

Cylchlythyr | Circular

HEFCW Strategic Change Fund: Outcomes

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Response by: No response required
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This circular provides information on the Strategic Change Fund allocated in the academic year 2016/17. It outlines the distribution of funding to Universities by thematic areas and provides examples of outcomes achieved with this funding.

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Background - Support for strategic change in institutions in Wales

- In October 2016, through a revised remit letter, the Welsh Government provided HEFCW with £20 million of funding which was to be spent by Higher Education (HE) providers against four criteria. We published circular W16/47HE: Supporting Strategic Change in December 2016 which informed providers of the additional £20 million funding available and provided detail of each of the following four areas against which Welsh Government required it to be spent, i.e.
 - Support for a review of estates rationalisation;
 - The development of investment in higher level apprenticeships;
 - Business incubator and accelerator facilities to improve the links between universities and industry; and
 - A strategic development fund to promote sector capacity and ability to meet strategic challenges and change.
- All of the HE providers submitted plans. There were plans for expenditure in all of the four areas although not all institutions intended to utilise funding in all areas. It should be noted that in areas such as higher level apprenticeships, the fact that providers did not plan to allocate this funding against that criterion did not indicate that there was no development activity at those providers.

Institution	Estates Rationalisation	Development of High Level Apprenticeships	Business Incubator and accelerator facilities	Sector Capacity and ability to meet strategic challenges and change	Total
University of South Wales	£396,000	£187,000	£472,000	£705,000	£1,760,000
Aberystwyth University	£870,000			£539,000	£1,409,000
Bangor University	£251,000	£50,000	£205,000	£934,000	£1,440,000
Cardiff University	£387,200	£5,000	£371,712	£8,921,088	£9,685,000
University of Wales Trinity St David	£215,000	£58,000	£147,500	£103,000	£523,500
Swansea University	£1,200,000			£2,000,000	£3,200,000
Cardiff Metropolitan University		£100,000		£189,000	£289,000
Wrexham Glyndŵr University		£68,000	£91,000	£350,000	£509,000
Open University in Wales		£84,815		£982,185	£1,067,000
UW Centre for Advanced Wales and Celtic Studies				£34,000	£34,000
Grŵp Llandrillo Menai		£42,000		£35,000	£77,000
Grŵp NPTC Group		£6,000	£2,000		£8,000
Gower College Swansea		£2,300			£2,300
Totals	£3,319,200	£603,115	£1,289,212	£14,792,273	£20,003,800
Percentage of total	16.6%	3.0%	6.5%	73.9%	

- At the end of the academic year (AY) 2016/17, institutions were asked to submit monitoring reports, by 31 October 2017, reporting on their achievements against their plans.

4. These monitoring reports highlighted significant progress against the intentions set out in the original plans, with overall expenditure exceeding the original allocation. Where the expenditure exceeded the funding allocated other institutional funds were used to meet the additional costs.
5. HEFCW Officers considered the monitoring reports which confirmed that satisfactory progress had been made. This circular details some of the key outcomes achieved through the fund in each of the four thematic areas.

Estates Rationalisation

6. Universities reported that they used HEFCW's Strategic Change Funding allocation for estates rationalisation with the aim of working towards ensuring a fit-for-purpose, sustainable and efficient estate that meets the changing demands of students, staff and other users.
7. The HEFCW funding was used by the Universities to:
 - undertake survey work in respect of the condition of the estate;
 - undertake valuations of surplus assets to support disposals;
 - refurbish and reconfigure space to underpin the efficient use of buildings and dispose of surplus properties;
 - undertake planning and improvement work related to energy efficiency; and
 - undertake feasibility studies, master-planning and strategy development work.
8. Examples of developments undertaken by universities include:

Aberystwyth University

9. The University completed Phase 1 of a Condition and Measuring Survey which is to be used to develop a detailed schedule of works for each building and to inform the revised Estates Strategy and space utilisation masterplan. Survey and architectural advice and feasibility and design consultancy were also sought in respect of the University's Protect and Stabilise programme, with £5.8 million overall expenditure on the programme in 2016/17.

Bangor University

10. The University prepared an Estate Strategy Framework which provided a summary of the current condition and functionality of the estate and how it matches the needs of the University's Strategic Plan, its academic business operations and priorities.

Cardiff University

11. The University completed feasibility studies to identify options for estates developments. It has also replaced inefficient plant and equipment to deliver energy efficiency savings.

