

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Degree Apprenticeships in Wales and Proposals for Funding 2020/21

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Reference: W20/05HE
To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Other interested parties
Response by: 27 April 2020
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This circular invites HEFCW-funded institutions to submit proposals for funding for Degree Apprenticeships in 2020/21. The call for bids covers the three priority areas of Digital (on the Digital Degree Apprenticeship (Wales) Framework), and (the Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (Wales) Framework).

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Introduction

1. This circular invites HEFCW-funded institutions to submit proposals for funding for Degree Apprenticeships in 2020/21.
2. The call for bids applies to new apprentices on the [Digital Degree Apprenticeship \(Wales\)](#) issued on 29 April 2018, and the [Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship \(Wales\)](#) issued on 1 August 2019.

Background

3. In February 2017, Welsh Government (WG) published its Apprenticeship Skills policy plan, [Aligning the Apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh economy](#). WG set itself a target of 100,000 apprenticeship starts during the current assembly term, as well as setting out a commitment to developing Degree Apprenticeships. The Cabinet Secretary for Education has confirmed in a [letter](#) to HEFCW her expectations for Degree Apprenticeships in Wales and a commitment to allocate £20m for funding of degree apprenticeships over a 3 year period from 2018/19 to 2020/21. HEFCW has also received assurance from Welsh Government that it will support apprentices in future years until they complete their apprenticeship. Initial priority areas for Degree Apprenticeships were confirmed as IT/ Computing, Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing.
4. Degree Apprenticeships in Wales include a bachelor's degree qualification as part of the requirement of an apprenticeship framework and provide opportunities:
 - for individuals in Wales to complete a programme of learning and training resulting in them gaining an apprenticeship and degree level qualification demonstrating the relevant knowledge and competency that employers in Wales recognise and value;
 - to strengthen pathways from higher level apprenticeships into degree level qualifications;
 - to further meet the skill needs of Wales and improve productivity through the skilling and upskilling of new and existing employees in Wales;
 - to break low skills trap, where a low supply of skills is combined with a low demand for skills;
 - to improve the diversity of the workforce in ICT/Digital and engineering/advanced manufacturing sectors in Wales;
 - to increase collaboration across education sectors in Wales and reduce nugatory competition.
5. The requirements for an apprenticeship in Wales are set out in sector specific 'apprenticeship frameworks' as determined by the [Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales](#) (SASW). Frameworks in Wales

are currently ¹issued by sector skill councils and are underpinned by National Occupational Standards (NOS), as they are in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Frameworks set out the qualifications and training required in order for an apprenticeship certificate to be awarded. Qualifications are key components of apprenticeship frameworks and a framework must consist of an occupational competency qualification, a technical knowledge qualification, and at least two [Essential Skills Wales qualifications](#). An ESW qualification is not a requirement of the Degree Apprenticeship pilot, but HEFCW expects assurance that apprentices' learning is being supported. This means that apprentices will only be awarded a qualification from their Higher Education provider, and not an apprenticeship certificate.

6. [Regional Skills Partnerships](#) (RSPs), labour market information and sector reviews by Qualifications Wales inform Welsh Government about where apprenticeship funding should be targeted. The Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB), informed by the Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board (WAAB), considers apprenticeship developments as part of its remit and advises on framework development.
7. Welsh Government has commissioned Degree Apprenticeship frameworks in digital and engineering/advanced manufacturing. The [Digital Degree Apprenticeship \(Wales\) Framework](#) issued by the Sector Skills Council Instructus, was published on 29 April 2018, and the [Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing \(Wales\) Framework](#) issued by the Sector Skills Council Senta, was published on 1 August 2019.
8. Welsh Government has confirmed support to HEFCW for degree apprenticeships at Level 6 in priority areas of ICT/computing, engineering and advanced manufacturing. Funding from 2018/19 to 2020/21 will be up to £20m and allocated to degree apprenticeship providers via HEFCW, up to £27k per apprenticeship pro-rata over the duration of the qualification.
9. The QAA has published a document on [Quality Assuring Higher Education in Apprenticeships: Current Approaches](#), and is keeping this under review. In July 2019, the QAA also published a [Characteristics Statement, Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#). Those wishing to apply to offer Degree Apprenticeships should ensure they take account of QAA guidance in their Degree Apprenticeship programme.
10. The Welsh Government's [Inclusive Apprenticeships, Disability Action Plan for Apprenticeships 2018-19](#) offers guidance on developing an inclusive approach to disability. Those wishing to apply to offer Degree Apprenticeships should ensure that they take account of this within their institutions Degree Apprenticeship programme.

