

Widening Access Programme of Action
2015/16 and 2016/17
Final progress report
November 2017



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government

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

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Widening Access Programme of Action (WA Programme) was developed at the request of the Welsh Government¹. It sets out HEFCW's response to a challenge from the then Minister for Education and Skills for universities to do more to widen access to higher education.
- 1.2 The Widening Access Programme was submitted to the Welsh Government in June 2015 to contribute to delivering the Welsh Government's widening access policies and priorities, including as set out in the Higher Education Policy Statement². The WA Programme was our response to the then Minister of Education and Skills' expectations and it describes how we work with our partners to secure HEFCW's Corporate Strategy widening access-related outcomes³.

2 HEFCW's policy context

- 2.1 Our WA Programme, and its implementation, taking account of the policy context above, covers the period 2015/16 and 2016/17 and aligns with our Corporate Strategy.
- 2.2 At the time of submitting the WA Programme to the Welsh Government we recognised that we had developed it before a number of key policies were published, including:
 - before the Welsh Government commissioned the *Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements*⁴ reported;
 - before the *Higher Education (Wales) Act*'s⁵ supplementary guidance, including on fee and access plans, was finalised and;
 - in advance of developing our new Corporate Strategy to begin in 2017/18.
- 2.3 The implementation of the WA Programme was designed, as far as possible, to take account of emerging policy positions.
- 2.4 As the WA Programme supports our Corporate Strategy and Strategic Approach to Widening Access,⁶ it should be read in relation to these documents.
- 2.5 Our Corporate Strategy (extended to 2016-17) establishes widening access as one of five strategic themes contributing to enhancing social justice and a

¹ Welsh Government request to HEFCW (autumn 2014) and [HEFCW 2015-16 remit letter](#)

² Welsh Government [Policy Statement on Higher Education](#).

³ HEFCW [Corporate Strategy](#)

⁴ [Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements](#) (Diamond Review)

⁵ [Higher Education \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

⁶ HEFCW [Widening Access Strategic Approach](#)

buoyant economy. The Corporate Strategy provides our widening access measures and the areas we monitor (see Appendix A).

- 2.6 HEFCW's Strategic Approach to Widening Access aligns with our Strategic Approach to the Student Experience⁷ and Child Poverty Strategy⁸. It should be read in conjunction with these documents and understood within the broader context of existing and emerging strategic developments, including as set out in relevant fee planning documents, our Strategic Equality Plan,⁹ the Agreement on Skills and Employability for Wales,¹⁰ and our Part-time Higher Education Position Statement.¹¹
- 2.7 The WA Strategic Approach provides a fuller picture of our strategic intentions. In it we set out HEFCW's definition of widening access, including 'hard to reach' students. This definition is provided below.
- 2.8 The WA Programme promotes a clear understanding of our widening access interventions by describing how we will deliver our strategic aims to support people of all ages to, through and beyond higher education. It sets out how we will work with our partners, listed in **Appendix B**.

3 HEFCW's definition and aim of widening access

- 3.1 'Widening access to and through higher education' is the term we use in Wales to define our strategic intentions in this policy area and frame our strategic objectives. We recognise that other parts of the UK use different terms, which prioritise different WA priorities.
- 3.2 The aim of widening access is to secure inclusion, progression and success in higher education to enable learners across all age ranges and backgrounds, who face the highest social and economic barriers, to fulfil their potential as students, lifelong learners, citizens and employees.

'Hard to reach' individuals and groups

- 3.3 HEFCW is committed to engaging the hardest to reach individuals and securing their progression to and through higher-level learning. We recognise that defining 'hard to reach' is challenging. We consider 'hard to reach' would include individuals and groups: based in Communities First cluster areas; the bottom quintile of the lower super output areas of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD); low participation neighbourhoods; workless households; those families experiencing 'in work poverty'; pupils in receipt of Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), pupils eligible for free school meals; carers or those with a care background; ex-offenders.

⁷ [Strategic Approach to the Student Experience](#)

⁸ [Child Poverty Strategy](#).

⁹ [Strategic Equality Plan](#)

¹⁰ [Agreement on Skills and Employability for Wales](#)

¹¹ [Part time Higher Education Position Statement](#)

4 Developing the Programme of Action

- 4.1 In developing the WA Programme, we were advised by our Student Experience Teaching and Quality Committee and we took account of [responses](#) to our consultation on the WA Programme.

5 Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 We are committed to advancing equality and diversity agendas. In addition to meeting our statutory responsibilities, our intention is to drive cultural change and proactive approaches to ensure that equality and diversity issues are fully integrated into our own and universities' policies and practices and to meet Welsh Government priorities.
- 5.2 We undertook an initial screening to assess the impact of our Widening Access Strategic Approach to ascertain whether there are any unintended consequences for, or negative impacts on, individuals with protected characteristics. Our Widening Access Programme of Action is linked to the Widening Access Approach and our consultation on the Programme invited respondents to comment specifically on any aspects, including implementation, which might have negative impacts or unintended consequences in relation to equality and diversity, sustainability and/or Welsh medium issues. No concerns were raised in the consultation responses.

