Circular: Research Scholarships Scheme 2027/28

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A. Invitation for applications

One of the core goals of the Research Scholarships scheme since the very beginning has been to develop a new generation of academic experts who can discuss their subject with confidence in Welsh. As well as promoting scholarship through the medium of Welsh in a wide range of topics, this scheme has made a significant contribution to the task of developing a workforce for the higher education sector and in ensuring that there are qualified candidates for academic posts that become available, thereby increasing and expanding Welsh-medium teaching in the sector. It is a difficult time within the higher education sector at the moment, with a number of academic staff leaving due to restructuring plans, retirement and redundancy schemes. In some departments this has led to a reduction in Welsh-medium teaching capacity. The Coleg will prioritise applications that are part of a proposed capacity rebuilding plan. Where there is a commitment from the institution to create a job at the end of the Scholarship period, 100% funding will be available from the Coleg (see below).

Over the years the scheme has also supported several projects that have been of interest to public policy makers in Wales. Applications that investigate themes of interest to Welsh Government policy-makers are welcomed.

The Coleg hopes to award up to 10 Research Scholarships to start in the 2027/28 academic year.

These will usually be 50% scholarships for three years, and therefore the Coleg will provide half the cost of each scholarship. However, the Coleg is willing to receive applications for some fully funded scholarships:

- each Branch may nominate ONE of its applications for 100% of the funding from the Coleg;
- institutions may apply for a 100% scholarship to help increase staffing capacity (however a condition of these scholarships is that institutions

create a Welsh-medium teaching post or post-doctoral research post at the end of the scholarship);

- the Coleg will fund 'equality and diversity' scholarships at 100% to support groups that are currently under-represented in higher education and Welsh-medium research.

Institutions may submit up to five applications in total, less any unfilled scholarships the Coleg has already permitted an institution to carry over from the previous round. If institutions submit more than one application, they should clearly identify which (if any) is to be nominated by the Branch for 100% of the funding. Institutions may also list their applications in order of preference in case their first choice is not supported by the panel. No more than one application may be submitted from the same academic school/department.

Full details of the application process and the scheme's terms and conditions are set out on the following pages of this circular.

Applications should be submitted electronically by 5pm on 29 January 2027 by sending them to m.james@colegcymraeg.ac.uk.

As usual, the awarding panel's decisions will be shared with the institutions in May 2027.

B. Application Process

Introduction

1. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol invites applications for Welsh-medium postgraduate scholarships, to start in the 2027/28 academic year (on or after 1 October 2027). The closing date for submission will be 29 January 2027.

2. This document outlines the application process and arrangements for supporting the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Research Scholarships during the 2027/28 academic year.

3. These will usually be 50% scholarships for three years, and the Coleg will provide half the cost of each scholarship. Each application must clearly declare that the remaining cost of the scholarship will be guaranteed by the institution making the application (see par. 21–22 below).

4. However, the Coleg is willing to fund some 100% scholarships for three years under the following circumstances:

   (i) **Branch scholarships** – every Branch may nominate ONE application to receive 100% of the funding from the Coleg. The submitting institution will be responsible for which one (if any) of its applications is to be nominated for 100% funding, or institutions may list their applications in order of preference (see par. 23–24 below).

   (ii) **Scholarships for increasing staffing capacity** – the Coleg will provide 100% of the cost of a scholarship that forms part of an institution's plans for increasing its Welsh-medium staffing capacity. Applications for these scholarships must clearly show that a particular need has been identified in the institution's continuation planning (e.g. as a result of a planned retirement) or for additional staffing capacity to achieve aims and targets associated with Welsh-medium provision, and that the

required individuals must be fostered through a doctoral route in order to achieve this aim. It will be a condition of these 100% awards that the institution must create a Welsh-medium teaching or post-doctoral research post at the end of the scholarship that the award-holder may apply for (see par. 25–27 below).

