

Office for
Students



Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

National contextual statements

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Introduction

1. The Department for Education in England introduced the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) in 2016 to recognise and reward excellent teaching in UK higher education providers.
2. The Office for Students (OfS) was established by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA)¹ and became fully operational in April 2018. The TEF is the scheme that the OfS has adopted under HERA section 25(1) as a sector-level intervention to promote excellence in teaching and outcomes². HERA (section 25 (1) (b)) also enables the OfS to give TEF ratings to higher education providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, where they apply for an award and their devolved government has given the appropriate consent.
3. The devolved administrations in Northern Ireland and Scotland have confirmed they are content for providers to take part in TEF Year Four (academic year 2018-19) should they so wish. In Wales, providers should write at the earliest opportunity to CeisiadauAU.HEApplications@llyw.cymru notifying the Welsh Government of their intent to apply to the OfS for a TEF assessment rating. Consent, where given, will be subject to review and may be revoked.
4. There are provisions in the TEF specification³ to ensure that providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can be assessed fairly and on a level playing field with providers in England. These provisions include a brief statement setting out the national context for panel members and assessors to review, which are produced by the respective funding bodies for England, Wales and Scotland and the Northern Ireland Executive, in consultation with their sector bodies.
5. This document presents the national contextual statement for each of the UK nations. The primary audience is panel members and assessors, but they may also be of interest to providers applying for an assessed award in TEF Year Four. Provider submissions to TEF are limited to a maximum of 15 pages, and providers do not need to duplicate information given in the national contextual statements in their submissions.

¹ See www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/section/25/enacted.

² See 'Securing student success: Regulatory framework for higher education in England' (OfS 2018.01), available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/.

³ See paragraphs 2.3 to 2.7 of the TEF specification at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-specification>.

TEF national contextual statement for England

Overall policy and responsibility

6. The OfS is the independent regulator of higher education in England. The OfS aims to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their life and career. The OfS is concerned with all students in its remit: from the UK and beyond; undergraduate and postgraduate; studying full-time or part time, and campus-based or distance learning.
7. The OfS's regulatory framework⁴ sets out its regulatory objectives, states how it intends to perform its various functions, and provides guidance for registered higher education providers on the ongoing conditions of registration.

Fees and student support

8. The maximum tuition fee English higher education institutions and further education colleges are permitted to charge for UK and EU students is set by the UK government. For 2018-19, fees are capped at £9,250 per year for providers with an access and participation plan approved by the OfS, and a valid TEF award. Providers without an approved access and participation plan, but with a valid TEF award, can charge a maximum of £6,165 per year.
9. Tuition fee loans and maintenance loans for living costs are available for eligible students from the UK and EU. Students on designated courses in alternative providers can also access student support. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/studentfinance/overview>.

Overview of higher education provision in England

10. In England there are 525 higher education providers that are potentially eligible for assessment in TEF Year Four. Using definitions relevant to 2017-18, these can be categorised as around 129 higher education institutions, 209 further education colleges; 96 alternative providers of higher education with specific course designation; and 92 other non-publicly funded providers.
11. In the 2017 admissions cycle, 33.3 per cent of 18-year-olds living in England entered higher education⁵.
12. In 2016-17, 85 per cent of undergraduate students in England were studying full-time, and 15 per cent were studying part-time.

⁴ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/.

⁵ Source: UCAS 2017 End of Cycle Report, available at www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-analysis-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports. Based on undergraduate applicants via UCAS member providers only.

13. In 2016-17, the proportions of undergraduate students studying full-time and part-time in England comprised 87 per cent from the UK, 5 per cent from the EU and 9 per cent international.
14. There has been an overall increase in higher education provision at further education colleges, shifting away from franchised provision, with colleges now offering more higher education directly. The majority of students undertaking undergraduate programmes other than degree level are taught at further education colleges. In 2016-17, there were 24,000 full-time 'Other undergraduate' entrants at further education colleges, compared with 21,000 entrants at higher education institutions.

