

Tánaiste & Minister Hanafin Announce Details of Revised FAS Work Placement Programme

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Ms. Mary Coughlan, T.D., together with the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Ms. Mary Hanafin, T.D., recently announced details to relax the eligibility criteria of the Work Placement Programme. The Programme is now aimed at providing 9 months work experience to 2,000 unemployed individuals, while they continue to maintain their social welfare entitlements. The revised criteria came into effect from 1st December 2009.

Making the announcement, the Tánaiste said, "Many people who at the moment cannot find employment want to ensure that they retain their skills level or want to secure work experience that will help their CV and assist them in getting a job. That is what this programme aims to achieve, while at the same time retaining their social welfare entitlements.

At the initial launch of the Programme, we promised to review its operation and its eligibility criteria and I am glad to say that this review has now been completed. We have decided to improve the accessibility of the Programme by amending its eligibility criteria for both unemployed participants and firms providing placements."

The key changes relate to the eligibility criteria. For unemployed participants the following criteria have been amended:

- Recipients of most social welfare payments, including Job Seekers' Allowance and Job Seekers' Benefit, will now be eligible to apply. Unemployed graduates who are not receiving a social welfare payment will also now be eligible to apply.
- 2009 graduates are now also eligible to apply.

• The period, for which participants have to be in receipt of a social welfare payment in order to be eligible, has been reduced from 6 months to 3 months.

The key changes relating to the eligibility criteria of firms providing placements are:

- The Programme will be open to all sectors of the economy including, the private, public, and now the community and voluntary sectors. The Department of Finance will issue a Circular in the coming weeks on the operation of the programme in the public sector.
- The requirement for a firm to have at least 10 employees has been removed.
- Previously firms could only participate if they did not have redundancies in the previous 6 months. This constraint has been reduced to 3 months. However, the level of redundancies in the last three months were less than 5% of the workforce, these firms will be eligible to participate.

The duration of the work placement has been increased to a maximum of 9 months. Minister Hanafin stated that, "this programme offers jobseekers and graduates the opportunity to gain valuable experience in their chosen field. With the introduction of the amended eligibility criteria, we expect that the number of participants on the Work Placement Programme will be substantially increased." The revised criteria came into effect from 1st December 2009.

Concluding, the Tánaiste said, "the amended Work Placement Programme demonstrates the Governments willingness to evaluate and review programmes to assess their performance and then to make the necessary amendments in order to increase their impact. We are also disposed to increasing the number of places available on this Programme should the revised criteria prove successful and on the number of places currently available becoming fully subscribed."

FÁS will continue to manage the Work Placement Programme and interested parties should revert to the FAS website, www.fas.ie, for further information or their local FÁS Employment Services offices or alternatively they can call the FÁS freephone number 1800 611 116.

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Note to Editors

For eligibility guidelines and details on how to become a Participant on the Programme please see web link <http://www.fas.ie/en/Job+Seeker/WPP/default.htm>

For eligibility guidelines and details on how to become a Provider on the Programme please see web link <http://www.fas.ie/en/Employer/WPP/default.htm>

