



RESPONSE TO:

HEFCW Consultation: Our approach to funding in 2015/16 and subsequent years.

Contact Details:

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1. The University and College Union (UCU Wales) represents more than 7,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians, and postgraduates in universities, colleges, adult education and training organisations across Wales.

2. UCU Wales is a politically autonomous but integral part of UCU, the largest post-school union in the world: a force for educators and education that employers and government cannot ignore.

3. UCU was formed on the 1st June 2006 by the amalgamation of two strong partners – the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) – who shared a long history of defending and advancing educators’ employment and professional interests.

4. We agree that the introduction of the new fee regime and the impact that it has had on funding allocations necessitates a review of funding priorities and we therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on your approach to funding in 2015/16 and subsequent years.

5. Funding Principles

We do not have issues with the underlying principles for the funding process that were endorsed by the Council in July 2014 and agree that in the current environment it is appropriate that they remain transparent, responsive and flexible.

6. Quality Research and Post Graduate training

We do not have any comments on the proposed approach to QR funding in 2015/16, or with regard to the adjustment of the parameters of the QR formula at this current time.

7. Institutional Research Strategies

We are in agreement with the proposal that the submission of institutional research plans to HEFCW should be a condition of QR funding from 2015/16. It would assist in the appropriate allocation of funding and reduce areas of duplication. Having the information in the public domain, would help students and staff to make informed choices about the appropriateness of HEIs for their individual needs.

8. Ring-Fenced Publications Funding

Broadly we are in agreement with the proposal to maintain an element of ring-fenced funding within QR for the purpose of supporting scholarly publications and related activities in the fields of Welsh culture, history and literature because Welsh studies are rightly one of the Government’s stated priority areas and publishing research in this relatively small field is not possible without subsidy. The withdrawal of funding from the University of Wales Press (which has high standards of peer-review and production) has not only significantly reduced the amount of research that it has published in this field since the change in HEFCW’s policy, but has also reduced the quality of what has been published as

the individual institutions only publish their own output, irrespective of its quality, and without rigorous peer-review.

9. Full-time Undergraduate and Postgraduate Certificate in Education

We have no comment on the allocation of funds for FT UG/PGCE.

10. Part-time Undergraduate funding

We would agree that further research and analysis of the nature and issues relating to part time provision need to be carried out and until such time as there is better understanding of the factors that may have contributed to the decline in part-time enrolments at Welsh HEIs, it is difficult to suggest what could be done to incentivise provision.

11. With regard to the proposal that HEFCW should look to fund part-time provision on a regional basis, we would like to know more about the rationale that lies behind the suggestion.

12. We have concerns that there may be unintentional consequences to funding particular institutions on a regional basis, particularly with regard to widening access. Although there may be some benefits to funding regional priorities and having centres of expertise, we have concerns that this may reduce the choices available to part-time students and that the time and costs incurred by increased travel, may become a further barrier to participation.

13. The increase of HE provision within FE may offer a way of making part-time provision more accessible within local communities. However we would only be in agreement with this, if safeguards were in place to ensure that FE staff were given appropriate time and resources, in order for them to deliver HE courses that matched the standards of those provided in HEIs. Neither students nor staff should be subject to inferior standards simply because the provision is located within a Further Education setting.

14. Postgraduate Taught funding

With regard to levels of part-time Postgraduate support we would agree that in the short term and until the Diamond Review is completed, it would seem that maintaining the current levels would be the sensible option.

15. General Strategy funding

We have no comment