

HEFCW part-time undergraduate fee waiver scheme 2023/24

Background

- Funding is available in 2023/24
- A fee waiver grant should not be provided for any student who studies more than 20 credits over an academic year. In the situation where a student initially undertakes 20 credits, or fewer, but subsequently adds to this during the academic year, any fee waiver given would not be regarded to be part of the HEFCW scheme. However, we would encourage providers to continue to provide that fee waiver from other sources, where possible, in order not to discourage students who decide they would like to study more credits. In all cases, institutional academic regulations will apply.

The following criteria have been used as a proxy for assessing whether a student is considered to be from a group which is underrepresented in HE:

- students in the bottom two quintiles of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019;
- students from UK low participation in HE areas;
- carers,
- care leavers or care experienced students;
- students with disabilities;
- students from ethnic minority backgrounds
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Student eligibility criteria

A student enrolled on an eligible course must:

(i) be classed as eligible for funding according to the definition provided in HEFCW's Higher Education Students Early Statistics (HESES) survey

(ii) be Welsh domiciled (provision of a Welsh address by the student would usually be considered sufficient evidence of Welsh domicile).

and meet one or more of the following conditions:

a) the student or the student's immediate family¹ is in receipt of:

- Universal Credit or its predecessors²
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance

¹ For the purpose of the criterion (a) the definition of 'family' is as follows: married, civil partnership or unmarried couple, or married or unmarried couple, or couple in a civil partnership with dependent children, or lone parent with dependent children.

² Housing benefit, Income support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit

b) the student is in receipt of:

- Carers allowance or carer's credit
- Disability premium or other disability-related financial support •
- Bereavement benefits³

c) be from a group which is considered to be under-represented in higher education, such as:

- students of all ages from areas in the bottom two quintiles of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019
- students of all ages from UK low participation in HE areas as measured by the proportion of working age adults with HE qualifications from the 2011 census (bottom two quintiles)
- care leavers or care experienced students • students with disabilities • students from ethnic minority backgrounds
- LGBTQ+ students
- refugees and asylum seekers
- students with caring responsibilities
- those studying through the medium of Welsh 12.

It is for institutions to assess the eligibility of students applying for fee waivers, and to devise a fair and equitable process for administering funds under the scheme. It is our general intention that institutions should allocate funds to students who meet the criteria above and who would most benefit from undertaking part-time higher education. Information on identifying under-represented groups in higher education can be found in HEFCW's Fee and Access Plan guidance, published in June 2022.

Course eligibility criteria

To satisfy the eligible course requirement, a student must

(i) be studying part-time at less than 25% of a full-time equivalent student. The definition of part-time study is that used by HEFCW in its 2021/22 HESES survey. This will be measured in credit values relative to an assumed standard 120 credit year for a full-time undergraduate student and so equate to studying 20 credits or less for the academic year of the fee waiver. In the event that any student studies more than 20 credits over the academic year they will cease to be eligible for the HEFCW part-time fee waiver scheme but providers are encouraged to continue providing that fee waiver from other sources.

HEFCW recognises that part-time students do not necessarily follow a course of study on a traditional academic year basis. However, for administrative simplicity the grant scheme will be based on the academic year for HE providers, i.e. 1 August to 31 July.

³ Information on the benefits which are listed above and the definitions of terms used in these benefits are available on the DWP website

(ii) be registered, as a new entrant in 2023/24 or a continuing student, on a programme with the aim of obtaining a recognised undergraduate higher education qualification⁴; or on a course, module or unit (including microcredential provision) which enables credit to be obtained towards a recognised undergraduate higher education qualification. Institutions should contact HEFCW for clarification in the case of doubt as to what is considered to be in scope.

Non-credit bearing courses and postgraduate courses do not qualify for the scheme.

Students are not eligible for funding to repeat a course or any modules or units in a course, except in cases where extenuating circumstances may apply. Providers should contact HEFCW for clarification in these cases.

(iii) be studying on a course which corresponds to five credit values or more as defined by the Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQFW). Credit values will have been determined on the basis of the CQFW standard of 120 credit values equalling one academic year of higher education experience for full-time undergraduates.

⁴ See Annex B of Circular W21/35HE