide additional, qualitative responses to issues of access and retention facing black and other ethnic minority groups in higher education in Wales. The outcomes of the assessment would be used to inform the guidance on new Widening Access Strategies (2006/07 to 2008/09).

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO THE RACE EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (W06/05HE)

4   Ten responses were received from higher education institutions in Wales. The questions in the circular, which offered a framework for responses, are attached. Responses identified some potential barriers to HE for BME groups. However, they cautioned against making generalisations or assuming that the barriers were the same in all cases, or existed at all for some students. One response suggested a disaggregation of home and overseas students' statistical data to enable more effective tracking and monitoring of UK resident BME students.

5   Responses drew attention to the following issues:

BARRIERS PREVENTING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION BY CERTAIN ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS

6   Most responses noted that many black and other ethnic minority families lived in deprived communities. A multitude of deprivation factors, including under-performing schools and the limited access to computers, internet and new technologies were considered likely to impact on the participation and academic attainment of pupils and their families in these communities.

7   English as a second language was also identified as a barrier for some BME groups. It was suggested that language and cultural barriers might affect BME students' HE interview performance, as well as affecting school and university achievement. Moreover, if BME students' families were not proficient English language users, their ability to support their children could be limited. Suggestions to overcome language barriers included providing application information in languages other than English or Welsh to enable BME families to access the information directly. Accessible HE information for BME families could also highlight the benefits of higher education to address issues of the real and perceived opportunity costs of remaining in full time education.

8   Many responses noted cultural and religious factors as potential barriers to entry to higher education. It was suggested that some BME groups might not perceive higher education as an option for their community. This attitude could be exacerbated by a lack of role models both within the student body and the teaching staff. Religious beliefs were also identified as a potential barrier with issues surrounding diet, respecting religious

festivals and fasting, and access to spaces for religious observance being both available and appropriate.

SUBJECT BIAS IN ETHNIC MINORITY APPLICATIONS, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

9   One response quoted evidence from national studies such as Connor et al. (2004) which identified a BME subject bias towards computer studies, law, medicine, business studies, engineering and mathematical courses; HEFCW's own data concurs with this evidence. Below average representation by BME groups was found in education and humanities subject areas. Welsh HEI responses to the race equality impact assessment tended to also reflect this bias, though explanations for this bias were limited. Some institutions suggested that the subject bias may be due to perceived employment opportunities on graduation, or certain subjects being more highly valued by some communities.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH HIGHER EDUCATION IS ACCESSED DIFFERENTLY BY DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS

10   Few responses were made on this issue. Some noted that that their institution had a statistically unviable BME sample group and were thus unable to comment. Therefore, responses in this section were from three institutions. One respondent suggested that in some cases black and other ethnic minority students, like many other students from low-income families, were not in a position to achieve the academic requirements of certain degree schemes as they tended to work longer hours in low-paid work or family businesses. It was also suggested that black and other ethnic minority students (and other students under-represented in HE) would be deterred from applying to HE from fear of debt and low expectations from graduate employment.

11   It was suggested that some BME communities tended to be concentrated in large urban areas and that, therefore, it should be expected that there would be concentrations of BME students in urban HEIs. A further suggestion was that some BME students might not be achieving their full academic potential and, therefore, they apply to institutions offering lower entry criteria, rather than accessing all HEIs equally. It was suggested that class and cultural issues within ethnic groups needed to be taken into consideration before clear explanations for patterns of access to HE could be provided.

GENDER AND MULTIPLE IDENTITY FACTORS WITHIN CULTURAL GROUPS

12   Most respondents agreed that some barriers to higher education were gender-specific for certain BME groups,. These issues were complex, for example some BME student groups might not want to work with a lecturer of the opposite sex, whilst other groups might not be comfortable with a tutor of the same sex.

13   Respondents suggested that barriers for some BME female students might include the lack of support or approval from their families, reluctance to permit study away from home and concerns about mixed sex student accommodation. Curriculum issues might include subjects thought unsuitable or providing progression to unacceptable occupations. Certain dress codes, for example, might prohibit some groups from undertaking teaching and drama studies.

