

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Consultation on well-being and health in HE: funding 2020/21

Date: 22 September 2020
Reference: W20/29HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Response by: 21 October 2020
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This is a consultation on an additional allocation of £1.8m to universities to revise their well-being and health strategies and implementation plans and to provide additional funding for implementing the plans, to further support well-being and health in higher education in 2020/21.

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Introduction

1. This is a consultation on an additional allocation of £1.8m to universities to revise their well-being and health strategies and implementation plans and to provide additional funding for implementing the plans, to further support well-being and health in higher education in 2020/21.
2. This consultation relates to funding to support both staff and students in HE to ensure a 'whole university approach' to well-being and health, including mental health.

Background

3. In addition to inviting well-being and health funded projects, circular [W19/11HE](#) required universities to develop well-being and health strategies and to adopt the frameworks of [#stepchange](#)¹ and [Suicide-safer Universities](#) developed by Universities UK.
4. While managing complex responses to Covid-19, universities have:
 - published Strategic Equality Plans 2020-24;
 - developed strategic equality delivery plans 2020/21;
 - submitted to us fee and access plans supporting equality of opportunity, including groups with protected characteristics;
 - submitted to us well-being and health strategies from 2020/21;
 - submitted to us safeguarding investment plans to review safeguarding policies and processes for staff and students (see circular [W20/08HE](#)); and
 - taken forward, where possible, five well-being and health funded proposals (see circular [W19/11HE](#)).
5. Lessons learned from ongoing Covid-19 responses will impact on the delivery of the above strategies and plans. This learning will require universities to reconsider and revise actions related to well-being and health, including mental health, and support for all staff and students.
6. Where these strategies and plans were developed and submitted to us this year, we recognise that additional resource is necessary to enable universities' to adapt to new ways of working and innovative delivery to meet their staff and student support objectives and key milestones in a Covid-19 working and learning environment.
7. Universities UK revised the 2018 [#stepchange](#) framework and published [Step change: mentally healthy universities](#) in May 2020. Universities should take account of these changes in revising their support.

¹ The former [#stepchange](#) publication is no longer available following revision. This link is to the revised version as outlined in this section of the circular.

8. To support students in higher education we are co-funding, with the Office for Students, [Student Space](#) managed by [Student Minds](#). Student Space is a large-scale guidance project providing additional, short-term, well-being and health resources alongside universities' own student support services. All universities in Wales provide links to their student support from the Student Space website.

Well-being and health funding and the related disabled students premium 2020/21

9. In 2020/21, we have increased the disabled students premium by an additional £1.7m to support disabled students².
10. HEFCW has contributed £190k to the Student Space project in 2020/21. This funding includes a ring-fenced allocation for some Welsh language provision.
11. Through this circular we are consulting on a proposal to allocate an additional £1.8m in 2020/21 to universities to support the well-being and health, including mental health, of all staff and students³.
12. Consultation questions can be found in **Annex A**.

Well-being and health funding: proposals

13. We propose to allocate £1.8m to support universities' review and implementation of their well-being and health strategies in 2020/21. We received high-level strategies from universities, all of which commit to *#stepchange* (revised as *Stepchange: mentally healthy universities*) and *Suicide-safer Universities* frameworks.
14. The proposed implementation funding recognises that this first year of strategy implementation will require additional resources if universities' commitments and intended pace of change are to be maintained in the Covid-19 operating context.
15. Universities should have in place plans to deliver their well-being and health strategies. However, given the likely scale of increased demand for these services in 2020/21, we propose to provide additional funding to

² In 2018/19 HESA data: The number of disabled students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) rose by 2.2% (from 6,905 to 7,055), while the number not in receipt of DSA rose by 27% (from 9,500 to 12,060) and the number where information about DSA was not known increased by 41% (from 430 to 610). The number of students declaring themselves disabled rose by 17.1% (from 16,835 to 19,725).

³ In 2018/19 HESA data: The number of students declaring themselves as having a mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder increased by 46.7% (from 3,180 to 4,670), and those declaring themselves as having a social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder increased by 39.9% (from 700 to 980).

support the review of strategies and plans and the plans' implementation, to ensure they remain fit for purpose, appropriately ambitious and agile in responding to the needs of staff and students.

16. Some plans submitted to us were clearer than others in their ambition and in their support of staff, which we consider essential in securing a whole university approach. We will be providing some generic feedback on the well-being and health strategies, including sharing interesting practice, to inform the review of the implementation plans.
17. We would expect implementation plans to take a 'whole university approach' by supporting the needs of staff and students and include:
 - i. a short-time timeframe for completing the well-being and health strategy and current implementation plan review;
 - ii. details of how and by when students and a range of staff will be involved in reviewing the strategy, informing revisions to the implementation plan and ongoing monitoring of progress;
 - iii. confirmation that the revised strategy and implementation plan have been equality impact assessment assessed and how the key findings of the assessment will be addressed;
 - iv. a description of how the implementation strategy will take account of the [Well-being of Future Generations Act's goals and ways of working](#);
 - v. a focus on both staff and students and a clear commitment to a 'whole university approach';
 - vi. details of activities and services to deliver the well-being and health strategy objectives/intentions in 2020/21;
 - vii. details of activities and services provided bilingually or in Welsh;
 - viii. details of activities and services to safeguard the well-being and health of staff and students, including when teaching and learning online;
 - ix. details of activities and services that take account of guidance provided in *Stepchange: mentally healthy universities* and *Suicide-safer Universities* (see paragraph 18 below);
 - x. dates by when activities and services will be established and completed for 2020/21; and
 - xi. confirmation of how progress against the implementation plan will be monitored, including how students and a representative range of staff will be involved; and
 - xii. how the implementation plan will be reported to and through university governance structures.
18. In submitting well-being and health funded proposals (see circular W19/11HE), all universities committed to adopt, from 2019/20, *Stepchange: mentally healthy universities* and *Suicide-safer Universities* approaches, as set out the respective UUK documents. The *Stepchange: mentally healthy universities framework* includes [a self-assessment tool](#) to support improvement. We recommend that universities use this tool to inform their planning and we will use this to inform the monitoring of plans.

