Skill Up – The Flexible Skills Fund

The Open University

in

Northern Ireland

Guidance Notes

September 2021
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1.0 KEY APPLICANT INFORMATION

1.1 Background to this funding:

Welcome to The Open University’s Skill up, Flexible Skills Fund guidance notes for applicants.

As part of the Northern Ireland Executive’s Economic Recovery Action Plan, a new Flexible Skills Fund, “Skill Up”, has been established by The Department for the Economy. The purpose of this funding is to help upskill and reskill individuals to meet the needs of the economy as we emerge from the pandemic and grow beyond it.

The Department for the Economy is currently supporting a range of online skills provision to upskill and reskill people in economic priority sectors and in-demand areas. These include life and health sciences, green technologies, advanced manufacturing / engineering and digital, to enhance skill sets in critical transferable areas such as leadership and management, entrepreneurship, and employability.

In partnership with The Department for the Economy, through this scheme, The Open University in Northern Ireland is offering a limited number of fully funded, accredited learning opportunities to upskill and reskill in leadership and management and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). As the only business school in Northern Ireland and only one of three business schools across the island of Ireland to be placed in the top one percent of business schools in the world (Triple Accreditation), this indicates the high teaching quality and qualification impact of our leadership and management provision, not just academically but to industry.

STEM and leadership and management qualifications are highly demanded by a wide range of sectors across our economy, providing a career gateway to highly successful and diverse career progression and development. Our full suite of fully funded modules being offered via the Skill Up – Flexible Skills Fund is available from: https://www.open.ac.uk/courses/courses/choose/att/ni-funded-skills
1.2 How to read this document:

This document is divided into 2 main sections. Section 1 includes general information, including how to apply, entry requirements, key timescales and contact details. The second section (sections 5/6) provide background to our postgraduate and microcredential study. We highly recommend you read this document in FULL before completing an application form.
1.3 Eligibility criteria:

To be eligible for a fully funded place you must be:

- domiciled in Northern Ireland
- eligible to work in Northern Ireland
- settled in Northern Ireland, and ordinarily resident in the UK for at least three years or have indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK
- over 18 years of age

In addition, you must meet the individual entry requirements for your chosen module.

1.4 Applying:

Complete the application form for the course that you would like to apply for. For postgraduate and microcredential study each separate application form is available from: The Open University | Courses and Qualifications under “How to Apply”.

The closing date for applications is 1 October at 6pm. Please note that late applications will NOT be accepted.

Shortlisting will be completed on a first come, first served basis and places will be subject to place availability. If you submit more than one application, we will shortlist based on the information included in the first application. We expect to receive significant interest for our courses so please apply as soon as possible. Once your application form has been submitted, it will be assessed by a panel. If your application is successful you will be emailed and invited to create an Open University account (if you don’t already have one), to create your own unique personal identification number. If you already have an existing personal identification number, and you are unsure of this, or for any queries relating to this, email: Ireland-general@open.ac.uk

You will then be required to complete and sign a registration agreement to process your application. Further instructions will be provided to successful applicants and we would ask you to respond within the timeframe outlined.

All applicants will be notified of outcome of decision by email, no later than 22 October 2021.
1.5 Entry requirements (for postgraduate modules):

(For information on our microcredentials go to page 11, Section 6)

Please read the eligibility criteria in FULL before applying. This specific criteria is available for each module from The Open University | Courses and Qualifications from “What you can study”.

Each postgraduate course will have its own specific entry requirements. In most cases, it is expected that you will hold a bachelors degree (or equivalent) in the related discipline you are applying for, and/or alternatively have at least three years relevant industry experience. The information you provide based on this criteria in the application form will be used for shortlisting; please read this carefully and answer the required question as comprehensively as possible.

