Medr

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

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

Apprenticeship Programme in Wales: grant application

Date:	01 September 2026 (updated 01 October 2026)
Reference:	Medr/2026/44
To:	Heads of higher education institutions in Wales Principals of directly-funded further education institutions in Wales Independent Training Providers Charitable and Not-for-Profit Organisations Public Sector Organisations Collaborative Partnerships and Consortia
Respond by:	**Stage 1:** 02 October 2026, **Stage 2:** 31 December 2026
More information:	ApprenticeshipGrantApplication@medr.cymru

Update 01 October 2026:

Following Welsh Government's announcement on the future of the Employability Support Programme (ESP) on 29 September 2026, we understand that some applicants may need to update some of their financial information. As a result, providers now have until **9 October 2026** to submit their financial sustainability conditions of funding evidence to Medr. All other elements of the grant application must still be submitted by **2 October 2026**.

Summary:

This document provides information for organisations wishing to apply for the new Apprenticeship Programme grant in Wales, to commence August 2027.

It sets out the programme requirements, application process and assessment arrangements. Further information is available in the supporting programme guidance documents.

Contents

Introduction 2
Background 2
What are the design principles 2
What is the purpose of the new Apprenticeship Programme? 3
What is the structure of the Apprenticeship Programme? 3
What are the grant application process stages? 5
How do applicants apply? 6
Which organisations can apply? 6
How many providers will receive a grant? 6
What are the regions? 7
What is the application deadline? 8
Where do you send the application? 8
When will I know the outcome? 8
What are the assessment criteria? 8
When will the allocations be made? 9
What is the appeals process? 9
Where can I get further information? 9

Annexes

Annex A - Grant Application Form

Annex B - Strand 1 Core Apprenticeship Programme Guidance

Annex C - Strand 2 Degree Apprenticeship Programme Guidance

Annex D - Strand 3 Supported Apprenticeship Programme Guidance

Annex E - Assessment Framework and Scoring

Annex F - Grant Application Appeals Process

Annex G - Apprenticeship Sector Frameworks and pathways

Annex H – Glossary of terms

Introduction

1. This publication serves as the primary source of guidance for organisations wishing to participate in the Apprenticeship Programme in Wales. It sets out the programme requirements, application process and assessment arrangements, with further details available in the supporting programme guidance documents.

2. Providers should read this document in full before preparing an application, as it contains the information necessary to understand both the requirements of the programme and the basis upon which applications will be assessed.

Background

3. Apprenticeships play a critical role in supporting economic growth, increasing productivity, addressing workforce shortages and creating opportunities for individuals to enter, progress and succeed in employment. They also make an important contribution towards wider public policy objectives, including social mobility, regional economic development, the Welsh language, equality of opportunity and the transition to a greener economy.

4. Historically, apprenticeship provision in Wales has been commissioned through a procurement-based approach, with contracts awarded to a network of training providers following competitive tendering exercises. Whilst this model has supported the development of a mature provider network and enabled the delivery of apprenticeship opportunities across Wales, Medr recognises that the future skills landscape requires a more flexible and responsive approach.

5. The establishment of Medr provided an opportunity to redesign the way apprenticeship funding is administered, moving from a contractual purchasing model towards a grant-funded partnership model that places greater emphasis on collaboration, responsiveness and continuous improvement.

What are the design principles

6. The design of the Apprenticeship Programme has been informed by extensive engagement with stakeholders and lessons learned from previous apprenticeship commissioning arrangements. Several key principles have informed the development of the programme:

    - All-age programme (16 years old and above).
    - Delivers high-quality apprenticeships from level 2 to level 6.
    - Responds to changing skills demands across the economy and regional skills needs.
    - Responds to the Welsh Government's skills priorities, including responding to changing technologies and green skills.
    - Meets the needs of learners and supports their progression through the tertiary education system and into and throughout their chosen career.
    - Is agile and responsive, ensuring the right qualifications and skills are delivered to meet the needs of employers, learners and the economy.

