

## Circular

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### Reaching Wider Initiative

**25 September  
2007**

**Ref: W07/38HE**

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

Summary: This circular provides advance notice of a  
number of Reaching Wider initiative  
developments including: initiative funding  
from 2008, an additional allocation to  
support alignment activities and initial  
guidance for funding proposals from 2008.

Response by: No response required.

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## INTRODUCTION

- 1 This circular provides advance notice of a number of Reaching Wider initiative developments including: initiative funding from 2008, an additional allocation to support alignment activities and initial guidance for funding proposals from 2008.

## BACKGROUND

- 2 In June 2007, we submitted our advice on the future direction of widening access and the Reaching Wider provision to Carwyn Jones, the then Minister for Education, Culture and the Welsh Language. Two key aspects of this advice were the short term nature of Reaching Wider funding and the need for a refresh of the initiative.
- 3 **Annex A** attaches the response to our advice from Jane Hutt, the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. The Minister's letter commends the progress made by the Partnerships, confirms a three year budget for Reaching Wider and invites us to refresh the Reaching Wider initiative.

## FUNDING

- 4 A sum of **£2 million** per annum will be made available to the Reaching Wider initiative for the period August 2008 to July 2011. As in previous years, we will retain approximately £100k each year to ensure effective central co-ordination of the Reaching Wider initiative with the remaining allocation available for distribution to the Reaching Wider Partnerships.
- 5 Following our previous practice, normally Partnership proposals will be funded within a range of plus or minus 15% on the 2007/08 allocations. This limited percentage variance is designed to provide Partnerships and their staff with some stability in the medium-term. However, Partnerships will note that there is insufficient funding for 15% growth across all Partnerships.
- 6 From 2008/09 All-Wales activities will be funded as part of the Partnerships' proposals from the £2m allocation, rather than as an additional allocation. Therefore, Partnerships will need to liaise with the All-Wales activities lead partners, agree their contribution to the projects and include All-Wales activities within their Partnership proposals.

## INITIAL GUIDANCE

- 7 Following the Minister's endorsement of the Reaching Wider initiative refresh, we will be meeting Assembly officers, during October, to discuss how to take this forward. Discussions will also include a review of the metrics to support more developed targets. We recognise that, during this period, there might be some lack of clarity around precise target definitions although they will continue to focus on the *Reaching Higher* widening access priorities. As soon we are able to clarify these definitions, they will be shared with the Partnerships.
- 8 Given the timescales involved in ensuring that the refresh discussions take full account of current and emerging policies and priorities, we plan to issue detailed guidance in **October 2007**.
- 9 The guidance will invite Partnerships to submit **two-year funding proposals** in **early January 2008** for the period 2008/10, with the assurance that funding will be available for a third year (2010/11). We are requesting two-year, rather than three-year, funding proposals because within this two-year period, target definitions and metrics will be revised. In the light of these anticipated changes, Partnerships may want to begin refocusing some of their work to take account of new and emerging UK and Welsh

Assembly Government agendas, including Leitch, Webb, the Wales Spatial Plan and *Reaching Higher's* all-age focus. This two-year planning period also provides an opportunity for some alignment of the widening access and Reaching Wider planning cycles. Should the Welsh Assembly Government make further long-term Reaching Wider funding available, we would aim to move to three-year strategy-based funding from 2010/11.

- 10 Detailed funding proposal guidance will be available, together with a reporting proforma, by the end of **October 2007**.
- 11 **In October/November 2007** we will invite the Reaching Wider Partnership Chairs and Managers to discuss with us the implications of the refresh on their Partnership's current and planned activities.

### REACHING WIDER PRIORITIES

- 12 The following points may be helpful in shaping early discussions with partners. These points are not intended as an exhaustive list as we recognise that Partnerships will have a range of issues to consider depending on their geographical region and portfolio of activities.
  - the **all-age** focus of the *Reaching Higher* widening access targets will remain a priority for the Reaching Wider initiative as will the emphasis on Communities First, Welsh medium, disabled, and black and other ethnic minority students.
  - the Reaching Wider initiative may be required to accommodate additional Ministerial commitments over the strategy period.
  - the sector's Strategic Framework and Development Plan for Welsh medium provision will impact on all Welsh medium developments including Reaching Wider. Discussions with institutional representatives on the Welsh Medium Higher Education Sector Group (WM HESG) may inform the Reaching Wider proposals, as will the Reaching Wider Welsh Medium Implementation Plan.
  - we do not view Partnerships' structures and membership as fixed and, as previously at the start of funding periods, some partners might consider membership of more than one Partnership, or Partnerships might increase their membership. We would particularly welcome a clearer role for the Open University in all Partnerships' work.
  - we anticipate that Partnerships will want to continue to build on their collaborative work to further add value to regional widening access provision.
  - a refocusing of some Partnership activities may be necessary to enable Partnerships to respond to changing demographics and new Welsh Assembly Government agendas.
  - it may be timely for some Reaching Wider activities to be mainstreamed into institutions' widening access provision to enable the Partnerships to provide refocused and innovative collaborative provision.

### INDICATIVE TIMEFRAMES

- 13 Subject to the outcome of our discussions with Welsh Assembly Government officers, Partnerships will be invited to submit their funding proposals to us by email by **Friday 4 January 2008**, with signed hard copies following by **Wednesday 9 January 2008**.