If you want to find out more about our postgraduate courses or have questions about applying for postgraduate study, you can contact one of our study advisers for further information: https://www.open.ac.uk/contact

1.6 Your study (postgraduate modules):

All teaching and assessment will be delivered online. You will have a personal tutor to guide you in your learning, provide feedback on your written work, and deliver group tutorials. They’ll support you throughout the course and you’ll be able to stay in touch by phone or online.

Our postgraduate modules will start in early November. The majority of the teaching will be completed by late March (2022) and following this, further assessment will take place. If successful, lecture content / key submission requirements and dates will be clearly laid out in a week-by-week study planner. We recommend you study no more than one module at a time (30 credits), and you’ll need to set aside around 13–16 hours to study each week.

For two of our postgraduate business modules (Effective strategic management in business and the public sector and Managing in a changing world) it is compulsory to attend a residential school. For those modules starting in November (2021), these will be online with no face-to-face events. More details about residential schools will be made available to successful applicants on registration.
2.0 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

2.1 Additional support:

We highly recommend that you complete our free badged open course, *Succeeding in postgraduate study*, introducing you to the nature of Master’s-level study. It offers essential preparation for pursuing your learning at this level. This is available from: [Succeeding in postgraduate study - OpenLearn - Open University - SPS_1](https://openLearn.openu.ac.uk)

We also offer another free online course, *Get Started with online learning*, where you will find out what online learning is and what it can offer you. This is available from: [OUFL_25 - OpenLearn - Open University - OUFL_25](https://openLearn.openu.ac.uk)

3.0 KEY TIMESCALES

3.1 Key timescales:

- Submit your application form **by Friday 1 October no later than 6pm**; late applications will **NOT** be accepted;
- Confirmation of receipt of application form will be sent to you within 24 hours (if submitted on a Friday, it will be Monday before we can confirm);
- Following this, if you still haven’t received a decision, email: [Ireland-skillup@open.ac.uk](mailto:Ireland-skillup@open.ac.uk)
- All applicants will be notified of outcome of decision **by email, no later than 22 October 2021**.
4.0 KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

4.1 Key contact information:

- For registration queries please contact: northern-ireland@open.ac.uk
- For eligibility queries please contact: Ireland-skillup@open.ac.uk
- For submission of application form related queries contact: Ireland-skillup@open.ac.uk

5.0 POSTGRADUATE STUDY

5.1 Postgraduate study

At The Open University we offer a modular approach to learning. Our modular delivery has many benefits including bite size, stackable blocks of learning that can be built upon to suit professional / personal commitments across the short, medium, and long term, helping to make adult learning opportunities more flexible and accessible to help you fit your study around life commitments.

Each module ranges from 15 – 120 credits with the majority of modules having 30 credits. Credits measure the learner workload required for successful completion of a module / qualification. One credit represents about 10 hours of study over the duration of the course. We recommend that you study no more than 30 credits at any one time.

Our “stand alone” postgraduate modules allow you to study an area that you are personally or professionally interested in. We offer the option to combine modules towards an Open University qualification, allowing you the flexibility to build your qualification from a postgraduate certificate to a masters degree as highlighted below:

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<td>60 postgraduate points</td>
<td>120 postgraduate points</td>
<td>180 postgraduate points</td>
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For more information visit: Postgraduate Qualifications | The Open University
Qualification pathways:

For your reference we have highlighted those modules that have the potential to build towards a postgraduate certificate qualification (progressing to complete a Masters programme, however, we cannot guarantee funding for this):

**Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths:**

- **Advanced Networking (60 CREDITS)**
  - *Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Networking (CCNP Enterprise)*

- **Data Management (30 CREDITS)**
  - *This module can build towards the Postgraduate Certificate in Computing (K22) / Postgraduate Certificate in Systems Thinking in Practice (C72) / Postgraduate Certificate in Technology Management (C49)*

- **Network Security (30 CREDITS)**
  - *This module can build towards the Postgraduate Certificate in Computing (K22) / Postgraduate Certificate in Technology Management (C49)*

