

Proportionate universalism: Understanding Welsh higher education policy in a wider UK context

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Source: Ordnance Survey Open Data

Policy Context

- Large cross-border flows
- Heightened anxiety about funding position of Welsh universities, esp ability to recruit researchers
- School performance
- Welsh language provision

Constitutional/political context

- Welsh Assembly created in 1999 with fewer powers, including over student funding, than in Scotland or Northern Ireland.
- Full powers over student funding, inc fees, only from 2006, under Higher Education Act 2004.
- Labour in government alone or in coalition (Lib Dems or Plaid Cymru) continuously from 1999.

Independent reviews of student funding

- Rees Review (2001-02)
- Second Rees Review (2004-05)
- Jones Review – first phase (2008)
- Diamond Review (2014-16)

Progressive (or proportionate) universalism

“the principle of **progressive universalism** ... has been an important tenet of policy-making in Wales since devolution” (Diamond 2016, 5)

Recommendations are “**progressive** and, therefore, provide the greatest support to individuals who have the greatest need while maintaining **an element of universality** that reflects the shared investment citizens make in education as taxpayers” (Diamond 2016, 16)

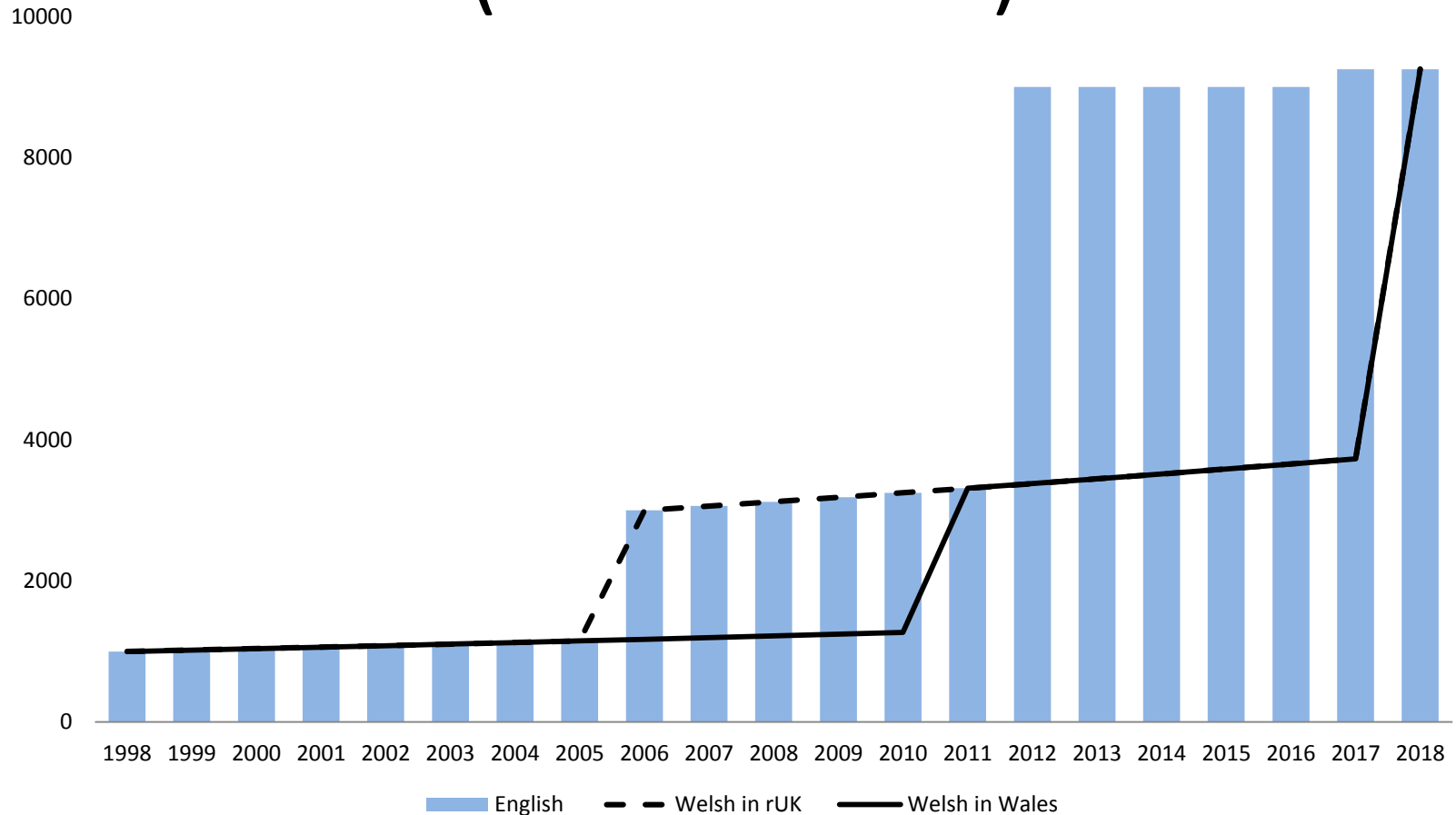
“a policy approach in which the benefits of universal services are retained, but where extra resources and policy attention is paid to those whose needs are greatest”

Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister (2006)

“universal services are preferred ... The *progressive* part of universalism comes in providing .. additional help for those who need it most”

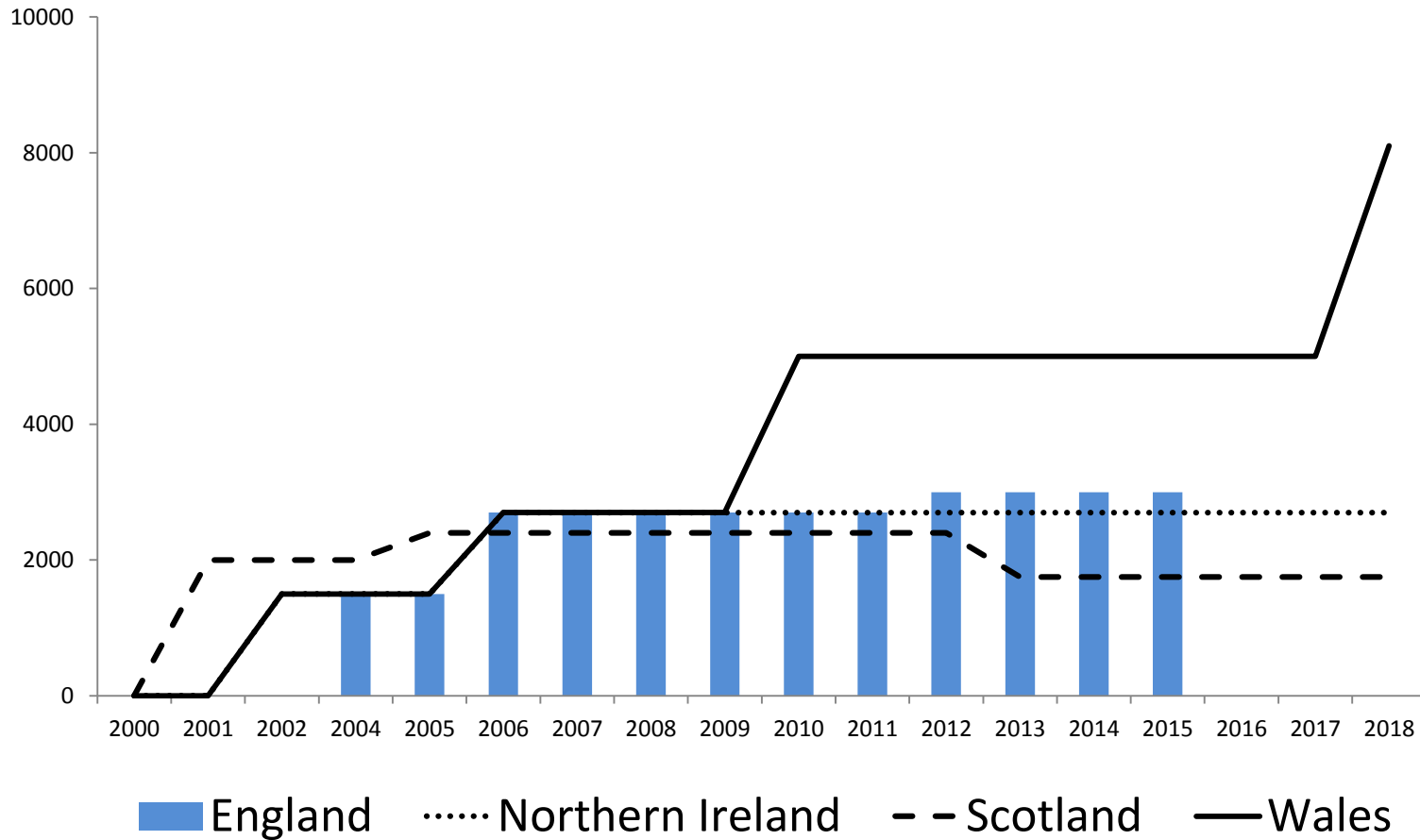
Mark Drakeford (2007)

