



## Press release

**Date:** Monday, 3 August 2009

**Title:** £2 million investment for skills and employment turnaround

Universities in Wales have been awarded more than £2 million to support employees, companies and graduates during the economic downturn.

Four projects, worth £2.15 million, have been given the go-ahead under the Economic Support Initiative, which will see Wales's universities help individuals and businesses weather the economic downturn.

The initiative will enable Welsh higher education institutions to further protect or improve the employment prospects of employees in the Welsh economy, the recently unemployed and graduates entering employment.

It will also allow them to support companies, including SMEs, in targeted sectors, by providing co-ordinated access to knowledge and expertise within higher education, to improve business performance and up-skill their workforce.

The four projects, running for 18 months from 1 August 2009, will see universities and their partners, including jobs, careers, business, tourism and skills organisations, trade unions and further education colleges:

- providing online advice and guidance about Open University learning choices to individuals in Wales, including free on-line continuing professional development;

- delivering vocational training to up-skill staff in small businesses in the tourism industry in south west Wales;
- providing targeted training for individuals who are freelancing, unemployed or at risk of redundancy, in the creative media industries in Wales;
- extending the availability of careers advice to graduates; and
- helping up to 1,000 unemployed graduates access training from universities across Wales.

Professor Philip Gummett, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: “The funding will allow Wales’s universities and colleges to respond quickly to situations as they emerge and to target areas most at need of help.

“We always emphasise the wealth of knowledge and expertise in Wales’s higher education institutions, and the current economic downturn means that Wales needs to tap into this valuable resource more than ever.”

Education Minister Jane Hutt said: “In the current economic climate it is essential that we do everything we can to help businesses and individuals gain the training and skills they need so that we are prepared for the economic upturn when it arrives.

“This funding is an excellent investment in the workforce of Wales which I’m sure will, amongst other things, make a positive difference for recent graduates when they seek employment.”

**Ends**

**Notes to Editors**

**Contacts for further information**

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## **Economic Support Initiative**

Funding for the Economic Support Initiative is through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales's (HEFCW) Strategic Development Fund.

The Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills will take the opportunity to visit the stands of some of the institutions involved in these projects at the National Eisteddfod of Wales, Meirion and District, near Bala, Gwynedd on Tuesday, 4 August.

The objectives of the Economic Support Initiative are:

- To provide a one-off investment for additional activity to enable institutions to enhance and add value to their existing work with individuals and employers.
- To co-ordinate activities between higher education institutions (HEIs), and between HEIs and other partners as appropriate, particularly through building on existing schemes, programmes, regional partnerships and other initiatives.

Four projects have been approved under this Initiative with a total value of over £2.1 million:

1. £100k support is being provided for a project led by the Open University in Wales to deliver: a Welsh dimension to the existing Open University Recession website to provide employment-related individual information, advice and guidance about learning choices to individuals in Wales; and 300 free online CPD episodes to individuals, including those facing job-loss, including CPD content specific to the recession needs of Wales. Other partners in the project are: Jobcentre Plus, Neath Port Talbot College, Lifelong Learning UK, TUC Cymru, Careers Wales and the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils Cymru.

2. £309k support is being provided for a project to deliver a programme of vocational training, contributing to the up-skilling of staff in small businesses in SW Wales, with a particular focus on the Tourism and Leisure industry. The partners in this project are: Trinity University College Carmarthen; University of Wales, Lampeter; Swansea Metropolitan University; Pembrokeshire College; Coleg Sir Gar; Swansea College; Gorseinon College; Neath Port Talbot College; with support from: Tourism Training Wales/Gallu; Mid and West Wales Chamber of Commerce; Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Tourism Associations; and Business in the Community.

3. Building on the existing Skillset Screen Academy Wales, £440k support is being provided for a project to address the skills needs of individuals and companies in the Creative Media industries in Wales, by providing targeted training for individuals who are freelancing, unemployed or at risk of redundancy. The partners in the project are: University of Glamorgan; University of Wales, Newport; Aberystwyth University; Cardiff University; Swansea Metropolitan University; and Skillset, the sector skills council for the creative media industry.

4. £1.295 million support for a Cardiff University-led project involving Aberystwyth, Bangor, Glamorgan, Glyndwr and Swansea Universities to extend the provision of careers advice to include graduates, with 3000 graduates to be assisted over the lifetime of the project. The project will also assist up to 1000 unemployed graduates to access training from the universities through an Individual Learning Voucher scheme.

For more information about eligibility under the Scheme (which is now closed for bids), see Circular [W09/06HE: Economic Support Initiative](#), 4 March 2009 on the Publications / Circulars pages of [www.hefcw.ac.uk](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk).

**The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)** is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body responsible for administering funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government in support of:

- education in higher education institutions (HEIs);
- research undertaken by HEIs; and
- higher education courses at further education colleges.

HEFCW is also responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, HEFCW provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.