¹ Responses to the Welsh Government consultation on [the role of issuing authority for apprenticeship frameworks](#), 29 March 2019, is currently under review.

Degree Apprenticeship numbers for 2020/21

11. Circular [W18/29HE Degree Apprenticeships 2019/20: Consultation on the Funding Methodology and Request for Expressions of Interest](#) invited HEFCW-funded institutions to express their views on the allocation of funding in the event that demand exceeded available funding, together with providing indicative numbers. A summary of responses to the consultation can be found on our [website](#).

Degree Apprenticeship priorities for 2020/21

12. HEFCW held a workshop in January 2019 to support institutions in submitting high quality bids for 2019/20 and to consider the funding methodology. We expect institutions to use information from this workshop in preparing their bids.
13. HEFCW's priorities for Degree Apprenticeships are that:
 - Degree Apprenticeship providers comply with relevant legislation and regulatory documents published by Welsh Government;
 - There is collaboration across the HE and work-based learning sectors to best meet the needs of employers and to avoid nugatory competition;
 - Individuals from groups under-represented in HE, apprentices and the occupations that degree apprenticeships are aimed at are supported to undertake Degree Apprenticeships.

Call for proposals

14. The call for proposals will provide opportunities for funding of the requirements of one or more of the pathways identified on the [Digital Degree Apprenticeship \(Wales\) framework](#), issued on 29 April 2018. Funding will not be confirmed until HEFCW funded institutions submitting proposals have successfully had their qualifications accepted on to the framework.
15. Proposals will also be invited for funding requirements of one or more of the pathways identified on the [Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing \(Wales\) Framework](#) issued on 1 August 2019. Funding will not be confirmed until HEFCW-funded institutions submitting proposals have successfully had their qualifications accepted on to the framework.
16. Further Education Institutions (FEI) and/or employers can partner with more than one Higher Education Institution (HEI), for the same provision. Bids will need to state clearly, whether or not each partner has applied for the same provision in more than one submission to avoid double counting within the allocation of apprenticeship numbers. Where an FEI/employer

is engaged with more than one bid for the same provision, HEFCW will determine the bid to which the numbers will be allocated. This means that where an FEI/employer is partnering with more than one regulated institution for the same provision, the numbers allocated to the HEFCW-funded institution may vary from the application.

17. Applicants are expected to apply for provision to be delivered on a regional basis with partners and employers. Applicants that submit proposals to work outside their region will need to make a very clear case to support this. That case will need support from the employer, together with evidence that the providers in the region were unable to meet the employer and apprentice needs. Any approval will be on an exceptional basis.
18. HEFCW-funded institutions can recruit apprentices internally from their own staff. We expect this to be a minority of applications, which must be supported by a clear case for each individual, demonstrating that the recruitment is based on genuine need.
19. Bids for apprentice numbers must include applications for the allocation of realistic numbers. HEFCW-funded institutions must be in a position to deliver, should bids be accepted.
20. HEFCW-funded institutions are invited to submit proposals for the funding of Degree Apprenticeships by 27 April 2020. The template is set out at **Annex A**. The proposals will require providers to set out the following information:
 - Institution name;
 - Framework and pathway being delivered;
 - Name of Qualification being delivered as part of the framework;
 - Duration of the apprenticeship (to be no longer than 5 years);
 - Confirmation of course validation, and details of timescale if not already validated;
 - Confirmation of acceptance onto the framework, or details of timescale if not yet already approved;
 - Delivery partners;
 - Evidence to support collaboration with partners outside of region (as an annex to the submission);
 - Details of delivery method, including reference to how it meets the needs of employer(s);
 - Identification of multiple bids by participating employers for the same provision with collaborative partners;
 - Details of how the provision will enable delivery through the medium of Welsh;
 - Arrangements for the recognition of prior learning;
 - Identified progression pathways onto and through the apprenticeship;
 - Number of new starts 2019/20 by employer, including their entry point onto the apprenticeship;