- Delivers inclusive apprenticeships which are accessible for learners from a range of backgrounds and with protected characteristics and socio-economic disadvantage.
- Increases opportunities for all apprentices to develop, maintain and use their Welsh language skills throughout their training and employment, equipping them to contribute to an increasingly bilingual workforce.
- Offers high-quality provision which strengthens outcomes and attainment of learners.

What is the purpose of the new Apprenticeship Programme?

7. The purpose of the Apprenticeship Programme is to secure high-quality apprenticeship provision that meets the current and future needs of learners, employers and the Welsh economy.

8. The programme has been designed to support providers that can demonstrate the organisational capability, leadership, financial resilience and delivery capacity necessary to operate as strategic partners within Wales' tertiary education system.

9. The programme recognises that skills needs are continually evolving. Emerging technologies, demographic change, economic transition, decarbonisation, public service reform and changing employer demand all require an apprenticeship system capable of adapting over time. Therefore, the grant model has been designed to balance stability with flexibility, allowing Medr to respond to changing priorities whilst maintaining continuity for learners and employers.

10. Unlike previous commissioning arrangements, the grant-funded programme is not intended solely to purchase apprenticeship places. Instead, it seeks to establish a network of providers capable of contributing to the wider strategic objectives of Medr and Welsh Government throughout the lifetime of the grant period.

11. Successful providers will be expected to demonstrate not only their ability to deliver apprenticeship frameworks, but also their ability to contribute to broader outcomes relating to learner success, employer engagement, social inclusion, Welsh language development, regional growth and workforce transformation.

What is the structure of the Apprenticeship Programme?

12. The grant-funded Apprenticeship Programme is structured around three delivery strands:

    - Strand 1 – Core Apprenticeship Programme - delivery of frameworks leading to regulated qualifications at levels 2-5.

    - Strand 2 - Degree Apprenticeship Programme - delivery of frameworks leading to degrees at level 6 awarded by universities.

- Strand 3 - Supported Apprenticeship Programme. (Supported Apprenticeships provide enhanced support for apprentices with complex employment and learning needs, enabling them to successfully complete their apprenticeship.)

13. Further information and guidance on the delivery requirements of each of these programme strands is at:

    - Annex B - Strand 1 Core Apprenticeship Programme Guidance
    - Annex C - Strand 2 Degree Apprenticeship Programme Guidance
    - Annex D - Strand 3 Supported Apprenticeship Programme Guidance

14. A Glossary of terms to support applicants is at Annex H.

How long will the grant be awarded for?

15. Initial grant awards will be for a period of four years. Minor changes may be made to the programme guidance during the first four years to respond to changing circumstances. If providers continue to meet the programme's grant conditions and continue to be compliant with the requirements of Medr's regulatory framework, they will continue to receive investment following the initial award.

16. There will be a formal review of the programme at the four-year point which may lead to more major changes; it will also be an opportunity for further providers to apply to receive grant funding under the programme, subject to programme conditions and budget availability.

What are the grant minimum values?

17. All providers must demonstrate their ability to manage grant funding at the following indicative minimum values. These figures are used to assess financial sustainability, delivery capacity and programme risk, and do not create any guarantee of, or entitlement to funding:

    a) For existing apprenticeship providers, we anticipate £5m (this would include continuing learners and new starts) annually. However, this is dependent on budget allocations, therefore, it is not a guaranteed budget entitlement.

    b) For new providers, who would not have continuing learners, we anticipate year 1 would be a minimum grant £1.5m. This would increase annually due to continuing learners. However, this is dependent on budget allocations, therefore, it is not a guaranteed budget entitlement.

    c) For degree apprenticeships there is no minimum grant value.

    d) The minimum grant value for the supported apprenticeship strand is £250k per year. However, this is dependent on budget allocations, therefore, it is not a guaranteed budget entitlement.

What are the grant application process stages?

18. There are two key stages to the grant application process. Providers must pass Stage 1 before they can submit their application for Stage 2.

19. The stages are:

- **Stage 1 – Confirmation that Applicants meet Medr's Conditions of Funding**

  All providers that would like to deliver apprenticeships in Wales (this could include current providers or new providers including consortium or partner organisation models, including sub-contracting models will need to submit an application using the form at Annex A. The application includes key information about the applicant and their ability to meet Medr's Conditions of Funding. The information aligns with that requested for applications for the Register of Higher Education Providers.

