

Wales

National Higher Education Equity Policy

Governance

The Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education is responsible for defining national policies in higher education. The Higher Education Funding Council of Wales (HEFCW) acts as an intermediary body between government and the higher education sector.

Higher Education Policy Documents

What are the current official documents defining the national higher education strategy / policies?

- Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015
- 2009 For Our Future: *The twenty-first Century higher education strategy and plan for Wales*'.

Equity Policy Documents

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) *Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education*

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales has a program that focus on greater participation of different communities in higher education: Reaching Wider Programme.

Access & Fee plans must include provisions relating to the promotion of quality and opportunity in higher education (access, retention, financial assistance, Independent Advice and Guidance for under-represented groups). This applies to all HEIs in Wales charging more than basic fee rates.

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents?

- Under-represented groups defined as under-represented at the time Access & Fee plans are written:
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/1/pdfs/anaw_20150001_en.pdf
These include students in lower super output areas of Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD); low participation neighborhoods; forkless households; families experiencing 'work poverty' in receipt of FSM and Educational Maintenance allowance.; carers; care-background; ex-offenders.

Does the country have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups?

- While Wales does not define targets for specific equity groups, each HEI defines its own concrete targets in the Access and Fee plan signed with the Higher Education Funding Council.

Is there a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education?

- Yes, the *Strategic Approach to Widening Access to Higher Education* defines the government's equity strategy in a comprehensive way.

What specific interventions and/or instruments of equity promotion are included in the official strategy and policy documents (monetary and non-monetary)?

Monetary Policy Instruments

- Regulated fees place a cap on what HEIs can charge = £9250 and £9000 for Welsh students studying outside of the UK. No cap on private institutions.
- Needs-based scholarships called the Welsh Government Learning Grant, dependent on household income and whether students live at home. Potential grants range from £1,000-£10,124. In addition, students can benefit from a special support grant to cover related costs such as books and travel. The maximum for 2018-2019 is £5,161. Individuals' circumstances are considered to determine their eligibility.
- Access & Retention premium for part-time and postgraduate taught courses (for retention & recruitment from under-represented groups)
- Disabled Students Allowance

Allocation of funds dedicated to widening access

Non-Monetary Policy Instruments

- Outreach and bridge programs: Reaching Wider program administered by HEFCW
<http://reachingwider.ac.uk/>
- Flexible pathways and transfers / Recognition of prior learning

Financial Resources

What financial resources does the country devote to equity promotion measures?

Not available.

Quality Assurance

Do the quality assurance criteria take equity elements into consideration? In what way?

- In reviewing HEIs for Quality Assurance, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales takes into account the data to identify “issues relating to protected groups under the Equalities Act 2010.”

Monitoring and Evaluation

The governing bodies of Higher Education Institutions must provide the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) with relevant information for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The HEFCW commission independent reviews of widening access.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects data from higher education institutions.

Dedicated Equity Promotion Agency

Wales does not have an agency dedicated to equity promotion in higher education.

Sources

“Reaching Wider Programme” Higher Education Funding Council for Wales,
https://www.hefcw.ac.uk/policy_areas/widening_access/reaching_wider_initiative.aspx

Strategic Approach to Widening Access to Higher Education - HEFCW

“Disabled Students Allowance” Student Finance Wales
<https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students/new-students/what-financial-support-is-available/disabled-students-allowances.aspx>

“Help with Living Costs” Student Finance Wales

<https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students/new-students/what-financial-support-is-available/help-with-living-costs.aspx>

“Tuition Fee Support” Student Finance Wales,
<https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students/new-students/what-financial-support-is-available/tuition-fee-support.aspx>

Quality Assessment Framework for Wales, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, March 2018,
http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2018/W18%2005HE%20Annex%20A.pdf