

Higher Education in Wales

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Aim

To outline key features of the higher education system in Wales and to comment on developments in this system within the wider context of changes in higher education policy in the United Kingdom over the last twenty years.

Outline

- Higher Education Institutions in Wales
- Similarities and differences with the HE system in England
- Explaining developments

Higher Education in Wales

1. University of Wales Trinity St David's (Prifysgol Cymru Y Drindod Dewi Sant). Formed in 2013 from the merger over preceding years of St David's College (Lampeter) (Coleg Dewi Sant) founded by Royal Charter in 1822 with Trinity College, Carmarthen, established as a teacher education college in 1848, and Swansea Metropolitan University, the successor body to arts, education and technical colleges founded in the mid-19th century.
2. Aberystwyth University (Prifysgol Aberystwyth) established as The University College of Wales in 1872.
3. Cardiff University (Prifysgol Caerdydd) founded in 1883 as the University College of South Wales.
4. Bangor University (Prifysgol Bangor) founded as The University College of North Wales in 1884.
5. Swansea University (Prifysgol Abertawe) chartered as University College of Swansea in 1920.
6. Open University (Wales) established by Royal Charter in 1969.
7. Glyndŵr University (Prifysgol Glyndŵr) founded in 1887 as Wrexham School of Science and Art, more latterly the North East Wales Institute of Higher Education (NEWI) which became a constituent college of the University of Wales in 2004.
8. University of South Wales (Prifysgol De Cymru) formed in April 2013 from the merger of the University of Glamorgan and the University of Wales, Newport. Both institutions had origins which can be traced back to mining schools established in the early 20th century.
9. Cardiff Metropolitan University renamed from what was formerly the University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC) formed from the amalgamation of art, food, teacher and technical education colleges.

Similarities and Differences

	England	Wales
1. Access and admissions	Increased applications and admissions. Regulation focus on SNC and POLAR via Hefce and OFFA with processing by UCAS and monitoring by HESA.	Increased applications and admissions. Higher level of part-time provision. Regulation focus on aggregate budget and Community First via Hefcw with processing by UCAS and monitoring by HESA.
2. QA of learning and teaching	Focus on robustness of institutional procedures via QAA, Institutional Review and associated machinery.	Focus on robustness of institutional procedures via QAA (Wales), Institutional Review and associated machinery.
3. Research assessment	Increased emphasis on STEM via ring fenced science budget for research councils, capital funding and assessment via Research Excellence Framework (REF).	Assessment via Research Excellence Framework (REF).

Similarities and Differences

	England	Wales
4. Knowledge exchange	Policy focus on eight key technologies. Assessment via HEBCIS and funding via TSB and HEIF strand within Hefce block grants.	Assessment via HEBCIS and funding via TSB and Hefcw.
5. International engagement	UK Visas and Immigration controls. BIS focus on increasing overseas student numbers with help from UK HE International Unit.	UK Visas and Immigration controls. Institutional focus on overseas students at Welsh campuses and in London.
6. Student finance	Student fees and loans of upto £9,000 with maintenance support of between £4,375 and £7,675. Administered by the Student Loan Company (SLC).	Student fees of between £7,500 and £9,000 with Assembly Learning Grant reducing maximum student loan requirement per student per year to £3,685 for students who have a home address in Wales . Maintenance loan of between £5,202 and £7,288 per year. Administered by the Student Loan Company (SLC).

Similarities and Differences

	England	Wales
7. HE Funding	<p>Funding for QR, enhanced funding for STEM and reduced funding for widening participation.</p> <p>UUK working group examining possible futures of HE Funding. UK Labour Party committed to reducing top line fee levels.</p>	<p>Funding for QR, widening participation and expensive subjects.</p> <p>The Diamond Review “The Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales” chaired by Sir Ian Diamond. findings in two stages.</p>
8. Governance and oversight	Regulatory partnership group.	Higher Education Bill (2014)
9. Institutional form	Independence and autonomy with incentives for HE “cold spots” and a watching brief to guard against institutional failure.	Hard and soft wired HE and FE structures encouraged more or less actively.

Explaining the differences

Divergence

- Redistribution of formal powers associated with devolution
- Composition and independence of policy communities
- Situational logics of policy making in different places
- Differences in values and policy discourses
- Financial pressures associated with austerity

Convergence

- Emergence of cross national and supranational agencies and agendas
- Mobile and interconnected policy and academic communities
- Common pressures associated with globalisation
- Similarities in values and policy discourses
- Financial benefits of scale and trade