Fee liabilities 1998 - 2018 (schematised)

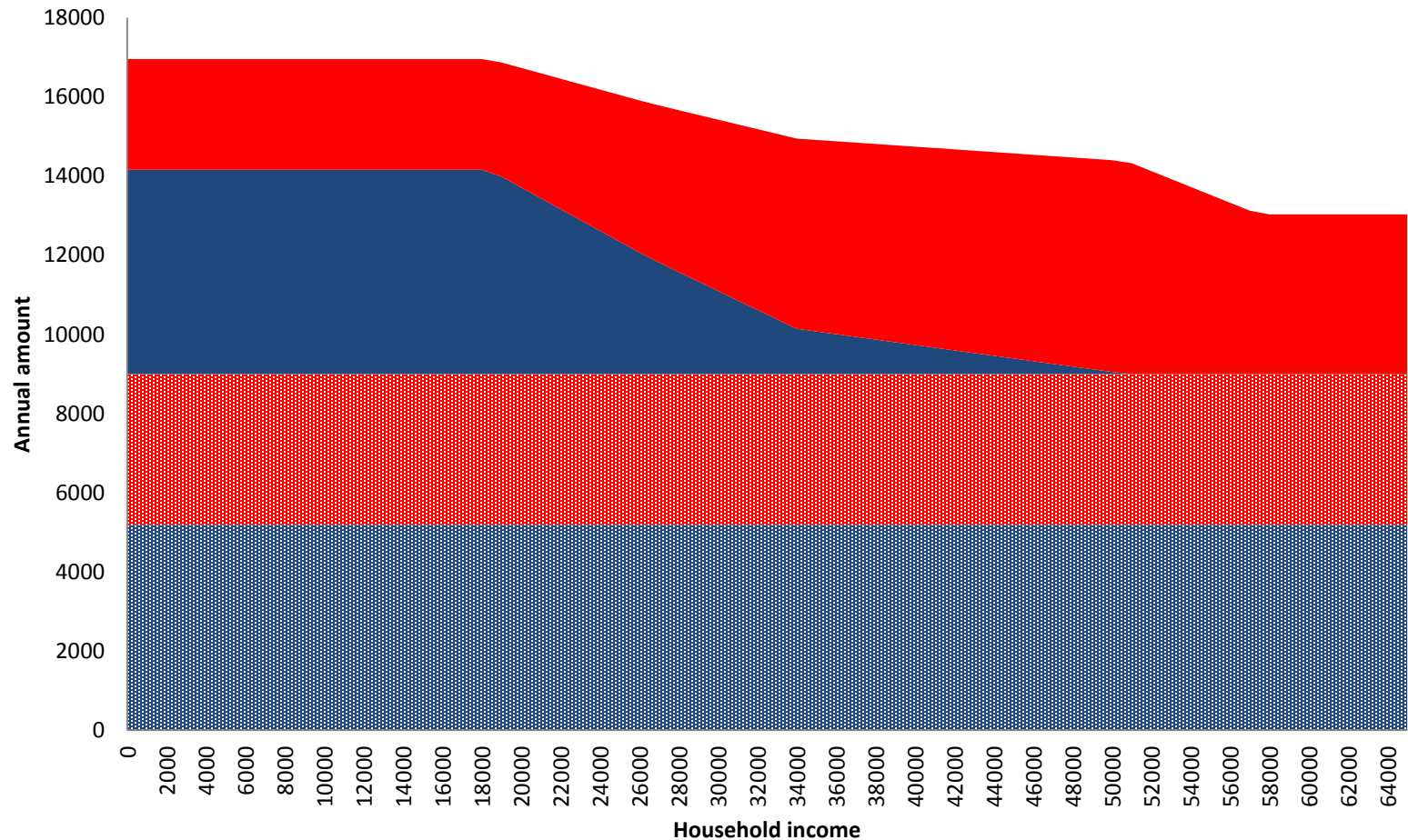


Fees for NI and Scottish students in rUK, and rUK students in NI and Scotland, as for English. NI in NI as for England until 2012 (then no change), Scots in Scotland £2000 graduate endowment deferred by loan 2001-07, thereafter nil. Fees means-tested 1998-2005. Loans for fees available in all UK nations from 2006.

