

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg  
Uwch Cymru  
Higher Education Funding  
Council for Wales

Cwrt Linden  
Clos Ilex Llanisien  
Caerdydd CF14 5DZ  
Ffôn 029 2076 1861  
Ffacs 029 2076 3163  
www.hefcw.ac.uk

Linden Court  
Ilex Close Llanishen  
Cardiff CF14 5DZ  
Tel 029 2076 1861  
Fax 029 2076 3163  
www.hefcw.ac.uk

hefcw

Cylchlythyr

Circular

## The Regional Dimension to the Planning and Delivery of Higher Education 2011/12

**Date:** 02 August 2011  
**Reference:** W11/29HE  
**To:** Heads of higher education institutions in Wales  
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales  
**Copied to** Principals of further education institutions in Wales  
**Response by:** **31 October 2011; 30 November 2011**  
**Contact:** Name: Celia Hunt / Dr Ewen Brierley  
Telephone: 029 2068 2224/029 2068 2229  
Email: [celia.hunt@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:celia.hunt@hefcw.ac.uk)  
[ewen.brierley@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:ewen.brierley@hefcw.ac.uk)

This circular sets out the arrangements for the continuing development of a regional dimension to the planning and delivery of higher education.

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## Introduction

1. This circular sets out the arrangements for the continuing development of a regional dimension to the planning and delivery of higher education in 2011/12. Under these arrangements we ask regions to submit:
  - A revised strategy document covering a three-year period from 2011/12 to 2013/14;
  - A narrative report on progress in delivering against the initial regional strategy in 2010/11; and
  - A completed strategy outcome template, proposing future activities to support the delivery of the revised regional strategy.
2. We also invite regions to submit funding proposals (i) for building capacity to produce, interpret and make better use of evidence to inform the planning and delivery of higher education on a regional basis; and (ii) for regional shared services developments.

## Background

3. *For our Future, the 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales*<sup>1</sup> included the expectation that the Welsh Government, working with stakeholders and HEFCW, would ‘develop a regional dimension to planning and delivery of higher education’. It noted the need for HEFCW to **‘explore, develop and co-ordinate, in concert with the HE community, the development of a regional planning and delivery structure in Wales which can identify and tackle need while demonstrating the best use of resources’** [para 76i].
4. Following consultation, Circular W10/16HE, published in May 2010, defined the three regions to be used in the planning and delivery of higher education and set out HEFCW’s expectations regarding the regional strategies. A subsequent circular W10/28HE, published in July 2010, invited proposals to support the implementation of the plans set out in the regional strategies, including bids for additional funded credits and Regional Initiatives Funding; and outlined the arrangements for rewarding the rationalisation of provision between institutions within a region (reflected by a redistribution of credits). The credits to be used to support successful bids for additional funded credits and to reward regional redistribution were to be generated through a top slice of 5% of funded credits for AY 2011/12. A separate circular W10/29HE was also published in July 2010 inviting the submission of proposals for Foundation Degrees to support the implementation of the regional plans. The arrangements for the regional redistribution process were subsequently published in Circular W11/03HE.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/forourfuture/?lang=en>

5. The regional strategies were considered by HEFCW, and feedback provided to each of the regions in February 2011 outlining areas where further development was required. This included issues that would need to be addressed in the short-term and those that could be addressed when developing and delivering the strategy.
6. The regional proposals for additional funded credits, Foundation Degrees and Regional Initiatives Funding were considered by HEFCW and feedback on in principle decisions provided to the regions in February 2011.
7. We are conscious of the Minister's statement of 13 July 2011 on the future shape of HE in Wales and the associated consultation<sup>2</sup>. In the context of changes to the structure of the HE sector in Wales, institutions will need to continue to strive to best meet the needs of regional learners and employers, and to demonstrate the most efficient use of resources through working together regionally. We therefore consider it imperative that institutions continue to work together to plan the delivery of HE on a regional basis.

### **Outcomes of 2010/11 regional planning process**

8. The credit allocations in support of successful regional proposals for additional funded credits were taken forward through the Strategic Implementation Allocations for 2011/12 outlined in Circular W11/12HE<sup>3</sup>. Funding arrangements for successful Foundation Degree and Regional Initiative Funding proposals are also now being taken forward. The outcomes of these regional proposals are to be published on the HEFCW website by 31 August.
9. The outcomes of the regional redistribution exercise, including credits allocated to reward redistribution, were also published in Circular W11/12HE. Institutions may wish to note that they will be free to redistribute the 'reward credits' allocated from this exercise in the normal redistribution exercise later in the summer. A circular outlining this redistribution process will be published in due course. However, we do not intend a further specific regional redistribution exercise, although this should not preclude inter-institutional redistribution where required to reduce unnecessary duplication. Inter-institutional redistribution is already possible under the normal redistribution arrangements.
10. A further outcome of the regional planning process in 2010 was the identification of the need for detailed mapping of progression from FE to HE on a regional basis. We are currently discussing a potential project to address this issue with the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and Colegau Cymru. We will contact regions in due course should this project be progressed.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/education/heinwales/?lang=en>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications/circulars/circulars\\_3.aspx](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications/circulars/circulars_3.aspx)

11. The consultants commissioned by HEFCW to support the initial regional strategy development process were required to provide a final report on this process. Council has considered this report and the sections of the report relating to each region will be shared with the respective regions for information in early August.
12. We invited regions to provide feedback on the 2010/11 regional planning process through a questionnaire circulated in June 2011. The responses from each of the regions have been noted and, where appropriate, will inform the regional planning and delivery processes in 2011/12. A summary of these responses is attached at **Annex A**.

