

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref: MA(P) KW/3248/17

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee

31 October 2017

Dear Lynne,

Following the Minister for Lifelong Learning & Welsh Language and my attendance at committee on 18 October, I agreed to provide you with further information on two separate issues, namely:

- The calculations underpinning the additional £10m that would be made available to HEFCW following the Statement of 18 October on Student Finance; and
- A note of the views of Universities on the Welsh Bacalaureate.

Additional funding to Universities in Wales

My written statement of 18 October confirmed that the maximum tuition fee in Wales would remain at £9,000. The statement acknowledged that this may cause some short-term challenges within our university sector and that financial plans will have included additional income from increased tuition fees.

To help our institutions deal with any immediate issues arising from the tuition fee changes, I allocated HEFCW an additional £10m. I did not confirm which financial year the additional money would be allocated as I am still discussing the implications with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

However, as confirmed at the committee meeting, I attach the initial estimate that I used to calculate the additional allocation:

Analysis of full-time undergraduate fee scenarios for

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Welsh HEIs

	2017/18	2018/19
Projected student numbers [1]	62,638	62,638
Average fee scenarios [2]		
£9,000 maximum	£8,872	£9,000
£9,295 maximum	£8,872	£9,155
Fee income scenarios		
£9,000 maximum	£556m	£564m
£9,295 maximum	£556m	£573m
Difference	£0m	£10m

Higher Education Division internal analysis, Welsh Government

Note that fee income estimates are rounded to the nearest £1m.

[1] Home and EU students at Welsh HEIs; Higher Education Statistics Agency Student Record, 2015/16.

[2] The average fee for 2017/18 has been estimated by HEFCW from Fee and Access Plans. For 2018/19, the average fee is increased by inflation (RPIX), unless constrained by the given maximum fee scenario.

I am keen to emphasise that these calculations have been prepared by a statistical team that is a part of a wider financial management system that has been set up to ensure that Welsh Government operates an effective and efficient assurance and accountability system to manage the student loans and grants system in Wales.

My statement also confirmed that I would continue to work in partnership with our Funding Council to ensure there are no short-term financial issues for our institutions as a result of this change. These discussions will acknowledge that there is no definitive answer as to the impact that enabling a fee increase would have had given the individual restrictions that may or may not have applied to individual institutions (for example, whether they would have been able to charge all students a higher fee or just new students).

Views of Universities on the Welsh Baccalaureate

The reformed, level 3 Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate that had its first certification this summer is more rigorous than in the past and is a better indicator of the true acquisition of level 3 skills. It ensures that all learners who have taken the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate are properly recognised as they take their next steps.

As an internationally recognised and benchmarked qualification, we would therefore expect all UK universities to accept the reformed Welsh Baccalaureate - Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate as part of future entry requirements or as part of an alternative offer within universities and their departments.

In May, I wrote to all university Vice Chancellors to seek assurance that their institutions would accept the reformed Welsh Baccalaureate - Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate (WBQ) as part of their future entry requirements or as part of an alternative offer. My officials are working with universities, including the Russell Group universities, to make sure that Welsh learners taking the WBQ are not disadvantaged when it comes to entry onto HE courses.

Universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, are clear that they value the WBQ and are taking an increasingly flexible approach to recognising it in their offers. The majority of HE institutions broadly recognise the WBQ as an appropriate qualification, although some universities and courses do not count it towards their entry requirements.

We keep the WBQ under review to ensure it remains rigorous and useful. Qualifications Wales will be publishing a review of the WBQ in the autumn term.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

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Cabinet Secretary for Education