

## Wales Research Environment and Culture (WREC) Fund 2024/25

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**To:** **Heads of higher education institutions in Wales**

**Respond by:** 26 September 2025

**More information:**

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This publication provides details of the Wales Research Environment and Culture (WREC) fund institutional allocations for Academic Year (AY) 2024/25.

The fund was initiated by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales in AY 2023/24 to support new and existing activities that enhance positive research cultures and environments.

WREC funding will be allocated to Welsh universities in receipt of Quality Related (QR) funding (as set out in [W24/13HE: HEFCW's Funding Allocations for Academic Year 2024/25](#)). The funding is expected to continue until 2027/28, subject to future budgets. AY 2024/25 allocations will be based on data from the 2022/23 HESA staff and student record.



## Wales Research Environment and Culture

1. The development and sustainability of healthy research cultures and environments in universities is pivotal to supporting excellent research. Research funding bodies in the UK are supporting positive cultures through wide-ranging capacity building and enhancement activities, alongside piloting the assessment of [People, Culture and Environment within the Research Excellence Framework 2029](#).
2. 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.
3. We cannot do this without supporting the diverse workforce who contribute to research. We want to encourage research environments that support integrity, diversity, inclusivity, well-being and respect, attracting and retaining talented people from Wales, UK and across the world.
4. In 2023 HEFCW initiated the WREC Fund recognising the need to enhance research culture activities already underway in universities, supported via QR funding allocations. Medr has reviewed the WREC monitoring returns received from universities in July 2024 which indicate the fund has been valued and contributed to new or enhanced activities. We propose to continue to support the funding until 2027/28 subject to future budgets.
5. This funding will provide dedicated support for enhancing research cultures and environments. However, Medr expects that a healthy culture should be treated as an integral part of research and innovation activity and also supported strategically through core research and innovation funding.
6. 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.
7. Medr expects the funding to demonstrate progress and enhancement of activity related to research culture. This funding could be used to extend existing projects, and also for new activities and infrastructure.
8. For this second year of funding, we would encourage institutions to consider how they will measure and evaluate the 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. We realise that these enhancement activities may still be in their infancy, therefore in this academic year we are interested in how institutions are putting in place early-stage evaluation activities.
9. In determining the use of allocations, institutions should 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
<b>Creating Positive Research Culture(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reward and recognition of positive behaviours</li> <li>• Identifying what a positive research culture looks like including well being</li> <li>• Valuing diverse research activity</li> <li>• Career development of researchers and associated professions</li> <li>• Developing research culture frameworks</li> <li>• Improving infrastructure and capacity to support better research grant capture</li> <li>• Tackling bullying and harassment</li> <li>• Collegiality and belonging</li> <li>• Valuing the full range of experiences, skills and contributions of all who contribute to research</li> </ul>
<b>Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Recognition of all staff contributions</li> <li>• Enhancing access to, and participation in, research from underrepresented groups</li> </ul>
<b>Responsible Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrity, openness and ethics</li> <li>• Improving research conduct and reproducibility</li> <li>• Research assessment and reform</li> <li>• Collaboration and convening institutions to share practice</li> <li>• Reproducibility of metrics</li> </ul>

10. Medr expects the 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. This includes, but is not limited to, technicians, archivists, and software engineers.
11. Medr encourages the use of the Welsh language in research to fully foster a rich and inclusive environment reflecting the cultural heritage of Wales, enriching the research community.

### **Sharing learning and good practices**

12. 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 have provided £50,000 for FY 2024-25 to WIN to support sharing of good practices across institutions in Wales. We are also working in partnership with LSW to continue supporting diverse communities to effect change. Eligible universities are strongly encouraged to work collaboratively and build on existing activities that support positive research cultures for example: [Researcher Development Programme - The Learned Society of Wales](#). We welcome ideas and feedback on further opportunities to support shared learning and collaboration.

## Institutional Allocations

13. The method used to allocate funding for 2024/25 is based on 2022/23 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 of £5k has been included to ensure that all universities have a usable allocation to enhance their research cultures and environments. HESA data used have been verified by universities.

Institution	FTE				Allocation
	Research Contracts	Teaching and Research Contracts	PGR Students	Total	
University of South Wales	70	716	226	1012	<b>£20,042</b>
Aberystwyth University	118	287	257	662	<b>£13,120</b>
Bangor University	224	261	610	1095	<b>£21,683</b>
Cardiff University	909	1312	1604	3825	<b>£75,722</b>
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	38	343	448	830	<b>£16,442</b>
Swansea University	438	549	676	1663	<b>£32,994</b>
Cardiff Metropolitan University	27	559	171	757	<b>£14,996</b>
Wrexham University	3	184	49	236	<b>£5,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,827</b>	<b>4,213</b>	<b>4,041</b>	<b>10,080</b>	<b>£200,000</b>

15. This method was used by HEFCW for allocations in 2023/24 and was broadly supported by institutions in the consultation in December 2023. Medr notes that WREC funding allocation methodology does not explicitly include research-supporting staff such as some of the technical community, and professional services staff. Medr recognises the crucial contributions of these staff to research cultures and the research environment.

## WREC Fund Monitoring Arrangements

16. Institutional allocations for AY 2024/25 will be made in November 2024. Medr expects assurances concerning the projects and activities that are being undertaken through this fund. Allocations should be spent in full in AY 2024/25.
17. Institutions should complete the WREC funding monitoring form at **Annex A by 26 September 2025**:
  - **Part 1 – Strategic Context:** indicate the strategic context of research culture at your institution.
  - **Part 2 – Thematic Areas:** should indicate how the activities/projects align with the thematic areas outlined in the *Institutional WREC Funding* section of this publication, 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:** should explain how you plan to measure the effectiveness 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 research environment across Wales.

## Further information

19. For further information, contact Hayley Moss ([research@medr.cymru](mailto:research@medr.cymru)).

## Impact Assessment

20. 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.
21. We welcome the submission of monitoring reports in Welsh.

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Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

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