14   Gay, lesbian and bisexual people of all races were identified by one respondent as being particularly disadvantaged during secondary education. These identities may exacerbate the issues affecting BME students; however it was acknowledged that further study was needed in this area.

FACTORS AFFECTING ASYLUM SEEKER, REFUGEE AND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

15   Financial issues were identified as the most significant barrier to HE for asylum seekers. Institutions normally consider asylum seekers as 'overseas' students as they do not qualify as having a 'settled residence' and, therefore, are subject to higher fees. Moreover, these students were not eligible for bursaries, student loans or local authority housing benefits. The lack of funding to enter higher education, and difficulties in accessing employment after graduation, mean that higher education would often not be seen as viable option.

16   The status and qualifications of asylum seekers was acknowledged as a barrier to higher education. The difficulty of verifying qualifications, credit transfers or criminal record bureau checks were often insurmountable for HEIs as asylum seekers often had no proof of prior achievements.

17   One respondent suggested that some asylum seekers and refugees might register with a HEI in order to favourably influence their residency application. It was recommended that clear HE application guidelines should be developed and communicated within HEIs to deal with this issue.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

18   A number of examples of good practice working with black and other ethnic communities which emerged from the responses included:
- The University of Glamorgan has a Refugee Discussion Forum which liaises with public and voluntary sector organisations to share expertise.
- The University of Wales Swansea has a 'Pathways for Ethnic Minorities' programme which offers educational advice to BME communities. Contact details for the programme are available in three languages.
- The University of Wales Newport provides 'taster' sessions such as 'An Introduction to Interpreting and Translating Skills', and work with *Ashiana* to provide sessions for Asian women in 'Women's Studies and Community Development'. In partnership with Cardiff University, it also offers 'An Introduction to Community Translation' module.
- The Welsh College of Music and Drama offer a series of drama workshops to schools and communities with a high proportion of young people from ethnic minority communities and music workshops with young ethnic minority children from Barnardos. A series of inset training sessions is also being developed for teachers and community workers.
- The North Wales Reaching Wider Partnership is currently undertaking a project to identify the educational needs of Eastern European migrant workers.

OTHER ISSUES

19   Respondents also drew attention to the following points:
- Young, white working class males are also an ethnic minority group currently under-represented in higher education.
- There was a need for a BME target to be set for student recruitment.
- There may be perceived or actual racism where few HEI students come from minority ethnic groups.
- There continued to be a lack of positive, academic and professional role models for BME groups.
- There was need to improve race equality monitoring and staff development.
- There was a need for HEIs to that ensure equality and diversity was a cross-cutting theme in all their strategies.
- The need to make equality and diversity a compulsory part of the curriculum for some programmes, for example, the Teaching in HE Certificate.
- Where HEIs have worked in partnership with other community organisations their activities have been better attended, supported by communities and more responsive to community needs.

Indicative Issues for Consideration in Providing Feedback to HEFCW's Race Equality Impact Assessment

HEFCW welcomed responses on the following questions, but information on other issues which are pertinent to policy regarding widening access was also welcomed:

- Are there barriers preventing access by certain ethnic minority groups to higher education, if so what are they?;
- Is there a subject bias in ethnic minority applications, recruitment and retention, if so what might account these trends?;
- To what extent is higher education provision accessed differentially by different racial groups and what might be the reasons for this?;
- Within cultural groups are there issues regarding the gender distribution of students accessing HE or other issues of multiple identities which should be taken account of?;
- Are there issues which need to be addressed concerning access to higher education by those from asylum seeker, refugee and migrant communities?;
- Are there Welsh examples of good practice in working with black and other ethnic minority communities which should be widely shared?;
- Are there other issues which need to be addressed in considering widening access to black and other ethnic minority groups?;
- Do you have any other comments which could contribute to this assessment?;