- A clear case to support internal recruitment of staff from providers of Higher Education onto apprenticeships (as an annex to the submission);
- Details outlining the institutions approach to widening access in apprenticeship provision;
- Details of how equality and diversity is supported through apprenticeships, and confirmation that an equality impact assessment has been conducted in relation to its development (a copy of the Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment must be submitted as an annex to the proposal);
- Confirmation of names of employers that wish to deliver apprenticeship provision and a breakdown of the number of existing employees to receive this provision and the number of new staff to be recruited onto an apprenticeship;
- Funding being claimed per apprentice, which will be paid pro-rata over the length of the apprenticeship;
- Sign off from:
 - the head of the HEFCW-funded provider;
 - the head of the delivery partner(s) where relevant.

Proposals for funding

21. All proposals submitted by HEFCW-funded institutions will need to be supported with evidence of how the provider will deliver against a set of criteria, addressing the following:
- Measures in place to ensure that there is a diverse mix of individuals recruited to Degree Apprenticeships. We expect explicit reference to under-represented groups in higher education, apprenticeships, and the digital and engineering/advanced manufacturing sectors in Wales, as well as those groups with protected characteristics, principally gender and/ or disability. References should be made to the equality impact assessment and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act goals where appropriate;
 - Arrangements in place for delivery through the medium of Welsh;
 - Confirmation of the period over which the provision will be delivered, to be no more than 5 years;
 - Information on how the apprenticeship bids align with the mission and expertise of the institution applying for funding;
 - Information on how SMEs will be supported to deliver Degree Apprenticeships;
 - Information on how the needs of the employer and apprentice are met within the apprenticeship programme;
 - Confirmation of how the delivery of the provision would provide additionality to the apprenticeship offer in Wales;
 - A summary of the collaboration with further education and Work Based Learning (WBL) providers and employers to support delivery of higher-level apprenticeships at levels 4 and 5, and strengthen progression pathways into the Degree Apprenticeships.

22. Submission of a proposal will be taken as agreement that the provision will meet the following requirements should numbers be allocated:
- All apprentices are employed in a job role that allows them to fulfil the requirements of the framework identified for delivery, and their salaries will be met by the employer;
 - Apprentices will spend 51% or more of their time working in Wales;
 - An apprenticeship agreement is in place;
 - An initial assessment is undertaken with the apprentice;
 - Previous experience and learning will be recognised where appropriate;
 - Apprentices additional learning support requirements will be identified and supported;
 - Apprentices will receive on and off the job learning;
 - Apprentices will have their progress reviewed at least every two months. Reviews must involve the HEFCW-funded institution, the apprentice and the employer;
 - Apprentices will have access to the full range of student services offered by the provider;
 - Data will be submitted as required by HEFCW;
 - Apprentices can have equivalent level qualifications to those included on the apprenticeship framework as identified on the [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales \(CQFW\)](#), but not in the same pathway;
 - Degree apprenticeship marketing and communications will align with Welsh Government marketing and communications;
 - Student and learner protection measures as set out by HEFCW for regulated institutions will be applied in the standard way to the treatment of apprentices;
 - An apprentice can exit the qualification with accreditation/certification of learning achieved. This will not constitute successful achievement of a full apprenticeship.
23. Sign up to these requirements will provide assurances to HEFCW that there is close alignment to the broader apprenticeship programme in Wales that meets the relevant legislative requirements. HEFCW will expect providers to document evidence that they are meeting these requirements, and reserves the right to audit that information.
24. There will be an expectation that Degree Apprenticeship providers will participate in:
- Welsh Government marketing activities and national campaigns. In circular W18/13HE HEFCW requested that each successful bidder nominate an individual to work with HEFCW and Welsh Government in this area. Separately HEFCW will be arranging workshops and meetings with Welsh Government and those contacts to discuss this further;
 - Skill competitions such as [World Skills](#). These competitions provide apprentices with additional experiences and challenges that will serve them well in their careers. Additionally they provide

opportunities to demonstrate the strength of Wales's performance in national and international competitions. Further information is available from the Pan Wales Coordinator, Paul Evans (Paul2.Evans@colegsirgar.ac.uk), or Claire George, Inspire Skills Excellence Champion for IT & Enterprise (cgeorge@bridgend.ac.uk).