(iii) **Scholarships to improve equality and diversity** – as part of the Coleg's equality and diversity strategy, we wish to ensure that more people from underrepresented groups are given access to Welsh-medium and bilingual education in the further education, apprenticeship, and higher education sectors. Some of these groups within Welsh communities are also currently under-represented in Welsh-medium research. The Coleg encourages applications that nominate eligible individuals from groups that have been underrepresented and will provide 100% of the funding for at least one successful award from this category of scholarship (see par. 28 below).

'Eligible individuals' are expected to belong to one or more of the groups below:

- LGBTQ+ people
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people
- Disabled people
- People who have undergone gender reassignment
- Individuals who received Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in the sixth form or college
- Individuals who received the maximum living costs grant while studying on an undergraduate course
- Young carers
- People who have experienced the care system
- People who have experienced the justice system

Applications

5. The Coleg will award up to ten scholarships to start on or after 1 October 2027 in the 2027/28 academic year.

6. Every higher education institution is eligible to submit up to five applications (less any awards the institution has been allowed to carry forward from the previous funding cycle), but no more than one from the same academic school / department.

7. Applications for Research Scholarships will be submitted by the institutions where the awards will be located. Part 1 of the application form must be completed by the academic school / department and should include full details of the proposed research project and the academic school / department's recent record of supervising research students.

8. Institutions may also nominate a **candidate** or **candidates** as part of their application. This scheme's experience in the past shows that research projects built around a suitable and qualified candidate have been more likely to succeed than projects where potential scholarship-holders were not identified in advance. However, the scheme also allows applications without nominated candidates.

9. If a candidate is associated with an application, the prospective student will be expected to follow the institution's customary processes for being accepted to undertake doctoral research. Applicants are not required to be full-time students at the academic school / department where the research is to be located **before** being part of an application to the Coleg for a scholarship (e.g. applicants could be postgraduate students at a higher education institution outside Wales, they may wish to move from one university to another, or they may have left the higher education sector for a period of time and now hope to return to undertake postgraduate study). However, applicants will be required to have secured the formal support of the academic school / department where they intend to conduct their

research before being nominated as part of an application to the Coleg for a scholarship. After having secured this support, the candidate (or candidates, if the institution wishes to nominate more than one suitable individual) must complete Part 2 of the application form.

10. For applications where a candidate or candidates has/have been nominated, the academic school/department will be expected to provide a statement supporting their application in Part 3 of the application form.

11. Institutions are also welcome to submit applications **without a nominated candidate**. If an application without a candidate is supported, the awarded scholarship must be advertised openly in the press. Institutions will be allowed up to a year from the award date to recruit a suitable candidate for an 'empty' scholarship, to begin their studies usually in the 2028/29 academic year. Any scholarship awards being carried over to the 2028/29 year will decrease the maximum number of applications that institution may submit to the next funding cycle.

Criteria

12. Up to ten scholarships will be awarded, based on:

    (i) The proposed research project,
    (ii) The scholarship's / scholarship-holder's potential contribution to realising the Coleg's strategic aims,
    (iii) The experience and record of the academic school / department where the research will be supervised, and
    (iv) The academic excellence of the applicant (where applicable).

13. The awarding panel will consider applications in two groups – applications with and applications without a candidate. All applications will be considered on the criteria outlined in 12 (i), (ii) and (iii). The applications will

be placed in order of priority and if an application does not merit support based on these criteria, it will not progress further. The awarding panel will also consider the candidate's academic excellence (12 iv) where a candidate or candidates have been nominated. If the candidate is deemed unsuitable, the awarding panel may recommend that the institution is awarded the scholarship on condition that they nominate a more appropriate candidate, or it may decide to refuse the application.

14. To respond to the first criterion (i), the academic school/department should provide an outline for the proposed research project. The context and theoretical merit of the research topic should be explained, its originality, and the possible impact or impacts of undertaking the research. The project's proposed methodology and timetable should also be detailed in order to demonstrate that the planned research is at doctorate level and how the research will provide a suitably robust and scholarly output.

