

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Well-being and health and additional financial support for higher education students

Date: 24 January 2023
Reference: W23/01HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Response by: 24 March 2023, 29 September 2023
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This circular provides information on how HEFCW will allocate £2.3m of additional funding.

This 2022/23 funding is for higher education providers in Wales to support well-being and health with a particular emphasis on measures to address cost of living impacts.

This funding must be spent by the end of July 2023.

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Introduction

1. This circular provides information on how HEFCW will allocate £2.3m of additional funding.
2. This 2022/23 funding is for universities and directly-funded further education colleges to support well-being and health with a particular emphasis on measures to address cost of living impacts.
3. **This funding must be committed in full by the end of March 2023 and spent in full by the end of July 2023.** Our definition of 'committed in full' is set out in the Allocation methods and expenditure timeframe section below. This funding is provided to support provision for potential applicants to, and students in, higher education, thereby benefiting the wider post-16 system. Where we refer to applicants and students, this includes post-graduate students and applicants to post-graduate studies.
4. HEFCW is required to report to the Welsh Government on this allocation by 31 October 2023, therefore, final monitoring reports must be submitted to us by **Friday 29 September 2023.**

Background

5. HEFCW received from the Welsh Government a [Revised Remit Letter 2022-23](#) on 21 December 2022. The revised remit letter annex provides £2.3m for well-being and health, with a particular emphasis on measures to help address the impact of the most recent and rapid cost of living increases.

Allocations and their purpose

6. The December remit annex confirms this additional allocation is for the following priorities and ways of working:
 - 'enhancing sustainable money advice and information services in HE';
 - 'promoting HE financial advice and information services, including to HE';
 - 'providing financial support to students by extending hardship funding or other resources to support those experiencing financial pressures, which are impacting on their student experience, well-being, health, retention and success';
 - supporting potential applicants and applicants transitioning into higher education provision, as well as existing students;
 - placing a particular emphasis on measures to help address the cost of living increases on potential applicants and students of all ages, particularly those transitioning into higher education;
 - providing services in Welsh;
 - working collaboratively with Students' Unions to ensure the support provided meets the needs of students; and
 - involving students with experience of financial challenges in reviewing the support provided.

7. We will allocate this funding to universities and directly-funded further education colleges to support additional activity to meet the remit letter expectations as outlined above.
8. We recognise that 'one-off' activity may primarily benefit current students, but higher education providers should consider how this funding can have some sustainable impacts and support well-being, health and mental health provision in the longer-term. Longer-term sustainability might include providing web-based information and resources. We also realise that higher education providers have already increased student financial support to respond to needs arising from the recent, rapid cost of living increases.
9. Universities should consider the alignment of this funding and its deliverables to their existing well-being and health strategies and implementation plans. All higher education providers should take a whole-institution approach to using this funding.
10. We strongly encourage higher education providers, working with their Students' Unions, to consider supporting well-being and health, including mental health provision, with a particular emphasis on measures to address the recent and rapid cost of living increases, including but not limited to:
 - up-dating, enhancing and extending physical and web-based money advice and information services and resources for potential applicants and students;
 - promoting and signposting potential applicants and students to up-to-date higher education financial advice and information services, including cost of living and studying information, third sector support services, [Student Space](#), bursaries, scholarships and other support;
 - increasing and/or extending the availability of, and criteria for, 'hardship' or other financial support to students;
 - ensuring all financial information, advice and services are available and accessible in Welsh;
 - ensuring international students are aware of all financial support, information and advice available and relevant to them;
 - ensuring that potential applicants and students with protected characteristics, including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, are aware of all financial support, information and advice available and relevant to them;
 - ensuring vulnerable potential applicants and students are supported with information, advice and funding, as appropriate, including those with care-experience backgrounds, carers, those experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence, and asylum seekers and refugees;
 - providing inclusive activities, resources, services and/or products at low or no-cost to support potential applicants and students experiencing financial pressures, including where this may impact on well-being, health, mental health, a sense of belonging or loneliness, the student experience, retention and success;

- extending, enhancing or subsidising period dignity¹ and personal hygiene products and/or clothes washing services for students wherever they are located.
11. We expect higher education providers to use data and evidence to develop and target resources and prioritise groups known to be particularly impacted by the recent and rapid increases in costs of living. Equality impact assessments should contribute to higher education providers' evidence of targeting actions and prioritising among potential applicants and students.
 12. Information on allocations for higher education providers is provided in **Annex A**. The allocation to the University of South Wales includes an allocation for the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.
 13. As this funding must be committed in full by 31 March 2023 and spent in full by 31 July 2023, our view is that the recruitment of staff through fair and transparent processes is likely to impact the pace of delivery of activities to support students. We encourage higher education providers to explore how activities aligned with the remit can be delivered at pace and within existing staffing models.