### **Development of regional strategies and associated strategy outcomes in 2011/12**

13. As outlined in the feedback on the initial strategies provided in February 2011, we expect each region to submit a revised regional strategy by 31 October 2011.
14. The revised strategies (one per region), and accompanying documentation, will need to take account of the points outlined in the feedback provided in February, as well as the outcomes of the regional redistribution exercise and the successful regional proposals for: additional funded credits, Foundation Degrees and Regional Initiatives Funding.
15. The revised strategies are to cover a three-year period from 2011/12 to 2013/14. Strategy outcomes will therefore need to reflect this three-year planning period. Where regions provided more detailed strategy outcomes and SMART measures, following the submission of the initial strategy documents in November 2010, we will provide feedback on these in order to inform the development of the revised strategies. We expect that there will be some iteration in the development of these outcomes and SMART measures prior to the submission of the revised strategies and accompanying documentation. We are therefore prepared to meet with each of the regions to discuss the development of outcomes and measures and any other aspects of the strategy development process.
16. Because of the degree of public interest already shown in seeking more information on the Regional Dimension, we expect each region to publish their final revised strategy documents on institutional websites by 31 March 2012 and these will also be placed on the HEFCW website at the same time. Consequently, we anticipate that the revised strategies will represent high-level documents, with operational detail in specific areas to be provided separately.
17. The operational detail linked to the strategies should be provided to HEFCW in the form of two documents:

- A narrative report on work undertaken to deliver against the initial regional strategy in 2010/11 and
- A strategy outcome statement proposing future activities to support the revised strategy. The strategy outcome statement should provide specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) measures associated with the planned strategy outcomes for 2011/12, as well as longer-term SMART measures linked to strategy outcomes at the end of the planning period in 2013/14. We expect this strategy outcome statement to be submitted together with the strategy document by 31 October 2011. The SMART measures will be in a similar format to the Annual Monitoring Statement (AMS) process and will facilitate monitoring. We will provide an AMS template to each region for reporting purposes in October 2012.

### **Format of the revised regional strategies**

18. We expect that the revised strategies will continue to cover the areas in the initial strategy template, taking account of the feedback on the strategies in February 2011 and any subsequent regional developments including successful regional proposals.
19. As the revised strategies will be high-level documents that are to be made available publicly, regions may want to consider placing any more detailed strategic information into separate documents that can be provided to HEFCW on our request. We will expect regions to inform HEFCW if and when such documents are available. As outlined above, we will expect all specific operational detail linked to the delivery of the revised strategies to be submitted in the form of a separate narrative report and strategy outcome statement. Further detail on the format and content of the regional strategies is attached at **Annex B** (A template for completion in respect of the strategy outcome statement is provided at **Annex E**):

### **Proposals for building capacity to help regions inform their planning and delivery of higher education**

20. In its recent report *Skills for Jobs: Priorities*<sup>4</sup> (July 2011), the independent Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) presents the case for the need for “better LMI [labour market intelligence] and information about the outcomes of learning programmes to ensure funded provision that is relevant, effective and efficient”. This reflects recent discussion with the WESB Chair at HEFCW’s Council Committees, which recognised that HEI planning would benefit from the availability of more robust LMI on higher level skills needs. Existing sources of LMI (e.g. previous Future Skills Wales surveys, the UKCES National Strategic Skills Audit for

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.wesb.org.uk/about/publicationss/skillsforjobspriorities/?lang=en>

Wales<sup>5</sup>, Sector Skills Council [SSC] sectoral evidence) and the forthcoming Employer Skills Survey (available in 2012) provide useful information but, arguably, cannot provide the intelligence needed by HEIs in responding fully to the needs of employers and learners within a region. The view of WESB, endorsed by HEFCW's Committees, was that there may be a role for HEIs, working within their regional partnerships in generating some of this information.

