

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Proposed revisions to HEFCW's part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme

Date: 09 May 2014
Reference: W14/17HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Response by: **06 June 2014**
Contact: Name: Steve Williams
Telephone: 029 2068 2285
Email: steven.williams@hefcw.ac.uk

This consultation outlines proposed revisions to HEFCW's part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme. The proposed revisions to the scheme relate to the eligibility of potential students in light of new funding arrangements for part-time study from Welsh Government.

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. HEFCW's part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme offers a fee remission for students who are unemployed and actively seeking work or are in receipt of Department for Work and Pensions benefits.
2. This circular proposes revisions to the eligibility of new students accessing this scheme in light of new funding arrangements for part-time study from Welsh Government and invites responses to a consultation on these changes.

Background

3. The part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme has been established since 1999. It was designed to act as an instrument to promote social justice and assist more people to obtain higher level qualifications.
4. The scheme is part of a package of measures aimed at widening access to higher education. It will be independent of existing schemes offered by HE institutions or other bodies to support students, for example schemes funded from institutions' general resources or hardship funds.
5. The current scheme is available to eligible students studying on an acceptable course as set out in the [W13/17HE: HEFCW Part Time Undergraduate Fee Waiver Scheme](#) circular. The scheme is not open to students who have previously accessed higher education unless they intend to top-up their qualification (HND/C, Foundation Degree etc.) to a full degree. The maximum level of funding that can be claimed for any student in an academic year is either the full cost of the course, or £1200, whichever is lower. Students may study at any intensity providing they meet the definition of part-time as set out in HEFCW's [W13/28HE: End of Year Monitoring of Higher Education Enrolments 2012/13](#) circular.

New Welsh Government funding arrangements

6. From 2014/15 Welsh Government will introduce a loans system which will allow new part-time entrants from all backgrounds equality of access to higher education, providing they are not already graduates and are studying at or above 25% FTE. The non-means tested maximum amount available through the loans system will be £2,265 (75% of £3,500) per year.
7. Continuing students will not be eligible for a loan and will still be required to either self-fund or apply to other funding sources. The Welsh Government's means-tested Part-Time Fee Grant will remain available to continuing students but is broadly aimed at those studying at an intensity of at least 50% intensity (courses must be completed in no more than twice the time it would take to complete the full-time equivalent). The maximum

grant available in 2013/14 was £1,025 - lower than the maximum HEFCW Fee Waiver.

8. Any new student who wishes to study below 25% intensity (less than 30 credits) will be ineligible for the new loan system. In 2012/13 the majority of students accessing HEFCW's fee waiver, 67.7% (756), were studying at less than 25% intensity.

Proposed revisions to the part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme

9. As described above, the introduction of the new student finance fee loans system in 2014/15 will enable all new eligible part-time students, studying at or above 25% intensity to have access to financial support for higher education. It is therefore proposed that HEFCW's part-time fee waiver scheme is amended to provide financial support for certain groups of students not eligible for the Welsh Government's loans system.
10. The following will form the basis of a revised fee waiver scheme available from 2014/15:
 - a) Funding will not be available for new students studying at or above 25% intensity as they will have finance available through the loans system.
 - b) We will retain the fee waiver scheme for continuing eligible students, regardless of intensity of study and new eligible students studying below 25% intensity as these groups are both barred from the fee loans system.
11. The proposed revised fee waiver scheme will retain the current eligibility criteria for students and courses to ensure that its aim of widening access to disadvantaged groups continues to be met.
12. The maximum funding available to students studying below 25% intensity would be lowered to £875 per annum but remain at a maximum of £1,200 for continuing students.
13. Continuing students studying at or above 25% intensity will need to make their initial application for funding to the Welsh Government's Fee Grant Scheme. If a continuing student is in receipt of a fee grant but it is insufficient to cover the full cost of fees that year they will be eligible to a top-up from the fee waiver if they meet the eligibility criteria. However, they can only claim up to £1,200 in total combined from both schemes. For example, if their fees are £1,300 and they receive the maximum fee grant of £1,025, they may apply for an additional £175 from HEFCW's scheme. They will need to self-finance any amount above £1,200.
14. Higher education institutions and further education colleges are invited to comment on the proposed new part-time fee waiver scheme. Should there be any unintended consequences of the revisions to the scheme,

particularly in reference to HEFCW's social justice objectives for providing this scheme, please could they be brought to our attention.

Responses

15. Please could you provide your responses to Steve Williams, (tel 029 2068 2285; email steven.williams@hefcw.ac.uk) by **Friday 6 June 2014**.

Assessing the impact of our policies

- 16 In responding to this consultation, we would welcome your advice in relation to equality issues and more broadly. Are there any equality and diversity, sustainability or Welsh language issues that should be considered further in the revision of the part-time fee waiver scheme?
- 17 We will be carrying out an equality impact assessment (EIA) to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We will also consider the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the higher education sector in Wales. Any comments we receive from you will help us inform this assessment. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about EIAs.