

Annex E - Frequently Asked Questions

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg |

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Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

What is Medr?

Medr is the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research in Wales. It is the arm's-length body of the Welsh Government responsible for funding and regulating the tertiary education and research sector. Medr launched on 1 August 2024, following the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022, and brings together oversight of:

- Further education
- Higher education
- Apprenticeships
- Adult community learning
- School sixth forms
- Government-funded research and innovation

For the first time, these areas are managed and coordinated by a single national body, enabling a more coherent, strategic, and learner-focused system across Wales.

What powers does Medr have under the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022?

The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 gives Medr the ability to regulate the tertiary education and research system in Wales through funding and registration powers. When we provide funding, we can set conditions of funding — rules providers must follow to ensure money is used effectively and in learners' interests.

Higher education providers registered by Medr will benefit from access to student support. We are able to set regulatory conditions associated through that registration, which they must meet to enable them to continue benefiting from the student support system. If a registered or funded provider fails to meet its conditions, we can take proportionate regulatory action. However, some responsibilities sit with other bodies — for example the Equality and Human Rights Commission, or the Welsh Language Commissioner — and in those cases Medr is not the principal regulator.

How will learners benefit from the new system?

The new system is designed to make access to tertiary education clearer, fairer, and more consistent for learners across Wales — whether they're in higher education, further education, apprenticeships, adult learning, or a school sixth form.

Learners will benefit from:

- stronger support and safeguards — providers will need clear plans in place to ensure learners can continue their studies smoothly if something changes, such as a course closing or major adjustments being made
- more opportunities to be heard — all parts of the sector will be expected to involve learners in shaping their experience through the Learner Engagement Code
- A focus on wellbeing and support — providers will have responsibilities to make sure learners are treated with care and respect, and that their needs are recognised
- better information and transparency — learners will be able to see which providers are recognised and regulated, and what they should expect from them
- improved collaboration between providers — Medr will encourage joined-up working across different parts of the sector. This means learners should find it easier to move between courses and institutions, and get the right support as they progress through different stages of education

Overall, the system aims to give learners more confidence in their education – and to make sure their voices and experiences help shape how providers are run.

What is the register, and who is it for?

The register is a list of education providers that Medr officially recognises and oversees. It helps make sure learners get a fair, high-quality experience, and that public money is used in the right way.

At the moment, the register is for **higher education providers only** — like universities or further education providers that run higher education courses in Wales. There are two registration categories, Core and Alternative. A provider must register with Medr in the Core category if it wants to receive certain types of public funding, or if it wants its courses to be covered by student support (like loans or grants) at the maximum level. Student support is available at a lower level for those providers in the Alternative category. To be on the register in either category, providers have to meet conditions set out by Medr. These are there to protect learners and make sure providers are well run and delivering good-quality education.

What does this mean if I have a Fee and Access Plan currently?

If you currently have a Fee and Access Plan, it will remain in place until 31 July 2027. However, if providers wish for their courses to be eligible for student support, they will need to register. From that point, Fee and Access Plans will no longer be part of the regulatory system. They will be replaced by a broader set of registration and funding requirements that apply across the tertiary education sector. For Higher Education providers with a Fee and Access Plan, from 1 August 2026 the majority of conditions will come into effect. However, conditions relating to the Fee Limits, and Equality of

Opportunity, will not come into place until 31 July 2027, with these areas covered by Fee and Access Plans until that point.

What does registration mean for a provider that currently has Specific Course Designation for Higher Education provision?

Providers with existing Specific Course Designation for HE provision will be subject to monitoring for those designated courses for 2026/27 entry, with that process due to take place from late 2025. Those providers may then also apply for registration for 2026/27, in either the HE Core or HE Alternative category when applications to the Register open in April 2026.

As the 2026/27 academic year represents a transitional year in which the Fee Limit Condition of Registration does not apply, Fee Limits will be determined by the provider's Specific Course Designation status regardless of their category of Registration. This means that for providers with Specific Course Designation, the lower level of fee support will apply for 2026/27. We are currently in discussion with Welsh Government to clarify the implications for ongoing students from 2027/28 where such providers are in the HE Core Category of the Register. We will update providers in due course.

Why should providers apply to become registered?

By registering for the Higher Education core category, providers of Higher Education ensure their eligible students are entitled to the maximum available loan in respect of tuition fees. They also become eligible for higher education and research grant funds managed by Medr, subject to Medr's funding policy. Institutions who register in the Higher Education alternative category will attract the lower limit of tuition fee support for eligible students. They are not eligible for higher education or research funding from Medr.

