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Circular

Reaching Wider Strategies 2011/12 to 2013/14: Supplementary Guidance

Date: 09 June 2011
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To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in
Wales
Response by: **29 July 2011**
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This circular provides supplementary guidance for Reaching Wider Strategies 2011/12 to 2013/14.

The circular contains: additional guidance on Welsh Government and HEFCW emerging policies and priorities; further clarification on the information that strategies should contain; 2011/12 funding allocations; a strategy checklist; and templates for the Annual Monitoring Statement process.

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Introduction

1. This circular provides supplementary guidance for Reaching Wider (RW) Strategies 2011/12 to 2013/14.
2. The circular contains: additional guidance on Welsh Government and HEFCW emerging policies and priorities; further clarification on the information that strategies should contain; 2011/12 funding allocations; a strategy checklist; and templates for the Annual Monitoring Statement process (AMS).
3. Strategies should be submitted electronically and in hard copy by **29 July 2011**.

Background

4. Circular W11/01HE, published in January 2011, provided initial guidance to Reaching Wider Partnerships on the submission of three-year strategies for the period 2011/12 to 2013/14 and it invited involvement in our strategy guidance equality impact assessment process.
5. The initial guidance circular set out the purpose of strategies, the policy context, the role of the Reaching Wider Programme and early guidance on strategy development. The circular noted our intention to fund Reaching Wider Partnerships more explicitly against Communities First areas from 2011/12 and to fund strategies on a formula basis.
6. The initial guidance confirmed that we would issue supplementary guidance, including funding allocations. This circular should be read in conjunction with our initial guidance.
7. We published our initial guidance when a number of Welsh Government and HEFCW policies and priorities with implications for Widening Access (WA) and Reaching Wider Strategies were still being developed. This circular provides an update on some of the emerging policies which Partnerships will want to consider in developing their RW Strategies.
8. We published *HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education 2010/11 to 2012/13* in February 2011¹. Our *Approach* establishes our widening access strategic objectives and direction of travel. RW Partnerships will want to ensure that their strategies contribute to achieving those *Approach* priorities which are appropriate to the RW programme, particularly:

¹ <http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circularsW11/09HE>

- to prioritise recruitment from Communities First areas;
 - to support fair access to the professions, higher level skills and the priority sectors;
 - to encourage flexible learning opportunities, including part-time;
 - to secure clear articulation and progression pathways into higher education;
 - to maximise the potential for collaborative, cross-sectoral, multi-agency approaches.
9. HEFCW officers met with Reaching Wider Partnership Chairs and Managers (February/March 2011) and we have taken account of these discussions in shaping this guidance.
10. To provide further support for RW Strategy development we:
- invited the Higher Education Academy to facilitate a workshop in May 2011 entitled *Future Directions: making the case for widening access: planning, evidencing and evaluating widening access performance*;
 - have developed a strategy checklist to support the development of SMART outcomes which contribute to demonstrating the success of strategies.

Supplementary Guidance: Policy Developments and Priorities

11. In developing Reaching Wider Strategies, rather than shorter-term funding proposals, Partnerships should take a more strategic approach to planning and delivery over at least a three year period.
12. Partnerships will want to take account of the policies and priorities outlined below in developing their strategies.

HEFCW's 2011-12 Remit Letter

13. Our remit letter sets out the Minister's expectations for HEFCW's work in 2011-12². Partnerships are asked to take account of these priorities and the implications for their areas of work, including: continuing support of the economic and social regeneration in the Heads of the Valleys (paragraph 17); regional developments to: '*deliver increasing evidence of more accessible and more cost effective HE opportunities for learners and employers*' (paragraph 8); continued engagement with Communities First areas; and improving retention and completion rates:
'I am keen to see evidence that the new (widening access strategic approach) arrangements, coupled with action on regional planning, transformation and business links, are raising yet further the level of participation and success in HE. This includes recruitment from Communities

² [HEFCW remit letter 2011-12](#)

First areas and improved retention and completion rates of students studying at Welsh institutions... (paragraph 15).