6 Progress with the WA Programme of Action

- 6.1 The current status of progress with tasks ins as follows:

Key to current status of Programme of Action activities	
✓	Completed
	On course for completion by 2016/17 or an ongoing task extending to and beyond 2016/17
	Potential issues with the delivery of the task or task will not be delivered by due date but will be partially completed by the end of 2016/17
	Issues with the delivery of the task – task will not be completed by the end of 2016/17 or task unable to be completed due to changes of policy or resources

WIDENING ACCESS PROGRAMME OF ACTION
2015/16 to 2016/17
to secure inclusion, progression and success in higher education

1. 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)

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities:	activities ¹² with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activity update – at November 2017	Status
Remit letter 2015-16	1.	continue a strategic approach to encourage and incentivise universities and their partners to raise educational aspirations and achievement among communities that have traditionally been under-represented in HE particularly Communities First areas;	1. Implement the Widening Access Strategic Approach and Programme of Action to deliver the Corporate Strategy widening access-related commitments ; (ongoing)	HEFCW officers reported progress to HEFCW's Student Opportunities and Achievement Committee (SOAC) on WA priorities January 2016. Final report to SOAC November 2017.	✓
WA Approach A1	2.	broker effective engagement with Communities First cluster structures;	2. Align widening access objectives and delivery to the Communities First Outcomes Framework priorities on: supporting young people to do well at school; supporting families to be engaged in their children's education and lifelong learning in communities ¹³ ; (ongoing).	HEFCW's Reaching Wider Programme aligned to Communities First (CF). All 2016/17 fee and access plans reference CF, nine 2017/18 fee and access plans reference CF and 7 2018/19 plans reference CF. In 2017, the Welsh Government announced that it was phasing out the CF programme from March 2018. Some £6m legacy funding would be available to 2020. Communities for Work would continue to be supported.	✓

¹² Activities listed will contribute to more than one strategic priority but they are not duplicated unnecessarily throughout the WA Programme.

¹³ See Welsh Government Communities First Guidance, Appendix 5.

WA Approach A2	3.	ensure fee plan targets prioritise Communities First and bottom quintile of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) communities;	3. Agree, with Welsh Government Communities First (CF) officials, and implement actions to improve communication and engagement with Communities First cluster structures; (Dec 2015)	The Reaching Wider Programme prioritises CF areas during the Partnerships 2014/15 to 2016/17 strategy period and 2017/18 extension period. All 2016/17 fee and access plans prioritised CF. Nine 2017/18 fee and access plans included actions to support individuals from CF clusters.	✓
			Approve 2016/17 fee plans that prioritise widening access and other key Corporate Strategy measures; (July 2015) Develop, consult on and publish 2017/18 fee and access plan guidance; (Feb 2016)	2016/17 fee plans approved July 2016 2017/18 fee and access plan guidance published circular W16/12HE . 2017/18 fee and access plans, first plans under the Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015 approved August 2017. 2018/19 fee and access plan guidance published circular W17/06HE . 2018/19 fee and access plans approved July 2017.	✓
WA Approach A3	4.	with partners, measure the sector's commitment to reducing the attainment gap, improving access and progression for people in locations where such opportunities are low against all-age targets related to Communities First clusters and the bottom quintile of the WIMD learners, including the Heads of the Valley's area, as defined in our Corporate Strategy;	4. Monitor progress towards Community First and WIMD Corporate Strategy measures; (ongoing)	Progress monitored through Corporate Strategy measures and report annually in HEFCW's report to Welsh Government	✓
			Support the three, regional Reaching Wider Partnerships' engagement with schools, colleges and communities in Communities First and WIMD areas; (ongoing)	Reaching Wider Partnership Strategies funded 2015/16 and 2016/17 and for a strategy extension period in 2017/18. Progress assessed through annual monitoring statements.	✓

WA Approach A4	5.	support the Welsh Government's education and training strategic priorities, including those set out in its Programme for Government, HE Policy Statement for Higher Education, Tackling Poverty Strategy, Child Poverty Strategy and Refugee Inclusion Strategy;	5. Audit and publish practice on supporting refugees and asylum seekers to, through and beyond higher education to contribute to the Welsh Government's Refugee Inclusion Strategy Action Plan ; (Dec 2015) Align HEFCW's Child Poverty Strategy with Welsh Government Tackling Poverty commitments; (July 2016)	Practice audited. Universities, including Cardiff, Aberystwyth and UW Trinity Saint David, have announced additional support for refugees and asylum seekers since the audit. Two 2018/19 fee and access plans reference refugee and asylum seeker support: Cardiff University and Cardiff Metropolitan.	✓
				Child Poverty Strategy to be reviewed and updated once HEFCW's new Corporate Strategy from 2017-18 is approved by Welsh Government.	

