

## Council Meeting

*For information*

### Widening Access Programme of Action 2015/16 and 2016/17

Agenda: 19  
**HEFCW/16/84**

Disclosable

**22/09/2016**

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#### 1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on the HEFCW Widening Access Programme of Action 2015/16 and 2016/17.

#### 2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 Widening Access (WA) is a Corporate Strategy strategic theme and we have published additional information on our WA priorities<sup>1</sup>.

- 2.2 HEFCW's 2015-16 remit letter says:

*'It would be helpful if the Council could produce a draft programme of action reflecting the outcomes of that conference by 1 June 2015 for discussion with my officials. I expect the programme of action to set out clearly the work the Council will take forward, together with the HE sector, to ensure that momentum on widening access is maintained.'*

#### 3 Recommendation

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
- i. note progress with the Widening Access Programme of Action.

#### 4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 There are no timing implications for this paper.

#### 5 Council members' interests

- 5.1 No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

#### 6 Further information:

- 6.1 Jane Johns ([jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk))

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<sup>1</sup> See HEFCW's [WA Strategic Approach](#) and [HEFCW's Part-time Higher Education Position Statement](#)

## 7 HEFCW's WA Programme of Action (the WA Programme)

- 7.1 At the HEFCW WA Conference (December 2014) the then Minister for Education and Skills, Huw Lewis, set out his ambitions for WA and challenged the sector to develop this agenda further. The Widening Access Programme of Action, developed through consultation, is our response to this<sup>2</sup>. The 2015-16 remit letter required the draft Programme to be submitted to Welsh Government officials and Council approved the Programme of Action, via delegated authority to the Chief Executive, prior to its submission to the Welsh Government (see Council paper [HEFCW/15/36](#)) in June 2015. While there was no Welsh Government response to the Programme of Action, it was referenced in HEFCW's 2017/18 remit letter in relation to the HE strategy.
- 7.2 The WA Programme sits beneath our [Corporate Strategy](#) and [Widening Access Strategic Approach](#) and describes our actions to deliver the Corporate Strategy widening access outcomes, measures and priorities.
- 7.3 The WA Programme covers the period 2015/16 and 2016/17 to align with the Corporate Strategy period (now extended to 2016-17) recognising that there will be new priorities for HE following the May 2016 Welsh Government election and taking account of recent higher education review outcomes (by Diamond and Hazelkorn).
- 7.4 The WA Programme takes account of the implications of the HE (Wales) Act 2015 which strengthens our regulatory role as our funding role reduces. The WA Programme takes account of such funding constraints and our work to develop fee and access plans.

## 8 WA Programme of Action progress

- 8.1 The WA Programme of Action is attached as **Annex A** and sets out our actions against the following objectives:
- i. Prioritise all-age recruitment from Communities First cluster areas and areas in the bottom quintile of the lower super output areas of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD);
  - ii. Improve participation and success in HE by all-age groups under-represented in higher education, including those from UK low participation areas;
  - iii. Secure and increase articulation and progression pathways into higher education, including FE and HE, HE in FE and to Welsh medium higher education;
  - iv. Promote fair admissions and Wales as the destination of first choice for higher education students from Wales and the UK;
  - v. Prioritise higher-level learning and skills, retention and student success;
  - vi. Increase flexible learning opportunities, including part-time study, workplace learning and technology enhanced learning; and
  - vii. Support widening access approaches to delivering the internationalisation of higher education.

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<sup>2</sup> HEFCW consultation circular on the Widening Access Programme of Action: circular [W15/04HE](#).

- 8.2 While good progress has been made, some actions have been delayed due to the diverting of staff resources to delivering the HE (Wales) Act work, particularly fee and access planning.
- 8.3 A report on the completion of the WA Programme of Action will be brought to Council in 2017 and it will inform our work planning in the new Corporate Strategy period.

## 9 Communications implications

- 9.1 While there are no immediate communications implications arising from this paper, we have published [Widening Access: Delivering for Wales](#), the first of a series of planned widening access publications and, resources permitting, future national conferences will be held.

## 10 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 10.1 HEFCW undertook an impact assessment as we developed the WA Programme. There are no additional implications in this reporting period.

## 11 Risk Assessment

Risk	Action to address risk
Insufficient progress is made to widen access to higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with higher education providers, Reaching Wider Partnerships and partners, to continue to prioritise WA to and through HE.</li> <li>• Assess progress through fee plan monitoring statements, Strategic Planning and Engagement Document (SPED) reporting and the Institutional Risk Review (IRR) process to evaluate progress and inform institutional dialogue.</li> </ul>