How and when can providers apply to become registered?

Medr is in the process of developing an online application portal which will allow providers to submit the information needed in order to apply to become registered. Medr will use information already held where possible to reduce the burden of the application process e.g. Information on providers finances. The application process will open for providers in the next year, and further information will be provided in the coming year.

What is a regulatory condition?

A regulatory condition is a rule that a provider must follow if they want to be registered with Medr or receive public funding from us. These conditions help make sure that learners are supported, that public money is used properly, and that providers are doing what's expected of them.

Some conditions apply to providers on the register — these are called **conditions of registration**. Others apply when we give funding — these are called **conditions of funding**. Some conditions are used in both ways, depending on which part of the tertiary education sector a provider is in.

What is the difference between conditions of registration and conditions of funding?

Conditions of **registration** are rules that a provider has to meet to be included on Medr's register. These apply to higher education providers. They help make sure that learners are protected, courses are high quality, and the provider is well run. If a provider doesn't meet these conditions, it could be removed from the register which may affect whether its students can get financial support.

Conditions of **funding** are rules that apply when Medr gives public money to a provider — for example, to deliver courses, support learners, or carry out research. These apply more widely across the tertiary sector, not just to providers on the register.

Some conditions are used both as conditions of registration and as conditions of funding. Whether a provider has to meet a condition as part of registration, funding, or both depends on which part of the tertiary education sector they are in — for example, higher education, further education, apprenticeships, or adult community learning. Some parts of the system — like **school sixth forms** — are funded through local authorities, not directly by Medr. This means they are not subject to Medr's conditions of funding, although Medr still has oversight of the funding passed on to them.

What applies to school sixth forms?

Importantly, school sixth forms are only subject to Medr's condition of funding in respect of quality. This condition will be applied via Local Authorities. Medr's Quality Framework also informs Estyn's assessment of quality as it applies to schools with sixth forms. Schools with sixth forms will also have a **statutory duty** to comply with the **Learner Engagement Code – the monitoring requirements for which are set out in the associated condition**. This helps ensure that learners in school sixth forms benefit from the same expectations around quality and voice as learners in other parts of the tertiary system. School Sixth forms, and the local authorities in receipt of a grant for sixth form provision, have a statutory duty to have regard to advice and guidance given by Medr or other bodies acting on Medr's behalf (e.g. Estyn).

Do local authorities have a role in this new system?

Yes — local authorities will receive funding from Medr for Sixth form provision and Adult Community Learning, and will continue to play a vital role in distributing this funding and maintaining this provision.

Local authorities will be directly subject to funding conditions in respect of the funding they receive for Adult Community Learning provision, and they are a key part of how the system works. In some cases, they act as the link between Medr and the learning being delivered — especially where they fund or coordinate provision on behalf of others.

Where local authorities are responsible for learning, they will need to make sure that what's delivered meets any relevant requirements — such as statutory duties around quality or learner engagement. Medr will also work with local authorities as part of wider collaboration and planning across the sector. This includes helping to make sure that learning opportunities are joined up and meet the needs of local learners and communities.

When will the new regulatory system be put in place?

As required by the legislation that supports the TER Act (2022), and in accordance with the transfer of powers from the Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015, Medr is required to meet the following timeframes:

- from **August 2026**, the register of higher education providers will be launched, and [most registration and all funding requirements](#) will begin to apply
- from **August 2027**, the remaining registration requirements will come into effect

By the 2027/28 academic year, the full set of requirements will be in place. Providers will be required to meet the conditions that apply to them, depending on which part of the tertiary education sector they are in.

What does registration mean in practice for providers?

Registration is how Medr formally recognises and oversees providers of **higher education** in Wales, effectively replacing Fee and Access Plans and Specific Course Designation with Core and Alternative categories. At this stage, only providers offering higher education courses will need to register. Being registered means a provider has met the conditions set by Medr. These conditions are designed to make sure the provider is well governed, financially sustainable, and focused on delivering a high-quality experience for learners.

In practice, registration brings certain responsibilities. Providers must (a) meet initial conditions of registration, and (b) continue to meet the conditions of registration on an ongoing basis. Being on the register may also allow a provider to access certain types of public funding, and it means learners studying there can be eligible for financial support like student loans or grants.