2. Improve participation and success in HE by all-age groups under-represented in higher education, including those from UK low participation areas

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	Activities update at November 2017	Status
WA Approach A5	6.	encourage universities to: monitor and take action to ameliorate differences in selection, attainment or retention patterns; develop appropriate student support mechanisms; and disseminate effective practice to support under-represented groups in HE;	<p>6. Support fair access, including contextualised admissions processes, to enable all students with potential to succeed in higher education; (ongoing)</p> <p>Support, with Universities Wales, the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) and Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) programme, including representing Welsh sector on steering/funding groups; (Dec 2015; July 2016 and ongoing)</p>	<p>HEFCW supports and promotes fair access through the Reaching Wider Programme, fee and access plans, fee and access plan annual monitoring and strategic planning and engagement document (SPEDs) monitoring.</p> <p>ECU supported and HEFCW representation on ECU Board. SPA now likely to become a Centre for Excellence in fair admissions following end of UCAS support in September 2017. HEFCW has met annually with ECU CEO and SPA Director.</p>	✓
Remit letter 15-16	7.	provide assistance to institutions as they develop discretionary hardship fund options;	<p>7. Audit hardship fund provision in universities and its promotion to students; (March 2016)</p> <p>Assess hardship fund audit outcomes to inform further development of funding options; (March 2016)</p>	Audit report completed to provide baseline data for comparison with fee and access plan investment. HEFCW fee and access plan guidance requested student support information, including hardship support. 2017/18 and 2018/19 plans require institutions to set out the proportion of plan funding to be invested in financial support and to describe the provision.	✓
WA Approach A6	8.	review HEFCW's Child Poverty Strategy;	8. Refresh and publish HEFCW's Child Poverty Strategy following the publication of Welsh Government's educational attainment of looked after children strategy; (July 2016)	New Child Poverty Strategy to be updated in line with Corporate Strategy from 2017-18. See update above (number 5).	

WA Approach A7	9	promote the Buttle UK framework and effective practice in supporting looked after children and care leavers;	9. Encourage universities to maintain and go beyond commitments to the Buttle UK quality framework for looked after children and care leavers, in line with our published statement ; (ongoing)	All 2018/19 fee and access plans include support for care leavers. Reaching Wider Partnerships prioritise looked after children and encourage progression to HE. Welsh HE providers have established the CLASS Cymru network to support care leavers, HEFCW is represented on this group.	✓
Remit letter 2015-16	10	work with institutions as they consider the implications of changes to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) for English domiciled students;	10. Revise current guidance on the Disabled Students Allowance changes as they impact on universities in Wales, taking account of the Welsh Government's review of Disabled Students' Allowances policy in Wales ¹⁴ ; (March 2016)	Welsh Government has established DSA Stakeholder Group. HEFCW was not invited to be represented. Welsh Government has undertaken a DSA consultation. HEFCW was interviewed by DSA consultants in summer 2017. The consultation outcomes are not yet known. HEFCW is awaiting further Welsh Government guidance before updating its guidance.	

¹⁴ [W14/43HE](#)

3. Secure and increase articulation and progression pathways into higher education, including FE and HE, HE in FE and to Welsh medium higher education

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities:	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	Activity update at November 2017	Status
Remit letter 2015-16	11	consider what actions ...[universities] might take to ensure young people from deprived areas have the opportunity of HE promoted to them proactively;	11.Support universities to promote higher education opportunities to schools and colleges; (ongoing)	The focus of 2017/18 and 2018/19 fee and access plans includes promotion of HE. Reaching Wider Partnerships promote HE with and to further education colleges and to schools, parents and communities	✓
Remit letter 2015-16	12	support local partners in raising the aspiration of young people;	12.Monitor the Reaching Wider Programme to ensure it promotes higher education through Wales-wide engagement with schools, colleges, families and other parties; (Oct 2015;Oct 2016) Promote widening access interventions that support success in the Welsh Baccalaureate and progression to higher education; (ongoing)	Reaching Wider Programme annual monitoring is ongoing. All 2017/18 and 2018/19 fee and access plans reference collaborative work with regional Reaching Wider Partnerships of higher and further education colleges and partners.	✓
WA Approach A9	13	promote collaborative arrangements that deliver coherent regional learning opportunities;	13. Fund UHOVI to July 2016 and mainstreaming into USW provision, including full-time, part-time, bite-size and 14-19 provision with partner schools and colleges; (July 2016)	UHOVI funded to the end of Phase 2, July 2016.	✓
WA Approach A10	14	broker more strategic, multi-agency dialogue and clearly articulate the contribution of higher education providers;	14.Audit universities' work to incentivise students to provide learning and other support in schools as part of/ in addition to normal course requirements; (July 2016)	HEFCW's audit request for information to universities as set out in circular W15/04HE . Audit complete 2015/16. The audit findings informed dialogue with universities and Reaching Wider Programme developments.	✓

