

Degree Apprenticeships offer best of both worlds

The university-run scheme will be fully funded by the Welsh Government, with all students' fees paid for. Courses will be available in key sectors for economic growth identified by the Welsh Government, including IT, Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing.

In the academic year 2019-20, subjects include Software Engineering, Cyber Security and Data Analytics, with further courses being developed.

Courses are being provided this year by Bangor University, Cardiff Met, Swansea, Trinity Saint David, the Open University, Wrexham Glyndŵr and the University of South Wales.

The funding will be managed by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

Degree apprentices work throughout their degree, spending part of their time at university and the rest with their employer, developing the skills and knowledge needed to excel, both in university and in their work role.

Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education, said:

“It is essential people are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to benefit from the opportunities an evolving labour market presents. Degree apprenticeships are ideal for people already working in technology industries but are keen to study to degree level, or those who are new to the workforce but would like to study for a degree at the same time.

“This is also about improving social mobility and widening participation – providing alternative routes into higher education for people who didn't consider or may not have had the opportunity to go to university straight after leaving school.

“The degree apprenticeship therefore offers those all-round benefits – they're good for individual development, good for diversifying entry into the professions and good for Wales' economic well-being.”

Ken Skates, Minister for Economy and Transport, said:

“Our rapidly changing economy means that securing and retaining a highly skilled workforce is imperative to our future economic wellbeing. And with the ongoing challenges and uncertainties of Brexit there is no doubt that developing a highly skilled and

flexible workforce is more important than ever. These degree apprenticeships have been designed to reflect the needs of employers in Wales, providing the knowledge and skills they recognise and value. They will help improve productivity by upskilling both the new and the existing workforce, and will deliver clear benefits to both employer and employee.”

Siobhan Stephens is currently undertaking a Degree Apprenticeship at University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) while working at Mobilise, a digital cloud development business in Swansea.

Siobhan said:

“I’ve always known I wanted to work with computers – I find them fascinating. I took computer science and ICT at A Level, but I wasn’t sure if university was the right fit for me. I just wanted to get straight into work.

“For me, a degree apprenticeship is the best of both worlds. I spend four days a week working at Mobilise, getting hands-on experience in software development, and one day a week at university learning the theory behind it. Working this way means I can see how the theory works in practice and apply my on-the-job knowledge to my studies.

“My degree apprenticeship will only take a year longer than a normal degree. At the end of it I’ll have a recognised qualification and four years of industry experience under my belt.”

Barry Liles OBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Skills and Lifelong Learning) at UWTSD, said:

“As a provider of high level skills, we recognise the immense benefits to both our students and employers that can be achieved through digital degree apprenticeships. They are invaluable for preparing students with the skills and knowledge needed for industry – using a combination of expertise to upskill the talent pipeline for employers in Wales and beyond. We want to ensure that every student who walks through our doors, leaves with a skillset for life.”

Further information on the available courses can be found on the university websites.