Swansea University

12. The University commissioned consultants to undertake feasibility/options appraisal reports on the Talbot and Vivian Buildings to inform the developing Estate Strategy and to determine the options for the future use of the buildings. Both studies were completed and the development plans in respect of the Talbot Building have been progressed with a £1.4M investment in 2016/17 and further investment planned. The works to upgrade and extend the teaching laboratory facilities in the Margam Building were completed in September 2017 and are currently in use. Following the success of the project, options are being developed to upgrade other teaching laboratories, including PC facilities, to improve the condition and functionality of the spaces and improve utilisation rates.

University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)

13. The University undertook the refurbishment of three halls of residence and other residential facilities at its Lampeter Campus to enable the disposal of these properties on a 99 year lease. The Parry Building on the Carmarthen Campus was also refurbished, to enable the Arts teaching and performance space to be utilised to its full potential. The University also developed business cases for energy efficiency projects.

Development of High Level Apprenticeships

14. HEFCW-funded institutions have supported the development of higher level apprenticeships in Wales in a number of ways.
15. As digital and engineering/advanced manufacturing frameworks have been developed institutions have worked with sector skills councils and employers to inform the content of apprenticeship frameworks, develop qualifications that could be published on relevant higher level apprenticeships frameworks and consider appropriate models for the delivery of higher level apprenticeships. Wrexham Glyndŵr University hosted an employer event for SEMTA to scope out demand for higher level apprenticeships in advanced manufacturing and engineering in order to develop a relevant framework. Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Swansea University, University of South Wales and University of Wales Trinity Saint David engaged in discussions with the Tech Partnership regarding qualifications being published on the relevant digital framework.
16. Significantly there has been collaborative work across the education sectors with universities working with partner colleges and other work-based learning providers in order to respond to the demand of employers and develop apprenticeships at lower levels. Bangor University and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, for example, have developed a working group in order to jointly respond to the demands of higher level apprenticeships.

17. Recognising that higher level apprenticeships are new to Wales, institutions have developed new internal processes to embed apprenticeships in institutional activity to enable a strategic approach to meeting employer needs. A case study at the University of South Wales highlights the importance of universities embedding apprenticeships at an institutional level and being flexible to meet the needs of employers.

University of South Wales (USW)

18. When the Strategic Change Fund circular was published USW committed to a strategic approach. USW has worked to ensure this has fitted into core structures and identified a resource base at a central and faculty level that would work up and explore demand being received through a range of channels and communicate a clear response that articulates back to employers the emerging policy, funding and framework context in England and Wales. This has been discussed and agreed at an institutional level.
19. The Director of FE Partnerships and Chair of the UK partner operational group set up a working group with representation from the four academic faculties at USW, Commercial and Client Services, Network 75 and by request core functions in finance, quality and registry. The work of this group feeds directly to the UK POG (partner operational group) and up to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Institution's overarching Portfolio Group – ensuring curricula is developed as part of its wider academic and work based learning footprint with appropriate quality, business and due diligence. Formal presentations and discussion have taken place with each faculty executive team, student support and learner services team and academic board.
20. This group has managed communications and demand internally and externally and ensured a joined up approach across the institution.
21. As the priority areas became identified in policy, the group recognised that whilst these primarily sat in one faculty – Computing Engineering and Science – demand and requests from employers were across a wide range of areas in Wales and England. In order to meet this demand USW worked to achieve registration on the register of apprenticeship training providers in England – this has been a considerable investment of time and resource. USW have also worked to offer alternative provision to non-funded higher level apprenticeship strands. USW are still bounded by two different policy approaches but have secured confidence of employers who can see that USW are willing and able to engage with them beyond a regional and Welsh boundary.

Business Incubator and accelerator facilities

22. Universities reported that they used HEFCW's Strategic Change Funding to:

- Grow their existing services to businesses, provided through advice hubs, clinics and enterprise lounges
- Enhance their existing plans for capital development to provide additional space for business incubator/accelerator and shared lab provision
- Expand existing activity in relation to student and graduate entrepreneurship to support new business start-ups.

