

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Postgraduate Taught Master's Incentivisation Bursary Scheme 2019/20

Date: 09 September 2019
Reference: W19/27HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in
Wales
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This circular provides details of HEFCW's Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Master's Incentivisation Bursary scheme which aims to attract Welsh students to study Master's degrees in Wales in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine related subjects and/or to undertake a Master's degree through the medium of Welsh, starting in academic year (AY) 2019/20.

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Introduction

1. The scheme was announced in the Welsh Government's press release [New bursaries for post-grads in Wales](#) on 26 June 2019. Its aim is to increase the number of Welsh graduates who remain in or return to Wales to undertake a Master's degree in science, technology, engineering, mathematics or medicine, also known as 'STEMM' subjects. The scheme aims to encourage the recruitment of Master's students in Wales in these subjects, where there is a high demand for postgraduate qualifications and which are instrumental in the growth of high-tech industries and the wider economy in Wales.
2. The scheme also makes available additional funding for students to undertake a Master's degree through the medium of Welsh. Through this scheme, the Welsh Government is aiming to increase the proportion of Welsh Master's students studying in Wales to 80%. The additional bursary for Welsh medium Master's students 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 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 we cannot fund students directly, the Welsh Government's request is for us to provide funding via Welsh higher education providers. The funding will be structured in such a way that we can provide the funding to providers for postgraduate taught Master's provision, with terms and conditions that require the funding to be used for providing bursaries for Welsh and EU domiciled Master's students, both those studying on a full-time basis and those studying on a part-time basis.
5. A separate scheme for Welsh domiciled students aged 60 and over who want to study for a Master's degree during AY 2019/20 has also been announced by Welsh Government. We will publish guidance on this separately.

Consultation and consideration of responses

6. In July 2019 we issued a consultation ([W19/24HE](#)) seeking comments on our proposals for the allocation of PGT Master's Incentivisation Bursaries. It outlined the background to our proposals and posed a number of questions, the responses to which we have used to inform the final arrangements. We are grateful to those who responded for engaging in the process.
7. Responders to the consultation put forward a number of suggestions for amendments to the scheme and these and other comments have been

summarised in Annex B. Where suggestions have not been implemented, we will keep these under review.

8. Responses to the questions were supportive of the scheme on the whole, but were concerned with the detail of implementation, with some recurring themes. For example, students studying for longer than the duration of study assumed in the allocation method. This is addressed in paragraph 15 below. A number of responders also suggested that the level of the Welsh medium bursary should be increased to the same level as the STEMM bursary. However, the Welsh Government's position is not to increase the Welsh medium bursary at this time. In this context, we would emphasise that the internal distribution method for the scheme is for providers to develop. We would therefore expect that some of the issues raised through the consultation would be dealt with in a way that is practical for the individual provider, rather than through us issuing detailed guidance which may not apply universally. Other issues raised have been dealt with through providing clarification in this document. Further details can be found in Annex B.

Method of funding allocation

9. We are making no changes to the funding allocation method as proposed in the consultation circular W19/24HE, paragraph 5 to 14. The data used in calculating the funding allocation have gone through a verification process, and verified figures have been used in the allocations to providers shown in Annex A.
10. Our allocation of funding is based on £2k per eligible STEMM Master's student and £1k per eligible Welsh medium Master's student.

Internal institutional allocation

11. Providers are expected to develop a distribution method to award bursaries to Welsh and EU domiciled students undertaking a STEMM Master's course, or a Master's 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 franchise. Welsh Government has confirmed that these incentivisation bursaries can be awarded in addition to other bursaries offered.
12. The Minister's intention is that the bursaries awarded to eligible students by providers under this scheme are in line with the amounts we have used in the allocation of funding set out in paragraph 10 above. A student can receive both the STEMM bursary and the Welsh medium bursary if they are studying a STEMM subject through the medium of Welsh. As assumed in the allocation method, we would expect a student studying a mixture of STEMM

and other subjects to receive an appropriate proportion of the STEMM bursary.