SOME KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE SUBMISSION OF THE 2002/03 WIDENING ACCESS STRATEGIES

A number of key policy developments have influenced widening access activities and strategies since the submission of the current three year institutional strategies (2002/03 to 2004/05), and the one year planned extension (2005/06). Institutions might want to take account of the policy developments outlined below:

1   The Assembly's *Reaching Higher* strategy for higher education to 2010 has defined an all-age target for work with Wales' most deprived communities:
   i.   *'To increase the number of all undergraduate new entrants to higher education courses at UK HEIs and FEIs who are domiciled in the Welsh Communities First areas. This will be measured by monitoring the proportion of undergraduate new entrants to courses who are domiciled in the Communities First areas equivalent to the 100 most deprived electoral divisions, which is targeted to rise from 8.9% to 11.4% by 2010.*

   ii. The Assembly published the new Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation in 2005. However, we confirmed with Vice Chancellors and Principals that, in the light of statements made by Edwina Hart, the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, we saw all the Assembly's *Reaching Higher* targets as agreed, long-term measures to 2010 [and that we] do not anticipate any changes to them' (11 November 2005). We would, therefore, encourage all HEIs to continue to report work with all 142 Communities First areas until such time as we are informed of any changes.

2   The Reaching Wider initiative also includes work to assist the sector in meeting the *Reaching Higher* all-age widening access target for Welsh medium students. The target has been clearly defined since previous strategy submissions as:

        'the proportion of HE students in Welsh HEIs and FEIs undertaking some element of their HE course through the medium of Welsh to increase from 3.4% to 7% in 2010/11.'

3   *Reaching Higher* also highlighted the need to improve participation by students with disabilities and black and other ethnic minority groups, although targets for this work have yet to be defined. Institutions will want to reference their work in these areas against the relevant institutional race equality policies and developing disability equality schemes.

4   The all-age dimension of the *Reaching Higher* widening access targets is particular to Wales and contrasts with the widening participation target for young people in England.

5   The development of the regional Reaching Wider Partnerships, with a specific remit to make progress towards the four *Reaching Higher* widening access targets, has supported the sector's progress towards achieving these Assembly targets. The Partnerships have also demonstrated collaborative working and the Assembly has been keen to encourage HEIs to adopt, and make explicit, an increasingly co-ordinated approach to widening access, aligning their activities with those of their regional Partnerships.

6   The Higher Education Act 2004 provided the statutory framework for HEIs to charge flexible fees. Approval for Welsh HEIs to charge flexible fees of up to £3,070 per annum from 2007/08, for all undergraduate and PGCE programmes is subject to HEFCW's approval of institutional fee plan proposals to utilise the additional income generated. In 2006/07 proposals will cover the use of the Supplementary Income Stream funding. Fee plans must include a range of institutional measures designed to promote both equality of opportunity and higher education more widely.

7   Circular W06/03HE announced funding developments totalling £2.5m over two years, from 2005/06, to support widening access priorities specifically: to recognise the gap

identified between widening access funding and costs in England and Wales, and also establishing a Communities First premium and funding for students with non-traditional qualifications.

8   Both the Rees Review (Devolution of Student Support Project) and the Graham Review (Review into Part-time Higher Education Study in Wales) are two important contextual documents which HEIs will want to take into consideration. These reports can be found at:
  i.   http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/students/rees-review-e.htm; and
  ii.   http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/students/graham-review-e.html.

9   HEFCW's 2006-07 remit letter requests that we provide advice on *'whether further specific steps should be taken to reflect the particular circumstances of young people entering HE having been in care.'* Institutions will want to consider their support of looked after children and care leavers. This circular includes a copy of the *Going to University From Care* recommendations for HEIs published by the Frank Buttle Trust.

10   HEFCW's Race Equality Scheme will be informed by responses to its widening access impact assessment. Attached as an annex is a summary of the responses received. HEFCW was grateful for the responses received and institutions may want to take these into consideration when developing their new strategies.

