

Wales Research Environment and Culture (WREC) Fund 2025/26

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To: Heads of higher education institutions

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Summary:

This publication provides details of the Wales Research Environment and Culture (WREC) fund institutional allocations for Academic Year (AY) 2025/26.

WREC funding will be allocated to Welsh universities in receipt of Quality Related (QR) funding (as set out in [Medr/2025/06: Medr's funding allocations for academic year 2025/26](#)). The WREC funding is expected to continue until 2027/28, subject to future budgets. AY 2025/26 allocations are based on data from the 2023/24 HESA staff and student record.



Wales Research Environment and Culture (WREC)

1. As noted in our [Strategic Plan 2025-2030](#), Medr is committed to the development of research environments with positive cultures that attract and retain the best researchers and innovators from across the world. We are ambitious for our research sector in Wales. We want Wales to be renowned as a great place to undertake research and which, through collaboration, secures social, economic and cultural benefits. The development and sustainability of healthy research cultures in universities is pivotal to supporting excellent research, It is also important in its own right. We want to support the diverse workforce who contribute to research, including technical and professional staff. Through our funding, and our work with other partners, including UK funding bodies on REF 2029, we will encourage research environments that support integrity, diversity, inclusivity, well-being, mental health and respect.
2. WREC funding provides dedicated support for enhancing research cultures and environments. However, Medr expects that maintaining a healthy culture should be treated as an integral part of research and innovation activity and supported strategically through core research and innovation funding.
3. The allocation of £200,000 funding to Welsh universities is to support projects, programmes and activities that actively contribute to supporting or developing positive and healthy research cultures and environments. This funding could be used to extend existing projects, and also for new activities and infrastructure.
4. For this third year of funding, we would encourage institutions to continue to embed evaluative thinking in their activities to understand the outcomes and impacts of their research culture activities. This is to ensure that the activities are making tangible changes to research culture or generating learning about what works. In this academic year we are interested in the outcomes of interim evaluations.
5. In determining the use of allocations, institutions should continue to refer to the three themes outlined in the table below. These are based on themes developed through engagement with the Welsh and UK research sectors. This is not an exhaustive list and institutions are encouraged to use the funding flexibly accounting for their strategic priorities, and broader principles relating to improving research cultures and environments.

Themes	Potential sub areas of alignment
Creating Positive Research Culture(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reward and recognition of positive behaviours• Identifying what a positive research culture looks like including for well-being and mental health• Valuing diverse research activity• Career development of researchers and associated professions• Support for career transitions, career porosity and mobility between sectors• Developing research culture frameworks• Improving infrastructure and capacity to support better research grant capture

Themes	Potential sub areas of alignment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling bullying and harassment • Collegiality and belonging • Valuing the full range of experiences, skills and contributions of all who contribute to research
Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and addressing barriers to inclusion for applicants from under-represented groups in the research talent pipeline with a view to ensuring the research environment is accessible, inclusive and equitable for all • Recognition of all staff contributions and career pathways frameworks, including for fixed-term, technical and research-enabling staff • Enhancing access to, and participation in, research from underrepresented groups <p>Understanding and tackling the challenges experienced by those who may experience multiple disadvantages</p>
Responsible Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity, openness and ethics • Improving research conduct and reproducibility • Research assessment and reform • Collaboration and convening institutions to share practice • Reproducibility of metrics

Inclusion

6. The research sector has an important role to play in supporting an inclusive Wales, including opportunities to improve support for staff and students who are currently disadvantaged. Medr has a strategic duty to promote equality of opportunity and we have set out commitments and actions to achieve this in our Strategic and Operational Plans. Medr is developing a new regulatory system which includes conditions on staff and student welfare and equality of opportunity. Higher education providers will be required to comply with these conditions, including as they relate to research. Medr expects WREC funding to be used to address barriers to inclusion of under-represented groups in the research talent pipeline and to develop a supportive and inclusive research environment, which values the contribution of academic staff, research enabling and support staff, and professional services staff.
7. We particularly welcome activities that support people with protected characteristics to have equal access to fulfilling research careers and to participate in research as citizens, contributing to the Welsh Government's equalities-related strategies and plans, including, but not limited to the [Disabled People's Rights Plan: 2025 to 2035](#).
8. We also welcome activities that make progress towards the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan goals and actions, and take account of the institution's commitments in

its race equality charter action plan. We expect to see research students and staff included within institutions' wellbeing and health, including mental health, strategies and implementation plans, which are required through Medr's [Wellbeing and health funding 2024/25 and monitoring requirements \(Medr/2024/07\)](#).

9. Medr actively promotes the use of Welsh language in research, not only to foster a rich and inclusive environment that reflects the cultural heritage of Wales, but also in recognition of the statutory duties placed on institutions to support the Welsh language and Welsh-medium provision. WREC funding may be used to support activities to encourage research in the medium of Welsh.

Sharing learning and good practices

10. Medr recognises the importance of collaboration across the sector in developing positive research cultures and the role of organisations such as the Wales Innovation Network (WIN), the Learned Society of Wales, and Universities Wales. We are working through funded partnerships with these organisations to continue supporting diverse communities to effect change. Institutions are strongly encouraged to work collaboratively and build on existing activities that support positive research cultures, for example The Learned Society of Wales's [Researcher Development Programme](#).
11. We have previously provided £50,000 to WIN for activities to support shared learning across institutions. In 2025-26 we are exploring wider options to support collaboration and shared learning including learning from initiatives across the UK such as plans for the Good Practice Exchange and the Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager. We welcome ideas and feedback on how this could be best achieved in Wales, please contact research@medr.cymru.
12. A positive and inclusive research culture is vital to advancing the civic mission of universities in Wales. By fostering diversity, equity, and collaboration, universities enable socially responsive, community-driven research that delivers meaningful social, economic, and cultural benefits to Wales and its communities. Inclusive environments can also support innovative approaches to engagement, empowering researchers to co-create knowledge and solutions with external partners.

Institutional allocations

13. The method used to allocate funding for 2025/26 is based on 2023/24 HESA staff and student data:
 - Number of FTEs on research-only contracts at the higher education institution
 - Number of FTEs on teaching and research contracts at the higher education institution
 - Number of postgraduate research students at the higher education institution
14. A minimum allocation of £5k is used to ensure that all universities have a usable allocation to enhance their research cultures and environments. HESA data used have been verified by universities.

	FTE				
Institution	Research Contracts	Teaching and Research Contracts	PGR Students	Total	Allocation
University of South Wales	66	722	257	1044	£21,185
Aberystwyth University	104	297	260	660	£13,397
Bangor University	177	279	545	1000	£20,295
Cardiff University	864	1342	1570	3777	£76,368
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	40	361	390	791	£16,057
Swansea University	383	572	638	1593	£32,325
Cardiff Metropolitan University	27	583	124	736	£14,924
Wrexham University	1	201	54	255	£5,180
Total	1662	4357	3838	9856	£200,000

15. Medr notes that the WREC funding allocation methodology does not explicitly include research-supporting staff such as some of the technical community, and professional services staff. Medr acknowledges the crucial contributions of these staff to research cultures and the research environment.

WREC fund monitoring arrangements

16. Payments for AY 2025/26 will be made in August 2025. Medr expects assurances concerning the projects and activities that are being undertaken through this fund. Allocations should be spent in full in AY 2025/26.
17. Institutions should complete the WREC funding monitoring form at **Annex A** by **25 September 2026**:
- **Part 1 – Strategic Context:** indicate the strategic context of research culture at your institution.
 - **Part 2 – Thematic Areas:** indicate how the activities/projects align with the thematic areas outlined in paragraph 7, and whether: 1. activities would have taken place without the funding, 2. activities only took place through WREC funding provision, or 3. activities could have taken place without the funding, but to a lesser extent.
 - **Part 3 – Evaluation:** explain the effectiveness and impact of the projects/activities.
 - **Part 4– Confirmation:** confirm that the WREC funding has been spent in accordance with the information outlined in this publication.
18. Information submitted by institutions in their reports will form the basis of evidence to support future budget decisions and support for research culture and environment across Wales.

19. We welcome the submission of monitoring reports in Welsh.

Further information

20. For further information, contact Hayley Moss (research@medr.cymru).

Impact assessment

21. We have carried out an impact assessment to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We anticipate a positive impact on race, sex, disability, age, religion and belief. We also considered the impact of this policy on the Welsh language, Welsh language provision within the HE sector in Wales, socio-economic characteristics and potential impacts towards the goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Medr

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