13. It will be for providers to assess individual students' eligibility. The bursaries should be allocated to postgraduate taught Master's students that fit the eligibility criteria as defined in [The Education \(Student Support\) \(Postgraduate Master's Degrees\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2019](#), except that awards should be made regardless of age. An assessment of whether the course the student is studying on is a STEMM course should be made on the basis of the academic subject category (ASC) of the course. A STEMM course would be considered to be a course with a subject of study in ASCs 1, 2, 3, 4 or 6 (Medicine and dentistry, Subjects and professions allied to medicine, Science, Engineering and technology and Mathematical sciences, IT and computing). From 2019/20 the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) coding system is used to categorise subject of study and a mapping from HECoS to ASC is available on the [HEFCW website](#). The Welsh medium bursary should be allocated to those studying 40 credits or more of their course through the medium of Welsh.
14. Institutions should use the bursaries to encourage under-represented groups to study STEMM subjects and/or study through the medium of Welsh, for example, through initiatives such as the WISE [Women in STEM Networks](#).
15. We have allocated funding based on the assumption that full-time students receive the funding in one year and part-time students over two years. However, this will not always reflect actual patterns of study. Therefore, whilst this is the basis of allocation, providers should spread the bursary over the duration of study as they deem appropriate.
16. Given that most, if not all, institutions already operate bursary schemes, we do not consider it necessary to allocate any of this funding for administrative costs for this scheme.

Monitoring and Clawback

17. 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.
18. We will clawback funding if necessary on the basis of the actual number of completed Master's in STEMM subjects and those completing Master's through the medium of Welsh. We will take these numbers from the HESA student record, checked against the verified estimates used in the allocation of funding. Using the allocation per student of £2k for STEMM subjects and £1k for Welsh medium, if the institution fails to deliver the estimated numbers against which the allocation was provided, we would reclaim this amount per

student multiplied by the number shortfall. If the clawback results in funding being available we will add this to future years' funding.

19. Any data that we use to allocate funding is included in the scope of our external audit of higher education data. The systems and processes used to collate data are also included in the scope of providers' internal audits of data systems and processes. Included in this would be a check for reasonableness of the criteria used to assess students' eligibility for a bursary. More information can be found in HEFCW circular [W18/33HE](#) Audit of Higher Education Data 2018/19 to 2021/22.

Timetable

20. The detail of the proposed allocations for each provider is included at Annex A. We cannot make any firm financial commitment, or payments, until formal confirmation of the funding has been received from the Welsh Government. However, we intend to pay the allocation based on full-time student numbers in two equal parts, one in September 2019 and one in April 2020. The allocation relating to the part-time student numbers will be paid in four equal instalments; September 2019, April 2020, August 2020 and April 2021. Should we have to amend this profile, we will inform you as soon as practically possible.
21. As outlined in paragraph 3, this scheme is intended to be a three year pilot. We are mindful that providers would like confirmation of the availability of funding for the scheme for 2020/21 starters in a timely manner and we will confirm details as soon as we can.

Further information

22. For further information, contact Gemma Stephens (029 2085 9642; finance@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

23. 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.
24. A similar responsibility rests on higher education providers to assess the impact of their method for allocation of the bursaries, to safeguard against discrimination and promote equality.