19. We expect implementation plans to take account of the particular needs of staff and students identified in circular [W20/24HE](#) *Covid-19 impact on higher education providers: information on equality, diversity and inclusion*.
20. As universities will already have well-being and health strategies and initial implementation plans in their own corporate style, revised implementation plans may be submitted to us in their existing format, *provided we are able to clearly identify how the points in paragraph 17 above are clearly addressed*. Where it is helpful, institutions can use an implementation plan template which we will provide with the funding allocation.

Funding and monitoring

21. We propose to allocate funding on the basis of student headcounts. We allocated well-being: safeguarding and period dignity funding on the same basis and it provides a proxy for a 'whole university approach' (staff and students). Details are provided in **Annex B**.
22. Subject to the outcomes of this consultation on our overall approach, we propose to allocate funding in two equal tranches in:
 - i. October 2020 to support the review of well-being and health strategies and revision of implementation plans; and
 - ii. February 2021 to enable further implementation.
23. We reserve the right to hold back or clawback funding where implementation plans are not sufficient to assure us that satisfactory progress is being made, at a reasonable pace.
24. A monitoring report will be required in autumn 2021 with information on delivery to date, a self-assessment update, lessons learned and next steps.
25. HEFCW will provide the monitoring report template.

Timetable

26. Responses to this consultation should be submitted to sheridan.nott@hefcw.ac.uk by **Wednesday 21 October 2020**.
27. Subject to consultation outcomes, we will request the submission of well-being and health implementation plans, including confirmation that well-being and health strategies have been reviewed, in **December 2020** to enable us to release the January 2021 allocation.

28. We appreciate that the time available for consultation responses is short if we are to allocate funding in October 2020. We would welcome succinct responses and anticipate that this will make replying to us easier.

Further information

29. For further information contact Ryan Stokes (email ryan.stokes@hefcw.ac.uk).

Responses to this consultation

30. Please submit consultation responses and, subject to responses, revised implementation plans to Sheridan Nott (email sheridan.nott@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

31. We have initiated an impact assessment to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality and diversity in HE. We 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 and ways of working set out in the [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and HEFCW's Well-Being Objectives and our consultation invites responses on these matters.
32. We consider this potential funding to be a positive intervention in providing increased financial support for well-being and health, including mental health and its alignment with WG, HEFCW and institutional priorities as they relate to staff and students. We update our impact assessment and the final guidance on allocations consultation.
33. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about impact assessments. The outcome of this consultation will inform the allocation of £1.8m to support revised well-being and health implementation plans in 2020/21.

Consultation questions

1. Do you agree with our overall approach of funding a review of well-being and health strategies and implementation plans and providing additional support for implementation of these plans in 2020/21 to take account of the impact of Covid-19 on staff and student well-being and health, including mental health?
2. Are there any unintended consequences of allocating £1.8m to support revised well-being and health strategies and implementation plans in 2020/21, including using the method indicated, and, if so, what are they?
3. Is there more we might do to support the implementation of well-being and health strategies as they relate to staff and students in allocating this funding? If so, what more might we do?
4. Do the timelines provided present any insurmountable problems and, if so, how might they be revised to ensure universities receive funding to support their students and staff in a timely manner?
5. In relation to the Welsh language:
 - i) what **effect** (if any), positive or adverse, will the policy have on:
 - a. **opportunities** for persons to use the Welsh language; and
 - b. **treating** the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.
 - ii) How could the policy be [formulated / changed] so that the policy decision would have **positive effects**, or increased positive effects, on:
 - a. **opportunities** for persons to use the Welsh language; and
 - b. **treating** the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.
 - iii) how could the policy be [formulated / changed] so that the policy decision would **not have adverse effects**, or would have decreased adverse effects, on:
 - a. **opportunities** for persons to use the Welsh language; and
 - b. **treating** the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Proposed allocations

2020/21 wellbeing and health strategy implementation funding

We propose to allocate funding on the basis of student headcounts as a proxy for a 'whole university approach'.

University	Total allocation 2020/21 £
University of South Wales	312,643
Aberystwyth University	106,909
Bangor University	143,451
Cardiff University	465,501
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	155,012
Swansea University	289,606
Cardiff Metropolitan University	149,027
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	67,705
The Open University in Wales	120,146
Total £	1,810,000

Notes:

Source: HESA student record 2018/19;

HESA standard registration population, all modes and levels, reduced to a headcount.