

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Consultation: Developing the HEFCW Part-time Higher Education Action Plan 2012-13 to 2015-16

Date: 25 April 2013
Reference: W13/12HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales,
Principals of further education colleges in Wales and other
interested parties
Response by: 13 June 2013
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This circular sets out for consultation HEFCW’s draft Part-time Higher Education Action Plan 2013-14 to 2015-16 and it seeks to engage higher education institutions, directly funded further education institutions and other interested parties, including those with an interest in equality and diversity issues, in its further development.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please telephone us on (029) 2068 2225 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



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Introduction

1. This circular sets out for consultation HEFCW's draft Part-time Higher Education Action Plan 2013-14 to 2015-16 and it seeks to engage higher education institutions, further education institutions and other interested parties, including those with an interest in equality and diversity issues, in its further development.
2. The HEFCW Part-time Higher Education Action Plan (Action Plan) is in early draft form to enable us to take account of the consultation and engagement responses we receive.

Background

3. *For our Future: the 21st Century Strategy and Plan for Wales* and HEFCW's Corporate Strategy set out the Welsh Government's and HEFCW's commitment to part-time higher education¹.
4. In response to our 2011-12 remit letter we submitted to the Welsh Government, in March 2012, a report on part-time employer-focussed provision and progression from further education.
5. The report, as requested by the Welsh Government, focussed largely on issues of part-time employer-focussed provision and progression from further education. However, we recognised that this provision is only one aspect of a diverse higher education (HE) offer and the report's initial findings and conclusions considered all part-time provision and markets, as many of the same characteristics and issues are common and cross-cutting. Our report set out our future actions, including the development of an action plan articulating our strategic intentions for part-time provision in Wales.
6. The Welsh Government invited us to publish our report following the Minister's response to it and in April 2012 we published:
 - *Widening Access to Higher Education: Part-time employer-focussed provision in higher education and progression from further education* report;
 - The report's underpinning evidence and data;
 - *Employer Engagement with Part-time Education by Oldbell3*; and
 - The Minister's response to our report².
7. In February and March 2013 the Welsh Government published statements setting out the terms of reference of the on-line digital learning working group and on higher education part-time undergraduate support³. The on-

¹ Both documents are available on our website [Corporate documents](#)

² www.hefcw.ac.uk/policy_areas/widening_access/part_time_provision.aspx

³ Welsh Government Statements on [on-line digital learning](#) and on [higher education part-time undergraduate support](#)

line digital learning group's remit includes advising Welsh Government on the extent to which technological development may provide a platform to increase participation in part-time and full-time higher education, again in a period of constrained public spending. The HE part-time undergraduate support statement confirms that the Welsh Government will work closely with key stakeholders on the implementation of the proposed changes to the student support system for 2014/15.

8. HEFCW's 2013-14 remit letter reiterates that part-time higher education continues to be a priority for the Welsh Government and the expectation that HEFCW will implement its action plan '*alongside innovative approaches to the following issues:*
 - *How to incentivise part-time study for postgraduates, employer-led courses and bite-sized provision;*
 - *Alternative models for the provision of part-time study e.g. the FE sector providing more HE courses in collaboration with employers and the HE sector;*
 - *Promotion of best practice.*⁴
9. We are consulting on the draft Action Plan now, to align it with our Corporate Strategy 2013-14 to 2015-16. We acknowledge the challenges of developing the Action Plan in the current climate.
10. We recognise fully the UK environmental factors impacting on part-time provision and the current downward trends in both part-time provision and demand from students and employers. This position is evidenced by data including our monitoring of our Corporate Strategy 2010-11 to 2013-14 part-time target which indicates that it is unlikely to be met⁵.
11. Our planning will also need to take account of changes in the fees and funding arrangements for part-time students in Wales and the rest of the UK.

Developing the initial draft Part-time Higher Education Action Plan 2013-14 to 2015-16

12. The initial draft Action Plan is attached as **Annex A** and it includes actions set out in our March 2012 report to the Minister, the priorities identified in the Minister's April 2012 response and in HEFCW's 2013-14 remit letter. It also takes account of commitments made in, and the current development of, the *Agreement on Skills and Employability in Wales* developed by HEFCW, Higher Education Wales (HEW), CBI Wales and NUS Wales.⁶

⁴ [HEFCW's Remit letter 2013-14.](#)

⁵ HEFCW's Corporate Strategy part-time target: *The total number of part-time students studying 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.*

⁶ [Agreement on Skills and Employability in Wales.](#)

Involving our stakeholders

13. Our commitment to equality and diversity extends beyond our statutory responsibilities⁷. To inform our understanding of the nature of, and trends in, under-representation in higher education (HE), we work with partners to ensure our policies and practices take account of the needs of individuals under-represented in HE, including individuals with protected characteristics.
14. To contribute to our EIA process more generally contact us at equality@hefcw.ac.uk.
15. In responding to this consultation, we would welcome your advice in relation to equality issues and more broadly. Specifically, but not exclusively, it would be helpful to receive advice on:
 - The extent to which the Action Plan will contribute to Welsh Government part-time study-related expectations? If more could be done, please advise us.
 - The extent to which the identified actions will support the sector to improve part-time higher education opportunities and meet the Action Plan's measurable outcome? If there are gaps in the Action Plan, please advise us.
 - Whether there are additional innovative approaches we should consider and, if so, how might we implement and monitor them?
 - Whether there are any aspects of the Action Plan, or its implementation that might impact negatively, or have unintended consequences for, individuals with protected characteristics or individuals under-represented in higher education?
 - Are there any equality and diversity, sustainability, or Welsh medium issues that should be considered further in developing the draft Action Plan?

Consultation responses

16. Responses should be sent to Rachel O'Gorman rachel.ogorman@hefcw.ac.uk by **Thursday 13 June 2013**.

⁷ We must assess the impact of our policy implementation on individuals with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex and sexual orientation). See [2010 Equality Act](#).

Further information / responses to

17. 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).

HEFCW’s Draft Part-time Higher Education Action Plan 2013-14 to 2015-16

The draft **Part-time Higher Education Action Plan** identifies **priorities** for HEFCW and Welsh HEIs, working collaboratively with partners, to contribute to our Corporate Strategy and Welsh Government expectations, as set out in the Minister for Education and Skills’ response to our report (April 2012) and our remit letter 2013-14.

Action Plan Measureable outcome	The percentage change in the number of part-time students attending higher education in Welsh higher education institutions and further education institutions to be equal to, or greater than, the comparable figure for the UK.¹
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Number / Priority	Activity	Our partners	Due date	Current status*
Policy development and implementation				
1.	implement the actions set out in the Welsh Government’s Written Statement on HE Part-time Undergraduate Support (March 2013) and remit letters from 2013-14. ² <u>outputs:</u> i. subsidise the delivery costs of part-time courses in 2013/14; ii. implement proposed changes to the student support system for 2014/15; iii. HEIs to exercise restraint in setting of part-time tuition fees;	Welsh Government, HEIs	March 2013. 2014/15 loans to be available to eligible students	
2.	implement Welsh Government’s policy expectations in relation to how technological developments may provide a platform to increase participation in part-time HE , following advice submitted to it by the Online Digital Learning Working Group. (Welsh Government Written Statement and Terms of Reference February 2013). ³ <u>outputs:</u> iv. work closely with and provide advice and information to the Working Group and/or Welsh Government, as requested;	Welsh Government and HEIs	subject to policy development. March 2013 Welsh Government Online Digital Learning Working Group work begins. September 2013 to submit its advice	

¹ HEFCW draft Corporate Strategy 2013-14 to 2015-16 proposed part-time study measure, yet to be confirmed by Welsh Government.