23. Examples are set out below:

University of South Wales Exchange

24. The University has committed to supporting Wales's start-up and entrepreneurial activities by focusing on increasing SME contributions to the economy, developing students with relevant skills, and enhancing the status of the University as an institution for business.
25. Designed to embed activity further within full-time courses, HEFCW funding was used to support "USW Exchange" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0L7o1r8c1w>, which was officially opened on 18 September 2017 by Wales' Economy Minister Ken Skates and Sir Terry Matthews. USW Exchange now has a presence on all USW campuses and thus offers a region wide provision, covering a broad range of subject areas tailored to each campus: Pontypridd is the hub for general business, Newport for cyber security and Cardiff for creative industries. The initiative offers entrepreneurs in South Wales access to free expert support including that provided by sponsoring organisations, which include Barclays Bank, Alcumus, South Wales Chamber of Commerce, and Capital Law.
26. In addition to providing a centre for collaboration and interaction, a place to support start-ups and expand existing businesses, and somewhere to build links between industry and graduate talent, USW Exchange also offers an opportunity for discussions around graduate placements, research, consultancy training, and access to industry expertise through local sponsors.
27. The initiative builds on the success of the Legal & Financial Clinic based in Cardiff which has been in operation for three academic sessions (www.southwales.ac.uk/about/faculties-and-schools/school-law-accounting-and-finance/legal-and-financial-advice/) and is a core part of delivery aligned to provision in Law and Accounting. HEFCW's Strategic Change Fund was also used, therefore, to support the Clinic's ongoing development: future plans include establishing a satellite for USW Exchange to provide tailored advice to financial service businesses.

Cardiff University Innovation Central

28. Cardiff's priority for this funding was additional investment in Innovation Central, part of the University's development of its new Maindy Park Innovation Campus. Innovation Central will play a key role in providing

incubator and accelerator facilities and, from the outset, shared spaces, labs and serviced offices were prominent in the design of the building. These facilities will play a vital role in supporting a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation within the University and more widely for the city of Cardiff.

29. The HEFCW funding supported the completion of the design phase of the new build:
 - 2,400m² flexible lettable office space from 11m² to 115m²
 - Formal and informal meeting space with high-end conference facilities
 - Access to a professional high-street of advisers
 - Joint exhibition and presentation areas
 - 500m² wet lab space, including individual and shared fume cupboards
 - High-speed broadband
 - Access at competitive rates to the University's services and facilities

30. In addition to the Innovation Central building, the University's plans included continued investment in this area through financial commitment to the Institute for Compound Semiconductors, which also has a key role to play in terms of business and industry support.

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

31. Building on an established track record of supporting graduate business start-ups, UWTSD used the HEFCW funding to establish a pipeline of support for students. From the generation of business ideas (supported by the embedding of enterprise skills in the curriculum and extra-curricula activity) through access to incubation facilities and business support services (both in-house and delivered in partnership with external providers), the University considers itself well-placed to support the Welsh Government's ambitions to promote innovation-driven entrepreneurship.

32. The University took forward a range of activities to support students on the entrepreneurial journey, from idea generation to business incubation and acceleration. This included some minor refurbishment of existing space and resources within the Swansea Business Campus, the Creative Industries Research and Innovation Centre, and SA1:
 - Provision and refurbishment of dedicated space, on the Mount Pleasant campus, and support for students considering startup has been made available.
 - The Race to Market Competition, based on the Dragon's Den model, was hosted in July with students from across the University participating. Entrepreneurial alumni and business specialists were mentors and judges for the week of activities.

- Stakeholders such as Business Wales, Simply Do Ideas have collaborated on competitions encouraging the progression of ideas. Successes include a second year Graphic Design student winning a national competition for his personalised martial arts fightwear.
- The entrepreneurial alumni network is increasing with graduates from across the campuses providing workshops. The University has highlighted the fact that it had more events than any other UK University in Enterprise Week (November, 2016).
- Students have access to IP workshops and on-line materials that have been developed with the UKIPO
- Students and graduates starting up businesses are accessing support from the SBS Incubation Hub, a refurbished facility located on the top floor of the Business School, amongst a suite of offerings.
- Funding opportunities through potential investments as part of the SA1 Joint Venture are being examined, with proposals to set up a fund as part of the activity. Costs to date include legal work undertaken, completed and ongoing consultancy work to engage with the City Deal.
- Bursaries and internships have been accessed across the disciplines enabling students to work with business specialists.

Sector Capacity and ability to meet strategic challenges and change - Research capacity

33. Universities reported that they used HEFCW's Strategic Change Funding to continue to invest in the capacity of the research base, with the aim of continuing to grow the quality, scale and impact of the research base in Wales. Universities saw the investment as an opportunity to support effective approaches to interdisciplinary research and enhanced engagement with industry, business and the public sector in the delivery of research, development, innovation and technology transfer activity, as well as the delivery of demand-led higher level skills provision.
34. The HEFCW funding was used by the Universities:
 - to recruit high quality research academics (especially in key STEMM areas of engineering, lab-based science (eg Chemistry, Computer Science));
 - for the provision of matched funding for Research Councils' Doctoral Training Partnerships;
 - for investment in critical research equipment and facilities (eg fMRI scanner, Supercomputing Wales); and
 - for enhancing institution-wide research management and support.
35. Also in this context, three Universities reported that they used the HEFCW funding to ensure their successful participation in the Welsh Government's

flagship Sêr Cymru II (including COFUND) programme. The capacity of the research base has therefore been enhanced through the appointment of high quality research fellows to key STEMM areas within Universities in Wales.

