

# Cylchlythyr | Circular

## Postgraduate Taught Master's Bursary Schemes 2023/24

**Date:** 07 July 2023  
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**To:** Heads of higher education institutions in Wales  
Principals of directly funded further education institutions in Wales  
**Response by:** Response, if necessary, by **31 July 2023** to [hestats@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:hestats@hefcw.ac.uk)  
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This circular provides details of HEFCW's postgraduate taught (PGT) Master's bursary schemes for academic year (AY) 2023/24 and institutional allocations of funding. The total amount allocated is £3.87m.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please email [info@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:info@hefcw.ac.uk).



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## Introduction

1. This circular provides details of HEFCW's postgraduate taught (PGT) Master's bursary schemes for academic year (AY) 2023/24 and institutional allocations of funding.
2. Bursaries are available for eligible PGT Master's students at eligible higher education institutions and further education institutions<sup>1</sup> who will be studying science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine related subjects, also known as STEMM subjects, and/or who will be studying through the medium of Welsh and/or who are aged 60 or over, in Wales, in the academic year 2023/24.
3. On 8 September 2022, the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill became an Act. The Act outlines arrangements to establish the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER), which will replace HEFCW, and will be responsible for regulating and funding most post-16 provision in Wales currently within the Welsh Government. It is anticipated that CTER will be operational, and HEFCW will be dissolved, by April 2024. We have confirmed to the Welsh Government that we are proceeding with aspects of our work which we consider to be critical for a smooth and effective transition to CTER. However, as the PGT Master's bursary schemes are a ring-fenced element of HEFCW's budget subject to annual confirmation, we are not able to confirm at this stage whether the funding will be available for future allocation. In paragraph 20, we indicate our understanding of funding for continuing students, but institutions should not assume that the schemes will be available in future.

## Details of 2023/24 bursary schemes

4. Welsh Government has [confirmed](#) that the PGT Master's bursary schemes introduced in AY 2019/20 will continue in AY 2023/24.
5. In 2023/24, we will provide funding to eligible higher education institutions and further education institutions via our existing three Master's bursary schemes for eligible PGT students: for PGT students who undertake a Master's degree through the medium of Welsh; for PGT students who study a Master's degree in a STEMM subject; and for PGT Master's degree students aged 60 or over. It is possible for a student to be in receipt of all three bursaries.
6. The bursaries apply to those studying on either a full-time or part-time basis and are made available to students, through institutions, to contribute to costs associated with their programmes of study. In all cases, the bursaries are allocated on the understanding that individual entrants for 2023/24 receive a maximum of one bursary from each scheme for which they are eligible during the course of their study.

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<sup>1</sup> Only higher education institutions and further education institutions as defined in the Further and Higher Education Act (1992), are eligible for these schemes. Other higher education providers in Wales that are either regulated or have their courses specifically designated for student support may not meet the definition of a higher education or further education institution.

## Method of allocation of funding

7. We will allocate funding for AY 2023/24 to higher education institutions and directly funded further education institutions in Wales in proportion to their AY 2023/24 estimated PGT Master's numbers in the relevant STEMM subjects, those taking 40 or more credits of their course through the medium of Welsh and students aged 60 or over.
8. Estimated PGT Master's numbers for AY 2023/24 are based on the proportion of postgraduate entrants that are PGT Master's students, taken from the AY 2021/22 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record, and the number of forecast postgraduate entrants in AY 2023/24 taken from the student number forecasts provided to us by providers in July 2022. As in 2022/23, in the data extraction from the HESA student record we have used eligible Irish students as a proxy for eligible EU students, given that most non-Irish EU students starting in 2023/24 will no longer be eligible for the schemes. We are also including students from the Channel Islands and Isle of Man in the calculations as they are now considered home students in student finance arrangements, and are therefore treated in the same way as Welsh domiciled students for the purposes of these bursaries.
9. The data extracted to calculate the allocations have been verified by institutions. Allocations, based on verified data, are included in **Annex A**. Any funding not spent on bursaries as outlined in this circular will be recovered.

### PGT Master's bursaries for STEMM and Welsh Medium

10. Our allocation of funding is based on £2k per eligible STEMM PGT Master's student and £1k per eligible Welsh medium PGT Master's student. It is our expectation that bursaries will be paid to eligible students on this basis.
11. Funding is based on an estimated number of eligible students that has been verified by each institution. If there is a shortfall due to estimates not being accurate, it is for the institution to determine how this will be managed to ensure that eligible students are not disadvantaged.

### PGT Master's bursaries for students aged 60 or over

12. Our allocation of funding is based on £4k per eligible PGT Master's student aged 60 or over. It is our expectation that bursaries will be paid to eligible students on this basis.
13. Institutions will be expected to award bursaries to all eligible students who apply. Where the actual number of starters eligible in AY 2023/24 who apply for a bursary is greater than the number estimated and used in the allocation of funding, institutions are still expected to provide bursaries. Where this is the case, institutions will be allocated further funding for the additional students to ensure that they can provide all the necessary bursaries at the rate of £4k per student over the duration of their course. This will be done through a monitoring exercise

after the start of AY 2023/24 where we will ask for information as to whether there is a shortfall.

