



Evidence synthesis and research to inform post-16 education and skills policy thinking: Mapping skills needs to higher education participation

Summary

This is an exciting opportunity to do a work placement on a project for the Welsh Government. 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 successful applicant will work closely with Welsh Government Officials and stakeholders to conduct research to inform policy decision making. The applicant will have the opportunity to apply research skills in a policy environment, further develop evidence synthesis skills and to enhance their knowledge of research outside academia. Skills in synthesising quantitative and qualitative data will be required, along with the ability to work at pace, and present findings in an easy-to-digest format.

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 provide an exciting opportunity to work at the heart of Welsh Government, conducting research and analysis to support Tertiary Education directorate and the Skills division. 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

Mapping skills needs to higher education participation

Background

Higher education plays a critical role in skills development. This project is focused on increasing the evidence base on the alignment of post-16 qualifications with the projected skills needs for Wales. The project will contribute to the evaluation of the Diamond reforms to student finance, which were implemented in 2018/2019.

The project aims to bring together evidence detailing approaches to skills planning from other nations, evidence on the skills needs in Wales, and evidence and analysis on how higher education participation (undergraduate and postgraduate) aligns with these needs. The project will explore the mechanisms contributing to improving outcomes from the information available as well as develop a coherent picture of the issues and the groups affected.

The precise focus and tasks will become clear close to the start dates.

The internship is likely to involve:

- Engagement with policy officials to understand evidence gaps and develop research questions
- Close working with officials from arms-length bodies (including Medr)
- Reviews of existing evidence from both Welsh Government and wider research, including evaluations of projects/policy interventions, as well as statistical outputs with links to the topic of interest, for example, the Employer Skills Survey provides evidence on the skills needs of Wales.
- Awareness and review of UK Government policy and plans for reform in the area
- Possible use of small scale qualitative research to explore experiences of stakeholders in relation to policy issues.

The project is likely to involve identifying past research and statistical outputs with relevance to the topic and reviewing both the qualitative and quantitative data they provide. It will also pull together what we have learned from these studies and provide novel insights into stakeholders views, identifying challenges and areas for improvement. It will be important to consider this evidence in terms of how it relates to the landscape in terms of current policy priorities (including participation in tertiary education more broadly) as well as the broader

context of apprenticeships, vocational qualification reform, Curriculum Reform, 14-16 qualification reform, etc.

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
- A presentation to analytical colleagues and policy officials
- Publication of a research report on the Welsh Government website.

Internship responsibilities and requirements

The internship will last for a maximum of 3 months. Full time students are expected to step back from their PhD to focus on the placement for its duration in line with ESRC guidelines ([ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide](#) p. 27). 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 3 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

Requirements of the student:

- The student must be able to communicate with the policy team to understand their needs and to conduct desk research of contributing factors
- The student must have literature review and strong evidence evaluation skills, including the ability to synthesize a wide range of evidence.
- The student must have the ability to design and conduct stakeholder interviews and qualitative data analysis.
- The student must have the ability to evaluate research findings and apply them to the context of Welsh policy.
- The ability to produce concise, well written documents presenting technical material in an accessible format.

Start date of internship

January 2026 (exact date to be negotiated). There may be some flexibility dependent on individual circumstances.

Funding and costs

Reasonable travel costs for students not normally based in Cardiff can be met. Requests should be consistent with Wales Graduate School for the Social Sciences (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 Katy Marrin Katy.Marrin001@gov.wales and Jo Coates Joanne.Coates@gov.wales.

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.

Nationality requirements

'Eligibility for taking up an internship on this scheme is dependent on meeting the [Civil Service Nationality rules](#). Please check that you are eligible before applying. Those who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be able to take up a placement opportunity.

Queries

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

Privacy Notice

<https://www.gov.wales/welsh-government-privacy-notice>