25. Proposals will be considered by a panel. This will be chaired by a HEFCW Council member and will include membership from the Welsh Government and HEFCW officers. The outcomes of the process will be communicated to providers within three weeks of their submission. HEFCW reserves the right to require further information to support the proposals.
26. HEFCW received a [letter](#) of confirmation from the Cabinet Secretary that it will receive support from Welsh Government to fund degree apprenticeships in Wales. Funding for degree apprenticeships from 2018/19 to 2020/21 will be £20m. This funding allocation will cover all full-time equivalent (FTE) apprenticeships during the current assembly term, and HEFCW has received assurance from the Welsh Government that it will help support apprentices in future years until they complete their apprenticeship. The total allocation for funding degree apprenticeships for 2020/21 is £12m as confirmed in HEFCW's [Remit Letter](#).
27. The maximum sum that can be allocated for the delivery of the requirements for each apprentice is £27k over the duration of the apprenticeship. Funding will be allocated annually on a pro-rata basis in line with the length of the apprenticeship as indicated by the institution in their submission, e.g. £6,750 a year will be allocated for a 4 year apprenticeship.
28. Funding might be adjusted downwards based on modules not completed, withdrawals or if the total number of credits for the course is less than 360 credits due to recognition of prior learning (RPL). Adjustments of funding for RPL or apprentice withdrawals, will be calculated using 2019/20 HESA data, and recovered in May 2022.
29. The funding arrangements are as follows:
 - Total funding available is £12m for new and continuing apprenticeships delivered in 2020/21;
 - Funding will cover Degree Apprenticeships in the priority areas of Digital, Engineering, and Advanced Manufacturing;
 - The maximum sum that can be allocated for the delivery of the requirements for each apprentice is £27k over the duration of the apprenticeship;
 - Funding will be allocated annually on a pro-rata basis in line with the length of the apprenticeship as indicated by the institution in their submission, e.g. £6,750 a year will be allocated for a 4 year apprenticeship;

- Funding might be adjusted downwards based on modules not completed or withdrawals;
- Funding cannot be claimed for the recognition of prior learning and/or associated costs of this process;
- Funding for the recognition of prior learning might be adjusted downwards;
- Funding will not be confirmed until the HEFCW-funded institution submitting the proposal has successfully had their qualifications accepted on to the Digital Degree Apprenticeship (Wales) Framework, and the Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship (Wales) Framework;
- Proposals for funding on each framework will be treated separately, and funding confirmed when qualifications have successfully been accepted onto either framework.

Quality Assurance

30. It is imperative that apprenticeships in Wales are of a high quality. Only providers funded by HEFCW can be funded for the delivery of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales.
31. In line with HEFCW's statutory duties for quality, all HEFCW-funded providers are required to commission an external quality assurance review of their higher education at least every 6 years. This review will provide assurances to HEFCW that the providers responsible for the delivery of Degree Apprenticeships have the appropriate systems and processes in place to do so. The external quality assurance review will also provide assurances that the academic standards of the qualifications awarded as part of a Degree Apprenticeship are being maintained in line with European Standards and Guidelines. This process will also provide further assurances that university qualifications included on higher-level apprenticeship frameworks are being maintained within European Standards and Guidelines. HEFCW-funded institutions have chosen to do this through the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).
32. HEFCW will only fund the delivery of Degree Apprenticeships that meet the requirements of Degree Apprenticeship frameworks in Wales. Frameworks will have been developed with employers and qualifications included on those frameworks will have gone through a process to ensure that they meet the requirements of an apprenticeship framework and the needs of employers.

Timetable

33. Proposals should be submitted by 27 April 2020 to Angela West (tel 029 2085 9738; email angela.west@hefcw.ac.uk). Proposals received after this time may be considered, but this may affect the timing of

consolidation of the proposals and there may be insufficient funds available to allocate after the official process.

Task	Date
Call for submissions	30 January 2020
Deadline for proposals	27 April 2020
Panel discusses proposals	w/c 11 May 2020
Allocation of numbers, subject to acceptance of qualifications onto the relevant framework	by 5 June 2020

Further information / responses to

34. For further information, contact Angela West (tel 029 2085 9738; email angela.west@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

35. We have carried out an impact assessment screening 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.