

# Cylchlythyr | Circular

## The HEFCW part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme

**Date:** 16 July 2014  
**Reference:** W14/28HE  
**To:** Heads of higher education institutions in Wales  
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales  
**Response by:** **14 November 2014**  
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This circular confirms revisions to HEFCW's part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme from 2014/15 and provides a summary of responses to the consultation on these changes. It also sets out the eligibility criteria for those new and continuing students that institutions can claim a fee waiver grant for, and requests institutions to provide information on fee-waivers awarded for 2013/14 and estimated to be awarded for 2014/15.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please telephone us on (029) 2068 2225 or email [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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## Introduction

1. This circular confirms revisions to HEFCW's part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme from 2014/15 and provides a summary of responses to the consultation on these changes. It also sets out the eligibility criteria for those new and continuing part-time students that institutions can claim a fee waiver grant for, and requests institutions to provide information on fee-waivers awarded for 2013/14 and estimated to be awarded for 2014/15.

## Background

2. **HEFCW's part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme offers grants to institutions that waive fees for certain part-time students who are unemployed and actively seeking work or are in receipt of Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits.** Part-time higher education is a Welsh Government (WG) and HEFCW priority. This has been emphasised in the WG's Policy Statement on Higher Education<sup>1</sup> and HEFCW's Part-Time Higher Education Position Statement.<sup>2</sup>
3. It is designed as an instrument to help promote social justice and to assist more people to obtain graduate level qualifications. As such the scheme is intended to contribute towards widening access and increasing rates of retention, progression and success.
4. **Students apply directly to institutions for fee waivers and HEFCW will provide fee waiver grants to those institutions on the basis of returns they supply.** This scheme does not involve direct contact between students and HEFCW.
5. In March 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills announced changes to the part-time student support system from 2014/15 for those studying part time higher education.<sup>3</sup> In response, HEFCW reviewed its part-time fee waiver scheme arrangements and provided a consultation on possible changes in *circular W14/17HE: Proposed revisions to HEFCW's part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme*.<sup>4</sup> The proposed changes to the scheme, outlined in the circular, would be expected to apply from 2014/15 onwards.

## Part-time student support arrangements from 2014/15

6. The WG have introduced a loans system which will allow new part-time entrants from all backgrounds equality of access to higher education,

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<sup>1</sup> [Welsh Government's Higher Education Policy Statement](#)

<sup>2</sup> HEFCW circular [W14/24HE](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Minister for Education and Skills statement on part-time student support](#)

<sup>4</sup> HEFCW circular [W14/17HE](#)

providing they do not already have a qualification at the same or a higher level than the qualification they are studying for and are studying at or above 25% full-time equivalent (FTE).<sup>5</sup> The non-means tested maximum amount available through the loans system will be £2,625 (75% of £3,500) per year. Any new student who wishes to study below 25% FTE will be ineligible for the loan scheme.

7. Continuing students will not be eligible for the WG loan and will still be required to either self-fund or apply to other funding sources. The WG'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% FTE (courses must be completed in no more than twice the time it would take to complete the full-time equivalent).<sup>6</sup> The maximum grant available in 2013/14 was £1,025 - lower than the maximum HEFCW Fee Waiver.

### **Confirmed revisions to the part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme**

8. 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% FTE to have access to financial support for higher education. Therefore HEFCW's part-time fee waiver scheme will be amended to support those institutions providing financial support for certain groups of students not eligible for the WG's loans system because they are new and studying below 25% FTE or because they are continuing students.
9. A total of ten responses were received in response to HEFCW's consultation on the proposed changes to the scheme which have been helpful in identifying implementation issues. A summary of consultation responses and respondents are attached at **Annex A**. In response to the points raised in the consultation, further information and clarification is provided in a number of areas, and the general proposals will be implemented, as set out below.
10. The following will form the basis of a revised fee waiver scheme available from 2014/15:
  - HEFCW will retain the fee waiver scheme for continuing eligible students, regardless of intensity of study and new eligible students studying below 25% FTE (fewer than 30 credits) as these groups are both barred from the fee loans system.
  - HEFCW will not provide institutions with fee waiver grants for new students studying at or above 25% FTE as they will have access to finance available through the loans system.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk): information on financial support for new students

<sup>6</sup> [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk): information on financial support for continuing students