Medr will publish the register so that learners, parents, and the public can see which higher education providers are recognised and regulated.

It is our intention to be a proportionate and risk-based regulator and minimise regulatory burden. For example, the planned registration system will reduce burden in the area of governance and management, compared to the current arrangements for regulated institutions, with registered higher education providers no longer being required to provide the following information in their annual assurance returns: governing body composition, annual return of serious incidents, updates on progress against the Wales Governance Review, individual internal audit reports, head of internal audit annual report and audit committee (or equivalent) annual report.

We hope that in time there will be other opportunities to reduce burden, in line with our vision for tertiary education in Wales. For example, we are working with QAA and Estyn to identify opportunities for collaboration in relation to inspection/review and self-evaluation.

How will Medr support providers through the changes?

We know that introducing new requirements takes time, planning, and support. That's why Medr is committed to working closely with providers as the new registration and funding arrangements are put in place. Where Medr already holds information, this will be

used where possible to reduce burden and duplication. For example, when higher education providers apply for registration, Medr may use information it already holds to demonstrate where providers have satisfied certain initial Conditions of Registration, making the process less burdensome for providers.

We'll provide clear guidance, regular updates, and practical tools to help providers understand what's expected and how to meet the requirements. We're also planning to run events, workshops, and sector briefings as the changes are introduced. We'll also listen to feedback and work in partnership with the sector throughout the process.

What is the Quality Framework and who does it apply to?

The Quality Framework sets out how Medr expects providers to make sure learners receive a high-quality experience — and how we will oversee that across the tertiary education sector in Wales. It explains what providers should have in place to monitor and improve what they deliver, and how Medr will support and review quality across different parts of the sector.

The framework brings together existing arrangements, including inspection and review, and aims to ensure good learner outcomes and a consistent experience across the tertiary education sector. It will apply as a condition of registration for registered higher education providers, and as a condition of funding for providers who receive public money from Medr. It will also apply to local authorities in respect of sixth form provision. Although the way the framework is used may differ depending on the type of provider, the goal is the same: to support consistently high standards for all learners in Wales.

Does the Quality Framework mean an additional layer of inspection or review?

No. The Quality Framework is not about adding a new layer of external quality assessment (i.e. inspection or review) — it's about bringing together what's already in place and making sure it works well across the whole tertiary education sector. Medr will work with existing quality bodies and inspection arrangements, rather than duplicating them. The framework is designed to support a joined-up view of quality, while reducing burden on providers.

It sets out what Medr expects from providers, and how we will use things like data, existing reviews, and information from engagement with learners and staff to understand what's working well and where there may be risks. The aim is to promote quality and continuous improvement in a way that's proportionate, focused, and aligned with what already exists — not to create extra inspection processes.

How will Medr work with Estyn, QAA, and other quality bodies?

Medr will work closely with existing quality bodies — like Estyn, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and others — rather than replacing or duplicating their work. These organisations already carry out reviews, inspections, and quality assessments in different parts of the tertiary sector. The Quality Framework is designed to make use of those existing arrangements and bring them together into a more joined-up picture of quality across the whole sector.

Medr may commission or rely on reviews from these bodies, and will use their findings as part of our own oversight. We'll also work with them to make sure quality processes are aligned and proportionate, and to avoid placing unnecessary demands on providers. This joined-up approach is about coordination, not duplication — and it helps ensure that learners benefit from consistent, high standards wherever they study.

What is the Learner Engagement Code and who does it apply to?

The Learner Engagement Code will set out how learners across the tertiary education sector in Wales should be supported to have a meaningful voice in their education.

It will explain what providers should do to involve learners in shaping decisions, giving feedback, and influencing how things are run. It will also help learners to understand what kind of engagement they can expect, and how their voices should be listened to and acted on.

The Code will apply across the whole tertiary sector. It will be a condition of registration for registered providers, a condition of funding for funded providers, and a **statutory duty for school sixth forms**.

What will Medr's monitoring replace for higher education providers?

Medr's monitoring will replace the processes that were previously carried out by HEFCW, such as monitoring of Fee and Access Plans, annual assurance returns, and reporting on governance, quality, and the use of public money. Under the new framework, these activities will be brought together into a single approach to monitoring, covering both registration and funding requirements.

Our approach is set out in the statement of monitoring, published alongside this consultation. It will be proportionate, risk-based, and designed to focus on early engagement, self-reporting, and targeted follow-up where needed. The aim is to avoid duplication and to focus on what matters most for learners and the public. Further detail on how this will work in practice is included in the consultation documents.