PGT Master's incentivisation bursaries allocation for 2019/20 entrants

Provider	Allocation paid in: £								
	AY 2019/20				AY 2020/21		Total		
	Full-time		Part-time		Part-time				
	STEMM	Welsh medium	STEMM	Welsh medium	STEMM	Welsh medium	STEMM	Welsh medium	Total
University of South Wales	421,339	2,000	287,418	500	287,418	500	996,175	3,000	999,175
Aberystwyth University	68,000	7,000	2,069	0	2,069	0	72,138	7,000	79,138
Bangor University	211,410	26,000	42,909	500	42,909	500	297,228	27,000	324,228
Cardiff University	402,376	3,000	82,383	500	82,383	500	567,142	4,000	571,142
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	6,240	0	32,694	1,500	32,694	1,500	71,627	3,000	74,627
Swansea University	609,396	23,000	73,470	500	73,470	500	756,336	24,000	780,336
Cardiff Metropolitan University	333,409	0	30,510	0	30,510	0	394,429	0	394,429
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	84,348	0	19,968	0	19,968	0	124,284	0	124,284
Open University in Wales	0	0	34,580	0	34,580	0	69,160	0	69,160
Total	2,136,518	61,000	606,001	3,500	606,001	3,500	3,348,519	68,000	3,416,519

Note: STEMM = Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine

Summary of responses to consultation

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.

Issues relating to out of date data being used in calculating the funding allocation were mentioned by several responders. The data have gone through a verification process and each HEI has verified its figures. As part of this process, providers were able to update any figures they felt did not accurately reflect their recruitment for 2019/20 and these verified figures were used to calculate the funding allocation.

Concerns regarding the part-time student funding being calculated on a two-year basis were raised. The two-year calculation is used for allocation purposes only and may not reflect actual patterns of study. We expect that providers will spread the bursary over the duration of study as they deem appropriate, as noted in paragraph 15 of the circular.

Providers were concerned about the consistency of the level of bursary across all providers. Paragraph 10 confirms the Minister's intention that bursaries are awarded in line with the amounts used in the allocation of funding.

Concerns were also raised about the lateness of the implementation of this scheme. We will confirm details as soon as we can for AY 2020/21.

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

There were concerns raised regarding the financial shortfall if there are more eligible students than those included in the funding allocation. The data have gone through a process where each provider has verified the figures to be used in the funding allocation. If there is a shortfall it is for the provider to determine how this will be managed and paragraphs 11-16 provide guidance on internal distribution.

Potential issues relating to Brexit and the funding of EU students were also raised. Given the uncertainty around this, we have not provided any guidance, but expect that any changes to the scheme relating to this issue for future years will be as a consequence of further guidance issued by Welsh Government.

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

Providers noted that the late notice of the scheme means there are difficulties in implementing and using the scheme as an incentive in AY 2019/20. Providers

consider that if the scheme is confirmed sooner in future years there will be a positive impact.

A number of issues were raised regarding the detail of implementing the scheme within the provider. The development of an internal distribution method is the responsibility of the provider and so we would expect the provider to deal with these issues through their own distribution method. Paragraphs 11-16 give some guidance. The issues raised included the following:

- There will be difficulty in providing the bursary to students studying through the medium of Welsh because in a number of instances students have the ability to increase or decrease the amount they are taught through the medium of Welsh throughout the year.
- Depending on expectation as to when the bursary is paid to the students, this could increase the risk of bad debts for the providers.
- Any requirement to assess individual students as to their eligibility will be an extra cost to institutions not budgeted for at this late stage.
- How and when the provider distribution will take place will depend on when they are likely to receive the money from HEFCW.
- Whilst recruitment, retention and progression are cited within the document as some of the drivers behind this proposal, widening access (in accordance with HEFCW's own priorities) should be an area of equal focus.
- Identifying students studying 40 credits through the medium of Welsh is currently not fully confirmed until year-end as this can depend on student choice: study routes, language of submission of assessment. Providers should be able to use part of their allocation to fund the additional administrative burden arising from this scheme: this relates to communication, assessment of eligible students, and processing of the payment.
- It is vital that Design is a discipline supported by this initiative, as it will underpin industrial advances, eg electric vehicles, 3D printing, etc. There is a potential problem with allocations being based on ASC classifications.
- HEFCW should confirm how providers should apportion the bursary based on joint Master's where part of the course is not eligible, ie use of JACs or modules, with JACs being favoured.
- Internal administration of the scheme is burdensome – experience with the Welsh Government PGT Interim Support has revealed this.
- The HEFCW document states that modelling is being undertaken on the basis of around £2k per STEMM Master's and around £1k per Welsh medium Master's. 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 is very difficult to predict the number of enrolments that an institution could expect – it is not clear how many students will join until late in October each year. This will make the scheme very difficult to market, as it will be difficult to give certainty to applicants regarding the level of bursary that will be available to them. The new scheme raises several practical questions, for example will the bursary be dispensed as a payment to students or can it be used to offset tuition fees? What payment schedule should be adopted by institutions? What are