Regional Strategies

14. Higher Education providers submitted to us, in November 2010, three regional strategies. The aim was: *'to improve provision regionally, especially for learners who, for whatever reason, are geographically constrained and for employers who are seeking HE support, of whatever kind, locally'*.³ Our regional strategy guidance asked HE providers to set out how the regional approach would build on Reaching Wider Partnership work, taking account of current structures and initiatives to develop future arrangements. In developing RW Strategies, Partnerships should set out clearly their:
- relationship to the regional strategy, including management and governance arrangements;
 - alignment with their regional strategy priorities, including taking account of the relevant aspects of the evidence base used to support regional strategy developments, developing progression routes to existing and planned Foundation Degree and other FE/HE provision as set out in the regional strategies, increasing collaboration between regional partners and avoiding nugatory duplication⁴;
 - how the Partnership has become, or will become the widening access mechanism of the region; and
 - confirm that the RW Strategy has been considered by the regional strategy group.

RW alignment with regional HE Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies and Fee Plans

15. Our Learning and Teaching (L&T)/Widening Access (WA) Strategy Supplementary Guidance provides contextual information on broader widening access policies and priorities⁵. This wider policy perspective will be helpful to Partnerships in developing their strategies, particularly in relation to: the Child Poverty Strategy⁶; part-time learners; widening access priority groups; and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and modern foreign languages (MFL): subjects which are of strategic importance in Wales⁷. Additionally, Circular W11/14HE provides guidance to institutions on Fee Plan submissions⁸.

³ <http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circularsW10/16HE>
Regional Strategy guidance.

⁴ <http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circularsW10/29HE>
Foundation Degree guidance.

⁵ <http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circularsW11/17HE>
L&T and WA Supplementary guidance.

⁶ For further information about the Child Poverty Strategy see paragraph 19 below

⁷ See Circular [W11/17HE](#) paragraphs 24-30.

⁸ <http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publicationsW11/14HE>

16. Fee Plans for 2012/13 contribute to *For our Future* priorities, particularly in relation to utilising fee investment in support of **equality of opportunity** and the **promotion of higher education**. Reaching Wider Partnerships should take account of regional Widening Access Strategy developments, including how they relate to partner HE Fee Plans. The deadline for submission of Fee Plans to HEFCW was 31 May 2011. We will want to understand how RW Strategies relate to, and align with, WA Strategy developments to meet the needs of regional learners in Communities First areas.

Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI)

17. The UHOVI programme is a key Welsh Government commitment. UHOVI developments, led by Glamorgan University and the University of Wales Newport, support the economic and social regeneration of the Heads of the Valleys area through the sustainable delivery of a curriculum of continuous engagement leading to level 4 and other higher level learning opportunities. The First Campus RW Partnership region contains the UHOVI programme and 50% of the UHOVI area is comprised of Communities First wards. Therefore, we expect the First Campus Reaching Wider Strategy, within its wider commitments to all Communities First areas in south east Wales, to set out clearly its strategic objectives and intended outcomes for working collaboratively in **the Communities First areas of UHOVI**, including to raise educational aspirations, contribute to improving attainment and providing progression routes to higher education. We will also want to understand the level of resource First Campus will commit to these UHOVI-related developments as a reasonable proportion of its total resources.

Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

18. Since our initial RW guidance was published, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has been established⁹. It will work with, and through, higher education institutions in Wales to deliver increased and sustainable Welsh medium opportunities at all levels. It will be important for RW Strategies to articulate the Partnerships' commitment to, and plans for, providing Welsh medium opportunities for people of all ages in Communities First areas to raise aspirations to study through the medium of Welsh and to establish progression routes to Welsh medium HE provision.

