

Support for postgraduate study and part-time engineering, technology or computer science degrees

Consultation response form

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Responses should be returned by **26 May 2016** to

Higher Education Division
Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: HEDConsultationsMailbox@wales.gsi.gov.uk

A. Support for postgraduate study

Question 1 – Do you agree that support should be provided for postgraduate study?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

- The Learned Society of Wales has argued for some time, that achieving the levels of postgraduate participation necessary to reap the benefits of enhanced high-level skills will require effectively addressing the wider problem of the funding of universities in Wales, which currently falls some way below the rest of the UK. As such the long term solution offered by Diamond will be critical to the sustainability of this current policy given that the capacity of the universities in Wales to deliver the postgraduate programmes necessary to produce them remains highly precarious.
- Given the widespread concern that investment in postgraduate provision in Wales has fallen behind the rest of the UK and threatens to damage the sector and also impact on economic performance, this interim policy is welcomed by the LSW as it brings Wales in line with the rest of the UK.
- There has been concern about the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) policy from 2014-2015 which progressively restricted its financial support to part-time

postgraduate taught programmes, and to postgraduate research.

- The LSW was pleased to see that the theme of postgraduate support is also flagged by the Diamond interim report.
- Wales would have remained at a comparative disadvantage in attracting postgraduate students without this policy.
- Welsh students currently have a lower tuition fee debt, and therefore may be more likely to consider / pursue taught postgraduate courses.
- There are clear benefits to the HEIs in Wales for this policy given recent HEFCW cut in funding for PG courses; however, the support may also move outside of Wales, and there would be likely benefits for universities elsewhere in the UK and to economic development elsewhere too. It is important that the Welsh government recognise this potential element of subsidy outside of Wales.
- It should also be noted that PG fees are unregulated and fees may raise as a consequence of funding cuts to PG courses.
- The long term impact of new scheme needs to be carefully monitored.
- As this is only intended to be an interim policy (designed to support students beginning in 2017/18) it would be important that it is consistent to the outcome of the Diamond review.

Question 2 – Do you agree with the support package as outlined? Is there any aspect you would change? Why?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Supporting comments

- The support package provides for parity with England for taught postgraduate courses and research and is therefore welcomed.
- Consideration should also be given to introducing student loans of up to £25,000 to support those pursuing PGR courses, in line with the proposals set out for postgraduates domiciled in England.
- Why preclude those with an existing PG qualification if the student is prepared to take the loan burden?
- Individuals with dependents: the Parent's Learning Allowance and Childcare Grant could be extended for postgraduate students who were eligible for the same support as undergraduates
- The consequence of the policy will only be impactful with regard to increasing economic return and social mobility if the proposals by the Diamond review allow or improve on the current package such that there is certainty over time.

Question 3 – Do you think any particular groups would be disadvantaged by this policy?

- Uptake should be carefully monitored, and the impact of the policy assessed
- PGR students would receive little or no support under this proposal, and this should be addressed in line with developments in England.

B. Previous study and support for part-time study

Question 4 – Do you agree that it is beneficial to extend eligibility to statutory support to students with equivalent level qualifications on these engineering, technology or computer science courses?

Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
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This policy is a welcome development, however uptake will need to be carefully monitored, and the impact of the policy assessed.

Question 5 – Do you think any particular groups would be disadvantaged by this policy?

- Those seeking second degrees in other courses would be disadvantaged.
- Implementation of the policy should also take in to account the recommendations of the Welsh government's recent report on women in STEMM in Wales, Talented Women for a Successful Wales.

Question 6 – Are there any other courses you believe should be considered for future inclusion in this scheme?

- To the extent that wider economic benefits are to be achieved, it is important that the economy is able to draw upon the full range of available talents from a wider range of disciplines.
- Consideration should be given to extending the statutory support to students with equivalent level qualifications to other courses of economic and / or social importance – eg Welsh, Modern Languages, and subjects allied to medicine. This would help to ensure that the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, would be delivered.
- Moreover in respect of individual benefits, it is a matter of social justice that everyone should have the opportunity to access advanced level study.

Question 7 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

The introduction to the document mentions second degrees in STEM subjects, which is misleading as the proposed support is for courses in a subsection of STEM subjects.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: