

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Widening Access Strategy Allocations for 2013/14

Date: 21 May 2013
Reference: W13/18HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Response by: No response required
Contact: Name: Jane Johns/Rachel O’Gorman
Telephone: 029 2068 2219/029 2068 2227
Email: jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk
rachel.ogorman@hefcw.ac.uk

This circular provides information on the Widening Access Strategy allocations to higher education institutions for 2013/14 and provides additional information on related policy developments.

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Introduction

1. This circular provides information on the Widening Access Strategy allocations to higher education institutions (HEIs) for 2013/14 and provides additional information on related policy developments.

Background

2. Circulars W10/41HE: Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies 2011/12 to 2013/14: Initial Guidance and W11/17HE Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies 2011/12 to 2013/14: Supplementary Guidance provided guidance on the Strategy submissions¹.
3. Institutions report annually on progress against strategies through the annual monitoring statement process. Further information detailing the arrangements for 2012/13 monitoring will be provided separately, as is our usual practice.
4. Where institutions developed joint Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies, we expect SMART outcomes to be reported separately through the AMS process, to demonstrate progress and success and account for public funding.

Policy and practice developments

5. In this Strategy period, the Widening Access priorities remain as set out in our original Widening Access and Learning and Teaching Strategy guidance. However, since the submission of Institutional Strategies there have been a number of new and emerging policies and priorities which institutions will want to take into account when implementing their Strategies and confirming outcomes for 2013/14 through the AMS process:

HEFCW Corporate Strategy widening access priorities and measures

6. Our Corporate Strategy 2013-14 to 2015-16 has been finalised following sector-wide consultation and Welsh Government approval. The Corporate Strategy sets out the following widening access priorities and four widening access measures to make progress towards Welsh Government policy expectations:

To measure improved access and progression for people in locations where such opportunities are low, including the Heads of the Valleys:

¹ [Initial](#) and [Supplementary](#) guidance

T1 A rise in the proportion of all Welsh domiciled students studying higher education courses at higher education institutions and further education institutions in Wales who are domiciled in the bottom quintile of wards in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation or in Communities First cluster areas, from 20.0% in 2011/12 to 22.4% in 2015/16 (a rise of 11.6%) and

T2 An increase in the proportion of all UK domiciled students studying higher education courses at higher education institutions and further education institutions in Wales who are from UK low participation areas from 33.2% in 2011/12 to 35.3% in 2015/16 (a rise of 6.3%).

To measure the increase in the number of students who successfully complete their learning objectives:

T3 (a) A decrease in the percentage of full-time undergraduate students no longer in higher education following year of entry from 9.2% in 2011/12 to 8.2% in 2015/16 (a drop of 10.7%) and

(b) A decrease in the percentage of part-time first degree students no longer in higher education two years following year of entry from 33.7% in 2011/12 to 30.1% in 2015/16 (a drop of 10.7%)

To measure the extent to which ‘improved part-time learning opportunities are offered’:

T4 The percentage change in the number of part-time students attending higher education courses in Wales higher education institutions and further education institutions to be equal to, or greater than, the comparable figure for the UK.

7. We recognise the downward trend in part-time enrolments in recent years and the challenges to the sector this presents. In our remit letter 2013-14, the Minister for Education and Skills noted his concern about declining part-time enrolments and asked us to work with the sector to address issues of part-time study, including in the areas of part-time postgraduates, employer-led courses and bite-sized provision and alternative models for part-time provision². We expect that widening access strategic developments, within Strategies that include an element of ring-fenced funding for part-time provision, will consider further ways to expand and promote part-time study and to share effective practice.
8. To further support part-time provision we published, in April 2013, a consultation circular on our Part-time Higher Education Action Plan and we would welcome responses by **13 June 2013**³.

² The Minister’s April 2012 [response](#) to HEFCW’s report on part-time employer focussed provision and progression from further education (March 2012) and our report is available on our website.

³ Part-time Higher Education Action Plan consultation [W13/12HE](#).