15. Contribution to the realisation of the Coleg's strategic aims (criterion ii) could be a contribution towards scholarship and publication, teaching, the creation of new provision or educational resources, and/or promotion of the discipline through the medium of Welsh. Applications must explain how the award would advance Welsh-medium strategic aims and the mid- and long-term planning requirements of the academic school/department, the Coleg, and/or the wider discipline. Applications should demonstrate how they reflect the targets of the Coleg's Higher Education Academic Plan to **protect** extensive Welsh-medium provision in all subjects, to **expand** the learning experiences available to students, and/or to **extend** the provision to new audiences. The awarding panel will use this information to assess the value of the proposed investment in a scholarship to the achievement of the Coleg's aims.

16. The awarding panel will also prioritise (if they are worthy under every other criteria) any applications that show evidence (a) that Welsh-medium teaching capacity has been lost recently as a result of reorganising and

restructuring within the institution and/or staff leaving or retiring; and (b) the application is part of a plan to rebuild capacity. Where there is a commitment from the institution to create a job at the end of the Scholarship period, the institution can also mark the application as one for a 100% Scholarship from the Coleg.

17. In providing evidence for criterion (iii), academic schools/departments should summarise their recent record in supervising PhDs. The total number and percentage of theses successfully completed within the school/department should be provided for the previous five years. Details for the proposed supervising team should be included specifically.

Priority areas

18. It is required that each application, in providing evidence of the potential contribution to the Coleg's strategic aims, must show how the award is consistent with the objectives and targets of the Coleg's Higher Education Academic Plan (2022).

19. Scholarships will be open to any discipline.

20. Welsh Government also has an interest in projects that investigate themes relevant to public policy in Wales. When submitting applications with a public policy interest, an explanation should be provided outlining the value of the proposed research project to the work of drawing up or refining public policy in Wales. The application should clearly state the policy area in question and cross reference specific policy documents in the description of the project. The Welsh Government has begun publishing a series of 'Areas of Research Interest' (ARI) documents recently and plans to add more over the next period. These documents will note the most important research questions that the Government needs answered. The first ARIs that have

been published includes one specifically on the Welsh language and the Cymraeg 2050 policy area:

Areas of research interest (ARI) | GOV.WALES

Funding

21. The Coleg will usually provide 50% of the cost of the Research Scholarships, namely half of the cost of the fees and half of the cost of the maintenance grant to the student. In submitting an application for a scholarship, institutions will be committing unconditionally to covering the remaining costs of the scholarship. The Coleg will not consider any applications where strict assurances that the institution accepts this condition are not given.

22. Institutions may receive funding from another source (e.g. research council, industry, etc.) to contribute to the remaining cost of the scholarship, but applications that expect the applicant to self-fund the scholarship (either wholly or in part) will not be permitted. The application should clearly note which body will be funding the remainder of the scholarship, but the institution itself will be responsible for guaranteeing that the remainder of the scholarship will be provided.

23. For the 2027/28 funding cycle, the Coleg will be willing to fully fund up to 5 of the Research Scholarships for three years. Each Branch may nominate ONE application to receive 100% of the funding from the Coleg. The submitting institution will be responsible for choosing which one (if any) of its applications is to be nominated for 100% of the funding, and the application to be nominated by the Branch should be clearly identified on the application form. Institutions may also list their applications in order of preference in case their first choice is not supported by the panel.

24. Applications nominated by the Branch for full funding will not be treated differently by the awarding panel and will not receive preferential consideration nor deemed more of a priority than other applications. The

additional conditions regarding the creation of a post etc outlined below in par. 26-27 will not be applicable to the Branch scholarships.

25. In the case of scholarships to increase staffing capacity (4.ii above) institutions may apply for 100% of the cost of a scholarship for three years. The Coleg will prioritise applications that:

    (i) provide evidence showing insufficient staffing capacity within the subject nationally, and a shortage of suitable applicants with the required experience and/or expertise to be appointed to Welsh-medium posts; and/or that

    (ii) provide evidence of continuation planning and that the institution is preparing for the retirement of a member of staff within the academic school/department, and wishes to appoint a successor that will undertake duties including Welsh-medium teaching and provision development.