11   The Disability Discrimination (amendment) Act 2005 placed a duty to promote disability equality on all public authorities, including HEFCW and HEIs. Institutions will want to consider the implications for future planning of producing a Disability Equality Scheme by December 2006.

12   Following HEFCW's strategic review of modern foreign languages in the sector a collaborative project is taking forward a programme of activities including the marketing of modern foreign languages within a widening access context.

13   As institutions have themselves emphasised, it is important that widening access strategies accord with their own mission and circumstances. We would, therefore, anticipate that widening access strategies outline their relationship to other strategies and policy areas (for example, Welsh medium provision and third mission strategies).

AN EXAMPLE OF THE ANNUAL MONITORING FORMAT (AMS) TO BE USED FOR MONITORING PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS AND FOR EXPENDITURE FROM 2006/07

Institutional contact name for **Widening Access Funding** (to be used by HEFCW for all future correspondence relating to the AMS)	
Position in Institution	
Telephone	
E-mail	

SECTION ONE: WIDENING ACCESS FUNDING

Activity	2006/07 performance indicators	Progress against performance indicators	2007/08 performance indicators	Proposed changes to expenditure in 2007/08, including proposals for use of funding carried forward from previous year (where appropriate)
Activity_1				
Activity_2				
Activity_3				
Activity, name etc. *[Activity areas and performance indicators for widening access activity will be agreed individually with institutions. Individual templates will be forwarded under separate copy.]*				

Activity	2006/07 performance indicators	Progress against performance indicators	2007/08 performance indicators	Proposed changes to expenditure in 2007/08, including proposals for use of funding carried forward from previous year (where appropriate)
Funding Allocation for 2006/07 = £xx I confirm that the above allocation was used broadly according to the proposed expenditure outlined in the institution's **Widening Access Strategy 2006/2009**, subject to any major changes or funds carried forward to 2007/08 that I have outlined below. Signature (Head of institution) ……………………………………………………………………………………. Date ………………………….. *Please indicate below any changes to planned expenditure, with brief explanation.*				**Funding allocation for 2007/08 = £xx**

GUIDANCE ON SUBMITTING:
THE WIDENING ACCESS STRATEGIES (2006/09) AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS 2006/07
DISABILITY DEVELOPMENT PLANS (2006/09) AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS 2006/07
WIDENING ACCESS PROGRESS AND EXPENDITURE (2005/06)
DISABILTIY DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROGRESS AND EXPENDITURE (2005/06)

1   The guidance below on the widening access strategy and progress reporting structure may also apply to the plans for disability development, if these are presented as a sub-set of the main strategy. The term 'widening access' therefore also includes 'provision for students with disabilities'. Where institutions find the need to repeat the same text for both widening access and students with disabilities plans, they may want to simply cross-refer to the main strategy. Some additional guidance is also given on what we would expect to see specifically covered in plans for students with disabilities.

STRATEGY TIMESCALE

2   The strategy should cover at least the period 2006/07 to 2008/09, with detailed implementation plans for the coming year. Some institutions may wish to plan over a longer-time scale. The strategy should be rolled forward and updated each year. Institutions will, therefore, be regularly evaluating and reviewing their strategies to ensure their currency.

ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

3   Widening Access Strategies should contain:

a.   **An Executive Summary**

b.   **Institutional Widening Access Mission and Planning**
      o   A statement on how the institution's widening access mission fits into the institution's overall mission
      o   The relationship of the Widening Access Strategy to the institution's overall strategic plan
      o   The institution's widening access planning process and its place within the institutional strategic planning process.

c.   **Progress to Date (2005/06)** Institutions should provide a full account of progress against their plans for 2005/06, including achievement of in-year targets. Reports should also account for the expenditure of the Council's funding allocations in support of widening access including:
      o   The Widening Access Premium Funding including
             Communities First Premium Funding and
             Students with non-Traditional Qualifications Funding
      o   The Widening Access Strategy Fund
      o   The Disabled Students Premium Funding
      Any significant in-year changes to plans or the use of funding should be explained. Institutions may also want to provide an overview of its work over the past few years to demonstrate how they are fulfilling their widening access mission and objectives.

d.   **The Medium Term Strategy (2006/09)** should include:
      o   An assessment of current and future needs, Welsh Assembly Government priorities and institutional widening access opportunities and challenges
      o   The strategy, including key aims and objectives
      o   Targets for the three-year period. Targets may be quantitative or qualitative and should be specific and measurable. Targets should be sufficiently challenging to drive to the strategy's implementation, measurable and achievable within the aims and objectives of the strategy.

