

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Consultation on the Postgraduate Taught Masters Incentivisation Bursaries 2019/20

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Reference: W19/24HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in
Wales
Response by: 09 August 2019
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This consultation seeks comments on HEFCW's proposals for the new bursary scheme to attract Welsh students to study Masters degrees in Wales in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine related subjects and/or to undertake a Masters through the medium of Welsh, starting in academic year (AY) 2019/20.

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Introduction

1. This consultation seeks comments on HEFCW's proposals for the new bursary scheme to attract Welsh students to study Masters degrees in Wales in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine related subjects and/or to undertake a Masters through the medium of Welsh, starting in academic year (AY) 2019/20. It outlines the background to HEFCW's proposals and poses a number of questions, the responses to which we will use to inform, develop and refine the final arrangements.

Background

2. The scheme was announced in the Welsh Government's press release [New bursaries for post-grads in Wales](#) on 26 June 2019. The scheme aims to increase the number of Welsh graduates who remain in or return to Wales to undertake a Masters degree in science, technology, engineering, mathematics or medicine, also known as 'STEMM' subjects. Additional funding will also be available to undertake a Masters degree through the medium of Welsh. Through this scheme, the Welsh Government is aiming to increase the proportion of Welsh Masters students studying in Wales to 80%. The additional bursary for Welsh medium postgraduates is important to the continued development of the Welsh-speaking workforce and will contribute to achieving the Welsh Government's target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
3. The Welsh Government has confirmed that it will make this funding available to HEFCW under section 68 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, and has confirmed that £1.3m of funds will be allocated in financial year (FY) 2019-20 for funding for August 2019 onwards. The scheme is intended to be run as a three-year pilot and our planning assumes further funding will be made available.
4. As HEFCW cannot fund students directly, the Welsh Government's request is for HEFCW to provide funding via Welsh higher education providers. The funding will be structured in such a way that HEFCW can provide the funding to providers for postgraduate Masters provision, with terms and conditions that require the funding to be used for providing bursaries for Masters students, both those studying on a full-time basis and those studying on a part-time basis.

Proposed method of allocating funding

5. HEFCW proposes to allocate funding for AY 2019/20 to providers in proportion to their AY 2019/20 estimated Masters numbers in the relevant STEMM subjects and those taking courses through the medium of Welsh. Estimated Masters numbers for AY 2019/20 will be based on the proportion of postgraduate taught (PGT) entrants that are Masters students, taken from the 2017/18 Higher Education Statistics Agency

(HESA) student record, and the number of forecast PGT entrants in AY 2019/20 taken from the student number forecasts provided to us by providers in July 2018.

6. Proportions studying STEM subjects and studying through the medium of Welsh, taken from the HESA 2017/18 student record, will be applied to the estimates. Those studying STEM subjects will be considered to be those whose Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) codes of their course subject are in HEFCW's academic subject categories (ASCs): 1 Medicine and Dentistry; 2 Subjects and professions allied to medicine; 3 Science; 4 Engineering and technology; and 6 Mathematical sciences, IT and computing. Those considered to be studying through the medium of Welsh will be those taking 40 credits or more through the medium of Welsh, studying any subject.
7. For the purposes of allocating funding, eligible students will be considered to be Welsh and EU domiciles, studying in Wales, that are not Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)/NHS funded, that are new entrant completions, studying full-time or part-time. Our modelling assumes that full-time students are studying for one year and part-time students for two years. Where a student takes a course that is joint between STEM and non-STEM subjects, we will assume the bursary is only paid for the proportion of the course that is STEM.
8. The data extracted to calculate the allocations will be provided to providers for verification. In the interests of being able to provide confirmation of this funding as soon as possible once the consultation concludes, the verification process will take place alongside this consultation.
9. Modelling is being undertaken on the basis of around £2k per STEM Masters and around £1k per Welsh medium Masters. However, the amount of total available funding and the number of students included in the calculation of the allocations will affect the actual figure allocated per student. It will be for the providers to assess individual students' eligibility for a bursary and award the bursaries to individual students at an appropriate rate.

Question 1: Do you have any issues with the proposed method of allocating funding to providers? If so, please outline your issues and provide alternative methods where appropriate.

Question 2: Are there any unintended consequences arising from the proposed method of allocation?

