

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Degree Apprenticeships in Wales

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To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Other interested parties
Response by: 23 July 2018
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This circular sets out funding arrangements for Degree Apprenticeships in Wales following Welsh Government's confirmation that Degree Apprenticeships are to be funded through HEFCW.

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Introduction

1. This circular sets out funding arrangements for Degree Apprenticeships in Wales following Welsh Government's confirmation that Degree Apprenticeships are to be funded through HEFCW.
2. Degree Apprenticeships are apprenticeships in Wales that include, in this instance, 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 certificate 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 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.

Background

3. In February 2017 Welsh Government published its new apprenticeship skills policy plan, *Aligning the Apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh economy*.¹ Welsh Government has set itself a target of 100,000 apprenticeship starts during the current assembly term. The delivery priorities set out in the policy plan include:
 - Addressing acute skills shortages with a focus on growth sectors and emerging job categories;
 - A focus on apprenticeships at levels 3 and above particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects;
 - An all age approach to apprenticeships;
 - A commitment to improving access, equality and equity of opportunity;
 - Strengthening opportunities for delivering apprenticeships in the medium of Welsh;
 - Developing skill pathways to integrate apprenticeships into the wider education system, including piloting degree apprenticeships;
 - Measuring the quality of apprenticeships through meaningful and sustained employment and international skills.

¹ [Welsh Government, *Aligning the Apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh Economy*, \(2017\)](#)

4. 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).² Frameworks set out the qualifications and training that are 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.³ An integrated qualification, which combines the occupational competency and the technical knowledge, could be included instead of the separate competency and knowledge qualifications at some levels, including degree level. Frameworks are currently issued by sector skill councils and are underpinned by National Occupational Standards (NOS), as they are in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
5. Regional Skills Partnerships⁴, labour market information and sector reviews by Qualifications Wales will 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) will consider apprenticeship developments as part of its remit and will advise on framework development.
6. Apprenticeships in England are operated through apprenticeship standards. These standards describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be competent in a specific occupation. Responsibility for the standards lies with the Institute for Apprenticeships. Only providers that are on the register of apprenticeship training providers can deliver apprenticeship training in England.

Development of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales

7. In October 2016 HEFCW received a revised remit letter setting out that £21.5m was being transferred from HEFCW to Welsh Government to partly cover the additional expenditure of the last instalment of the tuition fee grant. Recognising the impact of this transfer on HEFCW's ability to promote Welsh Government priorities and maintain expenditure in key activities, a financial allocation of £20m was made to HEFCW to address a number of issues:
 - develop investment in higher level apprenticeships;
 - a review of estates rationalisation;
 - Business incubator and accelerator facilities to improve the links between universities and industry; and
 - strategic development fund to promote sector capacity and ability to meet strategic challenges and change.

² <https://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/161014-sasw-en.pdf>

³ www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/essential-skills-wales/

⁴ The Welsh Government's Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) are the North Wales' Economic Ambition Board, the South West and Central Wales' Regional Learning and Skills Partnership and the South East Wales' Learning and Skills Partnership.

8. In December 2016 HEFCW invited its funded providers to submit plans to develop qualifications that could become part of an apprenticeship framework in Wales. These qualifications would be in the subjects of IT/computing, engineering and advanced manufacturing. These areas had been identified by regional skills partnerships as sectors where there are skill gaps and skills shortages across Wales and were agreed by Welsh Government officials. Increasing skill levels in this area in Wales should also have a positive impact on increasing productivity in Wales.
9. There was a positive response to the call for plans, with HEFCW funded institutions identifying the following areas as fitting with WG priorities where qualifications could be developed and form part of a Degree Apprenticeship:
 - Control and instrumentation;
 - Data science;
 - Civil engineering;
 - Digital media;
 - Software engineering;
 - Mechanical engineering;
 - Manufacturing engineering;
 - Cyber security.
10. Following this process, Degree Apprenticeship frameworks in digital and engineering/advanced manufacturing have been commissioned by the Welsh Government. The digital framework was published on 29 April 2018.⁵ A supplementary process for qualifications to be added to the framework was communicated to HEFCW-funded institutions on Tuesday 5 June 2018.
11. Welsh Government announced in January 2018 that funding for Degree Apprenticeships will be allocated via HEFCW to HEFCW funded institutions. Funding for all other apprenticeships up to and including apprenticeships at level 5 will continue to be allocated through the current work-based learning network.
12. 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.⁶ The key priorities set out in correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary are that Degree Apprenticeships:
 - Comply with the provisions of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009;
 - Comply with the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales;
 - Are closely aligned to the broader apprenticeship programme; and