Child Poverty Strategy

19. *HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education* refers to the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy and Delivery Plan for Wales, published in February 2011¹⁰. The Strategy places a duty on HEFCW to publish its own Child Poverty Strategy by March 2012, setting out how it will work with the sector, the Welsh Government and other agencies to contribute to the eradication of child poverty. Our strategy will take account of raising the education and vocational aspirations of children

⁹ <http://www.colegcymraeg.ac.uk/en/>

¹⁰ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/poverty/newcpstrategy/?lang=en>

and the parents, carers, families and communities that support the social and economic needs of disadvantaged children. Effective engagement with some minority ethnic communities, refugees and asylum seekers, gypsies and travellers and with looked after children and care leavers will contribute to the eradication of child poverty. RW strategies should reflect Partnerships' responses to child poverty issues within the context of their Communities First provision.

STEM Subject Development and Alignment with National Programmes such as the HE STEM National Programme

20. Our remit letter 2011-12 refers to the need to continue '*to focus on the increasing delivery of subjects of strategic importance namely science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).*' In this respect, the National HE STEM Programme has supported higher education institutions and Partnerships in developing, delivering and sharing new approaches to engaging learners of all ages in the study of STEM subjects¹¹. We recognise that the Wales 'spoke' of the National STEM Programme, with funding from HEFCW, has made links with, and funded, innovative STEM projects at a number of institutions and Reaching Wider Partnerships. Where it aligns with Partnerships' strategic priorities, particularly engagement in Communities First areas, we will want to understand how STEM provision and progression routes to higher level STEM provision, including Foundation degrees, will be developed over the strategy period. Partnerships might choose to set strategic priorities in these areas including:
- raising academic and vocational aspirations to study STEM subjects;
 - developing and sustaining STEM progression routes to FE and HE;
 - responding to equality of opportunity issues such as gender balances in, and ethnic minority engagement across, the STEM subject range;
 - fair access to the subjects leading to post-graduate study, the professions and higher level skills.

Part-time learners and study opportunities

21. Increasing the number of part time students studying HE courses in FEIs and HEIs is a HEFCW Corporate Strategy measure¹². Partnerships should consider how they raise aspirations and skills to encourage Communities First learners to consider part-time learning opportunities on campus, in the community, in the workplace or by blended learning. Ensuring that part-time learners are aware of progression routes may require information, advice and guidance from FE and HE providers and from Careers Wales. Where Partnerships are working with Careers Wales we would wish to understand the nature and extent of the collaboration.

¹¹ [National HE STEM Programme](#)

¹² Corporate Strategy measure: 'the total number of part-time students studying at higher education courses in higher education institutions and further education institutions in Wales will rise from 54,714 in 2008/09 to 59,000 in 2012/13.'

Equality and Diversity

22. We would expect RW Strategies to confirm that they have been equality impact assessed to ensure that they have taken account of any negative implications or unforeseen consequences. Partnerships should adhere to the equality policies and processes of their lead HEI.
23. We invited involvement in the further development of RW guidance through the publication of the initial guidance. We received few responses to the equality impact involvement process. The key concern expressed was the increased and overarching focus on Communities First areas, with the expectation of targeting other under-represented groups within Communities First areas. It is the case that the Reaching Wider Programme is being more sharply focused on Communities First areas, for the following reasons:
 - Communities First areas are a key widening access measure in our Corporate Strategy, as accepted by the Welsh Government as the action plan for implementation of *For our Future*;
 - Reaching Wider is only one mechanism for widening access to higher education. While it focuses on Communities First engagements, a range of other institutional widening access provision and resources operate more broadly, as our Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategy Guidance circulars indicate;
 - The Reaching Wider budget has increased only slightly since the start of the initiative and we believe the new phase of the Programme will be more effective if it uses its limited resources in a more targeted way.

