

For information

GO Wales Achieve through Work Experience Update

Agenda: 24
HEFCW/16/106

Disclosable

10/11/2016

1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper briefly discusses the GO Wales Achieve through Work Experience Programme and annexes a brief summary outlining the essentials of the Programme.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 The European Social Fund (ESF) funded new GO Wales Programme, Achieve through Work Experience, has a strong focus on skills and employability. This is in line with the current Corporate Strategy key strategic theme of 'Skills, Employability and Enterprise' which commits HEFCW to 'secure graduates who are equipped for life and work and universities that contribute to an upskilled workforce'.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
- i. note the contents of the paper and the annexed summary

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 No decisions are required at this time.

5 Council members' interests

- 5.1 No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

- 6.1 Jackie Cresswell-Griffith (029 2085 9740; jackie.cresswell-griffith@hefcw.ac.uk)

7 Background

- 7.1 In May 2015 HEFCW officers prepared a Council paper for approval without discussion which updated members with the latest position in respect of proposals for a new ESF funded GO Wales Programme 2015 to 2020. Council were invited to:
- i. Agree that if requested to do so by WEFO, HEFCW should proceed to full business plan for the GO Wales Student Employability Programme.
 - ii. Confirm authority delegated to the Chief Executive to take forward the business plans for the Student Employability Programme.
 - iii. Agree that if possible HEFCW should seek Competitiveness funding for a replica programme in East Wales.
 - iv. Agree that in the absence of Competitiveness funding, HEFCW will fund a replica programme within the agreed budgets, if the Convergence application is successful.
 - v. Agree that a targeted Graduate Programme should be explored with WEFO.
 - vi. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to submit a business plan for a graduate programme if invited by WEFO.
- 7.2 The Welsh European Funding Office approved a new GO Wales programme in West Wales and the Valleys (convergence area) and East Wales (competitiveness area) with a start date of 1 April 2016. In the case of the East Wales Programme the start date was retrospective.
- 7.3 The new programme is called Achieve through Work Experience and aims to work with full time students under the age of 25 years who are at increased risk of being 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) on leaving their higher education course. The target group is those students who have significant barriers to their employability and find it difficult to access mainstream employability provision, or would be insufficiently helped by mainstream provision. The basis of the Programme is tailored work experience and associated support designed to meet the needs of individual students.

8 Programme Progress

- 8.1 The timing of the Programme approval in April was not ideal for a higher education based programme as it was close to an examination period, followed quite quickly by the end of the academic year. This made a slow start almost inevitable, with some institutions taking a considerable period of time to recruit staff and be ready to work with students. It makes little sense therefore to be too focussed on outputs at this point in time.
- 8.2 Two institutions, Aberystwyth University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David were able to begin delivery shortly after the April start date and there are encouraging signs that the Programme is bedding down well at these institutions with suitable students being recruited to the Programme and taking part in work experience opportunities sourced specifically for them.
- 8.3 Most other institutions have now started delivery, with some recruiting staff over the summer period to be in a position to begin delivery with the start of the Autumn Term. Two institutions, The Open University in Wales and Swansea University have yet to commence delivery.

- 8.4 The annex to this paper provides a summary of the Programme including its budget and targets

Council Members are asked to note the contents of the paper and the annexed summary.

9 Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no new financial implications associated with this update paper. Council members should note that there is a match funding commitment by HEFCW of £1.56m over the period of the Programme (West Wales & the Valleys and East Wales).

10 Communications implications

- 10.1 There are no communications implications in respect of this update paper. We have developed ESF compliant materials to support joint sponsors in publicising the Programme to students, employers and others, and have developed a communications plan to steer how they communicate with these groups.

11 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 11.1 The GO Wales: Achieve through Work Experience Programme has had an equality impact assessment and it was noted that the Programme aims to improve the job prospects of young students, including those with disabilities / work limiting health conditions and those from BME backgrounds. Young students with other protected characteristics are not excluded from the Programme. The programme will be able to support hosts to make reasonable adjustments in the work place where appropriate, and the student could claim travel expenses to enable them to undertake the work experience.

12 Risk Assessment

- 12.1 We have developed a risk register for the Programme which comes under HEFCW's risk management processes. None of these risks are included in HEFCW's Corporate Risk Register.