- 14 The indicative timeframe for reporting is:

<b>Indicative Timeframes</b>	<b>Dates 2007/08</b>
HEFCW to issue funding guidance to RW Partnerships	October 2007
HEFCW to meet with the RW Partnership Chairs and Managers	October/November 2007
RW Partnerships to submit funding proposals via email	<b>4 January 2008</b>
RW Partnerships to submit funded proposals signed by all partners	<b>9 January 2008</b>
HEFCW to request further information/clarification as appropriate	January 2008
The Reaching Wider Advisory Sub Group to consider funding proposals and make recommendations to the March HEFCW Council meeting	5 February 2008
HEFCW to confirm funding allocations with Partnerships and, where appropriate, request revised funding proposals.	March 2008
RW Partnerships to submit revised proposals if required	July 2008
HEFCW to make staged Partnership 2008/10 payments	September 2008 March 2009 September 2009 March 2010

#### **ADVANCE NOTICE OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT ALIGNMENT**

- 15 In October 2007 HEFCW will be providing the Reaching Wider initiative with a small additional 'one off' allocation to further develop the work previously undertaken through the Reaching Wider audits (2002 and 2004). This work will also build on HEIs' articulation strategies submitted in 2006. **Circular W07/37HE** contains generic feedback on the strategies. The purpose of this additional funding is to support the further alignment of the Reaching Wider and widening access activities within a region and to assist the Partnerships in strategic planning.
- 16 Funding will be allocated pro rata to 2007/08 Reaching Wider allocations at the end of October 2007.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 17 For further information, please contact Emma King, Reaching Wider National Officer on: Tel: 029 2068 2201 or email: [emma.king@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:emma.king@hefcw.ac.uk).

cc Phil

Jane Hutt AM/AC  
Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau  
Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf / Your ref:  
Ein cyf / Our ref: MB/JH/5089/07

h o f o w  
28 AUG 2007/1

Professor Sir R Williams  
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22<sup>nd</sup> August 2007

Dear Roger,

Thank you for your letter of 29 June 2007 to Carwyn Jones AM, submitting your advice on the future direction of widening access provision in Wales. As you are aware, I have taken over responsibility for the newly formed Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills portfolio and have responsibility for higher education.

I was pleased to receive your advice on the future direction of widening access provision and the Reaching Wider initiative as a result of your consultation with stakeholders. The progress that the Partnerships have made to date in widening access to higher education has been commendable and I am pleased that Wales remains ahead of the game in terms of engaging with people in those hardest to reach communities. I believe that the recommendations that you have made will enable you to continue to build on the work that you are involved in and are a positive step forward.

It seems entirely sensible at this stage to agree upon a three year budget for the Reaching Wider Partnerships starting in 08-09, which will provide them with greater stability in terms of planning and staffing. However, the Partnerships will need to be able to demonstrate some flexibility in terms of workload planning over the three years in order to accommodate any additional emerging Ministerial commitments. Confirmation of the resources available for the three years will be provided in the budget letter to be issued by the Head of Higher Education Division later this year and officials will explore how far planning certainty could be improved in advance of this.

A refresh of the funding model, the Partnership structure, membership, activities and alignment with other widening access initiatives, seems a perfectly reasonable recommendation at this stage of Reaching Higher whilst building on experience of success

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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu ( 100%)

to date. I anticipate new priorities coming through from Leitch, Webb and Graham that will surely impact on the Reaching Wider initiatives and I will ask my officials to write under separate cover at the appropriate time to discuss the linkages that should be made, particularly as a result of Leitch and Webb.

It is also appropriate that a refresh of the Reaching Wider initiative should be accompanied by a review of metrics that could support more developed targets. I am aware that HEFCW statisticians have a close relationship with their counterparts in the Welsh Assembly Government and it is important that this relationship continues. In order for us to take final decisions on targets at the policy level it would be most helpful to have both the more technical work on what types of metric would be most robust and evidence from evaluations and stakeholders on the areas of impact on which targets should focus. To this end it would therefore be helpful to maintain the dialogue as the project progresses. I understand that the Partnerships are due to submit their three year plans to HEFCW by March 2008 and it would seem advantageous for the review of the targets to be completed in good time for them to be incorporated into the plans.

It has always been difficult to track the impact of widening access activities given the gap between intervention and outcome but I believe that the work that the Welsh Assembly Government is involved in via the UK Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP), will go some way to improving the collection of robust data. We will continue to support HEFCW's involvement in this work.

Care leavers is an issue that I have had involvement with in my previous portfolio and I am pleased that one of your recommendations is to develop an action plan to monitor progress and encourage more institutions to work with the Buttle Trust. I look forward to receiving a progress report from you in due course.

I am content for HEFCW and my officials to investigate further the issue of marketing and communications in order to raise the profile of widening access and ensure coherence between Welsh Assembly Government and HEFCW-led approaches. There are, of course, local and regional, as well as national elements to this. It is clearly important that we tread carefully however, so as not to add another brand to the 'marketplace' that may cause confusion amongst prospective students.

Finally, I acknowledge that widening access provision and the recruiting and retaining students from a widening access background is always going to cost more than a student from a more traditional background. As you are aware, the Welsh Assembly Government is currently considering budgetary priorities across portfolios in the context of its One Wales commitments and other pressures.

I look forward to receiving a further report from you in December and to our meeting at the end of the month.

Yours,  
Y. Jones,

J. Jones