Funding methodologies and the annual monitoring statement process

24. Our initial guidance noted our intention to fund RW Partnerships more explicitly against Communities First areas from 2011/12. We also confirmed that funding changes would not destabilise Partnerships. To ensure this, as in previous years, we will continue to not vary Partnership funding by more or less than 15% of their previous years' funding.
25. From 2011/12 we will fund RW Partnerships as follows:
 - 15% of the total RW allocation for the number of Communities First areas in each partnership region;

- 15% of the total RW allocation for the number of Communities First students as a proportion of the total Welsh domiciled students in the regional partner HEIs¹³;
 - 70% of the funding allocation based on the Partnership's 2010/11 allocation. The 2010/11 allocation will be used as the base-year for future calculations¹⁴.
26. We understand that University of Wales Trinity Saint David wishes to retain membership of both the North and West and Mid Wales merged Partnership and the South West Wales Partnership. To ensure fairness and transparency and to avoid an imbalance in funding certain communities we will:
- Fund University of Wales Trinity Saint David only through the South West Wales Partnership allocation unless there are mitigating circumstances, which would require HEFCW and the two Partnerships' agreement;
 - set aside an allocation of **£5k** from the RW budget for University of Wales Trinity Saint David to use in the Communities First area of '*Upland villages in the Tregaron area (parts of Melindwr, Lledrod, Tregaron and Llangeitho electoral divisions)*'¹⁵. This funding will be allocated via the South West Wales RW Partnership and ringfenced for use by University of Wales Trinity Saint David, subject to the Partnerships of SW Wales' and the merged Partnership of North and West and Mid Wales' written agreement. This will avoid duplication of activity and nugatory competition within Ceredigion and encourage collaboration.
27. The Open University in Wales is a member of all three HE regional partnerships and, as a distance learning provider, is able to engage in each region. We expect to see the involvement of the Open University in Wales in RW activities planned in each region and for it to be enabled to contribute fully.
28. The Reaching Wider Partnership allocations are attached as **Annex A**.
29. As indicated in our remit letter, please note that the allocations provided in **Annex A** are **provisional and are subject to change in-year**. We will inform Partnerships of any changes as soon as possible.
30. We recognise that Partnerships sometimes fund RW activities from additional internal and external funding streams. We would like to

¹³ For the purposes of this allocation University of Wales Trinity Saint David is counted as a funded member of the South West Wales Partnership only. The student numbers of the Open University in Wales have been calculated on the basis of the students' area of domicile and allocated to each Partnership accordingly.

¹⁴ For the purposes of this calculation the 2010/11 budgets of the Partnerships of North Wales, and West and Mid Wales, were combined.

¹⁵ This area definition is taken from the Communities First Unit map as at 1 April 2009.

understand the funding implications and intended outcomes of the use of such resources and we would appreciate their inclusion in the Strategy.

31. Funding allocations in this strategy period are subject to the submission of satisfactory RW Strategies and annual monitoring statements. The first tranche will be paid in September 2011 on submission of strategies. The second tranche, in March 2012, will be made subject to satisfactory strategies, and satisfactory annual monitoring statements (AMS) in October 2011. In subsequent years allocations will be made on submission of satisfactory AMS submissions.
32. We encourage Partnerships to publish the first part of their strategies, as indicated in the Initial RW Guidance circular, and we will monitor this through the AMS process.

Required information

33. In our initial RW guidance we recognised the dual purpose of RW Strategies (paragraphs 10 and 11). RW Strategies should be Partnership documents which are developed in a manner that enables the Partnership to achieve its priorities and demonstrate its success. In addition, they are the mechanism by which we: allocate RW funding; understand strategic intentions and support strategic planning and delivery; account for public funding; conduct strategic dialogues; and respond to the Welsh Government and others on issues related to RW performance and progress.
34. We recognise possible tensions arising from this dual function and, therefore, do not wish to be overly prescriptive about the structure and content of Strategies. However, there are some categories of information that we require in order to inform our funding decisions.
35. We have provided a list of required information in **Annex B**. The list includes information which we need and which we consider Partnerships will find useful to include.

