

Wales Research Environment and Culture (WREC) Fund 2026/27

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To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales

Respond by: 24 September 2027

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Summary:

This publication provides details of the Wales Research Environment and Culture (WREC) fund institutional allocations for Academic Year (AY) 2026/27.

WREC funding will be allocated to Welsh universities in receipt of Quality Research (QR) funding (as set out in [Medr/2026/16: Medr's investment for academic year 2026/27](#)) The WREC funding is expected to continue until 2027/28, subject to future budgets. AY 2026/27 allocations are based on data from the 2024/25 HESA staff and student record.

Wales Research Environment and Culture

1. As set out in our [Strategic Plan](#), 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. For this fourth year of funding, we expect institutions to have embedded 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. Medr will be preparing an evaluation of the WREC fund in 2027 and we may seek follow up discussions based on your monitoring submissions.
6. 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)	• 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 • 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)	• 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 • Understanding and tackling the challenges experienced by those who may experience multiple disadvantages
Responsible Research	• Integrity, openness and ethics • Improving research conduct and reproducibility • Research assessment and reform • Collaboration and convening institutions to share practice • Reproducibility of metrics

Inclusion

7. 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 has developed a new regulatory system which includes conditions on staff and student welfare and equality of opportunity.
8. 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 underrepresented 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.
9. 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](#).

10. We also welcome activities that contribute to the delivery of the [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#) goals and actions, and that reflect the institution's commitments under its Race Equality Charter action plan. Institutions should also have regard to Medr's investment in supporting anti-racism in higher education, as set out in: [Medr/2026/33: Supporting anti-racism in higher education: 2026/27 guidance and allocations](#).
11. Institutions are expected to ensure that research students and staff are included within institutions' wellbeing and health, including mental health, strategies and implementation plans, which are required through Medr's wellbeing and health funding: [Medr/2026/37 Higher education wellbeing and mental health funding 2026/27](#).
12. 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 that encourage research in the medium of Welsh.

Sharing learning and good practices

13. 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 (LSW), 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: [Researcher Development Programme \(The Learned Society of Wales\)](#).
14. During 2025/26, Medr supported the Learned Society of Wales through the Collaborative Fund to deliver the Research Culture Networks Grant Scheme. As part of the broader WREC Fund, the Collaborative Fund promotes research culture through a combination of institution-led and community-led activity. This support will continue in 2026/27.
15. 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

16. The method used to allocate funding for 2026/27 is based on 2024/25 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

17. 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.

Institution	FTE				
	Research Contracts	Teaching and Research Contracts	PGR Students	Total	Allocation
University of South Wales	56.595	667.857	197.59	922	£18,974
Aberystwyth University	99.848	277.406	247.982	625	£12,866
Bangor University	168.63	276.204	510.625	955	£19,662
Cardiff University	855.976	1,361.392	1,578.527	3796	£78,114
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	33.849	354.494	347.715	736	£15,147
Swansea University	366.817	602.350	681.284	1,650	£33,964
Cardiff Metropolitan University	28.991	568.069	169.468	767	£15,774
Wrexham University	3.544	219.114	44.494	267	£5,498
Total	1,614.250	4,362.886	3,777.685	9,719	£200,000

18. 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

19. Payments for AY 2026/27 will be made in August 2026. Medr expects assurances concerning the projects and activities that are being undertaken through this fund. Allocations should be spent in full in AY 2026/27.
20. Institutions should complete the WREC funding monitoring form at **Annex A** by **24 September 2027**:
- **Part 1 – Strategic Context:** indicate the strategic context of research culture at your institution, and how fostering a positive research culture has become embedded.
 - **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 and how your evaluative findings will be used to inform delivery and support the longer term sustainability of successful initiatives.

- **Part 4– Confirmation:** confirm that the WREC funding has been spent in accordance with the information outlined in this publication.

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

Further information

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

Impact assessment

24. 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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