

# Cylchlythyr | Circular

## 2020 Graduate Support Fund

**Date:** 26 October 2020  
**Reference:** W20/34HE  
**To:** Heads of higher education institutions in Wales  
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales  
**Response by:** 13 November 2020  
**Contact:** Name: Emma Mock  
Telephone: 029 2085 9742  
Email: [emma.mock@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:emma.mock@hefcw.ac.uk)

This circular provides the outcomes of the consultation on the fund in circular [W20/26HE](#) and confirms arrangements for the process, allocations and timetable for payments and monitoring.

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## Background

1. As described in circular [W20/26HE](#), the Welsh Government has made available an additional funding allocation of £1.5m in financial year 2020/21 ([Remit Letter](#)) to HEFCW to support graduates to access work experience, work tasters and paid work placements. This was announced by the [Welsh Government](#) as part of the £40m investment to support employment and training to help Wales' Covid-19 recovery.
2. This circular provides the outcomes of the consultation in circular W20/26HE and confirms the arrangements and timetable for funding and monitoring.

## Aim of the programme

3. The funding is to support individuals who have graduated during the pandemic to access work experience, with the aim of moving them closer to the labour market and helping their transition into employment in a more competitive job environment. It will reflect and complement the ESF-funded [GO Wales: Achieve through Work Experience](#) programme.
4. The fund is to support graduates who are unemployed or in low-skilled roles, and who are socially disadvantaged or from groups under-represented in HE.

## Consultation responses

5. We received 10 written responses. We also held a meeting with the Head of Careers and Employability or their delegated representative from each HEI on 14 October 2020 to discuss the written responses.
6. A brief summary of the written response to each question, together with the outcomes taking account of the written responses and the discussions in the meeting on 14 October, is provided below. **Annex A** provides a more detailed breakdown of the responses received, together with a list of respondents.

**Q1.** Are the groups of students proposed for support appropriate? Are there any other groups of students that should be considered?

7. The majority of responses confirmed that it would be appropriate to support the groups of graduates listed in the circular. Some of the responses suggested other graduates that could be supported, such as Welsh speakers, armed forces veterans, LGBTQ+ graduates, graduates from religious minorities, graduates with lower academic attainment and those whose degrees were in sectors adversely impacted by the pandemic, including aeronautical engineering, creative arts and retail. A number of

responses were in favour of broadening the support to all graduates, rather than targeting support to the proposed cohorts. The majority of responses argued that individuals who graduated in 2019 should be able to access the support, as they could also be subject to the full impact of Covid on the labour market as many are unlikely to have started a career by the time the pandemic started.

8. **Conclusion:** The support offered by HEIs should be made available to graduates who are unemployed or employed in a low skilled / non-graduate role and have been severely impacted by the pandemic. This could include those who graduated in 2019 for the reasons presented in the consultation responses. There must be a strong focus on graduates from groups under-represented in HE or from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the groups listed in circular [W20/26HE](#) and those proposed in the responses. Each HEI will be required to articulate the groups on which they will be focusing in their Delivery Plan (template at **Annex B**).

**Q2.** Should paid placements form part of the offer?

9. There was a very strong steer from the majority responses that the activity should be broadened beyond placements and include activities to enhance the graduate's employability, to prepare them for work experience and move the graduate closer to the job market. It was felt that this could help mitigate the concerns about the capacity of employers, especially SMEs, to host work experience and provide the support required at this time. There was a suggestion that this could include entrepreneurship support.
10. There was a mixed response to the question of paid placements. Some responses suggested that short-term paid work placements would not suit this type of support, due to issues such as the impact on a graduate's benefit status and meeting employers' needs in the current climate. Others suggested that longer work placements would be of value to graduates and employers. Several responses highlighted the other initiatives which offer longer, paid placements to employers, such as Kickstart, Jobs Growth Wales and Santander placements. It was agreed in the meeting that the support for graduates would need to find its own space in order to avoid duplicating other initiatives.
11. **Conclusion:** In response to the strong steers received in the written responses and the consultation meeting, HEIs could consider supporting activities to enhance graduates' skills and develop their knowledge in order to help them to move them closer to the labour market and to access work experience. HEIs will be required to explain how the funding is adding value in the Delivery Plan (**Annex B**).

**Q3.** If yes, should paid placements be subsidised and at what level? Note that funding for this would come from the HEI's allocation.

12. A number of responses suggested that if paid placements were offered, then they should be fully-funded and the graduate should be paid at the National Living Wage. One respondent argued that all placements should be funded at the same level to ensure parity across all opportunities.
13. **Conclusion:** Should an HEI wish to offer paid placements through this funding, then all placements should be fully-funded and the graduate should be paid at least the National Living Wage. As stated in paragraph 10, HEIs should ensure that this does not duplicate any other funded initiatives. HEIs should also ensure that this is operated in line with State Aid rules.

**Q4.** How can HEIs ensure that this activity complements and does not adversely affect the [GO Wales: Achieve through Work Experience](#) programme?

14. There was a range of responses to this question. A number of responses suggested that if the activity was broadened beyond work placements this could minimise the impact on the [GO Wales: Achieve through Work Experience](#) programme to avoid crowding the market place for opportunities. Several suggested that it would help if the resource for delivering the support was embedded in the GO Wales programme team. However, during the consultation meeting the majority felt that the responsibility for delivering this support would be better situated with Careers and Employability teams, working closely with GO Wales teams. Some responses highlighted the potential progression routes for individuals who had been on the GO Wales programme.
15. **Conclusion:** HEIs should determine the best way for delivering this support to their graduates, and we expect HEIs to put mechanisms in place for managing and monitoring the impact on the [GO Wales: Achieve through Work Experience](#) programme.

