

For information

Widening Access Programme of Action 2015/16 and 2016/17 – final report

Agenda: 19
HEFCW/17/89

Disclosable

16/11/2017

1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper provides a final report 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 in our Corporate Strategy to 2017 and we have published additional information on our WA priorities¹.
- 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 [HEFCW's Widening access 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 the final report on progress against the Widening Access Programme of Action deliverables.

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 (029 2085 9732; jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk)

¹ 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 This is the second and final report to Council on the WA Programme of Action (Council paper [HEFCW/16/84](#) provides the first report)
- 7.2 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 this². 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 as submitted, it was referenced in HEFCW's 2016-17 remit letter in relation to the HE strategy.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 The WA Programme covers the period 2015/16 and 2016/17 to align with the Corporate Strategy period (which was extended to 2016-17) taking account of policy positions at the time.
- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 From 2017/18 HEFCW will continue to articulate its widening access policy development and actions within its core strategic documents, including the Corporate Strategy and associated national measures, Operational Plan and Strategic Equality Plan.

8 WA Programme of Action progress against deliverables

- 8.1 The WA Programme of Action is attached as **Annex A** and sets out our actions against the following WA Strategic Approach 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;

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

- vii. support widening access approaches to delivering the internationalisation of higher education;
 - viii. improve fair access to the professions, high level skills and the priority sectors contributing to economic prosperity;
 - ix. support UK and national duties and Welsh Government priorities relating to tackling poverty, raising educational aspirations and attainment, social mobility and equality of opportunity; and
 - x. prioritise widening access sustainability.
- 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, and unexpected staff shortages in 2016-17. The promotion of widening access through e-publications has been the activity most delayed. However, we recognise the importance of this work and we will reschedule it.

Council is invited to note the final report on progress against the Widening Access Programme of Action deliverables.

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 widening access publications and, resources permitting, future publications and national events 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
<p>If one or more institutions, or the sector collectively, fail(s) to continue to widening access significantly there will be reputational damage to the sector and financial implications for institutions/the sector and socio-economic issues if WA cohorts are not recruited/recruited by institutions outside Wales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fee and access plans provide for equality of opportunity and WA • Analyse and monitor fee plan performance • Fee and access plan reporting annually to WG • Continue to emphasise WA strategic approaches • Continue to support and monitor RW partnerships • Monitor HESA, UCAS and related data. • WA Programme of Action monitored and reported to SOAC. • Assess WA performance and implications through IRR process • Sector discussions on WA aspects of Strategic Planning and Engagement documents (SPEDs) • Liaise with WG CF officials and schools consortia to align strategies. • Discussions with sector on their 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 plans.