11. HEFCW notes the concerns of institutions that some disadvantaged students from widening access backgrounds may be discouraged from entering higher education under these new funding arrangements. In line with their widening access strategic aims and taking account of the Welsh Government's prioritisation of part-time higher education and its commitment to tackling poverty, we expect institutions to promote the WG part-time loan scheme and institutions' own fee waiver support. Institutions will also want to provide clear information about the loans and other funding support available and consider providing additional incentives to those students to as appropriate.
12. Intensity of study will normally be measured in credit values, therefore a fee waiver grant will not be provided for any new student that studies 30 credits or more over an academic year. In the situation that a student initially undertakes fewer than 30 credits but subsequently adds to this during the academic year institutions will be unable to claim a HEFCW fee waiver grant. However, we would encourage institutions to continue to provide that fee waiver where possible.
13. The maximum funding available to students studying below 25% FTE is £875 per annum, remaining at a maximum of £1200 for continuing students.
14. In order to provide clear guidance while transitional arrangements are in place, information is provided separately below on the position for continuing students and for new entrants

## **Continuing students**

### **Criteria for eligibility for continuing students**

15. Continuing students are those students that commenced their studies prior to 1 September 2014 and are excluded from being considered for the WG loans system on the basis of not being a new student in 2014/15.
16. Continuing students studying at or above 50% FTE will need firstly to make an application for funding to the WG'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 tuition fees that year institutions will be eligible to claim a fee waiver grant if the student meets the eligibility criteria. However, students are only eligible for up to £1200 in total combined from both schemes. For example, if their fees are £1300 and they receive the maximum fee grant of £1025, an additional £175 will be available to institutions from HEFCW's scheme. Students will need to self-finance any amount above £1200.
17. Continuing students studying below 50% FTE will not be eligible for the WG's Fee Grant Scheme as previously.

18. In order for an institution to claim for a HEFCW fee waiver grant on behalf of a student, the institution must be satisfied that the eligibility criteria under two headings have been met:
- course
  - personal

### **Course criteria for continuing students**

19. A student must:
- be studying part-time and commenced their studies prior to 1 September 2014. The definition of part-time study is that used by HEFCW in its 2013/14 Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey (HESES).<sup>7</sup>

HEFCW recognises that part-time students do not necessarily follow a course of study on a traditional academic year basis; however, for administrative simplicity the grant scheme will be based on the financial year for institutions, 1 August to 31 July.
  - be registered, as a continuing student, on a programme with the aim of obtaining a recognised undergraduate higher education qualification; or on a course, module or unit which enables credit to be obtained towards a recognised undergraduate higher education qualification.

*The following qualifications are recognised for the purpose of the scheme:*

- *First degree*
- *Foundation Degree*
- *HNC*
- *HND*
- *Other undergraduate credit-bearing higher education award which is funded by HEFCW.*

Students who already have any of the above qualifications and are studying for a qualification that is of the same level or lower will not be eligible for a fee waiver. Non credit-bearing courses and postgraduate courses do not qualify for the scheme.

Students are not eligible for funding to repeat a course within a course under any circumstances.

- be studying on a course which corresponds to ten credit values or more as defined by the CQFW credit framework.

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<sup>7</sup> HEFCW circular [W13/32HE](#)

Where an institution has not formally attributed CQFW credit values to elements of its programmes, notional credit values will have been determined on the basis of the CQFW standard of 120 credit values equalling one academic year of higher education experience for undergraduates.

### **Personal criteria for continuing students**

20. A student enrolled on an eligible course must:
- i. be classed as eligible for funding according to the definition provided in HEFCW's HESES survey.
  - ii. be Welsh domiciled (provision of a Welsh address by the student would usually be considered sufficient evidence of Welsh domicile). Information on other UK fee support schemes can be accessed at [www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm).
  - iii. meet **at least one** of the conditions set out under (a) to (d) below:
    - (a) the student's family is in receipt of:
      - Universal Credit;
      - Income support;
      - Income based jobseekers allowance;
      - Housing benefit;
      - Pension credit;
      - Council Tax Reduction;
      - Working Tax Credits
    - (b) the student is in receipt of:
      - Employment and Support Allowance;
      - Personal Independent Payment;
      - Severe Disablement Allowance;
      - Disability Living Allowance;
      - Attendance Allowance;
      - Incapacity Benefit;
      - Carer's Allowance
- Information on the benefits which are listed above and the definitions of terms used in these benefits are available on the DWP website ([www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk))*
- (c) The student is a registered jobseeker, and has been for a continuous period of no less than six weeks prior to the date of application for fee waiver.

