

# 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 applicable  
for the 2026/27 Academic Year.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg |  
This document is also available in Welsh  
[www.medr.cymru](http://www.medr.cymru)



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## 1. Introduction

This Programme Specification outlines 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 Programme.

The Priority Sector Skills Academies Programme must meet the standards and conditions established within Medr's evolving regulatory framework, including the *Terms and Conditions of Grant*, *Conditions of Registration*, *Quality Framework*, and the *Learner Engagement Code*.

## 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<sup>1</sup> from Northern Ireland which has supported the growth of indigenous business and inward investment.

## 3. Delivery Overview

The Skills Academies, which run for up to 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 must be co-designed with industry and on completion learners must be guaranteed an interview with employers who have endorsed the programme. Learners can additionally benefit from a weekly training allowance and a barriers fund designed to enhance their participation.

The academies must be used to support recruitment in sectors such as:

- Information Technology and Software Development
- Cyber Security
- Data Analytics
- Manufacturing and Engineering
- FinTech
- Digital / Animation / Cloud Technologies

The Programme must include at least one full day<sup>2</sup> of work placement with an employer not partly or wholly owned by the Further Education Institution, where learners can have a

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<sup>1</sup> The Assured Skills Academy is a demand-led, pre-employment training programme designed to help employers fill specific skills shortages while giving individuals a direct pathway into high-quality jobs.

<sup>2</sup> A minimum of 7 hours applies.

specific role, develop their practical skills and are exposed to the day-to day running of a business.

A provider-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 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.

Providers 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;
- has the right to live, work and train in the UK
- is unemployed or under-employed / working part-time;
- cannot complete an intensive programme without intervention and support<sup>3</sup>;
- is 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.

The Academies must:

- provide short, intensive pre-employment training courses (typically 6–10 weeks, depending on academy type).
- align course content directly with real job vacancies in participating companies.
- be designed collaboratively between industry and education providers to ensure trainees gain exactly the skills employers require.

Training must include specialist technical skills and relevant industry tools alongside employability skills.

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<sup>3</sup> 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;

## 6. Data Submission Requirements

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

In line with the conditions set out in the annual *Terms and Conditions of Grant*, providers must ensure that data is submitted in the correct format and in a timely manner.

The LLWR User Support Manual<sup>4</sup> sets out the guidelines that providers should follow when submitting LLWR data for the current academic year.

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)

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.

Providers 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)*.

Within one academic year, a total number of 30 enrolment on Priority Sector Skills Academies programmes are fundable for each provider within one academic year. The two programmes share the cap.

## 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.

The approach to monitoring will focus on the compliance with the programme's specifications. This will be achieved through end-of year monitoring and detailed audit testing of learners on Priority Sector Skills Academies Programmes.

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

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<sup>4</sup> See [Lifelong Learning Wales Record \(LLWR\)](#).

- monitoring of the data from the programme and activity datasets to check that delivery requirements are being met.

Learner progression and destination is a key performance measure for the programme and crucial in evaluating programme delivery.<sup>5</sup> 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.

In addition to the approach to monitoring set out above, data returned by Further Education Institutions will be subject to existing end of year audit requirements<sup>6</sup>. 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.

Providers may also be asked to submit case studies to Medr as required.

## 8. Contact details

For any queries relating to the content of this Programme Specification, please contact Medr at [InvestmentandMonitoring@medr.cymru](mailto:InvestmentandMonitoring@medr.cymru).

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<sup>5</sup> Medr is continuing to develop its reporting on learner progression and destinations based on linked data, and reporting on the programme will be incorporated into these measures in the future.

<sup>6</sup> The audit requirements for the current year will be published at the end of the academic year.

## 9. Annexes

### A. Recording the Work Experience<sup>7</sup>

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: .....

<sup>7</sup> NB: This is only a suggested template for the Work Placement Plan.

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