In this section of the strategy institutions might also want to provide information on current and planned collaborative activity with other higher education providers or partners.

e. **SHORT TERM STRATEGY (2006/07)** The implementation pllan should cover planned activities for 2006/07. Planned activities should be linked to the strategy. All activities should have specific and measurable operational targets attached to them.

f. **Expenditure** Institutions should define how they will fund their 2006/07 strategies. Institutions should aim to draw together all the funding resources available to them and demonstrate how these contribute to meeting various aspects of the strategy. A breakdown should be provided of how the Widening Access Premium Funding (including the Communities First Premium and funding for Students with non-Traditional Qualifications), Widening Access Strategy Funding and the Disabled Students Premium Funding allocations will be used.

g. Institutions may find it helpful to combine implementation plans and finance into a single section to demonstrate the relationship between activities and expenditure.

h. **Strategy Management** Institutions should outline the systems and procedures in place to manage the strategy's implementation, review and monitoring. Institution-wide consultations and contributions to widening access planning and development might also be outlined in this section, together with any actions to increase cross-institutional activities to encourage the strategy's ownership and raise awareness of widening access work.

i. **Monitoring and Evaluation** The strategy should also include:
   ° The arrangements for the ongoing monitoring of progress towards the development and implementation of the strategy and also for evaluating the strategy's implementation and impact.
   ° The processes for adapting the strategy in the light of lessons learnt.

3. To support their strategies, institutions might also consider developing and/or maintaining an analysis of risk, though we would not expect this to be included within the strategy submission.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

4. In addition to the above, in order to provide a coherent strategy and implementation plan for disabled students, the following should be taken into account:
   ° Ensuring compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act
   ° Enhancing the quality of services and provision available for disabled students
   ° Developing new services and provision for disabled students
   ° Encouraging and facilitating the entry and participation in higher education of disabled students
   ° Increasing the accuracy of institutional data on disabled students.

LINKS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES AND PLANS

5. Widening Access Strategies will have implications for virtually all aspects of institutions' activities and will be linked to other policies and strategies. These include, for example: recruitment and admissions, learning and teaching, equal opportunities, third mission, Welsh medium provision, staff development, library and information resources. In some of these areas we already seek institutional strategies and plans. We would, therefore, expect to see, within the Widening Access Strategy, links being made with other relevant areas of institutional planning.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE *GOING TO UNIVERSTIY FROM CARE* REPORT

Recommendations for HEIs from the *Going to University from Care* Report by the Frank Buttle Trust

HEIs

Recommendation
36. All institutions should develop a comprehensive policy relating to young people in or leaving care.
37. All initiatives and publicity aimed at applicants or students from disadvantaged groups should specifically refer to care leavers.
38. More institutions should develop compact arrangements with local authorities to increase participation of care leavers. Universities and colleges running open days and summer schools should ensure that young people in care are specifically invited.
39. Admissions tutors need to understand that it is an exceptional achievement for care leavers to get to the point of applying to university from care and that examination grades may not reflect the young person's potential.
40. Widening participation officers should attend after care workshops and training events on the care system and the needs of care leavers.
41. Care leavers should be given priority for on-campus accommodation and for hardship funds.
42. Student Welfare/Support Services should contact new students known to have been in care and be proactive in offering any necessary help with financial, study or personal problems. They should be alerted to danger signals such as falling behind with assignments.
43. HEIs should ensure that successful applicants who have been in care know before they arrive about any additional grants or bursaries that might be available to them so that they can apply in good time.