- (d) The sole income to the student's family is Department for Work and Pensions benefits

For the purpose of the criterion (a) the definition of 'family' is as follows:

- *married, civil partnership or unmarried couple, or*
- *married or unmarried couple or couple in a civil partnership with dependent children, or*
- *lone parent with dependent children*

### **Evidence for continuing students**

21. To be eligible under the criteria in paragraph 20 (iii) students must provide their institution with official documentary evidence of their entitlement. This, for example, may be in the form of a letter from Jobcentre Plus confirming the claimant's name, address and benefit entitlement.
22. Evidence under paragraph 21 should be obtained prior to fees being waived. The institution should retain evidence of the documentation, for example, by recording the evidence obtained on a form, or taking a photocopy of relevant documents. HEFCW may wish to audit this evidence at a later date.

### **Changes in circumstance for continuing students**

23. A material change in circumstances may result in a student becoming, or ceasing to become, eligible during a period of study. Where such a case arises, the institution should seek to waive, rebate or claim fees, as appropriate, to an amount reflecting, in broad terms, the remainder of the year's period of study. Institutions should require students to notify them if such a material change in their circumstances arises.
24. A student may decide to change from a full-time to a part-time mode of study. If this change in status results in the student meeting the eligibility criteria then, where it is practical, the student should be able to benefit from the scheme. Such a case must be dealt with in the same way as any other significant change in circumstance.

### **Promoting fee waivers to continuing students**

25. We would expect institutions to promote fee waiver opportunities to those students that this policy is intended to support, particularly those from widening access backgrounds and with protected characteristics. Institutions must be clear to students that HEFCW funding is not indefinite and that HEFCW grants to institutions are subject to availability

of funding. Subsequently funding for this scheme could be withdrawn prior to students achieving a full qualification.

### **General points relating to assessment of continuing students' eligibility**

26. Student status should normally be assessed at the beginning of a programme of study. It should then be reassessed at least once every twelve months thereafter, for the duration of the period of study.
27. Situations may arise where fees are waived at the start of a year of study and then a student's status changes materially so that they no longer meet the qualifying criteria. In such cases the institution should seek, where appropriate, to adjust the fee waiver to represent that part of the year during which the student qualified for the scheme. Institutions should require students to undertake to notify them if such a significant change in their circumstances arises.
28. Only tuition fees are eligible for fee waiver. The cost of any assessment or examination fees is not eligible under this scheme.
29. Where the cost of tuition is paid for by an external/private source, the cost of tuition fees is assumed to be included in this full-cost. Such courses are not eligible for HEFCW funding. Therefore, courses that are run on a full-cost recovery basis cannot be included in applications for fee waiver.
30. HE providers offering fee waivers under this scheme will be supported through this HEFCW grant. We encourage institutions to operate and promote other schemes to support part-time students using, for example, their general resources, or other funding which can be used in support of part-time study.
31. Some cases will fall on the margins of the eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 19 and 20 above. In such cases, where the award of a fee waiver would, in the view of the institution, clearly be meeting the overall purpose of the scheme, institutions may apply reasonable discretion when testing student eligibility. It is important that the reason for applying discretion is recorded by the institution as this may be audited by HEFCW at a later date. In the event that such cases represent a sizeable proportion of eligible students, that is the higher of 20%, or more than 10 cases, HEFCW should be informed without delay.

### **Fee waiver grant conditions for continuing students**

32. The following conditions of grant will apply to any payment made under the HEFCW part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme:
  - Institutions may claim grants only in support of waived tuition fees for those students who are deemed eligible for the HEFCW part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme, as set out in paragraphs

19 to 20 above. Fees may be waived to the full cost of the course's tuition fees, or a maximum of £1200 per student, whichever is the lower amount.

- All grants paid must be used for the purposes for which they are provided.
- Each institution must submit an annual return setting out the total value of fee waivers actually awarded and providing additional details relating to the students benefiting from the fee waiver scheme, as set out in paragraph 52 below.
- HEFCW will adjust the amount of grant paid to an institution in support of student tuition fees waived where the amount that an institution has actually waived is different from its initial estimate for a year. Additional payments required where institutions have underestimated the level of funding required will be subject to the constraints of the overall HEFCW fee waiver budget.
- Under the fee waiver scheme institutions may not waive the tuition fee for a student where the same module(s) fees for the same academic year are being supported by a Welsh Assembly Government Part-Time Fee Grant.
- The operation of the scheme will be subject to review by HEFCW after the findings of the WG's *Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales*<sup>8</sup> has reported in 2016. Students should be made aware that the scheme may end at this stage.