Quality assessment

15. When providers seek to register with the OfS, they are tested against the quality and standards conditions set out in the regulatory framework, which outlines the behaviours a provider would be expected to follow, and the behaviours that would indicate a provider is not continuing to meet these conditions⁶.
16. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has designated the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to carry out the quality and standards assessment functions set out in the Higher Education and Research Act. A designated quality body conducts reviews of higher education providers and gives advice on the quality and standards of providers to allow the OfS to make decisions about whether to register a provider or grant degree awarding powers.
17. For providers in England, the processes for meeting TEF eligibility criteria have been updated to align with the OfS regulatory framework's registration conditions. The OfS's TEF Year Four procedural guidance⁷ sets out in more detail how quality assessment arrangements relate to eligibility criteria for the TEF.

Widening access and participation

18. The OfS is working to improve access and participation in English higher education through using its power as regulator to influence higher education providers to improve entry rates, retention and outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, through access and participation plans.
19. The Participation of Local Areas measure (POLAR) is an indicator of educational disadvantage commonly used in England in Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) performance indicators, OfS analysis, funding to support access and student success, and access agreements. This classification has been established since 2005 and since then various analyses have considered its robustness; these include detailed analysis of trends for different

⁶ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/.

⁷ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-year-four/guidance-for-providers/.

characteristics and of variations across the country. Further information is available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/.

20. For providers in England, the processes for meeting TEF widening access and participation eligibility criteria have been updated to align with the OfS regulatory framework registration conditions. The OfS's TEF Year Four procedural guidance⁸ sets out in more detail how quality assessment arrangements relate to eligibility criteria for the TEF.

⁸ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-year-four/guidance-for-providers/.

TEF national contextual statement for Northern Ireland

Overall policy and responsibility

21. The Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (DfE NI) has policy responsibility for higher education in Northern Ireland. DfE NI functions as both the government department and funding body; there is no intermediate funding council in Northern Ireland.
22. The current strategies for higher education, 'Graduating to Success' and 'Access to Success'⁹, set out the overall direction for higher education policy and widening participation in Northern Ireland higher education, respectively.

Fees and student support

23. Northern Irish, and non-UK EU, full-time undergraduate students starting higher education in 2018-19 pay tuition fees up to approximately £4,160 if studying in Northern Ireland, up to £9,250 if studying in England and Scotland, or up to £9,000 in Wales. Tuition fees for Northern Irish students studying in Northern Ireland have been frozen at current rates, subject only to an annual inflationary increase, since 2006, when variable deferred fees of £3,000 were introduced.
24. Full-time students may apply for up to £3,475 through the means tested Maintenance Grant or Special Support Grant. Students whose household income is less than £41,066 may receive up to this amount annually, with the full amount typically awarded to those whose household income is below £19,203. As a result, students in receipt of maintenance grant awards receive lower student loans than the maximum, but those in receipt of the special support grant do not. Students likely to qualify for the Special Support Grant are:
 - single parents
 - other student parents if they have a partner who is also a student
 - students with certain disabilities.
25. Full-time students may also be eligible to apply for a means-tested Maintenance Loan of up to £3,750 for those students living at home, up to £4,840 for students living away from home and studying outside London, or up to £6,780 for students studying in London. Students who are eligible to receive both Maintenance Grant and Maintenance Loan support will have their Maintenance Loan entitlement reduced.
26. DfE NI operates a Maximum Student Number cap to control the costs to government of financial support. This cap applies primarily to full-time home and EU-domiciled undergraduates enrolled in Northern Ireland. It does not curtail the recruitment by Northern Irish universities of English, Scottish, Welsh or international students, whose fees are not

⁹ Both strategies are available at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/higher-education-strategy-documents>.

regulated, nor does it curtail the recruitment of Northern Ireland-domiciled part-time or postgraduate students (with the exception of PGCE students).

Overview of higher education provision in Northern Ireland

27. In Northern Ireland in 2018 the higher education system funded by the Department for the Economy comprises:

- three universities
- two university colleges
- six further education colleges.

28. In 2016-17, 69.3 per cent of students in Northern Ireland's higher education institutions¹⁰ were studying full-time, and 30.7 per cent were studying part-time¹¹.

29. Of the 54,570 students enrolled at NI higher education institutions in 2016-17, 84.5 per cent were from NI, 3.8 per cent from the Republic of Ireland, 5.8 per cent from other countries in the UK, 0.7 per cent from other EU countries and 5.2 per cent from non-EU countries¹².

30. The number of higher education enrolments at further education colleges was 11,175 in 2016-17¹³.

Quality assessment

31. In Northern Ireland DfE NI, as part of its statutory responsibility, assesses the quality of higher education in higher education providers through the 'Revised operating model for quality assessment'¹⁴.