- **Information Security (30 CREDITS)**
  - *This module can build towards the Postgraduate Certificate in Computing (K22) / Postgraduate Certificate in Systems Thinking in Practice (C72) / Postgraduate Certificate in Technology Management (C49)*

- **Managing Change with systems thinking in practice (30 CREDITS)**
  - *This module can build towards a Postgraduate Certificate in Systems Thinking (C72) / Postgraduate Certificate in Computing (K22)*

- **Strategic Capabilities for Technological Innovation (30 CREDITS)**
  - *This module can build towards the Postgraduate Certificate in Computing (K22) / Postgraduate Certificate in Systems Thinking in Practice (C72) / Postgraduate Certificate in Technology Management (C49)*

- **Technological Innovation Management (30 CREDITS)**
  - *This module can build towards the Postgraduate Certificate in Computing (K22) / Postgraduate Certificate in Systems Thinking in Practice (C72) / Postgraduate Certificate in Technology Management (C49)*
Leadership and Management:

Managing in a Changing World (30 CREDITS)

*Building to the Postgraduate Certificate in Business Administration (C66)*

Our other FULLY FUNDED modules we are offering through this scheme, may build towards a future qualification (currently these qualifications are not being funded by this scheme).
6.0 MICROCREDENTIAL STUDY

6.1 Microcredential Study

A microcredential is a shorter and sharper type of University-level online learning experience. They are delivered at degree and postgraduate level and usually take around just a few months to complete. Microcredentials are becoming more popular in industry and education due to their focused and flexible delivery. The Open University’s microcredentials are hosted on our FutureLearn platform, the largest Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform in Europe. Microcredentials play an important role in The Open University’s mission: to make education accessible to all. From 2020, we have developed a strong pipeline of courses launched across key subject areas including business and management, data and technology, climate change and sustainability and teaching and learning.

There are many benefits related to undertaking a microcredential:

✓ Current course content that is fully accredited to address specific skills gaps within a reasonable timeframe;
✓ Self-paced to suit professional and personal commitments; and
✓ Meets a range of diverse learning styles and preferences, contributing to professional growth.

We offer a range of microcredentials across key subject areas including at postgraduate (LEVEL 7, 15 credits) and undergraduate (LEVEL 6, 10 credits) levels. The fully funded microcredentials on offer through the Skill up, Flexible Skills Fund include:
BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT:

Postgraduate:

- Management of Uncertainty: Leadership, Decisions and Action
- Agile Leadership and Management (in collaboration with the Agile Business Consortium)
- Management of Change: Organisation Development and Design

Undergraduate:

- Business Management: Improving Organisational Practice
- Business Management: Marketing Principles and Practice
- Business Management: Fundamentals of Management Accounting
- Business Management: Financial Accounting for Non-Financial Roles

DATA AND TECHNOLOGY:

Postgraduate:

- Cyber Security Operations (Cisco, Endorsed by Cisco Networking Academy)

Undergraduate:

- AWS: Solutions Architect (in collaboration with Amazon Web Services).
- Cisco: DevOps using DevNet (Endorsed by Cisco Networking Academy)

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY:

- Tackling the Climate Crisis: Innovation from Cuba - Undergraduate

TEACHING AND LEARNING:

- Teacher development: Embedding mental health in the curriculum (Endorsed by the Mental Health Foundation) - Postgraduate

Our microcredentials will commence in October. The postgraduate microcredentials will start on 11 October and last for 12 weeks and undergraduate microcredentials will start on the 25 October and last for 10 weeks. For more information of what to expect before, during and after a microcredential, read the “Syllabus” section of the microcredential you are interested in studying.

Updated September 2021
There is one compulsory assignment to complete at the end of your online study. You will receive no formal certification upon completion of the microcredential unless you submit and pass your assignment. Completing the assignment will also help you to further enhance your knowledge and awareness of the subject area.

We strongly encourage you to complete our free online courses to introduce you to online learning, see section 2.0, additional support (page 7).

For further information on our microcredentials:

Microcredentials | The Open University