## New students

### Criteria for eligibility for new students

33. In order for an institution to claim for a HEFCW fee waiver grant on behalf of a student, the institution must be satisfied that the eligibility criteria under two headings have been met:
- course
  - personal

### Course criteria for new students

34. A student must:

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<sup>8</sup> [Minister for Education and Skills statement of information on the Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales](#)

- i. be studying part-time and have commenced their course on or after 1 September 2014. The definition of part-time study is that used by HEFCW in its 2013/14 survey of HESES.<sup>9</sup>

HEFCW recognises that part-time students do not necessarily follow a course of study on a traditional academic year basis; however, for administrative simplicity the grant scheme will be based on the financial year for institutions, 1 August to 31 July.

- ii. be registered, as a new entrant in 2014/15, on a programme with the aim of obtaining a recognised undergraduate higher education qualification; or on a course which enables credit to be obtained towards a recognised undergraduate higher education qualification.

*The following qualifications are recognised for the purpose of the scheme:*

- *First degree*
- *Foundation Degree*
- *HNC*
- *HND*
- *Other undergraduate credit-bearing higher education award which is funded by HEFCW.*

Students who already have any of the above qualifications and are studying for a qualification that is of the same level or lower will not be eligible for a fee waiver. Non-credit bearing courses and postgraduate courses do not qualify for the scheme. .

Students are not eligible for funding to repeat a course under any circumstances.

- iii. be studying on a course which corresponds to ten credit values or more as defined by the CQFW credit framework.

Where an institution has not formally attributed CQFW credit values to elements of its programmes, notional credit values will have been determined on the basis of the CQFW standard of 120 credit values equalling one academic year of higher education experience for undergraduates.

- iv. be studying at less than 25% of a full time equivalent student. This will be measured in credit values relative to an assumed standard 120 credit year for a full-time undergraduate student and so equate to studying for less than 30 credits for the academic year of the fee waiver.

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<sup>9</sup> HEFCW circular [W13/32HE](#)

In the event that any student studies for 30 or more credits over the academic year they will cease to be eligible for the scheme.

### Personal criteria for new students

35. A student enrolled on an eligible course must:
- i. be classed as eligible for funding according to the definition in HEFCW's HESES survey.
  - ii. be Welsh domiciled (provision of a Welsh address by the student would usually be considered sufficient evidence of Welsh domicile). Information on other UK fee support schemes can be accessed at [www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm).
  - iii. meet **at least one** of the conditions set out under (a) to (d) below:

- (a) the student's family is in receipt of any one of the following:

Universal Credit;  
Income support;  
Income based jobseekers allowance;  
Housing benefit;  
Pension credit;  
Council Tax Reduction;  
Working Tax Credits

- (b) the student is in receipt of any one of the following:

Employment and Support Allowance;  
Personal Independent Payment;  
Severe Disablement Allowance;  
Disability Living Allowance;  
Attendance Allowance;  
Incapacity Benefit;  
Carer's Allowance

*Information on the benefits which are listed above and the definitions of terms used in these benefits are available on the DWP website ([www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)).*

- (c) The student is a registered job seeker, and has been for a continuous period of no less than six weeks prior to the date of application for fee waiver.
- (d) The sole income to the student's family is Department for Work and Pensions benefits.

For the purpose of the criterion (a) the definition of 'family' is as follows:

- *married, civil partnership or unmarried couple, or*
- *married or unmarried couple or couple in a civil partnership with dependent children, or*
- *lone parent with dependent children*

### **Evidence for new students**

36. To be eligible under the criteria in paragraph 35(iii) students must provide their institution with official documentary evidence of their entitlement. This, for example, may be in the form of a letter from Jobcentre Plus confirming the claimant's name, address and benefit entitlement.
37. Evidence under paragraph 36 should be obtained prior to fees being waived. The institution should retain evidence of the documentation, for example, by recording the evidence obtained on a form, or taking a photocopy of relevant documents. HEFCW may wish to audit this evidence at a later date.

### **Changes in new students' circumstance**

38. A student that initially undertakes fewer than 30 credits but subsequently adds to this during the academic year will be ineligible. In this scenario institutions are encouraged to continue providing that fee waiver without the HEFCW grant.
39. A student may decide to change from a full-time to a part-time mode of study. If this change in status results in the student meeting the eligibility criteria then, where it is practical, the student should be able to benefit from the scheme. Such a case should be dealt with in the same way as any other significant change in circumstance.

