

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Covid-19: additional financial support for higher education

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Reference: W20/32HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Response by: No response required
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This circular provides information on how HEFCW will allocate additional funding from the Welsh Government. This funding is for universities in Wales, and focuses on the particular challenges faced by students during the current Covid-19 pandemic. The funding is to be spent by the end of the 2020-21 financial year. We will monitor the use of this funding to enable us to formally report to the Minister for Education by the end of March 2021.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



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Introduction

1. This circular provides information on how HEFCW will allocate additional funding from the Welsh Government. This funding is for universities in Wales, and focuses on the particular challenges faced by students during the current Covid-19 pandemic. The funding is to be spent by the end of the 2020-21 financial year. We will monitor the use of this funding to enable us to formally report to the Minister for Education by the end of March 2021.

Background

2. In September 2020, HEFCW was invited to submit a proposal to the Welsh Government for further funding to assist universities in Wales with their response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus of our proposal was on the particular situation and challenges faced by students, with the funding to be spent by the end of the 2020-21 financial year.

Funding

3. The remit letter from Welsh Government is available on our [website](#). This remitted HEFCW to allocate £10m for the following priorities:
 - Additional funding for student financial hardship.
 - Additional investment in mental health and wellbeing strategies, including extending its participation in the Student Minds project to the end of March 2021.
 - Increasing capacity in students' unions and universities for the provision of advice and support services for both students and staff, including online support, with a focus on mental health support and suicide-safer measures for students and staff. This includes support through the medium of Welsh.
 - Extending universities' contracted services with providers of mental health support.
 - Extra provision for learning support for vulnerable students, those with disabilities and those with caring responsibilities, including helping to address digital poverty.
 - Support and services, including food services, for students required to self-isolate.
4. HEFCW will allocate the funding to institutions as follows:
 - £900k of additional support for the implementation of institutional well-being and health strategy plans. This will be in addition to the £1.8m we have already arranged to allocate to this work, as outlined in circular [W20/29HE: Consultation on well-being and health in HE: funding 2020/21](#), and will be distributed and monitored in line with the processes described in that circular.

- £50k to NUS Wales for additional capacity to support institutional students' unions to provide a range of student support services. HEFCW will provide this funding direct to NUS Wales.
 - £430k to support students' unions (SUs). Recognising that supporting students in the current circumstances depends, in part, on the support services provided by institutional student unions, which have themselves been under financial pressure resulting from reduced commercial income, we have allocated £50k to each institution to provide for additional staffing and/or to cover the costs of activities as determined by each SU. This money will flow through the universities. In this context, the allocation to the University of South Wales includes an additional £30k to support the students' union at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, recognising the relatively discrete organisation and nature of the College. We have not allocated SU funding to the Open University in Wales, given that its Student Association is UK-wide.
 - £5m hardship support for full-time (FT) students, allocated based on a headcount of FT students taken from the HESA student record 2018/19, regardless of domicile or level of study. This is to recognise that full-time students are more likely to have a different term time address and associated additional living costs.
 - £2.65m allocated based on a headcount of widening access (WA) students (see paragraph 5 below) taken from the HESA student record 2018/19, addressing the Welsh Government Steer to support students who are more likely to be adversely impacted by the pandemic.
 - £0.97m allocated based on a headcount of all students taken from the HESA student record 2018/19, regardless of domicile or mode and level of study. This element addresses the steer to support capacity in universities to provide advice and support: services which are provided to all students.
5. For the purposes of the £2.65m allocated using a headcount of WA students, students returned in the HESA student record 2018/19 are considered to be WA students if they:
- are from a low participation area (UK domiciled undergraduates only);
 - are from an area in the bottom two quintiles of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD 2014) (Wales domiciled undergraduates only);
 - are a carer;
 - are a care leaver¹
 - have a disability²;
 - are from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic group (UK domiciles only)³;

¹ Using the UCAS definition for all students (self-declared as in care for 3 months or more).

² Self-assessed.

³ Includes Black, Asian, Mixed and Other non-white ethnicity categories.

- are students with parents with no HE qualifications (UK domiciled undergraduates only).

These categories are used for allocation purposes only. Some categories are only returned for particular populations of students, indicated by the restrictions in brackets. For other categories, all domiciles, modes and levels of study are included. Students are counted in the headcount of WA students if they are from at least one of the above categories.

6. Information on the allocations for each institution is provided at **Annex A**. Our intention is to enable institutions to use their total allocations flexibly in relation to local priorities arising in 2020/21, within the parameters for the funding set out in paragraph 3 above. Therefore, institutions may use their allocation in line with their particular requirements, and in partnership with their student body.
7. We have consulted with universities via Universities Wales on the broad parameters and allocation of this funding.

Release of allocations

8. We will release this funding to institutions by the end of October 2020.

Monitoring

9. We will monitor expenditure and use of this funding to enable us report to the Welsh Government by end March 2021. We will expect institutions to report on the distribution of the funds, details of the activities supported and the impact of the interventions. We will confirm interim monitoring arrangements separately with institutions and provide a template for submission to HEFCW in due course.

Further information

10. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

11. We have carried out an impact assessment to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We also considered the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the HE sector in Wales and potential impacts towards the goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 including our Well-Being Objectives. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about impact assessments.

12. Universities must ensure that their use of their allocated funding:
 - has been equality impact assessed;
 - complies with the Welsh language standards (No. 6) Regulations 2017; and
 - takes account of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act seven well-being goals and five ways of working.

13. We will monitor the impact of the use of the funding via a monitoring template. Our monitoring will take account of how the funding has contributed to supporting the aims of the legislation set out in paragraph 11.