

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Consultation on revisions to HEFCW's regional approach

Date: 24 July 2015
Reference: W15/17HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Response by: **Monday 21 September 2015**
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This consultation sets out proposed new arrangements for HEFCW's regional approach in order to align with the regional priorities set out by Welsh Government.

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



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Introduction

1. This consultation sets out proposed new arrangements for HEFCW's regional approach in order to align with the regional priorities set out by Welsh Government.

Background

2. HEFCW developed an integrated approach to regional planning by requesting that three regions in Wales [develop a strategy for the planning and delivery of Higher Education in Wales](#) for the 2010/11 academic year. The regions constituted **North and Mid Wales** (Aberystwyth University, Bangor University, Glyndŵr University, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai¹ and the Open University in Wales), **South East Wales** (Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University, University of South Wales², Bridgend College and the Open University in Wales) and **South West Wales** (University of Wales Trinity Saint David³, Swansea University, Gower College, Neath Port Talbot College, Pembrokeshire College and the Open University in Wales).
3. In 2011 HEFCW requested that [revised strategies](#) be submitted covering a three year period from 2011/12 to 2013/14. These were subsequently extended for a further year to include 2014/15. These strategies set out:
 - The vision, aims and objectives of the strategies;
 - A summary of high level outcomes of an audit of higher education course provision across the region;
 - Progression routes from post-16 education into higher education and from higher education to other higher education in the region;
 - New higher education provision required in the region;
 - Opportunities for more coordinated widening access activities;
 - Opportunities for joint regional work with employers;
 - Collaborative capital developments and shared services;
 - The governance of the regional partnerships.
4. HEFCW's regional partnerships reported annually on progression against these strategies through Annual Monitoring Statements submitted to HEFCW.
5. HEFCW's remit letters request that HEFCW take consideration of regional coherence when allocating funding. HEFCW more recently has fulfilled this requirement through funding the Reaching Wider Partnerships.

¹ The region included Coleg Llandrillo Cymru as an individual institution prior to its merger with Coleg Menai to become Grŵp Llandrillo Menai.

² The region included University of Glamorgan and University of Wales, Newport as individual institutions.

³ The region included Coleg Sir Gâr, Swansea Metropolitan University and University of Wales Trinity Saint David as individual institutions and Coleg Ceredigion as an associate partner.

6. The proposals set out for consultation in the circular have been discussed in detail with the majority of universities in meetings during 2014/15

Welsh Government Regional Priorities

7. Welsh Government published its Skills Policy Statement in January 2014 and its Skills Implementation Plan in July 2014. Those documents highlighted the importance of the Welsh Government's regional partnerships in delivering Welsh Government's skills priorities, also taking consideration of the two city regions in South Wales. Higher education providers are expected to contribute to those priorities through both the regional partnerships and the city regions. Applicants for European funding are encouraged to consult with the regional partnerships to ensure that effective structural funding programmes are delivered.
8. The Welsh Government's regional partnerships are the North Wales Economic Ambition Board; the South East Wales Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership (LSkip); and the South West and Central Wales Regional Learning Partnership (RLP). The two city regions are the Cardiff Capital Region and the Swansea Bay City Region.
9. Each regional partnership was required to submit regional employment and skills plans to Welsh Government by April 2015 and these will be refreshed annually and both the City Regions will have strategies in place by 2015/16.
10. In May 2015 Welsh Government published its Higher Education in Further Education review⁴. The review concluded that higher education delivered by colleges was best achieved through collaboration of the further and higher education sectors. However, strategic collaboration in this area was found to be weak and Welsh Government has recommended that: *"HEFCW and Colegau Cymru work with Regional Skills Partnerships to ensure joint strategic planning of higher education in further education delivery between higher education institutions and further education institutions to support the expansion of delivery."*

Consultation Proposals

11. Given that the Welsh Government are driving a number of their policies through these regional approaches and that HEFCW's previous regional approach, aside from the Reaching Wider partnerships, has been largely completed, it is proposed that HEFCW revise our reporting structure for regional partnerships and build on the Welsh Government's regional employment and skills partnerships.

⁴ gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/reports/a-review-of-he-delivered-in-further-education-institutions/?lang=en

12. HEFCW expects universities and directly funded colleges to contribute to the Welsh Government's regional employment and skills plans and consider the priorities set out in the plans when making decisions as to where to prioritise higher level skills. Therefore, HEFCW would ask that its regional partnerships make HEFCW aware of how they are engaging with the Welsh Government's regional priorities.
13. Rather than monitoring institutional performances against regional strategies through Annual Monitoring Statements, we propose that HEFCW's regional partnerships submit copies of the plans and strategies that they are already engaging with in the Welsh Government structures. HEFCW would expect that its partnerships present these plans and strategies with a covering paper which highlights their contributions to the plans and strategies along with any supporting information. Further guidance on the cover paper would be set out in future guidance following this consultation.
14. There would also be an expectation that information detailing how regional projects, previously funded by HEFCW, have been embedded would be detailed in the covering paper.
15. HEFCW would expect that its regional partnerships, in line with the recommendations from the Welsh Government's higher education in further education review, are clear in their contribution to the Welsh Government regional priorities and how universities and colleges are working together to plan strategically.
16. HEFCW recognises that, in some instances, universities and colleges are meeting the priorities of several regions and therefore HEFCW would expect those providers to be reflected in several reports back to HEFCW.
17. We intend to produce a report for our Council and its relevant sub-committees highlighting university and directly funded colleges contributions to Welsh Government regional priorities and, where appropriate, making explicit areas where providers are meeting or exceeding their commitments to these priorities. The basis of this report will be the submissions from HEFCW's regional partnerships but these reports will evolve to take into consideration particular elements of labour market intelligence produced by the Welsh Government regional partnerships and will report on those initiatives funded by HEFCW under previous strategies. It is likely that reports will be considered for publication in the future to demonstrate HE contributions to regional working and share elements of good practice.
18. HEFCW would also request that individual higher education providers highlight in their HEFCW Strategic Planning and Engagement Document in future those initiatives that they have been delivering individually that contribute to their region's priorities.

19. Correspondence to Vice-Chancellors and Principals detailing the extension of the previous strategies proposed that we would expect that providers would report on the extended strategies for 2014/15 through the annual monitoring statement process. We will delay calling for the reporting of these strategies through this process until this consultation has been completed. Once the consultation responses have been analysed a circular detailing the outcome of the consultation, HEFCW's new process and what reporting HEFCW will request from the partnerships over the autumn will be published.
20. No funding has been set aside to support the regional agenda aside from the Reaching Wider allocations.

Consultation Responses

21. Please could responses to this consultation be sent to Steve Williams (steven.williams@hefcw.ac.uk) by Monday 21 September with answers to the following:
 - a. **Do you support HEFCW's proposed changes?**
 - b. **Do you have any comments on these proposals? eg Are there any unintended consequences of these revisions or should further consideration be given to particular elements of these proposals?**

Further information

22. Should you wish to discuss this consultation further, please contact Steve Williams (tel 029 2068 2285; email steven.williams@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

23. We will be carrying out an equality impact assessment to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We will also consider the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the higher education sector in Wales. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about equality impact assessments.