Funding and implications

9. Since the introduction of the full-time undergraduate (FTUG)/PGCE fees regime in 2012/13, the Welsh Government and HEFCW have been working to ensure the medium- and long-term affordability of HEFCW's current funding commitments, given the increasing fee grant commitment. This work has had implications for budget lines, including the Widening Access Strategy fund.
10. Institutions were informed in February 2013 that, given the movement to greater monitoring and control through the fee plan process, the Widening Access Strategy funding would be reduced by 50% in 2013/14 and then removed in 2014/15. See also circular W13/09HE HEFCW's Funding Allocations 2013/14⁴.
11. We are reviewing institutional reporting requirements with a view to minimising the burden on institutions while maintaining accountability for public funding. As 2013/14 is the last year of the current strategy period, we will inform institutions during this year about future strategic reporting on widening access provision.
12. In the context of student fees and support and with changes to the Careers Wales⁵ remit, institutions will want to ensure that effective information, advice and guidance, including on course qualification requirements, is communicated clearly to students. This will allow informed choices to be made in respect to HE. See the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) and Key Information Sets (KIS) websites for examples of good practice⁶.
13. The Welsh Government's strategy and delivery plan for mental health includes an aim '*to improve support for people with mental health and substance misuse problems in higher education*'. In supporting students with mental health issues or substance misuse problems, universities will want to reflect the principles of *Together for Mental Health* and continue to invest in a range of mental health support services, as appropriate⁷.
14. **The Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Strategy and HEFCW's Child Poverty Strategy**⁸ Our Child Poverty Strategy (March 2012) confirmed that we will manage our contribution to tackling poverty and the eradication of child poverty through our widening access policy area. In particular, we encourage all institutions to maintain their Buttle UK quality mark and to support learners from a care background to and through HE.

⁴ [HEFCW circular W13/09HE](#)

⁵ Careers Wales, has undertaken an internal review and restructuring and is currently in transition from working as six companies to becoming one company: Careers Choices – Dewis Gyrfu Ltd (CCDG).

⁶ www.spa.ac.uk/support/goodpractice/entryprofiles / www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/it/publicinfo/kis/

⁷ [Together for Mental Health – A Strategy for Mental Health and Wellbeing in Wales](#)

⁸ HEFCW's Child Poverty Strategy, circular [W12/11HE](#).

15. **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).** The Welsh Government's Programme of Government identifies a measure for the percentage of EMA recipients progressing to higher education. Institutions will want to consider ways of identifying and tracking EMA recipients from CF areas through its provision and onto HE⁹.

A Widening Access evidence base

16. From January 2013, we provided a grant to Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) for a project to develop a widening access evidence base and impact project. This work, match-funded by an ESRC grant, will include the Reaching Wider Programme, and will inform our understanding of the outcomes and effectiveness of widening access policy and practice, identify and disseminate the most effective indicators of success and suggest how widening access to HE in Wales can be maximised to contribute to national widening access priorities¹⁰. The WISERD project is led by Professor Gareth Rees and project staff will be contacting all HEIs to discuss policy and practice from summer 2013. We hope that your institution will contribute to this Wales-wide project.

Widening Access Strategy allocations 2013/14

17. **Annex A** sets out institutional allocations for 2013/14. The total sum available for Widening Access Strategies for 2013/14 is **£2,645,416**. This represents a reduction of 50% on its 2012/13 budget line, as noted above. As in 2012/13, no floors or ceilings have been applied to the allocations. The notes in **Annex B** provide further information.
18. Widening Access Strategy funding is comprised of a widening access element (**£949,816**) and a part-time student element (**£1,695,600**). *In locating the part-time funding within the Widening Access Strategy funding we are ring-fencing it to be used solely to support widening access for part-time students¹¹*. Both funding streams should be used for the purposes for which they were intended and as set out in our Widening Access Strategy guidance circulars.
19. The Strategy funding methodology remains as in previous years, therefore in 2013/14 we will use the same Communities First area data to calculate funding as in the previous two years of this strategy. However, we recognise that institutions will begin to work in the new cluster areas and implement their exit strategies from former CF areas in 2013/14¹².

⁹ Welsh Government's Programme of Government and progress report can be found at: <http://wales.gov.uk/about/programmeforgov/?lang=en>

¹⁰ www.wiserd.ac.uk

¹¹ See circular [W11/17HE](#) paragraph 37.