² <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2013/heparttimesupport/?lang=en>

³ <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2013/onlinedigitallearning/?lang=en>

Number / Priority	Activity	Our partners	Due date	Current status*
			submitted to Welsh Government	
Promote part-time study to exploit opportunities that arise from the new part-time support packages				
3.	consult on and begin implementation of the HEFCW Part-time Study Action Plan , taking account of the Welsh Government response to HEFCW report. ⁴ <u>outputs:</u> v. consult on draft HEFCW Part-time Study Action Plan; vi. publish consultation responses and revise the Action Plan;	HEIs, NUS Wales and other interested parties	Action Plan consultation April to June 2013	
4.	continue to analyse sector progress against our Corporate Strategy 2010-11 - 2012-13 part-time measure. <u>outputs:</u> vii. report progress against Corporate Strategy measures in HEFCW Annual Report;		annually up to 2012/13 data	
5.	implement the HEFCW Corporate Strategy part-time measure for 2013-14 to 2015-16 and assess sector progress. <u>outputs:</u> viii. report progress against Corporate Strategy measures in HEFCW Annual Report;		annually from 2013/14	
6.	progress the <i>HEFCW Skills and Employability Agreement</i> and monitor sector progress. <u>outputs:</u> ix. develop the Skills and Employability Action Plan for Wales;	HEW, CBI,	from March 2013	
7.	consider, and contribute as appropriate to the UCAS national part-time applications portal developments. <u>outputs:</u> x. UCAS to publish statement on the feasibility of a part-time applications portal;	UCAS, funding bodies HEIs	on-going	
8.	fund the Cadarn learning portal. <u>outputs:</u> xi. fund portal development, monitoring and implementation;	North and Mid Wales Regional Strategy Group	July 2015 – delivery of the Portal.	

⁴ HEFCW report: [Widening Access: employer-focussed provision and progression from further education to higher education](#) (March 2012)

Number / Priority	Activity	Our partners	Due date	Current status*
9.	provide guidance and technical support to institutions to ensure delivery of new bilingual Key Information Sets (KIS) . <u>outputs:</u> xii. all Welsh HEIs to make progress with bilingual Key Information Set data for full- and part-time provision;	UK partners, HEIs	Unistats website live from September 2013	
10.	develop arrangements to ensure prospective and current students as well as graduates have access to high quality information and guidance services . <u>outputs:</u> xiii. finalise formal agreement between HEFCW and Careers Wales (Careers Choices Dewis Gyrfa);	WHECS, Careers Wales	from April 2013	
Provide clarity on HEFCW's future funding intentions for part-time provision in Wales and communicate those arrangements to stakeholders				
11.	implement HEFCW's funding intentions for part-time study in Wales. <u>outputs:</u> xiv. publish HEFCW circulars;		from April 2013	
12.	clarify and promote the part-time fees and support regime in Wales and its differences from other parts of the UK. <u>outputs:</u> xv. marketing and media communications;		subject to policy developments	
Incentivise part-time study for postgraduates, employer-led courses and bite-sized provision				
13.	assess the effects of the part-time premium . <u>outputs:</u> xvi. report to HEFCW committees to inform policy development;		annually as part of Action Plan reporting	
14.	implement the HEFCW Foundation Degree policy ; and our Widening Access Strategic Approach and Plan . <u>outputs:</u> xvii. deliver HEFCW One Wales Foundation Degree Programme;	HEIs with partners including FEIs	dissemination event at end of <i>One Wales</i> Programme	

