

# Cylchlythyr | Circular

## Higher Education Investment and Recovery Fund – Outcomes

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**To:** Heads of higher education institutions in Wales  
**Response by:** No response required.  
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This circular provides details of the outcomes of the £27 million Higher Education Investment and Recovery Fund, which was established in 2020/21 in order to support universities to maintain vital capacity and aid economic recovery in the context of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please email [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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## Introduction

1. Following circular [W20/27HE: Higher Education Investment and Recovery Fund](#), this circular provides an update on the outcomes of the operation and delivery of this funding to date. The Higher Education Investment and Recovery (HEIR) fund was established by HEFCW following a remit from the Minister for Education to allocate £27 million to “support the HE sector in mitigating the effects of the pandemic and support the wider economic recovery.” The fund was split into two funding streams: an institutional stream of £12 million and a collaborative stream of £15 million
2. This circular also confirms which projects were successful in the bidding process and have been awarded funding.

## Higher Education Investment and Recovery (HEIR) Fund Operation

3. The HEIR funding process was undertaken as described in our previous circular (W20/27HE). In that circular universities were invited to submit individual and collaborative proposals detailing how they would invest allocations from the fund to meet Welsh Government priorities in order to maintain vital capacity and aid economic recovery.
4. We set a deadline of 30 September for the submission of the initial summary bids, with an indicative timescale of end of October for the invitation of full bids. We subsequently moved the October deadline to 6 November in order to provide sufficient time for the development of full bids and to take account of separate additional funding provided by the Welsh Government, ensuring alignment between the two funds.
5. Our [remit letter \(August 2020\)](#) from Welsh Government set out an expectation that, in making allocations from the fund, “HEFCW should have regard to demonstrable financial need at HE institutions as a result of the pandemic.” The urgency of financial need was assessed for each institution following analysis and consideration of a number of financial metrics. We categorised this financial need on the basis of low, medium or high need, and used this categorisation to inform an allocation of funding for each individual institutional bid, from the £12 million stream for institutional bids. This assessment was made after the submission of the initial summary bids, where institutions provided additional financial details for us to consider and when we were in a position to assess the impact of the latest recruitment information on institutional finances.
6. We received 19 initial summary bids: comprising eight individual bids from the universities in Wales and eleven collaborative bids covering the range of Welsh Government priority areas. We reviewed the bids before making recommendations to our HEIR Group, a subgroup of HEFCW Council comprising the Chair; the Chairs of HEFCW’s Quality Assessment Committee, Regulation Committee, Research Wales Committee and

Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee; and the HEFCW Chief Executive. The meeting to review the initial bids was held on 8 October.

7. On the basis of the HEIR Group's consideration of these initial applications, we provided written feedback to institutions on whether they were to proceed to a full submission, including any changes that would be required at the next stage (e.g. the merging of proposals), or whether it was considered that the bid was not appropriate for support from the fund. We met with all institutions to discuss this feedback. In providing the feedback, we informed all institutions of their provisional funding allocation from the £12 million available for individual bids.
8. Full bids (eight individual bids and six collaborative bids) were submitted to us in early November. We reviewed these against the published criteria, and submitted recommendations to the HEIR Group for consideration at a meeting on 17 November.
9. In view of institutions' financial need, we considered it important to release funds at the earliest reasonable opportunity. The Group recommended that most of the bids be approved for funding, but with a condition of funding that any remaining issues be addressed subsequently to HEFCW's satisfaction. This enabled £21,579,194 to be paid in December. Where more substantive changes were required, a final resubmission was requested with a January deadline. The remaining funds were released in February 2021 following consideration and approval of the remaining bids. Similarly, conditions of funding were applied where necessary to ensure any residual issues are addressed.
10. In addition to investment to help individual universities maintain vital teaching and research capacity in the context of the financial challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the HEIR fund is supporting major collaborative programmes that will underpin the sector's role in economic recovery. For more information on the bids, please see **Annex A**.

### **Final Allocations and Approved Projects**

11. A summary of approved projects and associated funding awards can be found in **Annex B**. This document also includes a list of the priorities as set out by Welsh Government for which the projects seek to address and the initial individual allocations calculated based on financial metrics.

### **Monitoring Arrangements**

12. We have notified institutions of the way in which we will be monitoring activity supported through the HEIR fund. A draft monitoring template is attached at **Annex C**. Each template will be based on the final agreed project submissions and will feature the deliverables as set out by

institutions or consortia. We will monitor progress at five points as set out below:

- March 2021
- July 2021
- October 2021
- July 2022
- July 2023

13. It is a condition of funding that this monitoring be completed satisfactorily. Whilst we will try to be as flexible as possible, if the funding is not appropriately spent in line with the agreed bids or if sufficient progress is not made against deliverables, funding may be subject to clawback.
14. We require this monitoring to inform Welsh Government on the impact of the funding in both the short and medium-term. This will be achieved through reporting against the deliverables set out in each proposal as well as reporting on any evaluation of activity. We will expect institutions to reflect on how activity will become embedded and lessons learnt.

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

15. We have carried out an impact assessment screening 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](mailto:equality@hefcw.ac.uk) for more information about impact assessments.