the provisions for students who transfer between STEMM/non STEMM after receiving the bursary or fail to complete their studies?

We have sought to clarify these issues, where appropriate and possible, in the wording of the circular.

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

One respondent raised a concern that consideration would need to be given with regards to managing students who withdraw from their studies. Paying cash bursaries in instalments would yield further administrative burden.

A provider noted that it can sometimes be confusing for students to differentiate between the various institutional scholarships and bursaries and other sector stakeholders' offerings. The proposed PGT bursaries provide a unique opportunity for students and institutions in Wales and as such the manner in which they are communicated to prospective students should be done clearly and in a manner which does not conflate and confuse them with existing opportunities, such as internalised awards and the bursaries that Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol currently offer.

We recommend that the internal distribution methods developed by providers make clear what this bursary is and why it is being awarded. It is also the responsibility of the provider to ensure that withdrawals are dealt with appropriately under their method for the scheme. Paragraphs 11-16 provide some guidance.

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?

Positive feedback was received regarding additional funding being made available for students aged 60 and over who want to study for a Master's degree during 2019/20.

Further responses raised issues about the provision of administrative costs for the scheme and the practicalities of administering the scheme. These included:

- Processing a fee waiver would be the most administratively efficient means of handling this. Payment of cash bursaries to students requires manual collection of bank account details and manual requisition/payment processes in order to action.
- The suggestion that the eligibility criteria is the same as that used for student loans is pragmatic, but an administratively burdensome system to assess the eligibility of those students who do not want to take up the loan should be avoided. From a University perspective, it would be easier to limit

eligibility only to those who are willing to apply to the SLC and have their domicile eligibility established through that means.

- In cases where an institution has more students that forecast can they allocate them on a 'first-come, first-served' basis?
- Is there an expectation that all STEM PGT students will receive the same amount of bursary or can the institutions award different bursaries based on where they believe it will incentivise more students to enrol?
- Clarification on whether a STEM student studying through the medium of Welsh would be eligible for both bursaries.

We have confirmed in paragraph 16 that we will not be allocate funding for administrative costs for this scheme given that most, if not all, institutions already operate bursary schemes.

A number of further suggestions were made which will be kept under review. These include:

- The scheme should be extended to include HEIW-funded students – these could still be viewed as a population to be targeted for retention within Wales. It was noted that HEIW-funded students are particularly aggrieved at being excluded from these sort of schemes– they are often more likely to be students with family/caring responsibilities where the additional financial support would be helpful.
- The bursary should be available for any student who has graduated from an undergraduate programme in Wales and is now continuing to Master's level.

Other comments have been dealt with by providing clarification in this circular. These include:

- The small number of MSc students undertaking a two-year course full-time who would appreciate clarification that they would be eligible for funding for at least one year of their course.
- Before providers can set up any distribution system they would need to know how much money they will receive, a clear expectation on how it will be allocated to individual students (e.g. same amount to all students, a set amount that will not change, as described in other responses), and a clear definition of eligibility (if the SLC rules with exceptions (e.g. for over 60s), the actual rules they apply).

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?

Responders varied in their critical dates between September 2019 and January 2020. We will confirm details of the scheme for 2020/21 as soon as we can.

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

One responder noted that the scheme is being considered as having a positive impact, but due to the timing this will be realised more for AY 2020/21. Outcomes of the pilot should therefore be assessed on 2020/21 data.