### **Promoting fee waivers to new students**

40. We would expect institutions to promote fee waiver opportunities to those students that this policy is intended to support, particularly those from widening access backgrounds and with protected characteristics. Institutions must be clear to students that HEFCW funding is not indefinite and that HEFCW grants to institutions are subject to availability of funding. Subsequently funding for this scheme could be withdrawn prior to students achieving a qualification.

## **General points relating to assessment of eligibility for new students**

41. Student status should normally be assessed at the beginning of a programme of study. It should then be reassessed at least once every twelve months thereafter, for the duration of the period of study.
42. Only tuition fees are eligible for fee waiver. The cost of any assessment or examination fees is not eligible under this scheme.
43. Where the cost of tuition is paid for by an external/private source, the cost of tuition fees is assumed to be included in this full-cost. Such courses are not eligible for HEFCW funding. Therefore, courses that are run on a full-cost recovery basis cannot be included in applications for fee waiver.
44. HE providers offering fee waivers under this scheme will be supported through this HEFCW grant. Institutions may, in addition operate other schemes to support part-time students using, for example, their general resources, or other funding which can be used in support of part-time study.
45. Some cases will fall on the margins of the eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 34 and 35 above. In such cases, where the award of a fee waiver would, in the view of the institution, clearly be meeting the overall purpose of the scheme, institutions may apply reasonable discretion when testing student eligibility. It is important that the reason for applying discretion is recorded by the institution as this may be audited by HEFCW at a later date. In the event that such cases represent a sizeable proportion of eligible students, that is the higher of 20%, or more than 10 cases, HEFCW should be informed without delay.

## **Few waiver grant conditions for new students**

46. The following conditions of grant will apply to any payment made under the HEFCW part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme:
  - Institutions may claim grants only in support of waived tuition fees for those students who are deemed eligible for the HEFCW part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme, as set out in paragraphs 34 to 35 above. Fees may be waived to the full cost of the course's tuition fees, or the maximum of £875, whichever is the lower amount.
  - All grants paid must be used for the purposes for which they are provided.
  - Each institution must submit an annual return setting out the total value of fee waivers actually awarded and providing additional details relating to the students benefiting from the fee waiver scheme, as set out in paragraph 52 below.

- HEFCW will adjust the amount of grant paid to an institution in support of student tuition fees waived where the amount that an institution has actually waived is different from its initial estimate for a year. Additional payments required where institutions have underestimated the level of funding required will be subject to the constraints of the overall HEFCW fee waiver budget.
- The operation of the scheme will be subject to review by HEFCW after the findings of the WG's *Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales* has reported in 2016. Students should be made aware that the scheme may end at this stage.

## New and continuing students

### Basis of HEFCW grant payments to institutions for new and continuing students

47. Institutions offering fee waivers under the scheme will be supported through the HEFCW fee waiver grant subject to available funds. The maximum level of funding that that can be claimed for any student in an academic year will either be the full cost of the course's tuition fees, or the maximum amount as outlined in paragraph 13, whichever is lower.
48. Each year institutions are invited to claim a grant in support of tuition fees waived by submitting a return to HEFCW which sets out an *estimate* of the value of the tuition fees to be waived under this scheme, and an *estimate* of the number of students expected to benefit, together with the corresponding overall number of credit values.
49. The estimates of the value of fee waivers provided in the returns from institutions will be used as the basis of a payment from HEFCW to support institutions for these fees. These payments will be made in December of each year.
50. Institutions who have benefited from a fee waiver scheme grant are also required to submit an annual return setting out the *actual* value of fees waived under the scheme. We compare the *actual* value of fee waivers with the early *estimate* received the previous November. Any difference between the two will be recognised in the payment of grant for the following year made in December, subject to the constraints of the overall fee waiver budget. In the event that it has been estimated that a student will undertake fewer than 30 credits but actually undertakes more than 30 credits a deduction will be made from the payment of grant the following year.
51. Institutions are asked to provide details of the *actual* value of fees waived in 2013/14, by completing the pro-forma at **Annex B**, and provide an

*estimate* claim for fee waiver costs in 2014/15 by completing the pro-forma at **Annex C**. These should both be returned to HEFCW by **Friday 14 November 2014**.

## Monitoring requirements

52. In order to assess the effectiveness of the scheme we require that you submit some information relating to the actual students benefiting from it. These items are set out below.

i. HESA Data:

- student identifier (HUSID as returned on the HESA student record 2013/14)
- student instance identifier (NUMHUS as returned on the HESA student record 2013/14)

ii. Institutional data:

- actual fee waived in £s with no rounding applied
- indicator of qualifying criterion in terms of low income, unemployment or discretion applied
- the following codes should be used:
  1. Student is a registered job seeker
  2. Student or student's family are in receipt of qualifying benefits, or DWP benefits are the family's sole source of income
  3. Discretionary

Where a combination of categories applies, the first applicable on the list should be used (i.e. if 1. applies, return code 1. even if 2. also applies).