**Q5.** Do you agree with HEFCW's preferred funding model (option 2 with a funding floor)? Please explain.

16. The majority of respondents agreed with this funding model. One respondent recommended that FEIs should be able to access this funding for their HE students.
17. **Conclusion:** We have been remitted to provide this support to universities, as described in the remit letter 'I wrote to the Vice Chancellors to encourage them to support students through the current situation... I would like the Council to develop support that runs parallel to, and shares the

ambitions of, the GO Wales programme, focusing on those students who have graduated during the pandemic’.

18. The preferred funding model will be adopted. Confirmation of the funding is at paragraph 23.

**Q6.** Are there any unintended consequences regarding the proposals in this consultation? Please explain.

19. Responses to this question were broad ranging; the full range of responses is summarised at **Annex A**. A number of responses referred to concerns around the timescales of the funding, as should HEIs need to recruit staff to deliver the support then this could delay activity. A few responses highlighted that longer term funding would be welcome, as it is likely that individuals who graduate in 2021/22 will also need additional support. A number of responses drew attention to the fact that it may be difficult to persuade graduates in low-skilled paid employment, or those claiming benefits, to undertake short-term work experience due to the impact on their finances.
20. **Conclusion:** Timescales for activity and monitoring requirements were clarified in the consultation meeting and are presented at paragraph 29. For graduates who are reluctant to risk giving up paid work for unpaid work and those who are claiming benefits, broadening the offer to activities which enhance their employability should mean that they are still able to benefit from this support.

#### Other considerations

21. All responses agreed that this funding would positively contribute to equality and diversity, and that the activity aligns very well with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act’s seven well-being goals, Sustainable Development Principle and five ways of working.
22. Several positive impacts and a few potential negative impacts on the Welsh language were identified in the consultation responses, as were suggestions for ways of encouraging the use of the Welsh language, including extending the activity to Welsh speaking graduates. These are listed at **Annex A**.

#### **Funding allocations**

23. Funding allocations, based on each university’s percentage share of graduates (2018/19) from widening access backgrounds (option 2, with £50,000 floor) are confirmed in the table below.

<b>Institution name</b>	<b>£(GBP)</b>
Aberystwyth University	80,262
Bangor University	114,172
Cardiff Metropolitan University	154,825
Cardiff University	302,812
Swansea University	236,132
The Open University in Wales	51,482
University of South Wales	324,563
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	170,878
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	64,875
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>

Notes:

- Source: HESA student record 2018/19;
- All modes of study (full time and part-time) and levels (first degree, other UG, PGR and PGT) included;
- EU, overseas and unknown domiciles are excluded;
- Data for University of Wales, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges and Gower College Swansea are excluded;
- Graduates - qualifications obtained population (graduates are counted once, whether they were awarded one or more qualifications);
- Widening Access students are those counted in one or more of the following categories: with a disability, from a Black or minority ethnic group, care leavers, carers, from a low participation area, from a widening access area, students with parents with no HE qualifications;
- Widening access areas: for undergraduate students - are those areas in the bottom quintile of areas defined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014; postgraduates are excluded;
- Low participation areas: for young full-time undergraduate students - are those areas in the bottom quintile of areas defined by POLAR4. For mature full-time and all part-time students - are those areas in the bottom quintile of areas defined by the proportion of working age adults with HE level qualifications (as measured using Census 2011 data). Young is defined as being aged 20 or under at the start of course. Mature is defined as being aged 21 or over at the start of course. Postgraduates are excluded.

### **Process and timetable**

24. A Delivery Plan will be required from each HEI by 13 November 2020. The template for the Delivery Plan is at **Annex B** and it should be submitted by email to Lisa Barry, [lisa.barry@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.barry@hefcw.ac.uk).
25. On approval of the Delivery Plan, HEFCW will issue funding confirmation setting out the allocated funding and the attached conditions. Payments

will be made as set out in the funding confirmation and as outlined in the timetable at paragraph 29, with any changes to the profile of payments subject to agreement by HEFCW.

26. The first payment will comprise of 50% of the total allocation and will be paid to HEIs on approval of their Delivery Plan.
27. The second payment (30% of the total allocation) will be released when a satisfactory Monitoring Report has been received. This should include information on delivery to date, including the number of graduates supported and the number of graduates who have undertaken work experience. This payment will be made in March 2021.
28. The final 20% of the allocation will be released on receipt of a satisfactory Final Report and Case Study. The Final Report will be required in July 2021 and will detail how graduates have been supported, the number of graduates supported and the number who have undertaken work experience.
29. HEFCW will supply templates for the reports and case study.
30. The timetable for approval and payments is below:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Indicative Date</b>
Submission date for Delivery Plans	13 November 2020
Confirmation of approval of Delivery Plans	24 November 2020
First payment (50% of total allocation)	30 November 2020
Submission date for Monitoring Report	19 March 2021
Second payment (30% of total allocation)	31 March 2021
Submission date for Final Report and Case Study (see note below)	16 July 2021
Final payment (20% of total allocation)	30 July 2021

31. Note that should activity continue past the end of July 2021, then HEFCW reserves the right to ask HEIs for an additional report in December 2021, which will detail the final outcomes and expenditure.

### **Responses to**

32. Delivery Plans should be emailed to Lisa Barry (Tel: 029 2085 9741, [lisa.barry@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.barry@hefcw.ac.uk)) by 13 November 2020.