



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Economic
and Social
Research Council

Using the Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES) to explore higher education participation trends for Welsh-domiciled students

Summary

This is an exciting opportunity to do a paid work placement on a project for the Welsh Government. The focus of the project is understanding student experience in higher education. The successful applicant will work closely with Welsh Government officials and stakeholders to research and develop a varied range of research outputs and support the Welsh Government in their research process. The applicant will have the opportunity to apply research skills in a policy environment, further develop generic skills (such as report writing or making presentations), and to enhance their knowledge of research outside academia.

The Organisation

The Welsh Government is the devolved Government for Wales with responsibility for the economy, education, health and the Welsh NHS, business, public services and the environment of Wales.

Specifically, the internship will be based within Knowledge and Analytic services (KAS). KAS provides the collection, analysis and presentation of research and data for policymakers and the general public in keeping with professional standards. They offer independent evidence to understand, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate government policies. KAS also supports policy colleagues with policy development, implementation and delivery.

The Internship

The internship will be based in the Post-16 Education and Skills research branch, which provides analytical support for tertiary education, a high-profile fast-paced policy area.

The internship will provide an exciting opportunity to work at the heart of Welsh Government. The internship will require working closely with policy officials and researchers, and will provide an opportunity to apply research skills in a policy environment, further develop generic skills (such as report writing or making presentations), and to enhance policy knowledge.

The successful candidate will benefit from development opportunities offered centrally by the Welsh Government, potentially including mentoring, shadowing, peer support and training.

Interns will benefit from the experience of working closely with the Welsh Government:

- Gaining a better understanding of the world outside of academia and increasing employability, using their knowledge and skills to contribute to the work of the Welsh Government.
- The intern's colleagues at the Welsh Government can offer an insight into the intern's PhD project that can contribute to the success of their thesis', as well as networking opportunities within the policy arena linked to their research area
- Transferable skills and knowledge
- Time management skills
- Report writing skills

The Project

Background

There is a significant challenge around post-16 education participation in Wales. Welsh-domiciled learners participate in higher education at the lowest rate of the UK nation and higher education participation rates are lower for the most deprived areas relative to more affluent areas in Wales. Covid-19 impacted on higher education enrolment behaviour with higher than expected entry rates during the pandemic.

This project sits within a workstream focused on understanding these participation trends in more detail – specifically focused on understanding student experience in higher education. The project will inform this workstream as well as inform ongoing evaluation activity to understand the outcomes and impacts of the Diamond Reforms in higher education in Wales.

This project will use the Student Academic Experience Survey to provide a greater understanding of changes in student experience in higher education over time, for Welsh-domiciled learners. The survey is repeated every year which offers a unique resource to assess changes overtime. The internship will focus broadly on changes to wellbeing, perception of value, retention, and aim to provide insights related to widening participation and groups with protected characteristics. The project may include comparisons with other UK nations. Within this broad topic area the intern will have the opportunity to shape the exact focus of the work according to their own particular interests.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- A short technical report which would include the following:
 - A review of what the data tells us
 - A discussion of the methodological choices made and impact on the findings
 - Recommendations for future research and/or policy based on findings
- Annotated syntax for carrying out the analysis, including any data preparation work (e.g. recoding of variables)
- A presentation to analytical colleagues and policy officials

- A training session with appropriate teams to share findings and to demonstrate how to replicate the work in future with new data releases
- Conference abstract

Internship responsibilities and requirements

The internship will last for 5 months, with the option of extension, during which time the students PhD project will be paused by their home institution. The student will be paid the equivalent of their stipend during their internship. Over and above leave policies, time for existing PhD commitments can be arranged on discussion with line managers. E.g. research groups meetings and conference presentations. Applications are encouraged from part-time students.

It is anticipated that the successful applicant will work in a hybrid way between home and a Welsh Government office during their internship. This may change depending on Welsh Government policy. Any changes to working arrangements will be discussed with successful applicants.

The internship will last for a period of 5 months full-time or the part-time equivalent. For students registered on a part-time studentship, this internship is available on a part-time basis over a longer time frame (no fewer than three days a working week), this would be negotiated between the WG and the successful applicant. If you would like to be considered on a part-time basis, please specify your preferred working hours on the application form.

Student specification

The student must have:

- Experience working with survey data
- Strong data analysis skills including:
 - Experience in handling/manipulating data, using statistical software
 - The ability to produce cross-tabulations and undertake multilevel modelling
- The ability to produce well designed charts
- The ability to produce concise, well written documents presenting technical material in an accessible format.

Start date of internship

September 2025 (exact date to be negotiated). There may be some flexibility dependent on individual circumstances.

Funding and costs

Reasonable travel and accommodation costs for students not normally based in Cardiff can be met. Requests should be consistent with WGSSS guidelines. Applications from students requiring additional funding for travel and accommodation will not be treated less favourably. For any queries on this please contact Carole Baker at the WGSSS on: enquiries@wgsss.ac.uk

Security

The Welsh Government's vetting procedures (which apply to temporary as well as permanent staff) involve the completion of a Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) application form and a Security Questionnaire for the purpose of security vetting.

This process requires the applicant to produce in person three original forms of identification documents, one of which should be photographic (passport, new driving license), one document should showing their current address, plus one of: a utility bill, birth certificate, P45 or P60.

Queries

Any queries relating to the post or application process should be directed to Jessica Steventon, head of post-16 research team, Jessica.steventon@gov.wales