



**Response to the Finance Committee's call for information:
Welsh Government draft Budget proposals for 2016-17**

The Universities Association for Lifelong Learning [UALL] UK supports all aspects of the diverse engagement of universities and higher education providers with their wider communities. The Association seeks to champion the broader definition of lifelong engagement with universities through part-time flexible provision. It does so through advocacy in policy development, dissemination of information on policy, practice and funding and through research and publication. UALL is structured to respond to change in higher education.

UALL Cymru is the national organisation for Wales within UALL. Provision by UALL Cymru members includes CPD, Access courses, public and community engagement, non-accredited and accredited part-time/flexible learning both in Welsh and/or bilingually. UALL Cymru works closely with Reaching Wider and other leading organisations.

UALL Cymru has serious concerns about the proposed cut in the Higher Education budget line within the Education and Skills Main Expenditure Group. The draft budget for 2016-17 indicates a cut of £41 million in this budget line, which is a decrease of 32 per cent on the 2015-16 allocation of £129 million.

We believe that the proposals in the draft budget will result in very difficult decisions having to be taken by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) as it sets out its next round of funding allocations. The institutional learning and teaching grant which supports part-time provision will be under considerable threat. This will further disadvantage part-time students who already receive less public financial support than full-time students.

UALL Cymru would like to see the HEFCW allocation for part-time funding protected in order for part-time student numbers in Wales to be sustained. The Minister has strongly indicated in previous remit letters that this should be a priority and that he does not wish to see part-time numbers decrease. We would not wish to see the number of part-time courses decrease or fees rise but these are likely to be the consequences of a significant cut in part-time funding. Part-time higher education is vital to ensuring social justice, social mobility and

economic development and it is essential that people are offered the opportunity to study part-time.

Widening access and participation is a key priority for the Welsh Government and the proposed cut would considerably impede the current successful work in attracting people from economically disadvantaged areas, carers and first-in-family progressing to higher education. These are the people who mainly choose part-time study. We are very concerned about the impact of this draft budget on part-time higher education and we also feel that part-time students are being disproportionately affected by funding decisions.

We hope this submission will assist the committee in their consideration of the draft budget.

Professor Colin Trotman [Chair]
Delyth Murphy [Joint Secretary]

7.1.16