21. The Welsh Government is currently developing its approach to LMI and considering the most appropriate way of supporting regional skills observatories, including ensuring the engagement of HEIs. In parallel to these considerations, and in support of HEFCW's regional dimension policy, we will provide support to regional partnerships to improve their joint capacity to produce, interpret and make better use of evidence to inform the planning and delivery of regional provision. Without the explicit prior agreement of the Welsh Government we would not welcome proposals for any further employer surveys or the development of additional LMI websites.
22. In providing this support we will be looking for opportunities to build capacity in learning and teaching, and innovation and engagement, operations, as well as opportunities for synergy between them. The focus will be on the interpretation of qualitative intelligence, alongside known quantitative information, that might be available to regional partnerships. We will establish a pan-Wales steering group to monitor developments and ensure alignment with moves by the Welsh Government to make available better sources of quantitative data (LMI).
23. We are inviting regions to submit plans for the improvement of capacity in this respect, with funding of £50k to be provided per region, over one year. A template is provided at **Annex C**. Funding will only be released on receipt of a satisfactory plan for this activity (one per region). Plans will be assessed against the following criteria:
  - The alignment of planned activity with, and the extent to which it will inform the delivery of, the regional strategy;
  - Plans for delivery (e.g. new appointments, regional employer events, etc) including SMART interim targets and deliverables;
  - The extent to which institutional expertise and information (e.g. learning and teaching; innovation and engagement) is being utilised;
  - The use and interpretation of external sources of intelligence and alignment with other related developments (e.g. Welsh Government LMI developments; and through the involvement of external bodies (e.g. SSCs, Careers Wales) as appropriate);
  - Anticipated outcomes and impacts, including SMART measures; and

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<sup>5</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/about/aboutresearch/social/latestresearch/?lang=en>

- The sustainability of the capacity beyond the one-year HEFCW funding period, drawing on the capacity and expertise of the Welsh Government, Careers Wales and other ongoing LMI developments.
24. Should HEFCW not be satisfied with the plans that are submitted, and in the context of discussions with the Welsh Government regarding LMI developments in Wales, we reserve the right to revisit the allocation of funding through this process.
25. Please submit your plans by 30 November 2011. Plans will be assessed based on the above requirements.

### **Proposals for shared services developments**

26. In line with the Minister's expectation that shared services should continue to be carried forward, we have allocated total funding of up to £300k in 2011/12 to facilitate shared services developments that are best achieved on a regional basis. In order to access this funding, we invite each region to submit proposals for the sharing of services on a regional basis, taking account of work completed by Higher Education Wales. Regions should use the proposal template provided at **Annex D**.
27. Proposals will need to provide:
- Evidence, based on the regional strategy, of the need for the proposed shared services developments;
  - Evidence of alignment with the objectives of the regional strategy;
  - Evidence of the extent to which the shared services developments will meet *For our Future* and HEFCW Corporate Strategy priorities;
  - An evaluation of alternatives (cost-benefit analysis);
  - Confirmation of the additional sources of funding to support the proposed developments, including institutional contributions;
  - Confirmation of the cost savings to be delivered by the shared services developments, including how these may be re-deployed to sustain services in the medium-term;
  - Outcomes for the planned developments, including SMART measures; and
  - Plans for the delivery of the shared services developments, including SMART interim targets and deliverables.
28. Proposals should be submitted by 30 November 2011. Proposals will be assessed based on the above requirements.
29. Regions may also wish to note that we are in discussion with the North and Mid Wales region regarding arrangements for 2010/11 Regional Initiatives Funding awarded for the development of the CADARN Learning Portal. It is our intention that once this portal is established, there will be the opportunity to roll the development out to other regions. We hope to contact regions in due course to discuss this further.

## Reports on progress in 2010/11

30. We expect regions to submit a narrative report (one per region) on work undertaken to deliver against the initial regional strategy in 2010/11. These documents should cover progress against each of the areas of the regional strategy and report on the achievement of the SMART outcomes identified for 2010/11. In line with the 2011-12 HEFCW remit letter requirement that we report to the Minister on utilising research and evidence to inform future action for widening access with particular emphasis on part-time, employer focussed provision, we would expect reports to highlight, in particular, work undertaken to engage with employers in the region. Progress reports should be no more than 10 sides of A4 in length and should be submitted by 31 October 2011.

## Strategy outcome statements

31. We expect regions to submit strategy outcome statements (one per region) providing detail on operational aspects associated with the revised strategy document. A template for the strategy outcome statement is provided at **Annex E**. Institutions may wish to note that, unlike the strategy documents, it is not intended that strategy outcome statements will be made publicly available.
32. The strategy outcome statement will need to provide SMART outcomes for the activities planned to support delivery of the regional strategy in 2011/12, to illustrate what is to be achieved by the end of the academic year. The strategy outcome statement should also provide SMART outcomes, linked to the overarching aims and objectives of the revised strategy, for the end of the three-year planning period in 2013/14.

## Submission of regional strategies, action plans and proposals

33. The regional strategies, and associated narrative report and strategy outcome statement, (one of each of these documents per region) should be submitted to Craig Brett, [craig.brett@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:craig.brett@hefcw.ac.uk) by 31 October 2011. One copy of each of these documents should be submitted electronically, with a signed hard copy submitted in parallel.
34. Plans for the development of improved capacity to produce LMI and proposals for shared services developments (one of each of these documents per region) should be submitted to Craig Brett, [craig.brett@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:craig.brett@hefcw.ac.uk) by 30 November 2011. One copy of the plan and proposal should be submitted electronically, with signed hard copies submitted in parallel.