Widening access and participation

32. 'Access to Success', Northern Ireland's strategy for widening participation in higher education, was published in 2012 with an overarching aim to help local higher education providers to work to common definitions and measures for widening participation, while developing their own unique approaches within a common framework.

¹⁰ Further education colleges in Northern Ireland do not subscribe to HESA and are therefore not included in this data.

¹¹ Source: 'Enrolments at UK Higher Education Institutions: Northern Ireland analysis 2016-17'.

¹² Source: 'Enrolments at UK Higher Education Institutions: Northern Ireland analysis 2016-17'.

¹³ Source: 'Further Education Activity in Northern Ireland: 2013-14 to 2016-17'.

¹⁴ See <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-quality-assurance-higher-education>.

33. 2015-16 saw the full implementation of annual Widening Access and Participation Plans (WAPPs), provided by all publicly funded higher education providers in Northern Ireland that charge above the basic fee rate.
34. WAPPs contain a narrative description of the institution's strategic approach to widening participation and its place in the organisational mission. WAPPs also provide a detailed breakdown of anticipated income and expenditure for specific programmes that will improve equality of access for all qualified applicants. They also include details of the initiatives to promote the sustained progression of students thought to be at risk of non-completion. The information in this section is provided at least 18 months ahead of the relevant academic year, to allow for publication before students apply to courses.
35. Access to Success introduced the use of multiple deprivation measure indices to measure participation in higher education across Northern Ireland. These indices are recorded using a basket of economic and social measures and are grouped into deciles and quintiles of equal population size.

TEF national contextual statement for Scotland

Overall policy and responsibility

36. Responsibility for higher education in Scotland is devolved to the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Government develops higher education policy and provides funding for Scottish higher education institutions via the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).
37. Current higher education policy priorities for the Scottish Government include: widening access, review of student support, high quality provision, employability and skills, innovation (including links with business), internationally competitive and impactful research and addressing gender balance in subject intakes and on governing bodies.
38. Policy priorities are taken forward primarily via outcome agreements between the SFC and individual, autonomous higher education institutions. The SFC was established by the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 which sets out its duties including that for ensuring high quality of provision. The Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013 sets out a requirement for SFC to have an access agreement with each higher education institution – this is part of the outcome agreements.

Fees and student support

39. Full-time Scottish-domiciled and EU undergraduate students do not pay tuition fees to study at Scottish higher education institutions. There is a cap on the total number of places for these students. There is some means tested fees support available for Scottish-domiciled and EU undergraduate part-time students. Undergraduate students from the rest of the UK are charged fees up to the amount charged per year in England.
40. Maintenance bursaries and loans for living costs are available for eligible students from Scotland and the EU from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland. Further information can be found at www.saas.gov.uk/.

Overview of higher education provision in Scotland

41. In 2018 there are 19 SFC-funded higher education institutions: 15 universities, three small specialist institutions and the Open University.
42. In 2017, 25.9 per cent of 18 year olds living in Scotland entered higher education in universities¹⁵.

¹⁵ Source: UCAS 2017 End of Cycle Report, available at <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-analysis-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports> (based on undergraduate applicants via UCAS member providers only). In Scotland, there is a substantial section of higher education provision not included in UCAS's figures. This is mostly full-time higher education provided in further education colleges, which represents around one third of young full-time undergraduate study in Scotland.

43. In 2016-17, 88 per cent of students in Scotland were studying full-time, and 12 per cent were studying part-time¹⁶.
44. In 2016-17, the proportion of students studying full and part-time in Scotland comprised 83 per cent from the UK, 9 per cent from the EU and 8 per cent international¹⁷.
45. There are 26 colleges in 13 regions across Scotland. The colleges deliver further education and higher education-level qualifications. The further education colleges in Scotland offer very little degree-level provision, unlike those in England. Almost all of the higher education-level qualifications are awards of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, e.g. HNC and HND. SFC also funds the colleges, but the funding model is different from that for the higher education institution sector. Colleges in Scotland are not eligible for the TEF as their provision is not reviewed against the UK Quality Code by the QAA.
46. Alternative providers are higher education providers that do not receive recurrent funding from the funding councils or other public bodies and are not further education colleges. However, their eligible students can access loans and grants from the Student Loans Company on specific courses, referred to as 'designated courses'. Authorities in England require providers with designated courses to make student data returns to HESA, regardless of where the provider is based. There is now one alternative provider based in Scotland, Ballet West, that makes returns to HESA.