Other issues raised in response to this question have been covered in the above questions and in clarifications in this circular. These issues included:

- Processes will need to be introduced to administer the scheme, experience from the PGT Interim Bursary in 2018/19 will help in doing this as quickly as possible
- As it is a three-year pilot and part time study is allowed, there will need to be a provision for carry-over into a fourth AY.
- Clarification is required as to whether a student would be eligible for both the bursary for STEMM and the Welsh medium bursary or whether they can only receive one.
- If the scheme is to persist beyond 2019/20, consideration needs to be given to potential unintended consequences arising from the move from JACS to HECOS and/or any changes to HEFCW funding categories to ensure fairness in the designation of STEMM courses.

Other issues raised that we will keep under review included:

- The opportunity for student partnership within the monitoring of the proposals. For example, SU's having the option to contribute to the monitoring report due at the end of AY 2019/20. This would offer an opportunity for additional, independent perspective on the impact and effectiveness of the proposal.
- The potential to include greater flexibility in terms of the definition of Welsh domiciled students. Students schooled in Wales may well take on employment outside of Wales after completing an initial degree, before later deciding to undertake a postgraduate course. They may no longer be eligible for the scheme on grounds of domicile. Is there any potential to broaden the eligibility in order to attract Welsh nationals back for a Master's education?

A responder raised a concern about the level of funding being provided by Welsh Government. They noted that the current proposal suggests that the Welsh Government has allocated only £1.3m for the three-year pilot so far and that £2.2m will come from the 2020/21 budget. If the Welsh Government does not give any additional funding for 2020/21 will this reduce the funding institutions receive? If so this scheme will reduce the income the universities receive and in the current proposed form, where institutions administer it, increase the costs to the University. We note this concern but can confirm that we are planning on the basis of future funding being available.

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?

All responders saw the scheme as having a positive impact.

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?**

All responders saw this as a positive impact with few adverse implications.

Positive effects noted include:

- The 40 credit threshold is beneficial, in that it offers an opportunity for non-fluent speakers and learners to access the fund and incentivises their use of the language.
- It will encourage more students to use the Welsh language at HE level, and ensure that there is a clear progression route throughout the education system, from studying through the medium of Welsh at school, and throughout their HE journey from undergraduate to postgraduate.
- It will meet student requirements, and meet demands from employers seeking confident Welsh speakers.
- Opportunities for students to study Post-graduate taught Master's courses through the medium of Welsh will potentially increase the pool of future academics who can teach through the medium of Welsh.
- Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol no longer offer scholarships through the medium of Welsh for postgraduate Master's taught degrees, therefore the proposals would bridge this gap between Welsh scholarships offered at undergraduate level, and PhD level.

One adverse effect was noted:

- A risk for institutions that offer a particular subject at undergraduate level through the medium of Welsh but not at postgraduate level may see the recruitment to their Welsh medium undergraduate provision fall. With this bursary, students may instead apply to institutions where they can progress through the subject in the medium in Welsh. This could have direct implications for the Welsh Medium undergraduate targets and provision at the other institutions.

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?**

Most responders had no proposed changes. However, the following suggestions were made for the scheme, which we will keep under review in discussion with the Welsh Government:

- Increase the Welsh medium bursary to the same level as STEMM; increase to £3k as issued in previous years by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol; have a stepped approach for those completing a Master's wholly through medium of Welsh.
- It was also proposed that the number of credits be reduced from 40 to 30. Many modules are worth 15 credits this would increase the number of eligible applicants as they would need to take two modules through the medium of Welsh, rather than three.
- A further suggestion included the consideration of subjects vocational in nature to prepare students to utilise Welsh language skills confidently within the work place.
- A suggestion was also made that there is a case that all bursaries should only be made available for STEMM based Master's programmes, even those that are taught through the medium of Welsh.