			<p>Administer grant funding for Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol including supporting its work with the post-16 sector to further develop clear continuity paths from Welsh medium post-16 provision in sixth forms and colleges, particularly in more vocational subjects; (March 2017)</p> <p>Revise and publish a statement on university/college partnerships, including franchise arrangements, taking account of the Welsh Government's review of higher education delivered in further education Institutions; (March 2016)</p>	<p>Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol funded by HEFCW in 2016/17.</p> <p>Welsh Government announced (August 2016) a review of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Review to include whether to extend the Coleg's remit to the post-16 sector (further education and work based learning), and if so, to provide potential options on how to take this forward. In 2016-17, the Welsh Government moved the Coleg from HEFCW's budget. Our 2017-18 remit letter expects HEFCW 'to continue to work closely with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, notwithstanding the funding changes, to support achievement of its strategic objectives.'</p> <p>HEFCW circular W16/13HE published April 2016 provides guidance on university partnership arrangements. This guidance remained unchanged for 2018/19 fee and access planning.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
WA Approach A11	15	promote and monitor the development of Foundation Degree and Higher Level Apprenticeship routes within the regions;	15. Take forward, with Welsh Government and partners, the Review of Higher Education in Further Education Institutions recommendations; (July 2018)	Welsh Government completed report. Welsh Government /HEFCW discussions ongoing. HEFCW's 2016-17 remit letter says: 'I am grateful for the enthusiasm demonstrated by the Council for the development of employer led degree qualifications that can be delivered as part of a Higher Apprenticeship. In line with the revised remit letter I issued in October 2016, I expect the Council to continue to work with my officials to prioritise and further develop this approach in order to add value to the current apprenticeship offer.'	✓
WA Approach A12	16	promote mechanisms for recognising and accrediting prior learning;	16. Ensure regional strategies reference the delivery of HE in FE and outline arrangements between partners; (ongoing)	HEFCW updated regional strategy approach circular W16/19HE	✓

WA Approach A13	17	support cross-sector events to promote widening access to HE priorities and champion effective practice;	17. Deliver the 2016 national WA conference securing cross-sector representation and providing progress on the WA Programme of Action; (Feb 2016)	Conference postponed. The then Minister for Education and Skills was unable to attend. Minister launched WISERD WA evaluation toolkit (2016). Due to fee and access planning commitments and limited staff resources we were unable to reschedule the conference in 2017.	
			Monitor progress and outcomes of regional projects including North & Mid <u>Cadarn</u> learning portal, SE Wales recognition of prior learning <u>RPL</u> project; (July 2016)	Monitoring complete. Project provision being embedded into regions. HEFCW will continue to monitor provision including through Strategic Engagement and Planning Document (SPED) annual reports.	✓
WA Approach A14	18	review our policies on HE in FE franchising;	18. Membership of <u>Colegau Cymru</u> HE in FE Network; (ongoing)	Membership of Colegau Cymru HE in FE Network ongoing. HEFCW published circular W16/13HE (April 2016) on partnership arrangements as they relate to franchise provision: <i>Guidance on partnership arrangements for franchise education provided on behalf of regulated institutions in Wales</i>	✓
WA Approach A15	19	with University of South Wales, secure the long-term sustainability of UHOVI;	19. Support UHOVI Phase 2 and its regional partnership working with colleges in the heads of the valleys area; (July 2016)	HEFCW funded UHOVI in Phase 2 from 2013/14 to 2015/16.	✓
			Evaluate UHOVI Phase 2 impact and outcomes; (July 2017)	HEFCW monitored UHOVI targets and mainstreaming of provision into USW in 2016/17. Evaluation tender drafted for commissioning in 2017/18. HEFCW resources, including staffing, impacted on delivery	

4. Promote fair admissions and Wales as the destination of first choice for higher education students from Wales and the UK

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities:	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activities update at November 2017	Status
WA Approach A16	20	promote the contribution of widening access to delivering social justice and economic prosperity;	20. Work with Welsh Government's Seren Network to ensure widening access school pupils with the potential to benefit and succeed are encouraged to participate fully in the programme; (ongoing)	HEFCW/ Welsh Government Seren officials' discussion 2015 to ensure the Seren Network takes account of WA priorities.	✓
			Promote the Widening Access: Delivering for Wales e-publication series; (ongoing)	First publication launched by then Minister for education and skills at WA conference and on HEFCW website (2015)	✓
			Publish Widening Access: Delivering for Wales e-publication (adult learning); (Dec 2015)	Adult learning case studies collated. Publication delayed due to HE Act and fee and access plan implementation. Limited HEFCW resources, including staff vacancies in 2016/17, prevented the publication being taken forward. HEFCW will schedule further WA case studies.	
			Publish Widening Access: Delivering for Wales e-publication (universities schools & college engagement); (March 2016)	Schools/ colleges publication on hold. Publication delayed due to HE Act and fee and access plan implementation.	
			Contribute to Communities First (CF) newsletters and CF regional network meetings; (Dec 2015)	Article submitted (2015) to Welsh Government Communities First e-newsletter. Information submitted (2017) to Welsh Government e-bullets, plus meetings with Welsh Government CF leads.	✓