Degree structure

47. The undergraduate honours degree in Scotland (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Level 10) is typically a four-year programme (if studied full-time). This degree structure in many cases provides flexibility for students to study a broad range of subjects in the initial years of a degree programme before specialising in later years. Students at some higher education institutions are initially admitted to a faculty, school or department rather than onto a specific degree programme.
48. An increasing number of students articulate from a further education college into the second or third year of a degree programme at a higher education institution on the basis of a credit transfer from Scottish Qualifications Authority HNCs and HNDs. Some undergraduates can also opt for direct entry into the second year of a degree programme on the basis of other qualifications, such as Advanced Highers or A-Levels.
49. A range of valid exit routes exist. A minority of undergraduate students choose to complete an ordinary degree (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Level 9) and graduate after three years. This is a qualification in its own right and is the standard entry point for some professions, notably nursing.

¹⁶ Source: HEFCE analysis of the 2015-16 HESA standard registration population (based on all undergraduates registered at UK higher education institutions only).

¹⁷ Source: HEFCE analysis of the 2015-16 HESA standard registration population (based on all undergraduates registered at UK higher education institutions only).

Quality assessment

50. The Quality Enhancement Framework was established in 2003 as a partnership between the SFC, Universities Scotland, National Union of Students Scotland, QAA Scotland, Higher Education Academy Scotland and Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland. The framework consists of five interrelated elements:

- enhancement-led institutional review, conducted by QAA Scotland
- institution-led quality review, conducted by institutions according to SFC guidance and the UK Quality Code
- student engagement, supported by Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland
- a national programme of enhancement themes, run over several years
- public information, such as found on Unistats.

51. Enhancement-led institutional review is the QAA's review method for assessing universities and other higher education institutions in Scotland, and is a process of continuous engagement over a four- to five-year cycle, involving:

- a. Annual discussions between QAA Scotland, senior staff and students at each institution.
- b. Submission of reflective analysis and case studies on enhancement of learning and teaching produced by the institution (with its student body), in addition to an advance information set, comprising a suite of information illustrating the institution's processes for securing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student experience.;
- c. The external review, including two review visits, resulting in reports published by QAA Scotland confirming threshold academic standards and quality, as well as a suite of differentiated information about the institution's strengths and areas for development.
- d. A year-on report by the institution published by QAA Scotland and structured, collaborative follow-up activity with peers and students.
- e. A range of thematic reports linking to developmental and enhancement activity through year-long 'Focus on...' projects and the national programme of multi-year enhancement themes.

52. The TEF specification¹⁸ sets out in more detail how this relates to eligibility criteria for the TEF.

¹⁸ See www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-specification.

Widening access and participation

Commitment to access and student success

53. The Scottish Government's widening access agenda is focused on more equal participation against the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (see paragraph 56). There is also a focus on access for care experienced young people.
54. As noted in the TEF specification, 'providers in Scotland typically have slightly lower retention rates, due to different structure [...] this should be taken into account by assessors in judging performance against the core and split metrics' (see paragraph 7.35c of the TEF specification). The slightly higher rate of higher education participation in Scotland than in the rest of the UK is also pertinent to this.
55. Over the last five years, the percentage of students recorded as transferring from Scottish institutions to other providers has been consistently lower than in England. This difference accounts for most (and sometimes all) of the gap between Scotland and England for the overall numbers leaving higher education. This means it is more likely that Scottish institutions will be flagged as being below benchmark for this metric, even though the Scottish sector data is, on average, comparable with the rest of the UK for all other elements of the retention metric. A key reason for this difference is the transfer of students from Scottish institutions to higher education-level enrolment in further education colleges, which are not captured in higher education retention data. Initial work by the SFC has indicated that if students transferring to an higher education enrolment in an further education college in Scotland were to be included in the 'retained' figures, the 'no longer in higher education' proportion for the sector would fall on average by 0.9 percentage points (a range by institution of -3.2 per cent to 0 per cent). This is not an exact model of the impact on the non-continuation metric, but should be used as an indicator of impact in considering institutions' data against benchmark for this metric.

