

Revised guidance on student charters

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Noddir gan
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Introduction

1. This circular provides revised guidance on developing Student Charters. It applies to all regulated and /or funded institutions. Students of franchise higher education (HE) in further education (FE) provision will be covered by the franchising higher education institutions' (HEI) Charter.
2. Institutions and Students' Unions (SUs) will need to work in partnership to communicate effectively in order to ensure students are aware of the revised guidance and how their interests are protected. They must also ensure that the revised student charter is accessible to the whole student body.
3. Institutions and SUs will need to take account of this guidance in their 2019/20 Student Charter and onwards.

Student Charters

4. We expect all regulated and funded institutions to have a Student Charter or equivalent document in place. Institutions and their SU may choose to call it something else, eg Partnership Agreement, but for ease of reference we will refer to it as the 'Student Charter' throughout this circular. It is not a legal document, but should set out the mutual expectations, rights and responsibilities of institutions and their students.
5. The Student Charter should be a high level partnership document which is applicable to the diverse body of students¹, including those with protected characteristics. It should provide signposts and links to more detailed information, such as regulations, student support, and course information.
6. HE institutions should have a single Student Charter covering all of their students and staff, including those undertaking HE study at FE institutions via franchise partnerships. They should include a diverse range of students, including student representatives and SU officers as well as institutional staff from franchise partnerships in the development and review of the Charter to ensure that it is relevant to all of their students.
7. FEIs with more than one franchise partner will need to ensure each set of students is aware of the HEI Charter which applies to them; they may also invite students to be aware of any Charter specific to, and developed by, the FEI.
8. FEIs should develop a Charter regardless of the number of HE credits covered under their Fee and Access Plan. This could be as part of a document covering all the FEI's students, if appropriate. These FEIs may

¹ part-time, full-time, international, European, UK, postgraduate, undergraduate, mature and non-traditional students, and students of franchise HE in FE

also have franchise HE in FE provision, which will be covered by the franchising institution's Charter.²

9. Where a HEI has a complex structure resulting in different expectations across the institution, it should still provide a single Charter covering all students of the institution. The Charter should link to additional information as appropriate, to provide the detail of where expectations vary.
10. The Charter should be reviewed jointly by students, student representatives, SU officers and institutional staff on an annual basis to ensure it is still being used and remains relevant. Both the incoming and outgoing SU officers should be involved in reviewing the Charter, with responsibility for sign off resting with the incoming officers. The review should involve staff who deal directly with students (both teaching and support roles) if substantive changes are being made. Both partners are expected to promote awareness of this document among all their stakeholders.
11. We expect the charter to be provided in a location and in a format which makes it readily accessible by prospective students, should they wish to use it in informing their choice of where to study.

Specific guidance

12. The charter guidance builds on the work of the Student Charter Group (SCG) in England, which produced a report and recommendations for the development of Student Charters in January 2011³. We continue to endorse the recommendations of the SCG, and expect institutions to take account of these in developing their Charter. However, we have adapted these to take account of the needs of students and institutions in Wales.
13. The conclusions and recommendations of the SCG (with references) included that:
 - a) Each institution should have a single Student Charter or similar high level statement, covering all students (undergraduate and postgraduate, taught and research) and all staff, to set out the mutual expectations of universities and students; (3a, 3b(a))
 - b) The Charter should be jointly written by the institution and the SU. It should involve student-facing staff⁴, students and student representatives from the outset; senior staff should demonstrate buy-in at strategic committees; (3a, 6.1)
 - c) The Charter should be short and clear, informing students of what they should be able to expect, what is required of them, and what to do if things do not meet expected standards; (3b(b), 3b(d))
 - d) The Charter should focus on current students; (3a)

² This could be either as part of a document covering all the students of the FE institution, or a specific HE document

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-charter-group-final-report

⁴ ie both teaching and support roles

- e) The Charter should be a summary document, providing signposts and links to more detailed regulations and course information, and should not be a legal contract. It should be as short as possible; it should be accessible to all students and staff; (3a, 6.5)
- f) The Charter should emphasise the importance of belonging to a learning community and the importance of partnership working between staff and students; (3a)
- g) There should be a clear approach for communication and dissemination, to ensure that the whole student body and all staff are informed and engaged, and that awareness of the Charter is not limited to SU representatives and senior staff. The student charter should be communicated in language and ways that meet the needs of the diverse student body. The approach should be continually adapted and the engagement with students used to monitor student opinion (3a, 6.2, 6.4).

14. In addition, we expect Charters for institutions in Wales to include the following:

- A statement that the institution is committed to student well-being and health, including mental health and supporting suicide-safer approaches. There should be a commitment to adopting the [#StepChange](#) and [Suicide-safer Universities](#) frameworks from 2019/20. The statement should provide links, or make reference to further information on the institution's policies and positions, including any current or developing strategy⁵ for well-being and health. In addition, the charters should link to the institution's policies regarding safeguarding, violence against women, domestic violence and sexual abuse, if these sit separately to the well-being and health strategy;
- A high level statement on the institution's responsibilities under the Welsh Language Act and taking account of the Welsh Language Standards. This can include providing opportunities where appropriate for assessing student performance in Welsh, regardless of the language of tuition. The Quality Assurance Agency is in the process of revising its guidelines for institutions on this;
- Signposting to where students may find information on opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh (eg on course web pages);
- A high level statement on the institution's engagement with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, including a link to the Coleg's website;
- A high level statement (or a link to one) on how the student interests are protected, eg in cases where a course or institution ceases to exist⁶;
- A statement (or a link to more detailed information) confirming that the institution complies with their responsibilities under consumer protection law, as set out by the Competition and Markets Authority, including the provision of information on the cost of study;

⁵ FEIs are not required to implement a strategy, but will need to include links to information on their approach to this area

⁶ This could be agreed collectively

- Information on how students can complain about academic matters, including information on any support regarding complaints, and on raising issues with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator;
- Signposting to where students may find information on opportunities for them to study overseas;
- Information on how to contact offices (eg the SU, registry office etc) in relation to relevant elements of the charter;
- A statement regarding the need for the institution to meet its statutory responsibilities regarding equality, diversity, safeguarding, and protected characteristics.

Monitoring the Charter

15. We expect institutions and their SUs to continue to monitor the impact of the guidance annually, as part of the process of updating the student charter. Information on revisions made could be included in annual quality reports produced by institutions.
16. Institutions and SUs should check links periodically to ensure they remain live, and should have processes to enable them to be notified of any links which need to be updated.