

The Open University in Northern Ireland

Skill-Up Flexible Skills Fund 2022

Guidance Notes

April 2022

SKILLS TO SUCCEED

SKILL UP
THE FLEXIBLE
SKILLS FUND

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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) areas. As the only business school in Northern Ireland and one of four 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.

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 (section 5) provides background to our 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

There is a single assignment to complete at the end of your online study. In order to receive formal certification, you will be required to submit (and pass) this. You'll then also receive an Open University certificate confirming that you have received 10 academic credits at undergraduate level and 15 at postgraduate levels. We strongly encourage you to complete the assignment as this will show evidence of your professional development.

Please note that postgraduate microcredentials start on the **20 June** and run for **12 weeks**. Undergraduate modules start on the **4 July** and run for **10 weeks**. These microcredentials will require **10–13 hours** of study a week. Applicants to the Flexible Skills Fund can apply to study up to 2 courses at any one time.

1.4 Applying:

Complete the application form for the course that you would like to apply for. For microcredential study the application form is available from: [The Open University | Courses and Qualifications](#) under “**How to Apply**”. Please note that in order to be considered for a fully funded place, these application forms must be completed via the application form on the Skill-up landing page. The closing date for applications is **16th May 2022 at 6pm**.

Shortlisting will be completed on a first come, first served basis and places will be subject to availability. We would strongly encourage you to submit one application form for the module(s) you would like to study. 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 a FutureLearn account (if you don't already have one). If we find an existing Open University record for you then the email address provided in this application may be used to update the record accordingly.

All applicants will be notified of outcome of decision **by email**. See section 3.0 for key timescales for more information.

2.0 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

2.1 Additional support:

If you are unsure about postgraduate study, our free badged OpenLearn course, [Succeeding In Postgraduate Study](#), will provide essential preparation for pursuing your learning at this level.

You can also explore the benefits of online learning and discover how to successfully learn with us by completing the free [Get started with Online Learning](#) course.

3.0 KEY TIMESCALES

3.1 Key timescales:

Submit your application form by:

- **16 May 2022 at 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**
- All applicants will be notified of outcome of decision **by email:**
 - **Microcredential postgraduate** – Week commencing 13th June 2022
 - **Microcredential undergraduate** – Week commencing 27th June 2022
 - **Unsuccessful applicants** – Week commencing 27th June 2022

Start dates:

- **Postgraduate courses** – 20th June 2022
- **Undergraduate courses** – 4th July 2022

4.0 KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

4.1 Key contact information:

- For registration queries please contact: Ireland-skillup@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 MICROCREDENTIAL STUDY

5.1 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 **Leadership and management; teacher development and inclusive learning and computing and digital technologies.**

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:

Postgraduate

Leadership and Management

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

Teacher development and inclusive learning

- Teacher Development: Embedding Mental Health in the Curriculum (endorsed by the Mental Health Foundation)

Undergraduate

Leadership and Management

- Business Management: People Management and Leadership
- Business Management: Fundamentals of Management Accounting

Computing and digital technologies

- Cisco: Python Programming (OpenEDG)
- AWS: Solutions Architect (in collaboration with Amazon Web Services)

Our microcredentials will commence in June and July. The postgraduate microcredentials will start on **20 June** and last for 12 weeks and undergraduate microcredentials will start on the **4 July** 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. **For further information on our microcredentials:** [Microcredentials | The Open University](#).

We strongly encourage you to complete our free online courses to introduce you to online learning, **see section 2.0, additional support (page 6)**.