⁵ www.afo.sscalliance.org/frameworks-library/index.cfm?id=FR04283

⁶ www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/policy_areas/skills_employability/HEFCW%20Degree%20Apprenticeships%20Annex%20A%20Degree%20Apprenticeships%20Letter.pdf

- Provide an opportunity for collaboration between the HE sector and the WBL network at all levels of higher apprenticeships.
13. In March 2018 HEFCW received its annual remit letter from Welsh Government which set out that HEFCW would receive £3m for Degree Apprenticeship delivery in 2018/19. HEFCW received a revised annex to its remit letter on Thursday 31 May 2018 that confirmed the inclusion of £3m in HEFCW's budget line for 2018-19.⁷
 14. HEFCW-funded providers have indicated that there is demand for Degree Apprenticeships in a number of sectors beyond those already identified for the initial phase of Degree Apprenticeship development, should they meet Welsh Government apprenticeship priorities. HEFCW expects demand for Degree Apprenticeships in sectors other than digital and engineering / advanced manufacturing to be set out in regional skills partnership annual plans. Given that Welsh Government apprenticeship policy focuses on particular sectors and that there is only a finite resource for Degree Apprenticeships, within a finite resource for all levels of apprenticeships, there is no commitment to expanding these areas. However, identifying where there could be expansion is important to inform policy thinking.

Delivery of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales

15. 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.
16. In order to achieve these priorities we are inviting proposals of Degree Apprenticeships that we will fund. As part of those proposals HEFCW-funded institutions will have to meet specific requirements and expectations as well as demonstrate how they will meet HEFCW's criteria for Degree Apprenticeship providers.
17. The call for proposals will only 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. The requirements for each pathway in the framework are:
 - Competence and Knowledge applied degree qualification = 360 credits;

⁷www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/about_he_in_wales/WG_priorities_and_policies/Revised%20Annex%201%20May%202018.pdf

- Essential Skills Wales (where not already satisfied) 3 x 6 credits =18 credits.
18. HEFCW-funded institutions are invited to submit to HEFCW proposals for the funding of Degree Apprenticeships by 23 July 2018. Total funding available during this round of funding will be £3m, and funding will be £27k per apprentice pro-rated over the duration of the apprenticeship. The proposals will require providers to set out the following information:
- Institution name;
 - Pathway being delivered;
 - Details of delivery method including reference to how it meets the needs of the employer(s) employing the apprentices, and provision for delivery through the medium of Welsh;
 - Delivery partners;
 - Numbers of apprentices;
 - Confirmation of names of employers that wish to recruit apprentices;
 - Name of qualification being delivered as part of the framework;
 - Where a provider is planning to deliver a qualification that has been submitted for inclusion on the framework details of timescales for that qualification to be developed and accepted onto the apprenticeship framework will be required;
 - Funding being claimed per apprentice, will be pro-rated over the length of the apprenticeship;
 - Details of previous experiences and learning being recognised;
 - Confirmation that an equality impact assessment has been conducted in relation to the development;
 - Sign off from:
 - the head of the HEFCW funded provider;
 - the head of the delivery partner(s) where relevant; and
 - those employers that wish to recruit apprentices.

Proposals for funding: Annex A

19. 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 extent to which:
- Measures are in place to ensure that there is a diverse mix of individuals recruited to Degree Apprenticeships. We will be expecting explicit reference to under-represented groups in higher education, apprenticeships, and the digital sector in Wales as well as those groups with protected characteristics, principally gender or disability. References where appropriate should be made to the equality impact assessment and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act goals;
 - Arrangements in place for delivery through the medium of Welsh;
 - Apprenticeships fit with the mission and expertise of the institution applying for funding;
 - SMEs will be supported to deliver Degree Apprenticeships;