Indicators of disadvantage

56. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) divides Scotland into almost 7,000 data zones. In each data zone, seven different 'domains' of deprivation (income, employment, education, health, crime, housing and access to services) are assessed, and on this basis the data zones are then ranked from most deprived to least deprived. Scottish Government and SFC policy focuses on the two most deprived quintiles (SIMD40).
57. Higher education institutions typically use other indicators alongside SIMD to support contextual admissions for applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds, in recognition of the fact that SIMD is an area measure. The Scottish Government acknowledges that two out of three people who are income deprived do not live in deprived data zones, and that fewer than one in three people living in deprived data zones are income deprived.
58. POLAR is widely acknowledged to be less useful in Scotland and is not used by HESA, the SFC or the Scottish Government. SIMD is used instead of POLAR for TEF metric splits for Scottish higher education institutions.
59. Nevertheless, POLAR has been used as one of the benchmarking adjustment factors for the highly skilled employment metric for all UK providers. Assessors should take account of the fact that the higher education participation rate in Scotland is slightly higher than the rest of the UK,

which means it has significantly fewer low-participation areas. Therefore, it is significantly less likely that entrants to Scottish higher education institutions will be from these areas. This is likely to mean that POLAR adjustments to benchmarks for Scottish institutions will be less significant than for institutions elsewhere in the UK, and, as a consequence, it is more likely that flags for Scottish institutions on these metrics will understate their performance. Indeed, the former Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) analysed the impact and indicated that the benchmark for this metric is on average 0.28 percentage points higher for Scottish institutions as a result of including POLAR as a benchmarking factor. As a result, HEFCE confirmed that there has been a negative impact on the core highly skilled metrics flags of a number of Scottish institutions. The negative effect on the split highly skilled metrics flags for Scottish institutions was not disclosed, but must be assumed to be material.

TEF national contextual statement for Wales

Overall policy and responsibility

60. Responsibility for higher education (higher education) in Wales is devolved. In addition to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales's (HEFCW's) role as a funder under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, the Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015 details its changed powers and enhanced role as the statutory regulator of higher education in Wales.

61. HEFCW's regulatory role has specific duties relating to:

- approving fee and access plans (FAPs)
- monitoring compliance with, and the effectiveness of, approved FAPs
- assessing the quality of education
- preparing, consulting on, and monitoring compliance with a Financial Management Code
- providing information and advice to Welsh ministers.

62. HEFCW has produced a Statement of Intervention¹⁹ to detail its intervention functions relating to the 2015 Act.

Welsh language

63. The Welsh language has official status in Wales, as set out in the Welsh Language Act 1993²⁰ and Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011²¹. This means that the Welsh language should not be treated less favourably than the English language in Wales. The Measure establishes the principle that persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of Welsh if they choose. A number of courses can be studied partly or wholly through the medium of Welsh, with latest figures showing that 5,765 students studied five or more credits in Welsh (of whom 2,285 studied 40 or more credits in Welsh) in 2016-17.

64. Institutions must offer opportunities wherever possible for assessment to take place through the medium of Welsh, irrespective of the language in which teaching takes place. The QAA has set out 'Guides for higher education providers for effective practice in examining and assessing in a language other than the language of tuition'²². The most effective means to ensure judgements on these assessments are reliable and valid is to appoint internal and external examiners who are linguistically and academically competent to make judgements on the original Welsh-language text.

¹⁹ See www.hefcw.ac.uk/working_with_he_providers/he_wales_act_2015/statement_of_intervention.aspx.

²⁰ See www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/38/contents.

²¹ See www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/1/contents/enacted.

²² Available at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-existing-uk-quality-code/part-b-assuring-and-enhancing-academic-quality/part-b-additional-resources>.

Role of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (National Welsh College)

65. The virtual Coleg was established to ensure more study opportunities for Welsh-medium higher education students, in partnership with universities. Its work includes training, developing and supporting Welsh-medium lecturers; funding undergraduate and post-graduate scholarships; promoting progression from school and further education into higher education Welsh medium study; developing new Welsh medium higher education provision in partnership with universities and increasing the numbers of students studying part or all of their course through the medium of Welsh.

Fees and student support

66. Information on student support arrangements for Welsh-domiciled students in the UK and EU students in Wales is available via the Student Finance Wales²³ website. From 2018-19 these full-time undergraduate and PGCE (qualified teacher status) students can take out a loan to cover tuition fees, and access a mixture of grants and loans to pay for living costs. The amount they get depends on household income and where they study, with students from higher income families receiving a maintenance loan in addition to the grant. Most full-time undergraduate students get a grant of at least £1,000. Similar arrangements are in place for part-time undergraduate and, from 2019-20, for postgraduate students.