Allocation methods and expenditure timeframe

14. We will make this allocation to higher education providers based on a headcount of all students taken from the HESA student record 2020/21, regardless of domicile, mode or level of study. This allocation method uses the same basis as the allocation in [W22/29HE: Well-being and health strategy funding 2022/23 and monitoring requirements](#). The data for universities was verified for the W22/29HE allocations. In the additional remit letter annex, the Welsh Government asks us to consider how 'the benefits of the measures supported [through this funding] extend to learners and students across the post-16 system'. Therefore, we are providing funding for directly-funded further education colleges.
15. Universities must ensure their students at partner higher education providers are included in, and benefit from, provision supported by this funding.
16. To allocate this funding quickly, to enable higher education providers to respond quickly to students' cost of living needs, we wrote to Vice-Chancellors and Universities Wales on 22 December 2022, before we received the funding from Welsh Government, to notify them of this funding and our intended allocation method. We have received no objections to the funding methodology.
17. The remit letter annex confirms that allocations must be committed by 31 March 2023. We expect the funding to be spent in full by 31 July 2023 as HEFCW must report to the Welsh Government on expenditure by 31 October 2023.
18. Higher education providers' total allocation must be committed in full and non-refundable by Friday 31 March 2023. By 'committed in full' we mean that funding

¹ We previously allocated funding to support period dignity in 2020 through circular [W20/08HE: Well-being and health improving safeguarding policies and practices and promoting period dignity in HE](#)

should be allocated such that deliverables are agreed and non-refundable by the end of March 2023. An example of ‘committed in full’ in this instance is where activities and services are delivered by 31 March, or ongoing financial support and provision will be delivered up to the end of July 2023, but invoices are not yet submitted for payment. All expenditure must be paid in full by 31 July 2023.

Release and reallocation of funding

19. This funding will be released in one tranche at the end of January 2023, as set out in the Timetable section below.
20. We reserve the right to clawback and reallocate any funding that is not realistically forecast to be committed in full by the end of March 2023. We reserve the right to clawback funding where monitoring is not satisfactory to account for the use of funding or used for the purposes set out in this circular.

Monitoring

21. We will monitor expenditure and the use of this funding to inform our reporting to the Welsh Government.
22. A monitoring template will be provided in early February 2023. Monitoring will include providing to us:
 - sufficient case studies to illustrate the breadth of activities, services and resources which have been provided;
 - satisfactory information to enable us to understand how ongoing impact assessment has influenced deliverables and potential applicants and students benefiting from the provision;
 - web links to English and Welsh financial information and resources;
 - confirmation that there has been effective collaboration with, and involvement of, Students’ Unions, students with experience of financial challenges, and students with a range of backgrounds;
 - a summary of sustainable resources, information and provision.
23. Where higher education providers are not able to confirm to us by **24 March 2023** that they have committed their allocation in full, we reserve the right to reallocate uncommitted funding across the sector to ensure it is invested to support students’ well-being and health.

Timetable

Actions	Date
Welsh Government remit letter annex received by HEFCW	21 December 2022
HEFCW confirmed to universities that funding would be made available when released to us, as well the funding methodology.	22 December 2022
HEFCW to allocate funding	23 January 2023

Monitoring template published	February 2023
Higher education providers to confirm to HEFCW that funding is committed in full	24 March 2023
Higher education providers to submit final monitoring to HEFCW, including case studies	29 September 2023
HEFCW to report to Welsh Government on use of funding	31 October 2023

Further information / responses to

24. For further information, contact jane.johns@hefcw.ac.uk.
Please submit monitoring to amanda.phillips@hefcw.ac.uk.

Assessing the impact of our policies

25. We have begun an impact assessment to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. 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 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. We strongly encourage higher education providers and Students' Unions to impact assess their allocations.
26. Our initial impact assessment findings have concluded that this allocation should make a positive contribution to increasing resources for well-being and health, including mental health and student support. The allocation aligns with existing HEFCW and provider priorities relating to well-being and health, including mental health and student support. The use of this funding could have particular positive impacts on, among other applicants and students:
- supporting women affected by violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence, recognising that other people with these experiences may be similarly impacted;
 - supporting people from minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, people with a care experienced background or caring responsibilities, including applicants and students who are parents, international students;
 - improving and extending Welsh language information, advice, resources and support.
27. No negative impacts of this allocation have been identified at this stage. Our initial impact assessment confirms that our guidance circular with this allocation encourages collaboration and involvement of Students' Unions, students with experience of financial pressures and students with a range of backgrounds / experience, in line with the five ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. We are encouraging integration by recommending alignment with well-being and health strategies and implementation plans. We will continue to impact assess this funding including through monitoring and reporting to Welsh Government.

Wellbeing and health, additional allocation, 2022/23

Provider	Headcount	Funding
University of South Wales	22,930	£369,374
Aberystwyth University	7,425	£119,634
Bangor University	9,695	£156,220
Cardiff University	33,195	£534,793
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	14,635	£235,772
Swansea University	21,420	£345,048
Cardiff Metropolitan University	11,390	£183,527
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	6,640	£106,955
The Open University in Wales	14,130	£227,637
Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	1,050	£16,883
Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges	195	£3,141
Gower College Swansea	65	£1,015
Total	142,765	£2,300,000

Notes:

- The allocation to the University of South Wales includes an allocation of £13,420 for the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.
- Data are taken from the HESA student record 2020/21, data from universities have been verified, data related to further education colleges are unverified.
- HESA standard registration population has been reduced to a headcount.
- All modes and levels of study have been taken into account.
- All student domiciles have been taken into account.
- The student headcount has been rounded to the nearest five.