¹² See circular [W12/24HE](#)

20. Please note that, as in previous years, and in the light of uncertainties regarding the level of the fee grant commitment, all figures above and allocations set out in **Annex A** are provisional, and are subject to change in-year. We will, of course, inform you of any changes as soon as possible.
21. We recognise that to support widening access developments institutions utilise a range of funding streams including: the Access and Retention Premium, Disabled Students' Premium, the Part-time Students' Premium and other internal and external funding¹³. We would like to understand the funding implications and intended outcomes of institutions' investment in widening access and would appreciate reference to such resources in future AMS reporting. Where fee plan funding is used please indicate this.

2012/13 Annual Monitoring Statement (AMS)

22. As in previous years, we will be sending electronic annual monitoring statements containing individually agreed Widening Access measurable outcomes.
23. The AMS form asks institutions to:
 - Report progress against SMART measurable outcomes for 2012/13;
 - Complete a declaration of expenditure to confirm that the 2012/13 Widening Access Strategy allocation has been fully spent and used for the purposes for which it was provided. This should be signed by the head of the institution; and
 - Provide SMART measurable outcomes and expenditure plans for 2013/14 which will form the basis of next year's AMS. Expenditure for 2012/13 should include Widening Access Strategy funding and funding from other sources, such as fee income.
 - Clearly identify any WA Strategy outcomes that are also fee plan targets.

Payment of Allocations

24. We expect to pay the first tranche of funding for 2013/14 in September 2013 and, subject to the receipt of satisfactory monitoring returns, the second tranche in March 2014.

¹³ The Access and Retention premium and Disability premium for 2013/14 funding have been calculated using data for all part-time students and continuing full-time undergraduate and PGCE students (those not covered by the new tuition fee regime).

Further information

25. 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
Widening Access Strategy Allocations 2013/14¹⁴

Institution	WA strategy funding	Part-time funding	Total
University of South Wales	278,857	448,818	727,675
Aberystwyth University	64,359	44,457	108,816
Bangor University	60,187	30,342	90,529
Cardiff University	91,788	106,374	198,162
University of Wales Trinity Saint David (including Swansea Metropolitan)	121,250	171,352	292,602
Swansea University	93,454	63,560	157,014
Cardiff Metropolitan University	87,927	39,098	127,025
Glyndŵr University	60,554	173,783	234,337
The Open University in Wales	91,440	617,816	709,256
Total	949,816	1,695,600	2,645,416

¹⁴ See the notes in Annex B for further information on the funding model.

Annex B

Widening Access Strategy Allocation Funding Notes

1. A term of our new data sharing contract with Student Loans Company (SLC) means we are unable to publish the breakdown of institutional data. However, the funding formulae and data is available for individual HEIs on request.

Source of widening access data:

2. Communities First, Low Participation and total student numbers are extracted from the HESA 2011/12 student record and confirmed by HEIs as part of the verification process for the access and retention premium 2013/14. The number of students entitled to a full Assembly Learning Grant is taken from the Student Loans Company aggregated data.
3. Suitably eligible students may be counted in one or more of the three categories: Communities First, Low Participation or Assembly Learning Grants.
4. For young full-time undergraduate enrolments - low participation neighbourhoods are those areas in the bottom 40% of areas as defined by POLAR3. For mature full-time undergraduate and all part-time enrolments - low participation neighbourhoods are those areas in the bottom 40% of areas as defined by the proportion of working age adults with HE level qualifications (as measured using Census 2001 data). Young is defined as being aged 20 or under at start of course. Mature is defined as being aged 21 or over at start of course. The vast majority of students entitled to a full Assembly Learning Grant are full-time.

Source of part-time data:

5. The model includes credits for part-time students studying for at least 10 credits. All such part-time students are included and all money is allocated pro-rata.
6. Total credits studied by Communities First, Low Participation and total students are extracted from HESA 2011/12 student record and confirmed by HEIs during the verification process for the access and retention premium 2013/14.
7. Suitably eligible students may be counted in either or both Communities First and Low Participation categories.

8. The majority of students entitled to a full Assembly Learning Grant are full-time, therefore, this element is excluded from the method for allocation.
9. The weighted total is calculated as total credits plus average of Low Participation and Communities First credits. Funding is allocated pro rata to weighted total.