Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

Priority Sector Skills Academies

Programme Specification

This version of the specification is valid until the FE sector is informed otherwise.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg | This document is also available in Welsh

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Contents

1.   Introduction

This Programme Specification sets out the requirements for delivery of the Priority Sector Skills Academies Programme. It provides an overview of the programme requirements, including learner eligibility and entry conditions; and details the data submission and monitoring requirements in order that Medr can monitor programme delivery and learning outcomes for the Priority Sector Skills Academies Programme.

This Specification also forms part of the Agreement between Further Education Institutions (FEIs) and the Welsh Ministers for the delivery and funding of special specification Programmes. You must ensure that your provision adheres to this Programme Specification.

Two programmes of study are currently available; at level 2 and level 3 equivalent.

2.   Purpose of the Programme

Priority Sector Skills Academies involve partnership working between industry, education and government to grow employers' local talent pipeline and ensure current and future skills needs are supported through targeted intervention.

The model is based on a well-established Assured Skills Academy concept from Northern Ireland which has supported the growth of indigenous business and inward investment.

3.   Delivery Overview

The Skills Academies, which run for 10 weeks per programme with up to 30 hours contact time per week, equip recent graduates and adults (primarily local residents, focussing on areas of deprivation to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) with skills required for hard-to-fill job vacancies in sectors experiencing skills shortages.

Academies have been co-designed with industry and on completion learners are guaranteed an interview with employers who have endorsed the programme. Learners can also access a weekly training allowance and barriers fund to support their engagement.

The Programme must include at least one full day[1] of work placement with an employer not partly or wholly owned by the FE institution, where learners can have a specific role, develop their practical skills and are exposed to the day-to day running of a business.

A college-based Realistic Working Environment (RWE) should only be used as a last resort. Please note that the use of RWE may adversely affect the progression of a learner, as feedback from industry indicates that a placement in a True Work Environment is more advantageous for learners looking to progress to employment or an apprenticeship.

Projects undertaken on behalf of external clients / organisations within the college workshops can count towards the work placement hours as long as they are not in the

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[1] A minimum of 7 hours applies.

timetabled teaching hours for the class and the employer that coordinates the work placement is also present. Please also note that working alongside in-house college technicians to service, clean and maintain equipment does not count towards the work placement quota.

Further Education institutions must ensure that arrangements are in place to oversee any work placements; including up-to-date health and safety and risk assessments.

4.   Learner Eligibility and Entry Requirements

The profile of learner recruited, immediately prior to the start of programme, is:
- aged 19 or over;
- unemployed or under-employed / working part-time;
- cannot complete an intensive programme without intervention and support[2];
- seeking to upskill / reskill to enter a priority sector with known skills gaps or shortages.

5.   Programme Content

The Priority Sector Skills Academies are programmes co-designed with industry. They equip adults with skills required for hard-to-fill job vacancies in sectors experiencing skills shortages.

6.   Data Submission Requirements

Medr will use data from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) to monitor programme delivery and learning outcomes for the Priority Sector Skills Academies Programme.

In line with the conditions set out in the annual *Grant Award Letter*, institutions must ensure that data is submitted in the correct format and in a timely manner.

The LLWR User Support Manual[3] sets out the guidelines that institutions should follow when submitting LLWR data for the current academic year.

Programme Codes

The following programme codes (LP74) should be used for learners on the Priority Sector Skills Academies Programmes:
        8800J02G   Priority Sector Skills Academies (Level 2)
        8800J03G   Priority Sector Skills Academies (Level 3)

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[2] For e.g. weekly training allowance for intensive programmes (£150 per week) and may also require access to barriers funding to support transport and childcare costs;
[3] See Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR).

Recording of Work Placement

Medr will use the information submitted via the LLWR fields *LP12 (Employer Name)* and *LP13 (Employer Postcode)* to monitor this requirement, thus the Further Education institutions must ensure that data is completed in a timely manner for each learner.

We appreciate that some learners will not be linked with an employer or have a work placement in place at the start of the programme, thus the expectation is the relevant details to be populated as soon as the employer information is known and whilst the learner is still on-programme.

Institutions must ensure that the hours spent on work placement with an employer are recorded using the following LLWR fields:
- *LP70 (Estimated Work Based Hours)*; and
- *LP72 (Actual Work Based Hours)*.

Funding Information

The total enrolments on the Priority Sector Skills Academies are capped at 30 for each institution within one academic year. The cap is shared by the two programmes.

7. Monitoring and Audit

Monitoring and audit will play a role in ensuring that the guidance is being applied consistently and to help assess whether policies, procedures and controls are adequate.

Monitoring Approach

The approach to monitoring will focus on the following areas:
- compliance with the programme's specifications; and
- learning outcomes for the programme.

This will be achieved through end-of year monitoring; a data matching exercise; and detailed audit testing of learners on Priority Sector Skills Academies Programmes.

Compliance with Programme Specification

Medr will use the data submitted via the LLWR to monitor compliance with the programme specification. This will include:
- monitoring of the work placement element using *LP12* and *LP13* data; and
- monitoring of the data from the programme and activity datasets to check that delivery requirements are being met.

Learning Outcomes

Learner progression and destination is a key performance measure for the programme and crucial in evaluating programme delivery.

It is anticipated that the majority of learners who successfully complete a Priority Sector Skills Academies Programme will secure employment, ideally in a sector experiencing skills shortages.

Audit Testing

In addition to the approach to monitoring set out above, data returned by FE institutions will be subject to existing end of year audit requirements[4]. Within this, particular emphasis will be placed in the *Auditors' Notes for Guidance* to ensure that external auditors appropriately sample learners undertaking the Priority Sector Skills Academies Programme.

8.   Contact details

For any queries relating to the content of this Programme Specification, please contact Medr at the following mailbox: InvestmentandPerformance@medr.cymru.

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[4] The audit requirements for the current year will be published at the end of the academic year.

9. Annexes

A. *Recording the Work Experience[5]*

Priority Sector Skills Academies Programme – Work Placement Plan	
Learner name:	
Qualification(s) being undertaken:	
Employer name:	
Work placement address:	
Nature of business:	
Name of person learner will report to:	
Planned attendance:	
Planned monitoring visits by tutor:	

I agree to the above Work Placement Plan:

Signed by Learner:	Signed by Tutor:	Signed for Employer:
……………………………	……………………………	……………………………..
Learner name:	Tutor name:	Position in company:
……………………………	……………………………	……………………………..
Date:	Date:	Date:
……………………………	……………………………	……………………………..

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[5] NB: This is only a suggested template for the Work Placement Plan.