  Where supporting information has already been submitted to Medr for that purpose, providers will not need to supply it again and will only be required to confirm their responses to the questions.

  The first stage establishes whether an applicant is eligible to receive public funding by confirming that it satisfies Medr's Conditions of Funding. This is a gateway assessment and is assessed on a Pass/Fail basis. Only applicants that successfully establish that they satisfy Medr's Conditions of Funding at Stage 1 will be eligible to submit, or have assessed, their substantive Stage 2 application. All providers are required to submit additional information on:

  - the regions providers would like to deliver in;
  - within each of the regions, which sectors providers wish to contribute to (as set out in paragraph 26);
  - Confirmation of digital and data security arrangements;
  - Which programme strand providers wish to apply for.

- **Stage 2 – Evidence on how they would deliver the Apprenticeship Programme**

  Providers will provide evidence against the approved assessment criteria as set out in Annex E. Stage 2 assesses the applicants substantive application, that is, the quality of the applicant's proposed apprenticeship delivery arrangements against the requirements of the programme guidance. This stage is assessed using the published criteria and scoring approach contained in Annex E to determine which providers will be recommended as appropriate to receive grant funding through the programme.

  All providers must demonstrate their experience of delivering apprenticeships frameworks across a range of sectors, and that they are able to respond to changing priorities. Providers must demonstrate how they will deliver across all local authorities within their region (as set out in paragraph 26) or provide a case for how they will expand their provision to give appropriate coverage.

  Providers will also need to demonstrate how they will ensure high-quality provision is delivered, including how they will support learners and employers,

and how they intend to actively encourage apprenticeship delivery through the medium of Welsh.

How do applicants apply?

20. Providers will need to apply separately for each of the three strands of the programme:

    - Core Apprenticeship Programme (delivery of frameworks leading to regulated qualifications at levels 2-5).
    - Degree Apprenticeships (delivery of frameworks leading to degrees at level 6 awarded by universities).
    - Supported Apprenticeships.

21. Please complete all relevant questions in the grant application form at Annex A.

Which organisations can apply?

22. Applications may be submitted by organisations that can demonstrate the legal, financial, governance and operational capability required to deliver apprenticeship provision within Wales.

23. Eligible organisations may include:

    - Further Education Institutions (Strand 1 and 3)
    - Higher Education Institutions (Strand 1 and strand 2)
    - Independent Training Providers (Strand 1 and 3)
    - Charitable and Not-for-Profit Organisations (Strand 1 and 3)
    - Public Sector Organisations (Strand 1 and 3)
    - Collaborative Partnerships and Consortia (Strand 1 and 3)

24. Participation in the programme is not restricted solely to organisations currently delivering apprenticeships in Wales. However, organisations that are not currently operating within the Welsh apprenticeship system will be expected to demonstrate how they will establish the necessary infrastructure, governance arrangements, employer relationships and delivery capability required to meet programme requirements, including premises in Wales and the capacity to address Welsh medium provision development.

How many providers will receive a grant?

25. Medr encourages collaborative arrangements, including consortium or partner organisation models, including sub-contracting models for providers applying to deliver the all programme strands, building on the current delivery model. This will ensure grant awards are at sufficient scale to provide coverage across all sectors and regions in Wales and supports high-quality delivery of apprenticeship provision. We anticipate the following maximum number of providers receiving a grant in each strand:

- 15 grant awards to providers for delivery of frameworks involving regulated qualifications for Strand 1.
- 9 grant awards to universities for Degree Apprenticeship delivery for Strand 2.
- 3 grant awards for Supported Apprenticeships for Strand 3.

What are the regions?

26. Medr proposes to maintain the existing regional structure as outlined in the table below. Location of delivery is determined by the employer's address.