Maximum grant (schematised)



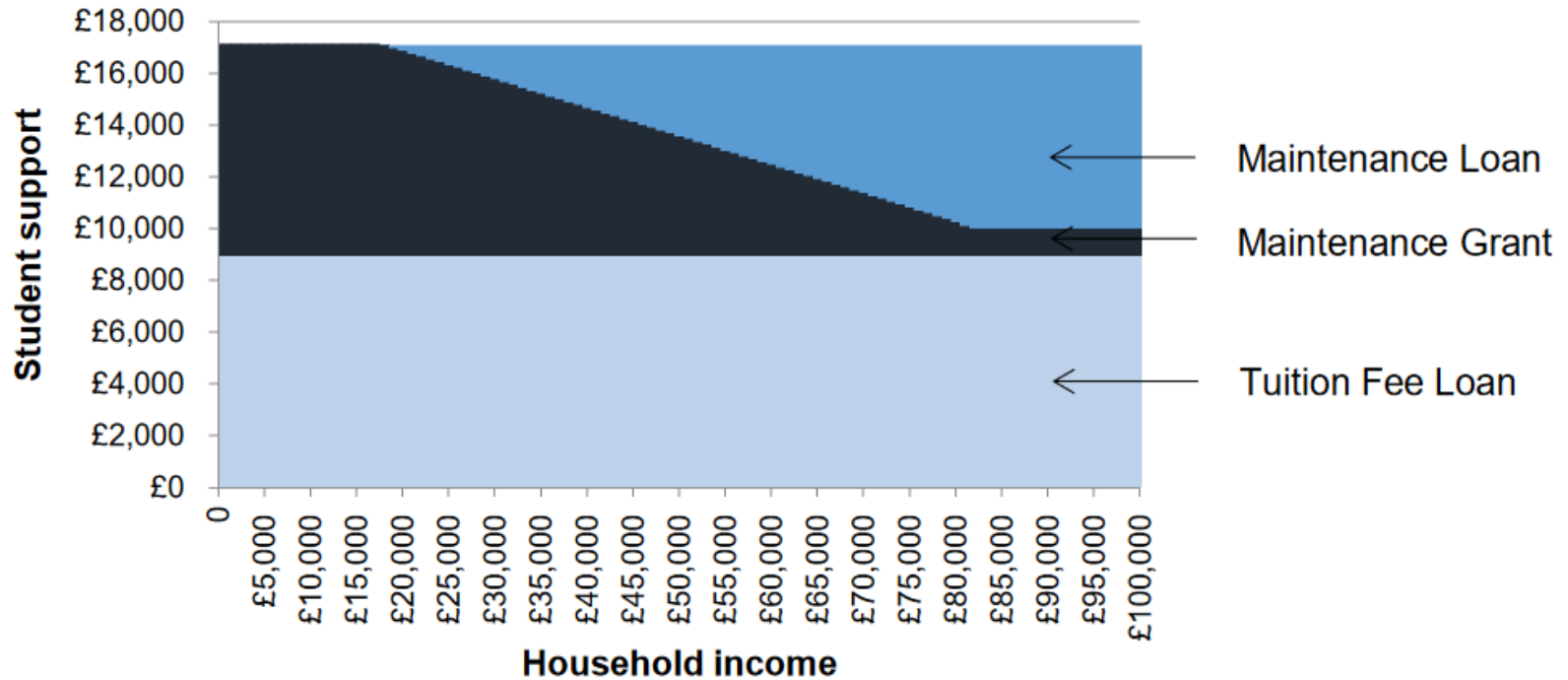
Welsh student support 2015-16



- Fee grant (assuming £9,000 fee)
- Fee loan
- Maintenance grant
- Maintenance loan

Diamond proposals from 2018

Figure 5: Recommended full-time student support*, by household income



* Maintenance support displayed is for a student living away from home, outside of London

Source: Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales Final Report (Diamond Review)

“came to the task with no preconceived ideas about what we would find or recommend”

Rees 2002

Its conclusions are “firmly rooted in our listening and learning”

Rees 2002

The proposals “provide value for money by targeting support to reduce the cost and debt associated with HE for those students and households who would benefit most at the time they would benefit most, i.e. support those in need when they most need it.”

Jones 2008

Members “were very much in agreement that ... full-time students entering higher education from the poorest households receive higher levels of maintenance support which they will not be required to repay”

Jones 2008

Summary

Wales – largest increase in targeted cash, decreasing universal cash (but some retained)

England – targeted cash increased, but then abolished; universal cash decreased, then abolished

Northern Ireland (but in NI only) – increase in targeted cash, less decrease in universal cash

Scotland (in Scotland only, but covers 95%+) – most cash universal, increase then decrease in targeted cash, increase universal cash

Conclusion

Wales is progressive, in absolute terms and relative to the rest of the UK, and getting more so

It has also been universal, but getting less so

But ... loans?