26. To receive full funding for scholarships prioritised according to the above, applications must clearly show that a particular need has been identified within the institution's plans for increased staffing capacity to achieve the aims and targets for Welsh-medium provision, and that suitable individuals must be fostered through a doctoral route in order to achieve this.

27. These scholarships will also only be fully-funded on condition that the institution commits to creating a Welsh-medium teaching or post-doctoral research post at the end of the scholarship. If a post-doctoral research post is created, the post-holders duties will be expected to include contributing to Welsh-medium teaching. These posts will be full-time and for a minimum of two years and must be available to the scholarship holders to apply. If a post is not created in line with theses conditions, the Coleg will reclaim the value of the scholarship in full from the institution. If having created a post but failed to appoint, the Coleg will reclaim at least half the value of the scholarship from the institution. In submitting an application for a fully-

funded scholarship, the institution will be committing unconditionally to these terms.

28. In the case of an equality and diversity scholarship (4.iii above) the Coleg will provide 100% of the cost of the scholarship. An institution can nominate an eligible individual who belongs to an underrepresented group in higher education (see 4.iii for full details of the eligible groups) when submitting a scholarship application, or when nominating an eligible individual after having advertised and recruited for a scholarship that originally had no candidate. It will not be necessary, therefore, to identify in advance an eligible individual for an equality and diversity scholarship in each case. If an eligible individual is appointed in due course to a scholarship originally awarded as a 50% scholarship, the Coleg will increase its financial contribution to 100% of the cost of the scholarship. However, applications to this category of scholarship will be awarded on the basis of the criteria and in accordance with the procedure outlined in clauses 12-17 above, and applications to this category will not be treated more favorably than other applications.

29. The application must clearly show whether it's for a 50% or 100% scholarship, and on what terms; it will not be possible to change the funding model after the application has been submitted (except in the circumstances outlined in clause 28 above).

30. **All** scholarships, whatever the funding arrangements, will be subject to all the scheme's usual terms and conditions, and will have to prove their value in terms of their potential contribution to realising the Coleg's strategic aims. All scholarships will also be treated as wholly Welsh-medium.

Submitting applications

31. Institutions should make internal arrangements for receiving and considering applications and, if required, to decide upon a process to select up to five applications to submit to the Coleg, and to identify which (if any) is to be nominated for full funding. Such arrangements must be based on a clear timetable which will allow applications to reach the Coleg by the closing date.

32. Applications must be submitted via the institution and signed by a representative from the academic school/department or college/faculty where the research will be located, and by an authorised signatory on behalf of the institution. Applications from individuals will not be considered under any circumstances.

33. Applications should be submitted on the appropriate form (in electronic format) by 5pm on **29 January 2027. Late applications will not be permitted under any circumstances.**

34. **The form must be submitted in Welsh or bilingually. Applications which break this condition will not be considered.**

35. The word limit set out for each part of the application form should be adhered to. **The Coleg will not consider applications that exceed the word limit** that has been noted or accept any appendices to applications that contain additional information.

36. If institutions are unsure of the validity of a proposed application, they should contact Coleg officers for advice before 18 December 2026. Every effort will be made to resolve any issues before the deadline. It is not possible to guarantee a response to enquiries received after this date.

Awarding

37. The Coleg may refer applications to subject experts to evaluate the scholarly excellence of the application and the applicant (if relevant). The Coleg may also decide that short-listed applicants should be interviewed in order to assess the potential contribution of the award/award-holder to the realisation of the Coleg's strategic aims, and to assess their abilities in Welsh, if required.

38. Recommendations for awarding scholarships will be submitted to the Coleg's Senior Management Team for approval. The Senior Management Team's decision will be final.

C. Terms and Conditions

1. In this document, the terms and conditions of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Research Scholarships for the 2027/28 academic year are outlined. The Coleg retains the right in future to append new terms and conditions to those outlined in this document.

