

Wales' first railway engineering degree apprenticeship

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The [University of South Wales \(USW\)](#) is leading a partnership which will offer the first railway engineering degree apprenticeships in Wales.

Approved by the Welsh Government and run in conjunction with Nantgarw-based Coleg y Cymoedd, the four-year courses will give apprentices operating in the rail sector the opportunity to gain a university-accredited engineering degree.

Starting in January 2024, then annually from September next year, students on the two Degree Apprenticeship Railway Engineering courses will focus on either civil engineering and rail track development, such as permanent way infrastructure; or electro-mechanical systems and electronics, supporting electrification and rolling stock maintenance. Studying part of the course at Coleg Y Cymoedd and then the rest at USW, the successful students will gain a Bachelor of Sciences degree.

Louise Pennell, who is Associate Dean of Partnerships and Development in USW's Faculty of Computing, Engineering, and Science, said the course has been developed to meet the specific requirements of the railway industry across Wales and the UK, as projects such as the South Wales Metro are developed to address the need for sustainable and reliable public transport systems.

"Over the past few years we have worked with a variety of rail industry partners, Industry Wales, and the Welsh Government to address the need for a railway engineering education pathway in Wales, as previously there was no such qualification offered here," Mrs Pennell said.

"After Industry Wales asked companies operating in the railway sector what knowledge, skills, and higher-level behaviours industry required from their employees and potential graduates, the pathway was put together and approved by the Welsh Government.

"At USW we have a sector-leading engineering department which has extensive expertise in developing work-based learning programmes in a variety of sectors, and are experts in managing degree apprenticeship across a number of specialisms.

"As we are leading on this degree apprenticeship, both employers and those taking the courses are guaranteed access to the most up-to-date knowledge and facilities available to the industry in Wales."

Matthew Tucker, Assistant Principal Business Services at Coleg y Cymoedd said: "Coleg y Cymoedd is absolutely delighted to partner with USW for this first-of-its-kind in Wales railway engineering degree apprenticeship. Students on this programme will be studying in sector-leading facilities through our established specialist railway training centre at Coleg y Cymoedd Nantgarw campus."

Economy Minister Vaughan Gething said: "Rail is a growth sector for Wales and this new pathway will help create a pipeline of talent with the right skills to see the industry prosper, creating more opportunities for highly skilled and well-paid careers.

"Degree apprenticeships have an important role to play in an education and skills system which is building the workforce for the now and the future. This new course links better transport with better jobs, helping more young people plan ambitious futures in Wales."

More details of the course are available at www.southwales.ac.uk/degree-apprenticeships or by contacting uswapprenticeships@southwales.ac.uk