14. Institutions are asked to notify HEFCW if they think they will require additional funding in AY 2022/23 to allow for recruitment over and above their allocated numbers of bursaries for students aged 60 or over in AY 2022/23. This should be done by email to [hestats@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:hestats@hefcw.ac.uk) by **31 July 2023**. We will use the information to assess whether further funding is required for the scheme in the remainder of AY 2022/23. We will use end of year monitoring data to inform any adjustments to the individual institutions' allocations we included in circular [W22/13HE](#) and so will not make in-year adjustments to individual institutions based solely on the information submitted at this stage.

### **Internal institutional allocation**

15. Through the schemes outlined above, it is possible for a student to receive all three bursaries, ie if they are studying a STEMM subject through the medium of Welsh and are aged 60 or over, they may receive up to £7k of bursaries. We would expect a student studying a mixture of STEMM and other subjects to receive an appropriate proportion of the STEMM bursary.
16. It will be for institutions to assess individual students' eligibility. The bursaries should be allocated to PGT Master's students who fit the eligibility criteria and are enrolled on eligible Master's programmes as defined in The Education (Student Support) (Postgraduate Master's Degrees) (Wales) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/895), as amended, except that awards should be made regardless of age. In developing a distribution method, institutions will need to ensure that eligible students on any relevant courses that they offer on a sub-contractual basis are considered within the allocation and application process, and receive the same information about the bursaries as on-campus students.
17. An assessment of whether the course the student is studying 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 has been used to categorise subjects of study and a mapping from HECoS to ASC is available in the Higher Education Students Early Statistics ([HESES](#)) survey in Annex E. The Welsh medium bursary should be allocated to those studying 40 credits or more of their course through the medium of Welsh.
18. It is our expectation that HE and FE institutions will publish clear information on how prospective students can access the bursary schemes on their websites and that this should be clearly signposted. The bursaries are intended to support eligible students with costs arising from their course of study and should therefore not be advertised solely as a tuition fee waiver. However, if a student in receipt of a bursary should choose to use it in this way, this would be allowable. Welsh

Government has confirmed that these bursaries can be awarded in addition to other institutional bursaries offered. Students in receipt of Health Education and Improvement Wales bursary funding, the NHS bursary and Social Care bursary are not eligible for these schemes.

19. HEFCW will review institutions' websites to ensure that information on the bursary schemes is available. Institutions should promote the bursaries to encourage under-represented groups to undertake postgraduate taught Master's study in Wales.
20. We have previously allocated funding based on the assumption that full-time students receive the funding in one year and that part-time students will receive funding over two years. However, in April 2024 HEFCW will be dissolved and replaced by the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER). We anticipate that financial commitments made by HEFCW will be honoured by the new Commission and therefore expect that second year payments in respect of part-time, postgraduate taught Master's students commencing study in 2023/24 will also be honoured and paid as expected.
21. As stated previously, we do not consider it necessary to allocate any of the bursary funding for administrative costs for these schemes.

### **Monitoring and unspent funds**

22. At the end of each academic year, HEFCW/CTER will request monitoring information to provide confirmation from each institution 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.
23. We will reclaim funding if necessary on the basis of the actual number of completed PGT Master's against the above scheme eligibility. 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, £1k for Welsh medium and £4k for students aged 60 or over, 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.
24. Any data that we use to allocate funding can be subject to an external audit. The systems and processes used to collate data are also included in the scope of institutions' internal audits of data systems and processes. This includes a check for reasonableness of the criteria used to assess students' eligibility for a bursary. More information can be found in HEFCW circular [W23/02HE: Guidance for Internal Auditors to use in their Annual Internal Audit of HE Data Systems and Processes](#).

## **Timetable**

25. The allocations for each institution are included at **Annex A**. We intend to make the payments for full-time students and the first year for part-time students in September 2023 and March 2024. Payments for second year, part-time students would be made by the new Commission and the profile may not match exactly that as made by HEFCW. Should we have to amend this profile, we will inform institutions as soon as practically possible.

## **Further information**

26. For further information, contact Nicola Hunt (029 2085 9735; [nicola.hunt@hefcw.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.hunt@hefcw.ac.uk)).

## **Assessing the impact of our policies**

27. We have carried out an impact assessment to help safeguard against discrimination and promote equality, which we keep under review. 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](mailto:equality@hefcw.ac.uk) for more information about impact assessments.
28. A similar responsibility rests on institutions to assess the impact of their method for allocation of the bursaries, to safeguard against discrimination and promote equality.