



Ein cyf/Our ref: WQ87354

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Andrew RT Davies MS
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20 February 2023

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your recent written question asking: “Will the Minister outline how the Welsh Government intends to close the undergraduate university admission gap between those in the lowest quintile for deprivation and the other four quintiles, given that the situation has worsened in the last year?”. My answer is set out in this letter.

Data from UCAS’s 2022 end of cycle report shows that 1,540 Welsh domiciled 18 year old accepted applicants were from WIMD Q1, an increase of 1.7% on 1,515 in 2021. This quintile was the only one to show an increase compared with the previous year.

The gap between the proportion of Welsh domiciled 18 year old accepted applicants from the most deprived (Q1) and least deprived quintiles (Q5) has narrowed from 15.9 percentage points in 2021 to 14.9 percentage points in 2022.

Working together with HEFCW, universities, UCAS and other partners we support and promote a range of measures to ensure opportunities are available for all who wish to do so to access further learning, whatever route they choose to take and irrespective of their background.

To help ensure parity for economically disadvantaged learners in Wales with the rest of the UK, we implemented a permanent legislative change to allow Welsh Ministers to share the FSM data of school leavers (in year 13) with UCAS. The addition of UCAS to the named parties listed in the Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, has enabled Welsh Ministers to share this data.

Providing contextualised information in this way will support University admissions teams to take socio-economic context into account when offers are made and will help us ensure fair access to higher education for all.

HEFCW and institutions committed £3.7m annually, from 2022/23, to support the work of the regional Reaching Wider Partnerships, who’s work with schools and low participation communities is crucial in raising aspirations and encouraging learners from all backgrounds to enter higher education.

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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.

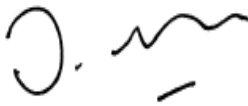
Through their fee and access plans, institutions also fund a range of activities to support equality of opportunity and promote higher education.

HEFCW also provides funding for a fee waiver scheme for part-time students, many of whom are mature and/or parents and/or carers. The part-time study undergraduate fee waiver scheme offers grants to providers that waive fees for students studying fewer than 30 credits (ie below 25% FTE), who are therefore unable to access student finance support.

We are firmly committed to widening access to higher education. To support our aspirations, we have put in place the most progressive and equitable student support package in the UK designed to encourage students from all backgrounds to enter higher education. Our unique and progressive student finance system, including postgraduate and support for part-time students, provides the highest level of maintenance support of all the UK administrations for undergraduate students. Students receive a guaranteed level of maintenance support irrespective of their household income. Every eligible Welsh full time undergraduate student receives a minimum of £1,000 in non-repayable grant support. We are unique in providing a level of maintenance support based on the National Living Wage.

Our partial cancellation scheme, which makes provision to cancel up to £1,500 of maintenance loan debt for each undergraduate student that enters repayment, is also the only scheme of its kind in the UK.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Miles', with a stylized flourish.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language