

Email response

14/04/20

ATISN 13873

Thank you for your request which I received on **15/03/2020** about **Open University**.

You asked for information relating to the Minister for education's reply in a short debate in Plenary on the State of the Coalfields Report 2019. Specifically you asked for copies of:

1. The data that supports the 80% increase in new Open University entrants.
2. The definitions used for disadvantaged communities and coalfields
3. The numbers of Open University students from coalfields county areas

I have set out responses to your queries below:

1. The data that supports the 80% increase in new Open University entrants

Table 1 provides the number of enrolled students for 2017/18 and 2018/19. We do not hold the data for 2019/20, as this has not yet been provided to us by the Open University. Table 1 shows an increase of 47%.

The only data we hold that indicates an increase of some 80%, as stated by the Minister for Education, is in an email from the Open University in Wales to the Minister for Education, on 3 March, providing her with estimates of 2019/20 data, which indicated an 84% increase in new FTE students since 2017/18. Note that this figure is provisional and may change following the analysis of the completed data for 2019/20 following the conclusion of the academic year on 31 July.

Table 1: New and continuing Full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate at Open University Wales

	2017/18	2018/19
New FTE undergraduate	1242	1821
New and continuing FTE undergraduate	3893	4923

Source: Open University in Wales

2. The definitions used for disadvantaged communities and coalfields

'Disadvantaged communities' are those in Widening Access postcode areas. Postcode areas are determined as Widening Access areas if they fall in the bottom two quintiles of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The speech doesn't reference coalfields specifically in the data. The data refers to disadvantaged communities.

3. Provide the numbers of OU students from coalfields county areas

In 2017/18, The Open University in Wales had 544 new FTE students from Widening Access backgrounds. In 2018/19, this figure rose to 872. We do not hold the data for 2019/20 as this data has not yet been provided to us. Indications of the continued increase in the number of students from Widening Access areas was provided in the email to the Minister from the Open University.

The text of the email from the Open University to the Minister for Education on 3 March was:

*You'll remember we saw an increase of 46% in new students during the first year, and the second year has continued to be good for us:
Increase of 84% in new students since introducing the new system.
Doubled the number of students from widening access communities – almost half of all our students.*

Note: this is a translation from the original Welsh language email.

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Annex 1

I have decided to withhold the following information:

Information being withheld	Section number and exemption name
Open University applications, 2019/20	The information isn't held