67. To access student support for full-time undergraduate and PGCE (qualified teacher status) students, regulated institutions must have an annually approved FAP. To apply for a FAP they must be a charitable institution providing higher education, be wholly or mainly located in Wales, and provide information on financial viability, organisation and management of financial affairs, and quality of education. The 2019-20 Fee and Access Plan guidance²⁴ is publicly available. If an institution's FAP is approved then it becomes a regulated institution, and all its provision is automatically designated for full-time undergraduate and PGCE (qualified teacher status) student support.

68. Part-time undergraduate students studying at an intensity of 25 per cent or more are eligible for tuition fee loans. The amount of tuition fee loan is capped and varies with the location of study. Part-time undergraduate students can also get a mixture of grants and loans to pay for living costs, with the amounts varying based on household income and course intensity. Postgraduate masters' students are eligible for a loan, which is not dependent on fee outcome.

Overview of higher education provision in Wales

69. In Wales in 2018-19 there are:

- a. Eight HEFCW-funded and regulated higher education institutions.
- b. The Open University in Wales, which is HEFCW-funded for teaching (not included in the data below).

²³ See www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students/new-students.aspx.

²⁴ Available at https://www.hefcw.ac.uk/working_with_he_providers/he_wales_act_2015/fee_and_access_plan.aspx.

c. Three HEFCW-funded further education institutions operating validated higher education provision, of which two are regulated²⁵.

70. In 2017, 29.4 per cent of 18-year-olds living in Wales entered higher education²⁶. In 2016-17, 82 per cent of undergraduate students in Wales were studying full-time, and 18 per cent were studying part-time²⁷. In 2016-7, the proportions of undergraduate students studying full- and part-time in Wales comprised 87 per cent from the UK, 5 per cent from the EU and 8 per cent international²⁸.

71. Currently only three further education institutions in Wales have higher education provision directly funded by HEFCW, as HEFCW's approach has been to encourage higher education in further education via franchise partnerships. Under the 2015 Act any further education institution meeting the requirements for a FAP can apply to become a regulated institution. HEFCW published guidance on partnership arrangements for franchise education provided on behalf of regulated institutions in Wales²⁹. Currently, no alternative providers are regulated institutions with FAPs.

72. The past four years have seen a significant growth in the number of people undertaking higher level apprenticeships in Wales. This is an area in Wales which will develop over the coming years, with digital degree apprenticeships starting in Wales in 2018-19.

Quality assessment

73. HEFCW's statutory position for quality is set out under the 2015 Act, which requires HEFCW to assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the quality³⁰ of all education provided in Wales by or on behalf of³¹ each regulated institution.

74. Wales has a quality assessment framework, which aligns with quality assessment in England and Northern Ireland³². As part of this, governing bodies of regulated institutions need to commission (at least every six years) an external quality assessment review from a body on the

²⁵ Under the 2015 Act any further education institution) meeting the requirements for a FAP can apply to become a regulated institution. Currently two of the further education institutions with validated provision are regulated, but more may wish to apply in the future.

²⁶ Source: UCAS 2017 End of Cycle Report, available at www.ucas.com (based on undergraduate applicants via UCAS member providers only). Figures exclude the Open University in Wales.

²⁷ Source: HEFCW analysis of the 2016-17 Higher Education Statistics Agency standard registration population (based on all undergraduates registered at UK higher education institutions only).

²⁸ Source: HEFCW analysis of the 2016-17 HESA standard registration population (based on all undergraduates registered at UK higher education institutions only).

²⁹ See www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications/circulars/circulars.aspx.

³⁰ In the Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015 the quality of education or of a course of education is 'inadequate' if it is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving the education or undertaking the course.

³¹ In a franchise arrangement.

³² Available at www.hefcw.ac.uk/publications/circulars/circulars.aspx.

European Quality Assurance Register, which complies with the European standards and guidelines³³. In May 2017, Universities Wales invited the QAA to be the external quality assurance reviewer on behalf of all universities in Wales from 2017-18. Welsh vice-chancellors agreed that the QAA was the most appropriate organisation to undertake the external quality reviews in Wales. This was because it was the only organisation on the register that not only understood the context of Wales within the UK and had appropriate Welsh language capacity, but also had the reputation and international reach that is important as the quality environment across the UK changes. Institutions must have a successful review outcome in order to be eligible for TEF.