- whether the student qualified under the scheme as a new or continuing student. The following codes should be used:
  - New
  - Continuing

53. In determining the data requested, HEFCW has sought to minimise the burden on institutions of administering the scheme by relying as far as possible on information already collected. Consequently, the data returned above will be linked using the student and instance identifiers to the data returned on the HESA student record for 2013/14. It is therefore important to ensure that the correct identifiers are returned for each student that had a fee waived under the scheme. It is intended in future to collect the additional data requested above via the HESA student record. Until this has been implemented, we will continue to ask for this additional information.

54. This information on actual fees-waived and the students in receipt of the fee-waiver in 2013/14 should be submitted to HEFCW by **Friday 14 November 2014** using the pro-forma attached at **Annex D**. The total of the actual fees waived as returned on the spreadsheet must correspond to that returned on the form at **Annex B**.

### **Assessing the impact of our policies**

55. As part of our policy development process we have undertaken an initial screening to consider the impact of this document on individuals with protected characteristics and groups underrepresented in higher education. This screening did not identify any negative implications nor unforeseen consequences for individuals with protected characteristics. The outcomes of this screening are available on request. We will continue to consider the impact of policies on equality and diversity, the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision, and on sustainability within the HE sector in Wales.
56. Institutions are responsible for impact assessing any part-time developments, taking into account the impact on individuals with protected characteristics in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Contact [equality@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:equality@hefcw.ac.uk) for more information about equality impact assessments.

## **Responses to the proposed revisions to HEFCW's part-time fee waiver consultation.**

There were ten responses to the consultation of which seven were higher education institutions, two were further education institutions and one was from a professional association. A summary of these responses has been provided below. A list of respondents is provided after the summary.

- Three responses supported the proposed changes.
- Five responses were supportive that the scheme would be continuing with one response suggesting that the fee waiver scheme should remain in its current format.
- Five responses raised concerns regarding the Welsh Government's part-time fee loans, explaining that part-time students who were debt-averse, often those from widening access backgrounds including mature students could be discouraged from applying and as a result part-time and widening access targets could be impacted. The decline in part-time numbers following the introduction of part-time undergraduate loans in England was provided by one respondent as evidence that it was likely that part-time numbers would fall with the introduction of the new funding system.
- Three responses advised that it was important that clear information was available to potential students with two responses warning that a complicated process with limited information could be prohibitive to students particularly those from widening access backgrounds and one response recognising that HEIs would need to do more to provide clear and targeted information for these groups.
- Six responses raised some concerns with the revisions to the fee waiver. Those concerns included:
  - Four responses warned that not continuing to extend the fee waiver to students studying over 25% intensity would be likely to lead to a reduction in numbers studying at a higher intensity. One response estimated that its institution could see a reduction of 70 part-time students that studied over 25% intensity.
  - One response noted that by capping the level of funding available the scheme would not account for subjects that could be costly to the institution and the student such as those associated with healthcare.
  - One response indicated that the fee-waiver could impact on its ability to sustain provision at its existing levels.
  - One response commented that students from widening access backgrounds that did not wish to access the loan could deliberately stay under the 25% threshold for the fee waiver and slow their progress to gaining qualifications.
  - One response noted that some students that chose not to take a loan for financial reasons would not be able to complete courses where the qualification was dependent on time.

- One response reasoned that the co-investment model would make it difficult to get employer support, notably in instances where support was limited to time release.
- Three responses requested clarification regarding the funding process for a student, that had initially signed up for a ten credit course but subsequently signed up for a second or third ten credit course later in the academic year.
- Two responses corrected the figure quoted in the consultation for the maximum amount available through the loans system.
- One response requested clarification on how the 25% intensity would be measured.
- One response requested greater clarity on how a 'continuing student' would be defined given that some lifelong students re-enter education after a period of no study.
- One response required greater clarity on the eligibility specifically related to pension-related benefits and income support.

**Responses to the consultation were received from:**

Aberystwyth University

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Cardiff University

Glyndŵr University

Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai

Neath Port Talbot College & Coleg Powys

Swansea University

Universities Association for Lifelong Learning Cymru

University of South Wales

University of Wales Trinity Saint David