				<p>Ongoing UCAS Welsh Standing Group membership</p> <p>Higher Education Nation series published.</p> <p>Publicised positive National Student Survey results last NSS press NSS release 9 August 2017)</p> <p>Promotion of Supporting Professionalism in Admissions and the Equality Challenge Unit throughout the period. Collaborative work with UK funding councils throughout the period.</p>	✓
WA Approach A17	21	champion, with partners, Welsh HE as a destination of first choice;	21. Publish Higher Education Nation series; (ongoing)	HEFCW has had ongoing engagement throughout the period with UK bodies as they relate to WA to inform policy development and implementation	✓
WA Approach A18	22	engage effectively with UK-wide organisations to ensure they recognise fully the implications of distinct HE policy and priorities in Wales;	22. Manage relationships with UK bodies as they relate to WA to HE in Wales, including representation on UK-wide committees and strategic boards, including UCAS Welsh Standing Group; (ongoing)	Datasets published on website. Data contributes to trend analysis of cross-border flows. Engagement with UK bodies throughout the period.	✓
WA Approach A19	23	fund research into cross-border flows (Wales and England) to inform our understanding of admissions trends;	23. Analysis of UCAS data sets	SPA funded in 2015/16, with UCAS being the major funder from 2016/17 to September 2017 (Welsh higher education providers are UCAS members).	✓
WA Approach	24	encourage effective practice in HE admissions at all levels and study	24. Support the SPA programme (Supporting Professionalism in	Data analysis ongoing and informs HEFCW strategic planning and policy implementation.	✓

A20		modes;	Admissions); (July 2016) Publish Higher Education Nation series; (ongoing)	HEFCW has continued to meet with SPA in 2016/17. HEFCW Higher Education Nation e-publications series recent publications on HEFCW website	
WA Approach A21	25	monitor UK and Wales-specific data related to mode of study and learner characteristics to inform policy implementation;	25. Annual analysis of datasets including: HESES and HESA; Universities' data planning and forecasts; UCAS statistical releases; ECU data survey; Universities Strategic Equality Plans; NSS data; (ongoing)	Analysis has been ongoing throughout the period to inform policy developments and monitoring of institutions and sector performance.	✓

5. Prioritise higher-level learning and skills, retention and student success

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities:	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activities updated November 2017	status
Remit letter 2015-16	26	set out how the HE sector can help support students through their studies and into higher level learning and graduate employment including through developing strong partnerships with their relevant Communities First Clusters;	<p>26. Develop European Social Fund funding proposals for all-Wales programme to support WA students to gain employability skills; (Dec 2015)</p> <p>Ensure fee and access plans deliver on universities' employability commitments; (ongoing)</p>	<p>Go Wales Achieve Through Work Experience Programme has been implemented and delivered throughout the period and a proposal to extend the programme is being developed.</p> <p>All ten 2017/18 and 2018/19 plans included the promotion of HE and targets for graduate employability.</p>	✓
WA Approach A22	27	fund the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD) to improve the WA evidence-base underpinning policies and practice;	27. Publish WISERD widening access evaluation reports, taking account of findings in policy implementation; (Oct 2015)	WISERD WA evaluation report (Sept 2015) and WA evaluation toolkit published on WISERD website . The then Minister for Education and Skills launched evaluation toolkit (February 2016). HEFCW review of Reaching Wider (2017/18) to take account of WISERD recommendations.	✓
WA Approach A23	28	analyse HE data, with particular emphasis on under-represented and equality groups to inform ambitious target-setting and meet and go beyond our statutory duties;	28. Publish an Annual Equality Report, including progress against HEFCW Strategic Equality Plan objectives; (March 2016)	Annual Equality reports published March 2015, 2016 and 2017, including progress on Strategic Equality Plan objectives. New Strategic Equality Plan published April 2017.	✓

			Work with, and respond to, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Wales) (EHRC) annual review of universities; (ongoing)	Liaison with EHRC Wales ongoing throughout the period, including annual HEFCW/EHRC meetings and HEFCW coordination of universities engagement with EHRC report to Welsh Government on sector progress in 2016. HEFCW is finalising its review of universities' new Strategic Equality Plans from 2016/17.	✓
WA Approach 24	29	identify and promote effective practice on retention and success;	29. Work with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in 2016/17 to disseminate UK and international good practice and enhance the student experience, retention and success; (July 2017)	HEA Future Directions series supporting universities Transition, Retention and Attainment (Wales) Strategic Enhancement Programme. - event held July 2016.	✓
WA Approach A25	30	support the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in 2015/16 to provide leadership and enhance the WA student learning experience, retention and success;	30. Monitor progress towards Corporate Strategy measures and UK data relating to full- and part-time retention and student success; (ongoing)	Progress published in HEFCW annual report and accounts in 2015-16 and 2016-17. Monitoring ongoing throughout the period.	✓

6. Increase flexible learning opportunities, including part-time study, workplace learning and technology enhanced learning