- The delivery of the Degree Apprenticeship provides additionality to the apprenticeship offer in Wales;
 - HEFCW funded institutions have collaborated with Further education, Work Based Learning (WBL) providers and their representatives in Wales, meeting jointly with employers to support delivery of higher level apprenticeships at levels 4 and 5, and strengthen progression pathways into the Degree Apprenticeships.
20. All proposals will require the providers to sign up to the following requirements:
- All apprentices are employed and their salaries will be met by the employer;
 - All apprentices are employed in a job role that allows them to fulfil the requirements of the framework identified for delivery;
 - Apprentices spend 51% or more of their time working in Wales;
 - An apprenticeship agreement is in place;
 - Apprentices receive on and off the job learning;
 - Apprentices have their progress reviewed at least every 2 months. Reviews should involve the HEFCW-funded institution, the learner and the employer;
 - Previous experience and learning is recognised where appropriate;
 - Apprentices have access to the full range of student services offered by the provider;
 - Data is submitted as required by HEFCW⁸;
 - Apprentices can have equivalent level qualifications to those included on the apprenticeship framework but not in the same pathway;
 - Degree apprenticeship marketing and communications aligns with Welsh Government marketing and communications;
 - Student and learner protection measures as set out by HEFCW for regulated institutions should 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.
21. Sign up to these requirements will provide assurances to HEFCW that there is close alignment to the broader apprenticeship programme in Wales and 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.
22. There will be an expectation that Degree Apprenticeship providers participate in:
- Welsh Government marketing activities and national campaigns. HEFCW has requested that each HEFCW-funded provider nominate an individual to work with HEFCW and Welsh Government in this

⁸ Further details to be set out by HEFCW.

- area. Separately HEFCW will be arranging workshops and meetings with Welsh Government and those contacts to discuss this further;
- Skill competitions such as World Skills⁹. These competitions provide apprentices with additional experiences and challenges which will serve them well in their careers. Additionally they provide opportunities to strengthen Wales' performance in national and international competitions. Further information is available from the Pan Wales Coordinator, Paul Evans (Paul2.Evans@colegsiargar.ac.uk).
23. Proposals will be considered by a task and finish group. The task and finish group will be chaired by a Council member and comprise the Head of the Apprenticeship Unit, Welsh Government and HEFCW officers.
24. The outcomes of the process will be communicated to providers within 2 weeks of their submission. HEFCW reserves the right to require further information to support the proposals.
25. The funding arrangements are as follows:
- Proposals are only for cohorts that start in 2018/19;
 - Total funding available is £3m for the requirements of the apprenticeship delivered in 2018/19;
 - Funding is only available for delivery of the requirements of the digital framework issued on 29 April 2018;
 - 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-rated basis in line with the length of the apprenticeship as indicated by the institution in their submission eg £6,750 a year will be allocated for a 4 year apprenticeship;
 - Credit will be reduced proportionally to take account of previous experience and learning.
 - Funding will be reduced proportionally if a student withdraws prior to completion.
 - Funding will not be confirmed until all HEFCW funded institutions submitting proposals have successfully had their qualifications accepted on to the Digital Degree Apprenticeship Framework Wales.

Future delivery

26. This funding round for proposals for Degree Apprenticeships is for starts in 2018/19 only. The next round of funding will be more comprehensive and will cover starts for 2019/20 and 2020/21 for both digital and engineering/advanced manufacturing frameworks. Proposals that receive funding will also be considered for new cohorts on an ongoing basis in the next round of funding.

⁹ www.worldskillswales.org/

Monitoring and evaluation

27. We will set out arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of proposals once funding decisions have been confirmed.
28. It is expected that data collection is consistent with HEFCW funded institutional standard student data collection requirements.

Quality Assurance

29. 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.
30. 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).
31. 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.
32. The QAA¹⁰ has published a document on Quality Assuring Higher Education in Apprenticeships: Current Approaches, and is keeping this under review. Those wishing to apply to offer Degree Apprenticeships should ensure they are familiar with the most recent version of this document.
33. Estyn inspects all work-based learning providers in Wales. All apprenticeships providers delivering non-degree level apprenticeships will be inspected by Estyn.

¹⁰ www.qaa.ac.uk

34. HEFCW, the QAA and Estyn have a memorandum of understanding. This provides a framework for working relations, to inform each other of issues relating to the quality of provision where there are overlaps in responsibilities.
35. Consideration is being given to a thematic review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales to inform good practice.
36. The future role of quality assurance in the post-compulsory education and training sector is being considered as part of Welsh Government's proposals for a new post-compulsory education and training oversight organisation.

Timetable

37. HEFCW will expect proposals to be submitted by 23 July 2018. Proposal documents should be submitted to Angela West (tel 029 2085 9738; email angela.west@hefcw.ac.uk).

Task	Date
Call for submissions	26 June 2018
Deadline for proposals	23 July 2018
Task and finish group discuss proposals	w/c 30 July 2018
*Confirmation of funding	by 6 August 2018

* Funding will not be confirmed until all HEFCW funded institutions submitting proposals have successfully had their qualifications accepted on to the Digital Degree Apprenticeship Framework Wales.

Further information / responses to

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

Assessing the impact of our policies

39. 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.