Widening access and participation

75. Widening access, inclusion, progression and success are key priorities for the Welsh Government and HEFCW. Widening access policies support equality of opportunity and promote higher education for people of all ages who are underrepresented in higher education with potential to benefit from it. Widening access to higher education, higher level learning and skills makes a significant contribution to the society and economy of Wales, and supports social justice, social mobility and economic upskilling.
76. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation) is the Welsh Government's official measure of deprivation for Wales. It is made up of eight separate domains of deprivation: income; employment; health; education; housing; access to services; environment; and community safety. HEFCW widening access policy has been aligned with this geographically based measure focused on access to higher education from people of all ages from the bottom quintiles of areas of deprivation in Wales.
77. Low-participation neighbourhoods are also a priority for widening access to higher education in Wales, as in England. In its analysis of low-participation neighbourhoods HEFCW takes account of young full-time students in the bottom 40 per cent of areas as defined by POLAR3, and in addition, HEFCW takes account of mature full-time and all part-time students in the bottom 40 per cent of low-participation areas, as defined by the proportion of working age adults with higher education level qualifications (as measured using Census 2001 data). This means that HEFCW's measures of participation include all ages.
78. Improving part-time learning opportunities is a priority for the Welsh Government and HEFCW. Higher education providers in Wales are encouraged to promote flexible learning and to maximise participation through different and more flexible ways to experience higher education. Part-time higher education contributes to a range of policy agendas in Wales, including widening access and employability and skills.
79. In order to participate in the TEF, providers based in Wales must have an approved FAP if they are a regulated provider, or an approved Statement of public good³⁴.

³³ European Quality Assurance Register: <http://eqar.eu/>. European standards and guidelines: www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/.

³⁴ Statement of public good: applicants must demonstrate that they make a significant and ongoing contribution to the public good. This could include through activities that: support access to, or the promotion

Student partnership

80. Partnership between institutions and students is a key priority within Wales, and features as one of five elements of HEFCW's mission in its Corporate strategy 2017-2020. Much of the work regarding student experience has been carried out via the collaborative Wise Wales initiative³⁵. Student partnership is an integral part of Wales's quality assessment framework.

Supplementary Longitudinal Educational Outcomes metrics

81. Both HEFCW and the Welsh higher education sector have stated their opposition to the inclusion of Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) data as part of student information unless this is contextualised with salary levels and cost of living in the locality where the graduate is employed. Wales has the lowest regional gross value added (balanced) per head (increase in the value of the economy due to the production of goods and services) of any country in the UK³⁶. It also has the lowest salary opportunities available for graduates³⁷ compared with other countries of the UK. Factors such as these mean that in isolation, comparisons and conclusions made using the LEO data may be misleading. The Welsh Government prioritises the provision of skilled graduates to meet the needs of Wales.

Grade inflation metrics

82. A number of universities in Wales were originally constituent partners of the University of Wales. The University of Wales was responsible for the standards of its degrees and its regulations set out first degree classification algorithms for all constituent institutions. Over time, the constituent institutions became universities – and degree awarding bodies – in their own right and took over responsibility for their own standards. As part of this process, degree algorithms were revisited. Thus, depending on the date when the constituent institutions became universities in their own right, data from 10 years ago may in effect relate to a different university with different regulations and approaches to standards, and therefore is not comparable with outcomes at the present university. Where this is the case, Welsh institutions will provide the data from the first year at which outcomes for the present university are available.

of, higher education; contribute to the availability of education; improve the retention of students and employability of graduates; or develop Welsh medium provision.

³⁵ See <http://wisewales.org.uk/>.

³⁶ See <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/bulletins/regionalgrossvalueaddedbalanceduk/1998to2016>.

³⁷ See <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/destination-leavers-higher-education/?lang=en>.

List of abbreviations

DfE NI	Department for Education Northern Ireland
FAP	Fee and access plan
HEFCE	(The former) Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HERA	The Higher Education and Research Act 2017
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
OfS	Office for Students
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
POLAR	Participation of Local Areas measure
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
TEF	Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework
WAPP	Widening access and participation plan



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