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activities update at November 2017	status
Remit letter 2015-16	31	consider whether there are any short term policies that can be implemented to encourage part time study prior to the publication of the recommendations of the Diamond Review.	<p>31. Review and consult on the part-time funding method; (March 2015)</p> <p>Fund UHOVI to July 2016 to develop and deliver bite-sized learning which meets identified employer need, maximises opportunities presented by European funding and reflects the priorities in the region's employment and skills plans; (July 2016)</p>	<p>HEFCW reviewed its part-time funding method. Changes delayed to take account of Welsh Government's response to Diamond review. Review remit includes: strengthening part-time provision in Wales</p> <p>UHOVI funded to July 2016 and embedded in USW provision from August 2016. HEFCW continued to monitor part-time student numbers in Heads of the Valleys area in 2016/17.</p>	✓
Remit letter 2015-16	32	consider the scope for developing flexibility to allow individuals to undertake training incrementally at a pace which suits both them and the NHS.	32. Promote dual sector, alliance and other HE/FE formal, strategic collaborations; (ongoing)	<p>Throughout the period, ongoing monitoring of dual sector, alliance and another HE/FE collaborations through Strategic Planning and Engagement Documents (SPEDs) and fee and access plans.</p> <p>Representation on Welsh Government WA to medicine group ongoing throughout the period. This group is continuing and RW have supported a WA to GP placements in 2015/16 and 2016/17.</p> <p>HEFCW has supported the OU throughout this period, recognising it did not benefit from higher maximum fees for full-time students.</p>	✓

			Review universities' healthcare professional education programmes; (March 2016)	Regular HEFCW liaison with Workforce, Education and Development Services (WEDs), including WEDs representation on HEFCW's Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee (SOAC) HEFCW agreed with WEDS that its assessment of healthcare professional education programmes would be embedded in its commissioning and review processes	✓
WA Approach A26	33	align widening access policy developments with the HEFCW Part-time Higher Education Position Statement and vision;	33. Contribute to the Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements ; (ongoing)	Diamond review completed. Welsh Government publish its response to the review in July 2017.	✓
WA Approach A27	34	take account of the recommendations from the Online Digital Learning working group in policy developments related to flexible, accessible inclusive learning;	34. Support the Open University in Wales to secure part-time, flexible and on-line learning opportunities; (2015/16)	Open University in Wales funded by HEFCW in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18.	✓
WA Approach A28	35	build on our assessment of flexible and part-time higher education, taking account of UK research and the Future Directions quality enhancement themes;	35. Encourage institutions to engage further with Open Education Resources Wales to showcase provision across subject areas and strengthening institutional reputation and brand; (ongoing)	Wales hosted 6 th International Conference on Open Education Resources (April 2015).	✓

WA Approach A29	36	promote progression routes to and through Welsh medium higher education, working with Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and partners;	36. Support the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol work with the post-16 sector to further develop clear continuity paths from Welsh medium post-16 provision in sixth forms and colleges, particularly in more vocational subjects to July 2017; (2015/16; 2016/17)	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol funded by HEFCW in 2015/16 and 2016/17. HEFCW to contribute to the review of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol announced by the Welsh Government.	✓
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7. Support widening access approaches to delivering the internationalisation of higher education

Reference	No.	Widening Access strategic priorities:	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activities update at November 2017	status
WA Approach A30	37	work with partners to promote internationalisation across HE, including targeting WA learners, regardless of their background or mode of study;	37. Publish HEFCW's Statement on Internationalisation, including widening-access related actions; (July 2015)	HEFCW Statement on Internationalisation published on HEFCW website.	✓
WA Approach A31	38	encourage universities to tackle the barriers to, and promote the benefits of, international experiences, enabling widening access students to enhance mobility and skills;	38. Monitor universities' actions to, and progress on, engaging under-represented groups' in international exchanges and other internationalisation experiences to enhance learning and employability skills; (ongoing)	Throughout the period universities work to encourage international experiences for groups under-represented in higher education has been monitored through strategic planning and engagement documents (SPEDs) and fee and access plans.	✓

8. Improve fair access to the professions, higher level skills and the priority sectors contributing to economic prosperity

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activities update at November 2017	status
WA Approach A32	39	identify and disseminate effective international, national and Welsh practice in improving access to the professions, higher-level skills and the priority sectors;	39. Develop, with partners, evidence-informed actions to widen access to medicine, promote and improve progression pathways to medicine and related professions; (July 2016)	Representation on Welsh Government WA to medicine group ongoing throughout the period. Reaching Wider Partnerships delivered WA to GP placements in 2015/16 and 2017/18.	✓
			Evaluate the Reaching Wider STEM programme outcomes; (March 2016)	Reaching Wider Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) reports analysed to inform Reaching Wider developments.	✓
			Identify and promote effective practice in universities' WA STEM provision; (July 2016)	Promotion of Reaching Wider STEM provision delayed due to HE Act and fee and access plan implementation.	
WA Approach A33	40	support collaborative, sustainable, flexible pathways enabling progression to Foundation Degrees and Higher Level Apprenticeships and beyond;	40. Work, with the Welsh Government and partners to agree how HE in FE delivery can be developed and expanded to meet the changing needs of the economy, working with Regional Skills Partnerships to ensure joint strategic planning and strengthening guidance on partnership and franchise arrangements: (ongoing)	HEFCW published circular W16/19HE setting out new arrangements for HEFCW's regional approach in order to align with the regional priorities set out by Welsh Government following a consultation in 2015. Regional collaboration has been monitored through strategic planning and engagement documents (SPEDs) throughout the period	✓
			Support UHOVI to 31 July 2016 to develop work-based learning opportunities with industry clusters including the pharmaceutical and	UHOVI was funded by HEFCW to July 2016 to deliver flexible learning, including Foundation Degrees and bitesize learning with progression routes to HE. UHOVI embedded in University	