2. The usual starting date for 2027/28 scholarships will be on or after 1 October 2027.

Language of the thesis

3. Doctoral dissertations will be expected to be researched and presented through the medium of Welsh. Dissertations that are researched, written and presented in Welsh are considered a valuable contribution to Welsh-medium research and scholarship, and may also eventually give rise to scholarly publication in Welsh.

4. Exceptions to this condition will not be considered. If an academic school/department is deemed to have breached this condition the Coleg may demand a full repayment of the funding provided for the scholarship. Moreover, the Coleg will refuse to receive any further applications from the academic school/department for up to three years.

5. It is the institution's responsibility to verify candidates' ability to comply with this condition successfully and, by presenting an application to the Coleg, the institution will certify this.

6. If the award panel during its evaluation of the application feels that the applicant requires language-skills training before the award can be given, the Coleg reserves the right to make language-skills training a condition of the funding.

7. Doctoral research projects will very often deal with subjects and texts where specialist support is needed to standardise and develop terminology in Welsh. To ensure the appropriate terminological support, at least one member of the supervisory team must commit to being part of the discussions on terminology with the scholarship holder and assist the terminological team with their subject expertise.

8. It will also be the institution's responsibility to ensure that at least one of the proposed supervisors on the research project is qualified to supervise through the medium of Welsh. If one or more members of the proposed supervisory team is a non-Welsh speaker, the application must clearly show how the supervisory process and arrangements will allow the research to be undertaken naturally and without impediment through the medium of Welsh, and without causing any further or unfair burden to the award-holder. Any internal processes within the university to monitor progress (e.g. providing reports, completing a trial period to progress from Part 1 to Part 2, etc) should also take into consideration the language of the research, without causing any further or unfair burden to the award-holder. If the supervisory team changes for any reason during the period of the research project, the university will be responsible for ensuring the continuity of supervision arrangements in the Welsh language.

9. When submitting an application, academic schools/departments will be required to suggest up to 3 suitable individuals who could serve as external examiners and be able to examine the doctoral thesis through the medium of Welsh.

Eligibility to apply

10. To be eligible for a scholarship, applicants will be expected to be graduates of a recognised higher education institution. They will normally have gained at least an upper second-class honours degree (2.i), and have successfully

completed a taught postgraduate course before 31 July in the year that the scholarship is due to begin. Applications will also be accepted from individuals who will be registering directly on a postgraduate research programme (i.e. without a previous postgraduate qualification) only when it is common practice within the subject. Other qualifications may be considered in exceptional cases.

11. Institutions will be responsible for making arrangements for the supervision of scholarship holders. These arrangements will conform to the institution's own internal mechanisms and to the QAA Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

12. Applications are welcomed from candidates who wish to undertake doctoral study either full- or part-time. The value of a part-time scholarship will be adjusted *pro rata*. However, it is not possible to fund a research programme that is less than 0.5 of an award-holder's time, if they wish to study part-time.

Additional expectations of award holders

13. Scholarship holders will be expected to undertake any activities which are customary for research students, such as undertaking any compulsory training, attending academic conferences, and if relevant, publishing and drawing in external funding.

14. Scholarship holders will be expected to contribute to Welsh-medium teaching on undergraduate programmes (up to 6 hours a week, or no more than 60 hours a year) within their academic schools/departments in the second and third year of their award. Holders will not usually undertake any teaching duties in the first year. In the second and third years, the number of hours should reflect the nature of the allocated teaching (which will usually be comprised of Part One seminars, explanatory tutorials, laboratory exhibition work, etc.) and the preparation time required. Teaching

responsibilities should be discussed and agreed with the award holder at the end of the previous academic year, and also with the Coleg. However, institutions should ensure that the teaching load does not over-burden the holders nor prevent them from completing their research programmes and obtain the PhD qualification as soon as possible.

15. The holders will be remunerated by the academic school/department for this teaching at an hourly rate consistent with the usual rates afforded to postgraduate students. Holders will not teach through the medium of English under any circumstances.

16. Every scholarship holder will be required to attend the Coleg's Research Skills Programme. This will include attending a minimum of 2 Research Skills Courses and a teaching skills course during the scholarship's first year, and one course in each of the following two years, as well as attending the Coleg's annual research conference during each year of the scholarship.
17. Scholarship holders will be encouraged to contribute to activities designed to promote Welsh-medium provision and scholarship within their disciplines, and become involved in Welsh-medium marketing and promotion activities held locally within their institutions, and nationally under the auspices of the Coleg.

18. Scholarship holders are expected to publish the results of their research in Welsh. A condition of the funding is that each scholarship holder provides a short academic article in Welsh (600-1000 words) based on their research project to be published on the *Gwerddon Fach* website (and on any other platform the Coleg deems appropriate). Scholarship holders are also encouraged to publish their work in any Welsh-medium scholarly journal appropriate to their field, and/or in an issue of the academic e-journal, *Gwerddon*.

19. The Coleg keeps an archive of doctoral dissertations funded through the Research Scholarship scheme. Every award-holder will be expected to

provide a digital copy of the final draft of their thesis to the Coleg within eight weeks of having graduated with a PhD (i.e. from the official date of matriculation at their institution). The Coleg reserves the right to place a copy of the theses in an appropriate archive in its on-line Library.

Monitoring progress

20. Progress will be carefully reviewed throughout the scholarship period. The scholarship holder and the academic school/department will be required to complete the Coleg's annual monitoring reports confirming the satisfactory progress of the research project and that the holder is likely to complete on schedule, or outlining what steps are to be taken to ensure successful completion within a revised timetable.

21. If a situation was to arise where the conditions of the scheme were breached in some way, the financial responsibilities for the scholarship would be transferred from the Coleg to the institution. Institutions therefore need to be aware that they could be expected to maintain the scholarship themselves in such situations, or that the award could be terminated.

Regulations

22. Full regulations apply to the scheme, copies of which are available from the Coleg. In general, these follow the pattern of research council regulations, and include regulations in relation to maternity leave, illness, holidays, etc.

Funding terms

23. Scholarships are funded for a period of three years and will be used only for funding doctoral research. These scholarships will not be used for funding

Master's degree studies (apart from when individuals will be required to formally register on a Master's programme that will convert within a year to the second year of a doctoral programme).

24. Scholarships will be equal in value to the postgraduate scholarships awarded by the research councils and will increase annually as appropriate to reflect any increase in the value of the research councils' scholarships. (See the UKRI website for current values). The scheme will contribute towards paying the:

    (i) standard institutional fees, and
    (ii) the maintenance grant paid to the student.

25. Institutions are expected to inform the Coleg of its fees for the coming academic year by 1 January.

26. The scheme contributes to the tutoring and registration costs of the student and pays this directly to the institution. Standard fees do not include accommodation costs, which should be paid from the maintenance grant. No additional payment will be made towards fees for any examination, caution money, or any deposit ultimately repayable. Nor will the scheme pay any charges for typing or binding a thesis, or any fees incurred for training courses other than those arranged under the aegis of the scheme and any costs paid from the additional funding noted under (28) below.

27. Institutions are expected to provide full support for the scholarship holders, equivalent to that which would be provided to research students funded through other means, e.g. office accommodation and computer facilities.

28. The scheme also includes additional funding to support fieldwork and/or laboratory work, attending conferences or contributing towards other research costs. Up to £500 may usually be claimed from the Coleg each year to cover such costs. Institutions are encouraged to provide matched funding from their own resources for the same use. If a case is made for providing a

greater sum annually, this should be made clear in the application and it is expected that the institution also commits to matching the higher sum requested of the Coleg. If external funding can be sought to partially cover the prospective additional costs, the application should clearly note which body will be contributing towards those costs and provide assurances for the funds being provided. It may transpire that it is not possible to provide additional funding for every award, and if several awards have significant additional costs it will not be possible to award all the proposed scholarships.

29. The scheme will not fund any extensions if the doctorate has not been succesfully completed within the three year allocation of funding.

Disclaimer

30. The Coleg reserves the right to set terms and conditions, that are not necessarily included in this circular, for any scholarships funded partly or wholly by the Coleg.