What will Medr's monitoring replace for further education providers?

Medr's monitoring will replace existing arrangements that are currently managed through funding terms and conditions, quality assurance processes, and returns agreed between providers, the Welsh Government, and other bodies. These existing processes will be brought together into a single approach to monitoring, covering both funding requirements and wider expectations across the sector.

More detail is available in the consultation documents.

What will Medr’s monitoring replace for other parts of the tertiary sector?

For providers delivering **adult community learning** or **apprenticeships**, Medr’s monitoring will replace current arrangements that are managed through a mix of funding conditions, data reporting, and quality assurance processes agreed with the Welsh Government or other bodies.

How will Medr monitor compliance for a provider which delivers multiple types of provision?

Further Education providers (or others within the tertiary sector) may deliver multiple forms of provision including, but not limited to, HE, FE, Apprenticeships and Adult and Community Learning. While we will need to gain assurances regarding all forms of provision delivered by a provider, we will make all effort to avoid duplication of processes and unnecessary administrative burden, adopting a joined-up tertiary approach to our monitoring processes wherever appropriate. It should be noted that we do not expect to require Annual Assurance Returns under the new regulatory system until late 2027, and we will work with providers to develop the detail of these returns and ensure that the processes are practical for all involved.

Will there be additional burden? What is new?

Medr’s approach is designed to build on existing arrangements, not to create unnecessary duplication. But some elements are new, and we know that change can bring extra work – especially at the start. For example, the new framework introduces a Learner Engagement Code, which will set out clear expectations for how learners should be involved in shaping their experience. There are also new requirements around staff and learner welfare, and greater consistency in how providers across the sector are monitored and held to account.

Some providers may need to adjust how they report or demonstrate certain aspects of their work. That’s why we’re committed to being clear, proportionate, and aligned with what’s already working well in the sector. We’re consulting now so that providers can help shape how these changes are introduced, and will continue to embody our values listening to feedback as the framework is implemented to ensure they work in practice.

What does self-reporting mean, and what will providers need to report?

Self-reporting means that providers are expected to tell Medr when something significant happens that might affect how they meet their responsibilities. Medr has collated requirements for self-reporting for this from across a number of existing requirements in the tertiary sector into one place to ensure consistency,

This could include things like serious financial risks, major changes to leadership or governance, course closures, or concerns about quality or learner safety. Rather than waiting for a problem to be picked up through data or inspection, providers are expected to come forward and explain what’s happening. This approach is based on trust and early engagement. It allows Medr to work with providers to understand the issue, decide whether any action is needed, and support resolution where possible.

The aim is to prevent problems from escalating — not to punish providers for being open and proactive.

Will Medr publish provider-level information?

Yes — Medr will publish some information about providers that are registered or receive public funding. This helps learners, parents, carers, and the public understand which providers are meeting the requirements and are part of the regulated tertiary education sector.

The register itself will be public, so anyone can see which providers are registered and what type of registration they hold. We may also publish other information — such as when a provider is under review or has been found to have breached requirements — where it's in the public interest to do so. Our aim is to support transparency while being fair and proportionate. We'll be clear with providers about what information will be published, and when, so there are no surprises.

As part of their interaction with us, providers sometimes submit confidential or sensitive information and our 'no surprises' approach actively encourages providers to inform us of issues or events ahead prior to these becoming public.

We regard this mutual trust as a vital element of effective monitoring and understanding of the sector and we will continue to have clear regard for this in considering what provider level information is published.

What does this mean for apprenticeship providers and learners?

Apprenticeships are a key part of the tertiary education system in Wales, and Medr's approach is designed to support consistent quality, learner protection, and collaboration across all apprenticeship delivery.

In Wales, apprenticeships are currently commissioned through a national contracting model. Providers are awarded fixed-term contracts that set out the requirements for how apprenticeships should be delivered and how public funding is used. This includes payments linked to learner enrolment, progression, and achievement. Medr has taken on responsibility for managing and funding apprenticeship provision, including both degree and non-degree apprenticeships. Over time, the way apprenticeship providers are commissioned will evolve to reflect Medr's conditions of funding. When providers are next re-commissioned to deliver apprenticeships, which we anticipate being from 1 August 2027, they will be expected to meet Medr's conditions of funding, just like other funded providers.

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