Cardiff Metropolitan University: Targeted investment to sustain high-quality, world-leading applied research in the field of vision technology (Fovography Centre)

36. Cardiff Metropolitan University used HEFCW's Strategic Change Fund support to sustain a strategic research investment, which could have the potential to position the Fovography Centre as a world-leading centre in the field of vision technology. The funding enabled the University to invest in staffing and specialist equipment, as well as maintaining software licences and protecting intellectual property.
37. The intensive research and development work undertaken in the Fovography Centre during 2016/17 has resulted in a step change in the scope, applicability and commercial potential of the technology. The University reports significant progress in the following areas:
 - The underlying perceptual process under investigation has been implemented in a real time high resolution graphics engine that is portable to multiple platforms;
 - The core technology has been protected by a US Patent granted and eight further patents pending across multiple territories;
 - A Limited Company has been formed as a vehicle for commercialisation, and key trademarks have been secured;
 - An extensive consultancy exercise has been conducted using external advisers on the commercial potential of the related IP and products;
 - Endorsements have been secured from leading figures in industry and academia;
 - External funding has been received from Wellcome Trust and multiple collaborative funding bids have been submitted;
 - Multiple academic publications have been produced along with other dissemination activities.
38. Work on the project continues with a view to commercialisation during 2017/18.

Sector Capacity and ability to meet strategic challenges and change - Widening Access

39. Universities reported that they used HEFCW's Strategic Change Funding to invest in a number of bespoke activities aimed at improving widening access to higher education. Universities used the investment to focus on areas such as retention, attainment and transition. The funding also

enabled a number of pilots to be launched exploring further ways to widen access to higher education.

40. Some of the most successful examples of the Universities' use of the additional funding included:

University of South Wales: To support recruitment to part-time education the University of South Wales has built and strengthened its strategic alliances with further education partners

41. The Strategic Change Fund has helped the University of South Wales to deliver services that support part-time learners, including library and IT services, there has also been funding for student advice services on employability, careers, student money and counselling and a bulwarking of the infrastructure that supports part-time students.

Open University in Wales: The OU in Wales uses funding to support Open Education Resources (OER)

42. OER is one mechanism for providing outreach activities, including with community organisations and other 'broker' type bodies and partners across Wales, including the Reaching Wider Partnerships, FE Colleges, community based organisations, trade unions, charities and employers. OER helps to deliver a Wales-wide community-centred programme of widening access activity that targets on adult learners, many of whom are in low skill/low wage employment or out of the labour market. OER provision aligns with, and contributes to, the Reaching Wider Programme enabling the Reaching wider Partnerships to promote higher-level study opportunities to adult learners. The OU in Wales' work in this area contributes to securing the sustainability of part-time numbers in Wales, it ensures that access to HE is open to all regardless of their geographic location and it targets learners who, traditionally do not engage with higher education.

Bangor University: Following a successful strategic engagement project, HEFCW funding has helped Bangor University to roll out a number of activities across their campuses.

43. The initiatives launched by Bangor University are aimed at supporting retention in the university. Activities have included an assessment of module grades across Schools, identification of student engagement levels and a pilot supplementary assessment process to provide additional learning opportunities, including a supported residential programme for students requiring additional study support to improve their performance and success. Funding has enabled Bangor to expand these activities and resulted in a university-wide roll-out of retention-related activities, including the residential supplementary assessment process, led by two members of academic staff seconded to the University's Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) liaising with student engagement officers in each of the University's five colleges.

Wrexham Glyndŵr University

44. The Strategic Change Fund has enabled Wrexham Glyndŵr University to undertake a number of engagements to examine relevancy of provision, particularly with regard to regional skill needs. It has also facilitated the promotion of HE and recruitment of part-time learners to relevant programmes.

Further information

45. For further information, contact Leanne Holborn (telephone 029 2085 9723; email leanne.holborn@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

46. A responsibility rests on higher education institution partners to assess the impact of their proposals to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality.