

Cylchlythyr | Circular

HE supporting learning experiences in schools and colleges

Date: 14 June 2021
Reference: W21/17HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Chairs of Reaching Wider Partnerships
Response by: **Friday 3 September 2021**
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This circular sets out the Welsh Government's expectations for higher education to contribute to supporting learning experiences across the education system working regionally and Wales-wide.

The circular draws attention to the Welsh Government's new transition funding which may be used to buy services from higher education providers and it expects higher education providers to review and publish on their websites all activities and services that support schools, colleges and learners who have experienced disrupted education in school and college.

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



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Introduction

1. This circular sets out the Welsh Government's expectations for higher education to contribute to supporting learning experiences across the education system working regionally and Wales-wide.
2. The circular draws attention to Welsh Government's transition funding for schools and colleges, which may be used to buy services from higher education (HE) providers in Wales.
3. In this context, providers should review and publish on their websites all their activities and services supporting schools, colleges and learners who have experienced disrupted learning, including explaining where such provision will align to the Curriculum for Wales. By **Friday 3 September 2021**, higher education providers should confirm with us that they have completed a review and send us a link to the web-based information.
4. We recognise that many adult learners in further education colleges, or other contexts, have experienced disrupted learning. We expect the needs of adult learners to be reflected in higher education providers' support for people of all ages with the potential to benefit from higher education.

Background

HEFCW's remit letter expectations

5. [HEFCW's remit letter 2021-22](#) includes two sections on supporting learners' transition to HE from schools and colleges and on supporting schools and curriculum development.
6. The remit letter draws attention to the need:
 - i. for specific measures to support students making the transition from school or college to university taking account of emotional and academic disruption experienced this year (*paragraph 15*);
 - ii. for clear, shared aspirations to realise curriculum reform with a shared understanding of how parts of the system will work together to support schools, including and extending beyond Initial Teacher Training (*paragraph 33*);
 - iii. to continue the sector's contribution to the process of curriculum development in the various [Curriculum for Wales](#) guidance work streams (*paragraph 34*);
 - iv. continue engagement with schools in their local area and through the [National Network](#) arrangements set out in the [Implementation Plan](#) (*paragraph 35*);
 - v. with further education, universities should play an ongoing role in supporting:
 - o learning experiences of school-age children;

- more effective transitions from pre-16 to post-16 learning progression;
 - professional learning for practitioners;
 - collaborative development of bilingual resources for schools and settings; and
 - curriculum-related research and publications (*paragraph 35*);
- vi. for HEFCW and Welsh Government to consider how universities can draw Curriculum for Wales principles into their own provision of services to better support learners in their preparedness and ability to engage in post-16 education (*paragraph 35*).

Welsh Government transition funding for schools and colleges

7. Separately, the Welsh Government has provided £8.5m [transition funding](#) (May 2021) to FEIs and school sixth forms to provide transition support for year 11, 12 and 13 learners studying AS/A2 level qualifications who are transitioning to the next steps in their educational journey. This additional funding recognises that these learners have experienced disruption to their education during the pandemic and may require further support and guidance in order to successfully transition onto the next stage of their learning or into apprenticeships, training, and the workplace.

Reaching Wider Programme supporting priority schools, colleges and learners

8. HEFCW will be consulting on a new Reaching Wider (RW) Programme strategy from 2022/23. Our consultation will invite views on how the RW Programme can contribute to supporting the disrupted education of priority learners, including alignment with the [four purposes](#) and [six areas of learning](#) of the Curriculum for Wales.

9. Actions to:

- respond to HEFCW's remit letter expectations;
- address disrupted learning experiences in schools and colleges; and
- enable learners of all ages to achieve their full potential;

will contribute to higher education providers' broader commitments, including to:

- i. the goals and ways of working of the [Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015](#);
- ii. supporting people with protected characteristics and acting in the spirit of the socio-economic duty of the [Equality Act 2015](#);
- iii. contributing to [Cymraeg 2050](#): A Million Welsh Speakers;
- iv. improving widening access, equality of opportunity and promoting HE through fee and access plan commitments;
- v. supporting Reaching Wider Programme priority groups through regional partnership working and fee plan commitments; and

- vi. supporting people under-represented in HE through widening access and civic mission strategies.

Action to further support schools and colleges and Curriculum for Wales developments

10. To respond to Welsh Government expectations and ensure that schools and colleges understand clearly HE activities and services, which are free or available to purchase from HE providers, we will work with Welsh Government and others to promote higher education and equality of opportunity for all who can benefit from higher-level learning.
11. We encourage higher education providers to review and publish on their websites their activities and services to support schools and colleges, including explaining where such provision aligns to the Curriculum for Wales. Improving the accessibility of HE providers' offers will enable schools and colleges to more easily understand and, where appropriate, purchase provision with Welsh Government transition funding.
12. The Welsh Government sets out in the transition funding guidance (pages 3–5) eligible activities that schools and colleges may buy to support year 11, 12 and 13 learners. Higher education providers in Wales can provide many of these activities and, simultaneously, build on and create new schools/college partnerships to strengthen a whole system approach to education in Wales.
13. Additionally, and in line with our remit letter expectations, we consider that some HE providers may need to strengthen and/or improve their promotion of some activities and services, including in one or more of the following areas:
 - i. working in partnership with schools and colleges to provide support for the development of pedagogy across areas of learning and experience and further engage with professional enquiry;
 - ii. providing professional learning to support the development of schools' pedagogy, curriculum design and approaches to assessment across the whole school workforce;
 - iii. reviewing the HE offer to schools and colleges and how this is articulated online, ensuring that engagement opportunities for schools and colleges, including targeted widening access activities, are accessible and that images reflect the diversity of the student population.
 - iv. working with schools and colleges to help all parties understand how HE learning, teaching and student life will be provided in Covid-19-safe ways, including in person and virtually;
 - v. raising awareness of the range of well-being and health support available and how to access it, including information co-funded by HEFCW on [Student Space](#);

- vi. signposting to e-resources created by HE providers in Wales at openlearn.com/university-ready. This co-created resource for A level or equivalent learners, parents and teachers provides information about applying to university, student life, study skills, studying academic subjects, and studying in Welsh;
 - vii. promoting the Reaching Wider Programme and working with schools and colleges to ensure they understand clearly how priority learners engaging with Reaching Wider Partnership activities up to the age of 16 can transition to HE-funded Reaching Wider activities post-16;
 - viii. collating, recognising and promoting the contribution that their staff make as school governors and/or through formal and informal links to schools and colleges in the region;
 - ix. using initial teacher training partnerships to contribute to HE/schools engagement;
 - x. engaging with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol on the development and promotion of Welsh medium / bilingual resources which can be shared with schools/ colleges;
 - xi. continuing to support and promote regional HE in FE partnerships and progression pathways.
14. Higher education providers' support for schools and colleges must be sustainable, respond collaboratively to identified need, add value to learning, and prepare future generations to access and succeed in higher education.
15. Closer partnership working with schools and colleges, as they implement the Curriculum for Wales, will inform higher education providers' response to applicants' and students' learning and teaching needs.

Action required by

16. By **Friday 3 September 2021**, higher education providers should confirm with us that a review has been completed and send us a link to the web-based information.
17. We will monitor higher education providers' webpages to understand how accessible information, activities and services are for schools and colleges and how HE providers are making links to the Curriculum for Wales, where appropriate.
18. We will write to higher education providers where we consider that more could be done to promote equality of opportunity and higher education, including in supporting schools and colleges and the Curriculum for Wales.

19. Please send web-links to the relevant provision to:
sheridan.nott@hefcw.ac.uk.

Further information

20. For further information contact Jane Johns (jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk) or Cliona O'Neill (cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

21. We impact assess policies. This circular takes account of our duties and commitments arising from the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the Equalities Act and relevant Welsh language legislation. We have carried out an impact assessment on the underpinning policies of this circular. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about impact assessments.
22. We expect higher education providers to consider the equality, diversity and inclusion, Welsh language and Well-being of Future Generations implications of supporting schools, colleges and their learners.