North Region	Mid Region	West Region	East Region
Isle of Anglesey	Powys	Pembrokeshire	Bridgend
Gwynedd	Ceredigion	Carmarthenshire	The Vale of Glamorgan
Conwy		Swansea	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Denbighshire		Neath Port Talbot	Merthyr Tydfil
Flintshire			Caerphilly
Wrexham			Blaenau Gwent
			Torfaen
			Monmouthshire
			Newport
			Cardiff

What are the Apprenticeship Sectors and Pathways?

27. The current apprenticeship sector frameworks and pathways are outlined at Annex G. The pathways and levels may change as frameworks are reviewed and new pathways developed, all changes post August 2027 will be published on the Apprenticeship Framework Library.

What are the current sector priorities for the Apprenticeship Programme?

28. Welsh Government has set out its key priority sectors for the Apprenticeship Programme in 2026/27. The sector priorities include:

- Advanced Manufacturing and engineering - Supporting a resilient, high value manufacturing workforce aligned to Wales 4.0.
- Construction (including decarbonisation and retrofitting, and the new Level 2 construction Apprenticeships) - Building skills to support delivery of 20,000 low carbon social homes and retrofit priorities.
- Digital and Technology (with a focus on cyber security and AI) - Developing digital and cyber skills to support Wales's response to rapid technological change.
- Life Sciences - Supporting innovation led growth and skills for health, wellbeing and high value sectors.

- Clean Energy - Building the skills pipeline needed to deliver Wales's net zero ambitions.
- Creative - Developing and sustaining creative talent in line with Creative Wales skills priorities.
- Defence & Nuclear - Supporting specialist skills linked to long term strategic infrastructure and energy investment.

What is the application deadline?

29. The deadlines for applications are:

- Stage 1 – 02 October 2026
- Stage 2 - 31 December 2026

Where do you send the application?

30. Please submit the completed application forms to: ApprenticeshipGrantApplication@medr.cymru.

When will I know the outcome?

31. You will be informed the outcome for the following stages by:

- Stage 1 – 31 October 2026
- Stage 2 – 31 March 2027

What are the assessment criteria?

32. The assessment process has been designed to ensure that applicants demonstrate they meet Medr's Conditions of Funding before the quality of their proposals are assessed. Only applicants that successfully satisfy the Stage 1 requirements will be eligible for Stage 2 assessment.

33. All applications will be analysed and assessed through a scoring system. The Assessment Framework and Scoring is outlined at Annex E.

34. The Assessment journey is outlined below:

Stage	Purpose	Assessment Method	Outcome
Stage 1 – Confirmation that Applicants meet Medr's Conditions of Funding	Confirms organisational eligibility and compliance with mandatory requirements.	Pass / Fail	Applicants that satisfy Stage 1 are eligible for Stage 2 consideration.

Stage 2 – Evidence of ability to deliver the Apprenticeship Programme	Assesses the quality, capability and delivery of proposals submitted within the Grant Application.	Scored Grant Assessment	Applications that meet the relevant assessment requirements will be considered for grant allocation.
Stage 3 – Grant Funding Allocation	Considers assessment outcomes alongside available funding, strategic priorities and programme objectives.	Allocation Decision	Grant Award (where applicable).

35. Assessment will be carried out by a panel of Medr staff and independent grant assessment experts.

When will the allocations be made?

36. Medr will confirm whether applicants applications have been successful by 31 March 2027. The allocations will be made once grant award letters have been issued as part of Medr's budget process.

What is the appeals process?

37. Applicants may appeal where they reasonably believe that a procedural error, administrative error or conflict of interest may have materially affected the outcome of their assessment.

38. The appeals process is outlined at Annex F.

Where can I get further information?

39. If you have any further queries or questions on the completion of the application form, please contact ApprenticeshipGrantApplication@medr.cymru.

40. An information online event will take place at 11:00 on 8 September 2026 for potential providers that are interested in submitting an application to deliver the Apprenticeship Programme in Wales. This can be booked via Eventbrite.

41. All questions and answers will be published on the Medr apprenticeships webpages to ensure transparency.

Medr

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

www.medr.cymru

2 Cwr y Ddinas
Stryd Tyndall
Caerdydd
CF10 4BZ

2 Capital Quarter
Tyndall Street
Cardiff
CF10 4BZ

Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government