Question 3: Are there any practical issues, within providers, which would make this proposed method of allocation, and the expectation of provider distribution, problematic?

Question 4: Can you foresee any issues with this proposal and its interaction with other similar arrangements within providers?

Proposal for bursary funding from HEFCW in AY 2019/20

10. As outlined in paragraph 3, funding available for FY 2019-20 is £1.3m. So far, our modelling indicates:
 - A total of around £3.5m required for bursaries for new entrants in AY 2019/20;
 - This includes the full bursary for part-time students that will continue into AY 2020/21;
 - Excluding the payments that would be made in AY 2020/21 for continuing part-time students, we estimate that around £2.8m is required to fund bursaries in AY 2019/20;
 - £1.3m would come from the FY 2019-20 budget and £1.5m is assumed to come from the FY 2020-21 budget, which is yet to be announced;
 - In addition, for continuers into AY 2020/21, £0.7m is assumed to come from the FY 2020-21 budget.

11. We propose that the funding allocation from HEFCW will be made available for the provider to develop a distribution method within their provider, to award bursaries to Welsh and EU domiciled students undertaking a STEMM Masters course or a Masters course through the medium of Welsh starting in AY 2019/20, using the subject and Welsh medium criteria used to allocate the funding. In developing a distribution method, providers will have to be mindful of any relevant courses that they may franchise. Welsh Government has confirmed that the incentive bursaries can be awarded in addition to other bursaries offered.

12. Welsh Government has clarified that the eligible population will be the same as the current eligible population for loans set out in the [Postgraduate Master's Degree Loans Regulations 2017](#), amended in 2018 in the [Postgraduate Master's Degree Loans \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#). It will include some research programmes where that research leads to a Masters degree, but will not include, for example, PhDs, integrated Masters and PG Diplomas.

13. The Welsh Government's remit letter to HEFCW also makes reference to the need for HEFCW to work with Welsh Government officials to consider how the Minister might provide additional grant support for Welsh domiciled students aged 60 and over who want to study for a Masters degree during AY 2019/20. Our understanding is that this funding will be provided as a temporary measure for this AY only, bridging the period before this support is picked up via Student Loan Company arrangements for eligible students. Therefore, in relation to the proposals for the Masters bursaries presented here, we expect that, if all other eligibility criteria are met, the bursaries will be allocated to students regardless of age.

14. At the end of AY 2019/20, HEFCW will request a monitoring report to provide confirmation from each provider that all the funding has been spent in accordance with the terms and conditions upon which it was allocated, ie that the bursaries had been awarded according to the eligibility outlined above. Similar reports will be requested in subsequent years in which the scheme operates. We will also monitor recruitment to STEMM and Welsh medium Masters and may decide to adjust funding accordingly if recruitment is below that used to calculate the funding.

Question 5: Do you have any views on the eligibility criteria described in paragraphs 11 to 13, or the expectation that an internal distribution method will be developed by the provider to determine eligibility and award bursaries?

Question 6: This funding is intended to be in place for AY 2019/20. If funding is agreed for AY 2020/21 entrants, what are the critical dates for confirmation of the details of the funding that providers will need in order to have adequate time for marketing and implementing the arrangements?

Question 7: Are there any further issues with these proposals for the bursary scheme that you would like to bring to our attention?

Question 8: Do the proposals have any positive or negative impacts or unintended consequences in terms of equality and diversity and the [Well-being of Future Generation \(Wales\) Act's](#) seven well-being goals, Sustainable Development Principle and five ways of working?

Question 9: What positive or adverse effects will the proposals have on:

- opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and
- treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

Question 10: Could the proposals be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects on:

- opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and
- treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

Responses

15. Please return your comments by email to Gemma Stephens, Funding Manager (finance@hefcw.ac.uk) by **9 August 2019**. For ease of reference a summary of the questions posed are included at Annex A.

Further information

16. Our initial proposal has been shared with Welsh Government officials to ensure that it is in keeping with their plans for these bursaries, and the Minister has agreed that we should consult on our proposals.

Any queries should be directed to Gemma Stephens (029 2085 9642; finance@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

17. We have carried out an impact assessment to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality. We also considered the impact of policies on the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision within the HE sector in Wales and potential impacts towards the goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 including our Well-Being Objectives. Contact equality@hefcw.ac.uk for more information about impact assessments.

Summary of Questions

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