			medical sector; (2015/16)	of South Wales provision from August 2016.	
WA Approach A34	41	develop further our relations with the careers service family, including Careers Wales, to promote higher-level study and vocational qualifications and skills and to inform learner choice;	41. Representation on the Welsh Government Careers Strategic Forum ; (ongoing)	HEFCW representation on the Welsh Government Careers Strategic Forum ongoing to March 2016. This group has been discontinued.	✓

9. Support UK and national duties and Welsh Government priorities relating to widening access, including tackling poverty, raising educational aspirations and attainment, social mobility and equality of opportunity

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities:	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activities update at November 2017	status
Remit letter 2015-16	42	ensure that HEIs participate fully in the ‘pupil offer’ in terms of their engagement with schools through structured programmes of engagement and support;	42. Strengthen Schools Consortia links to promote higher education opportunities; (ongoing)	HEFCW met 3 of 4 consortia by July 2017. Reaching Wider funding letter 2017/18 continues to encourage RW Partnerships to work with Schools Consortia	✓
			Audit and encourage HEIs’ engagement with schools and colleges including Schools Challenge Cymru Schools; (2015/16; 2016/17)	Audit completed and will inform HEFCW WA planning	✓
			Publish Widening access: Delivering for Wales series (universities, schools and college partnerships); (Feb 2016)	WA publication delayed due to HE Act and fee and access plan implementation	
WA Approach A35	43	work with universities to deliver our Strategic Equality Plan objectives;	43. Develop, consult on and publish HEFCW’s Strategic Equality Plan 2016 -17 to 2018-19; (March 2016)	HEFCW’s new Strategic Equality Plan published (March 2016) and underpinning Strategic Delivery Plan developed. Delivery Plan for 2016/17 has been monitored and the plan for 2017/18 has been drafted.	✓
WA Approach A36	44	continue to align WA policy implementation with Welsh Government WA-related expectations;	44. Deliver WA-related remit letter requirements through the WA Programme of Action; (March 2016; March 2017)	Implementation of remit requirements ongoing throughout this period and reported through HEFCW’s Operational Plan and this Programme of Action progress report.	✓

WA Approach A37	45	encourage coherent approaches, and champion universities' contribution, to Welsh Government's widening access-related priorities;	<p>45. Implement policy with advice from HEFCW's strategic advisory committees; (ongoing)</p> <p>Respond to Welsh Government WA-related information requests; (ongoing)</p>	<p>Throughout the period, WA Policy advice received from HEFCW's Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee which meets biannually.</p> <p>Provided WA briefings for Welsh Government.</p> <p>HEFCW developed the Welsh Government new Higher Education Strategy to 2027 (2016-17 remit requirement), submitted to Welsh Government 16 December 2016.</p>	
WA Approach A38	46	challenge institutions to set ambitious fee plan targets to advance equality of opportunity expectations set by HEFCW and the Welsh Government;	46. Submit annual reports to Welsh Government on the assessment, monitoring and enforcement of fee plans to deliver equality of opportunity and the promotion of higher education; (Dec 2015; Dec 2016)	<p>Fee and access plan annual reporting to Welsh Government submitted December 2016.</p> <p>Welsh Government receives HEFCW Council papers on fee and access plan developments and Welsh Government representative sits on SOAC.</p>	✓
WA Approach A39	47	broker more multi-agency strategic dialogue to promote more effective cross-sectoral working;	47. Develop with partners a widening access framework for Wales identifying higher education's role and responsibilities, taking account of policy priorities impacting on widening access; (July 2016)	Widening access framework delayed due to HE Act and fee and access plan implementation and Welsh Government responses to Diamond Review of Higher Education Funding and student Finance Arrangements in Wales and Hazelkorn Review of the Regulation and Oversight of Post-Compulsory Education and Training in Wales, with special reference to the future role and function of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).	
WA Approach A40	48	support strategies which articulate clearly the regional role of widening access, including through the Reaching Wider Programme;	48. Work with Welsh Government to embed the Unique Learner Number (ULN), noting the work of the Higher Education Data	HEFCW contribution to HEDIIP discussions to improve data sharing ongoing throughout this period.	✓