Number / Priority	Activity	Our partners	Due date	Current status*
	xviii. dissemination of effective practice in Foundation Degrees; xix. progress towards the HEFCW Corporate Strategy Widening Access measures;		2015	
15.	support the development of collaborative higher level apprenticeships. <u>outputs:</u> xx. higher level apprenticeships developed and opportunities sought for piloting it in selected HEIs across Wales;	Welsh Government, Welsh Government, HEIs, sector employers and SSCs	on-going	
16.	review progression to part-time postgraduate studies, including access to the professions by widening access students. <u>outputs:</u> xxi. seek policy advice from HEFCW committees to inform actions;	UK wide bodies, HEIs	November 2013	
Support alternative models for the provision of part-time study				
17.	implement the HE-related recommendations of the Welsh Government's HE in FE review . <u>outputs:</u> subject to review outcomes, but we will: xxii. ensure our work focuses on creating stronger partnerships between higher education institutions and further education institutions in the delivery of higher education that meets employer skill needs; xxiii. promote effective regional partnerships between higher education institutions and further education institutions; and xxiv. ensure regional strategies reference the delivery of HE in FE and outline arrangements between partners;	Welsh Government, HEW, Colegau Cymru, HEIs, FEIs,	subject to Welsh Government and the review recommendation response	
18.	encourage the development of online resources which support part-time study. <u>outputs:</u> xxv. Take forward the policy statement, developed with partners, to implement OER commitments;	HEW, JISC	on-going	
19.	identify opportunities for partnerships and collaborations to maximise part-time and flexible provision regionally. <u>outputs:</u> xxvi. regional strategy annual statements monitored to identify collaborative actions to support part-time, flexible learning provision;	regional HEI groups	annually through monitoring statements	

Number / Priority	Activity	Our partners	Due date	Current status*
20.	extend and support FE to HE progression opportunities. <u>outputs:</u> xxvii. regional strategy submissions to set out priorities for FE to HE progression taking account of the CQFW Colegau Cymru FE to HE mapping report;	Welsh Government, Colegau Cymru, HEIs and FEIs	annually	
21.	oversee the delivery of the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI) programme and transition to the second phase developments. <u>outputs:</u> xxviii. agree second phase of UHOVI and mainstreaming processes;	Welsh Government, University of South Wales	August 2013 and on-going	
22.	support for a showcasing part-time learning and teaching forum and evidence-based practice in Wales. <u>outputs:</u> xxix. Higher Education Academy and Open University in Wales seminar;	Higher Education Academy, Open University in Wales and HEIs	April 2013	
23.	analyse National Student Survey (NSS) part-time student experience trends. <u>outputs:</u> xxx. NSS part-time student data published annually through the Unistats website;	NSS	annually	
24.	assess the part-time offer at HEIs where provision is buoyant working with those HEIs who can do more to increase provision. <u>outputs:</u> xxxi. monitor and review part-time provision and supply-side forecasts;	HEIs	on-going	
25.	Support the increase in availability and accessibility of Welsh medium online and other flexible learning. <u>outputs:</u> xxxii. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol targets include increasing part time Welsh medium provision, including flexible pathways to facilitate workplace learning; xxxiii. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol commitments include ensuring that part time undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as full time students, can benefit fully from Coleg membership;	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, NUS Wales and Higher Education Wales,	on-going. August 2014 Coleg's Part-time Studies Framework launched. April 2013 part-time model to be agreed with NUS Wales	
26.	ensure widening access provision and regional Reaching Wider Partnerships contribute to	HEIs and RW	October 2013	

Number / Priority	Activity	Our partners	Due date	Current status*
	promoting part-time undergraduate and post-graduate part-time progression. <u>outputs:</u> xxxiv. monitor WA and RW annual statements including outcomes which support part-time learners to and through HE;	Partnerships	and 2014	
27.	continue to monitor UK and Welsh trends in part-time provision. <u>outputs:</u> xxxv. report to HEFCW committees on trends in UK and Welsh part-time provision;		annually	
28.	commission further research and/or evaluations of part-time provision to ensure delivery of Welsh Government expectations. <u>outputs:</u> xxxvi. assess the business case for further research and/or evaluation of part-time-related HE approved by HEFCW;		March 2016	
Monitor and Review Progress				
29.	Monitor progress on delivering the identified actions above. <u>outputs:</u> xxxvii. report to HEFCW committees;		annually	
30.	Review the Action Plan in the light of Welsh Government policy developments with implications for part-time HE, including fees and support. <u>outputs:</u> xxxviii. report to HEFCW committees.		on-going review with annual reporting.	

*A traffic light system will be used to indicate progress

Key to current status	
✓	Completed
	On course for completion by due date
	Issues with the delivery of the task
	No longer applicable