Outcomes

36. We will monitor Partnerships' performance against the outcomes they set themselves in their strategies and in the annual monitoring statements (AMS), as noted above.
37. **Annex C** provides a strategy outcome template for use with the RW Strategy to identify its short- and medium-term outcomes. Short-term outcomes may include milestones towards medium-term outcomes. We will use these outcomes to generate the Partnerships' AMS templates.

38. We require you to set specific outcomes which demonstrate your strategic intentions to increase engagement with **people of all ages from Communities First areas**, to contribute to HEFCW's Corporate Strategy measure.
39. **Within the Communities First strategic outcomes** Partnerships may want to include impact measures which demonstrate their engagement with the following areas and contribute to Welsh Government policies and priorities:
- groups in Communities First areas under-represented in HE; including underachieving males, some minority ethnic communities;
 - learners with protected characteristics;
 - young people and adults not yet at the point of transition to HE or without higher level qualifications and skills;
 - workplace and workforce learning, employability and skills;
 - capacity building in schools, communities and families to improve learner-support networks;
 - child poverty as set out in the Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy;
 - provision that aligns with the HE regional strategies;
 - provision that encourages progression to STEM and MFL priority subjects;
 - Welsh medium provision;
 - Collaboration with FEIs, Careers Wales and other stakeholders to improve FE to HE progression routes and information, advice and guidance on HE-related issues;
 - Alignment with HEIs' WA strategies to demonstrate alignment and avoid nugatory competition.
40. In addition, Partnerships will want to continue and/or develop their regional work with **looked after children and care leavers**.
41. First Campus should set strategic outcomes for their work in the Communities First areas of the Universities Heads of the Valleys area.

Setting outcomes

42. Previous Reaching Wider funded proposals were short-term and focused on short-term outputs. In this new strategy process we require the clear identification of outcomes that will enable Partnerships to measure progress and demonstrate achievement. In setting outcomes, please ensure that they are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART)**.
43. SMART measures should focus less on short-term outputs eg numbers of students attending an event, or number of one-off events, and more on demonstrating how outcomes will deliver the Partnership's stated high-level, long-term strategic objectives.

44. Effective outcomes should demonstrate the impact of the activities. While not every outcome can, or should, be quantitative, we need to understand how the achievement of qualitative outcomes will be measured and success demonstrated. Outcomes must be appropriately ambitious, while remaining realistic and achievable.
45. As we are prioritising SMART strategic outcomes and impact measures, we have prepared a sample template with examples of categories, activities and outcomes. This will be available on request from officer contacts below.
46. Within the short-term outcome templates we are asking Partnerships to identify the approximate sum and funding source used to support each strategic aim to enable funding transparency and accountability. Funding might be from a range of sources, as we recognised above.
47. We recommend that Partnership management processes and procedures monitor progress towards identified outcomes to ensure that outcomes remain achievable, realistic and relevant over the course of the strategy period. Partnerships will want to report the outcomes of these processes to their regional strategy group to inform regional developments and to contribute to the effective alignment of strategies.

Further information

For further information contact Jane Johns (tel: 029 2068 2219; email jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk); or Rachel O’Gorman (tel 029 2068 2227; email rachel.ogorman@hefcw.ac.uk).

Annex A Reaching Wider Partnership Allocations 2011/12

Reaching Wider Partnership	15% funding proportional to number of CF areas	70% funding proportional to 2010/11 allocations	15% funding proportional to number of CF students as a proportion of total eligible Welsh domiciled students in regional HEIs	Total funding 11/12
	£	£	£	£
South East Wales (First Campus)	179,311	562,694	122,348	864,353
South West Wales	65,688	320,735	112,677	499,101*
SWW ringfenced allocation for TSD				5,000
North and West and Mid Wales ¹⁶	60,362	541,593	70,336	672,291
HEFCW's central coordination				107,655
Total	305,361	1,425,022	305,361	2,148,400

* In addition to the £499,101 allocation to the South West Wales Partnership, we are allocating a further £5k ringfenced for delivery of RW Partnership provision in the Tregaron area by University of Wales Trinity Saint David, which they must agree in advance with the two Partnerships: SW Wales and the merged North and West and Mid Wales Partnerships. This funding should be allocated in line with SWW procedures on completion of the RW provision. The total allocation to SWW is therefore **£504,101**.