			Information and Improvement Programme (HEDIIP); (ongoing)		
WA Approach A41	49	assess regional strategy developments to ensure they deliver the Welsh Government's regional coherence expectations;	49. Support the three Reaching Wider Partnerships as the regional mechanism for widening access to higher education; (ongoing)	Regional Reaching Wider Partnerships funded in 2015/16 and 2016/17. HEFCW's approach to regional collaboration (HEFCW circular W16/19HE), published June 2016	✓
WA Approach A42	50	disseminate effective practice from UHOVI and other innovative, collaborative programmes disseminating their outcomes across Wales and the UK, as appropriate;	50. Commission evaluation of UHOVI to identify effective practice and publish outcomes; (2016/17)	HEFCW evaluation of UHOVI to be commissioned in 2017/18, delay due to limited HEFCW staff resources in the light of HE Act and fee and access plan implementation and staff shortages in 2016/17.	
			Encourage universities' engagement with Welsh Government's three Regional Skills Partnerships ; (ongoing)	HEFCW's Higher Education Nation and Widening Access: Delivering for Wales publication series promotes positive practice in higher education and widening access	✓

10. Prioritise widening access sustainability

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activities update at November 2017	status
WA Approach A43	51	review the extent to which fee plans deliver Welsh Government and HEFCW Corporate Strategy equality of opportunity and promotion of higher education-related expectations;	51. Manage the fee planning process to secure investment in equality of opportunity and the promotion of higher education; (ongoing)	2017/18 and 2018/19 fee and access plan application process is complete. Ten fee and access plans approved in August 2016 and July 2017. Review of process completed in autumn 2016.	✓
WA Approach A44	52	assess the extent to which fee plan targets and investment are aligned and contribute to institutions' WA strategic intentions to effectively support, further enhance and sustain widening access to higher education in the long-term;	52. Audit universities' investment in widening access ; (Dec 2015)	Audit of universities' fee and access plan investment in widening access completed. Audit will inform HEFCW Widening access planning. HEFCW monitors fee and access plan investment through annual monitoring statements.	✓
			Submit annual fee plan reports to Welsh Government, including data on total financial investment; (Dec 2015; Dec 2016)	Annual fee and access plan report to Welsh Government submitted December 2016.	✓
			Develop new 2017/18 fee and access plan arrangements informed by the current process; (2015/16)	HEFCW 2017/18 fee and access plan guidance published April 2016. Circular W16/12HE . 2018/19 guidance publishes in March 2017 circular W17/06HE .	✓
WA Approach A45	53	monitor part-time fee levels and any impact of the introduction of part-time loans from 2014/15;	53. Monitor part-time fee trends; (July 2016)	HEFCW is assessing how to collect effectively fee data for part-time and postgraduate taught courses. This data will be part of the new HESA record (from 2019/20). We are also assessing other sources of data to get the information.	✓
WA Approach 46	54	work with Welsh Government, the Review of Higher Education and partners to inform part-time policies	54. Support the Welsh Government's independent review of Higher Education Funding and Student	HEFCW Chief Executive had observer status on the Review Group. The Welsh Government published its response to the	✓

		and strategies;	Finance Arrangements (Diamond Review); (ongoing)	review in July 2017.	
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11. Improve the evidence base to support widening access and impact assessment and demonstrate effective practice and success in widening access to HE

Reference	No.	widening access strategic priorities	activities with timelines as submitted to Welsh Government	activities update November 2017	status
WA Approach A47	55	evaluate WA and equality practices to ensure effective progress towards delivering Welsh Government expectations and HEFCW Corporate Strategy priorities;	55. Evaluate Reaching Wider strategies; (March 2016)	Reaching Wider Partnership strategy review delayed as RW Strategies extended to cover 2017/18 and align with new Corporate Strategy period. Review planned for 2017/18.	
			Review HEFCW's Strategic Equality Plan and progress to inform future planning; (Dec 2015)	HEFCW's review of its Strategic Equality Plan and progress completed. New Strategic Equality Plan published following consultation (March 2016).	✓
WA Approach 48	56	fund WISERD to improve the WA evidence-base, inform planning and articulate impact;	56. Publish and take account of WISERD review outcomes, including WISERD's wider research work, in implementing policy; (Dec 2015)	WISERD HEFCW-funded WA research published on WISERD website .	✓
WA Approach A49	57	collect and disseminate examples of promising practice in widening access including from international and UK sources as well as from Wales;	57. Promote widening access through e-publications; (ongoing)	Widening Access: Delivering for Wales e-publication series begun but further publications delayed due to HE Act and fee and access plan implementation.	
WA Approach A50	58	champion widening access in higher education in Wales;	58. Develop and deliver an effective fee and access plan process; (2016/17)	2016/17 and 2017/18 fee and access plan application process delivered. Ten plans approved for 2017/18 and 2018/19.	✓
			Establish, with Reaching Wider Partnerships, a stronger public profile/brand for regional and national widening access activity; (2015/16)	Reaching Wider Programme developments delayed until the final year of the Reaching Wider Partnership strategies (2016/17) to inform future developments.	
			Update the HEFCW website; (2015/16)	WA, equality and diversity webpages update on hold pending review of the website. New fee and access plan information on HE Act pages .	