¹⁶ The name of the newly merged Partnership has not been formally agreed.

Annex B Checklist of information which we require and which Partnerships will find useful to include.

The Checklist outlines the information we will take into account when analysing strategies, as we explain in the Outcome template section in the above Circular. If this information would not naturally fall within your strategy it can be annexed as supplementary information.

Category	Does the strategy include/refer to the following information?	Yes/No ¹⁷ If Yes: Page number/ paragraph	If No, please provide it as an annex.
Strategic issues	An evidence base to which provides the rationale for the strategy's aims and objectives, development and planning, including evidence of learner demand and/or labour market information.		n/a
	The Partnership's mission and purpose as it relates to widening access in its region.		n/a
	The Partnership's role in, relationship and contribution to, the HE regional strategy developments.		n/a
	Strategic alignment with institutional widening access planning and delivery.		n/a
	The Partnership's management and governance structures including all Partnership members. Please also include the written agreement of partner senior managers to the Partnership Chair and lead partner organisation.		n/a
	A critical assessment of RW Partnership's work in the previous strategy period including but not limited to: tracking and monitoring data analysis, key outcomes, lessons learnt and areas for further development.		
	The Partnership's alignment with the HE regional agenda, identified needs and priorities: for example, increasing progression and collaboration and reducing nugatory competition in CF areas.		
	The Partnership's alignment with HE partner Widening Access Strategies: for example, increasing collaboration, progression routes, shared funding for provision in CF areas.		
	The Partnership's collaboration with FE partners: for example progression routes, HE level 'taster' provision in FE. HE information, advice and guidance for CF students.		

¹⁷ If the information is provided in the Strategy please indicate which paragraph number and page. If the information would not naturally fall within the Strategy please indicate that the information is provided in an annex and refer to the annex numbering.

	The identification of SMART measures of success and the anticipated impact on key target groups for each year of the Strategy.		
	The assessment of risk and controls to manage risks.		
Welsh Government/ HEFCW priorities	The strategy's response to the Welsh Government <i>For our Future</i> and other related priorities, particularly in relation to social justice, HEFCW's Corporate Strategy widening access measures and our remit letter.		
	The strategy's contribution to <i>For our Future</i> priorities that relate to supporting a buoyant economy, including developing and delivering employability skills, vocational learning, and skills-focused opportunities, work-based learning, flexible learning opportunities.		
	The strategy's contribution to maximising diversity and flexibility in order to meet the needs of learners and employers.		
Equality and Diversity	The strategy's prioritisation of equality policies, duties and priorities which will ensure fair and transparent practices and deliver equality of opportunity.		
	Outcomes of the Strategy's equality impact assessment.		
Welsh medium and other important subjects	The strategy's prioritisation of Welsh medium developments, taking account of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol priorities.		
	The strategy's approach to STEM and MFL provision, as appropriate, including collaboration with the National HE STEM programme.		

Annex C A strategy outcome template for use with the RW Strategy to identify its short- and medium-term outcomes.

Short-term Outcome Template

We will use this information to develop Partnership Annual Monitoring Statement templates.

Please also refer to the Outcome template section in the above circular.

Strategic priorities ¹⁸	Actions to achieve outcomes	2011/12 measurable (qualitative and quantitative) outcomes. <i>These outcomes may include milestones towards the final outcome in subsequent years</i>	Approximate financial resources allocated to this area

Medium-term Outcome template

Strategic priorities	Actions to achieve outcomes	2012/13 to 2013/14 measurable (qualitative and/or quantitative) outcomes.

¹⁸ Institutions will want to consider the number of areas of strategic focus they use to measure their strategies to ensure they are sufficiently challenging, while being realistic and achievable. We suggest, as a guide, between eight and twelve areas.