



1. Higher Education policy

Higher education in Wales is offered mainly through Wales' 12 universities and higher education (HE) colleges including the Open University in Wales. It is also offered at a number of further education colleges.

Education, including higher education, in Wales has been a devolved policy area since devolution in 1999. Prior to this it was broadly the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales. Schedule 5 to the Government of Wales Act 2006 lists the Fields in which the Assembly has legislative competence, Field 5 is Education and Training. The Members' Research Service's [Assembly powers tracking notes: Field 5: Education and training](#) shows an up-to-date list of the Matters for which the Assembly has legislative competence and the policy areas in which Measures can be made.

Higher education institutions are private bodies which are independent of government. They receive their income from a number of sources, including from student fees, through research projects and by generating business. However, they also receive a portion of their income from public funds. The funds from the Welsh Government are distributed by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

UK science policy rests with the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) as does the funding of the [seven Research Councils](#), which allocate public money to support research projects and teams in higher education institutions across the UK. BIS takes a lead role in furthering initiatives relating to links between business and higher education.

2. Recent Developments

In October 2009, Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills ("the Minister") told the National Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee that she would be publishing her Twenty-First Century higher education plan in November 2009 and that there would be emphasis on a partnership approach.

It is a partnership approach to maximise efficiency and gain, not just collaboration between HEIs, but also with business, and it is very much on the agenda of economic renewal that the Deputy First Minister announced yesterday' [RoP p26 Enterprise and Learning Committee, 14 October 2009](#)



The Minister's new plan for higher education follows a two phase Review of Higher Education in Wales which was undertaken by a Task and Finish group, set up by the Welsh Government. The Task and Finish Group was chaired by Professor Merfyn Jones, Vice Chancellor of Bangor University.

The Minister announced the establishment of the Review on 25 June 2008. In its first stage the Review was asked to consider student finance arrangements in Wales: the extent to which student finance is targeted to enhance widening access opportunities and encourage take up of priority subjects; how best to tackle graduate debt in anticipation of the 2009 fee cap review in England; and how this is best achieved through national statutory student finance and locally delivered bursaries, scholarships etc.

Professor Mervyn Jones submitted the Group's report on this first stage of the Review to the Minister on 1 October 2008.

The Welsh Government then consulted on proposals to remodel the student finance system in Wales for full-time undergraduate students. The consultation was open from 8 December 2008 until 16 February 2009. 28 responses were received and are published on the Welsh Government website.

The Minister made an oral Statement on student finance on 18 March 2009. The key points were

We will phase out the tuition fee grant for new students from academic year 2010-11 and remodel the student finance system. We will redirect resources away from the tuition fee grant and allocate them as follows. A total of £44 million will be re-invested in the student finance system to enhance the Assembly learning grant. As a result, we will raise the level of a full Assembly learning grant from £2,906 in 2009-10 to £5,000 in 2010-11, which will have a particular impact on students from families with the lowest incomes. At the same time, and in order to ensure that no Welsh domiciled full-time undergraduate student is eligible for less grant support for living costs than they would be under the English 2009-10 student finance system, I will increase the household income threshold for partial Assembly learning grants by £10,000.

Oral Cabinet Statement – Higher Education Student Finance 18 March 2009

For phase two of the Review, the Task and Finish Group was asked to undertake a high-level Review of the "mission, purpose, role and funding for higher education in Wales". They submitted their report to the Minister on 27 April 2009.

The Task and Finish group made a large number of recommendations identifying key issues and priorities.



They also identified three fundamental challenges for the higher education sector:

- the strategic leadership of higher education in Wales (the need to address the tension between the Welsh Government's expectations of the sector and the sector's sense of its responsibility to act autonomously);
- configuration of provision (the geography and organisation of higher education in Wales not being fitted to achieving teaching or research benefits); and
- investment (the tension and dispute surrounding the current and future planning of higher education).

The Minister responded in an oral statement on 23 June 2009 in which she outlined four critical priorities:

- a revised approach to a national bursary framework;
- new ways of providing foundation degrees;
- new HE provision in the Heads of the Valleys and
- taking forward the Coleg Ffederal.

The Enterprise and Learning Committee published their report [Final report on the Economic Contribution of Higher Education in Wales](#) on 7 October 2009, following an in-depth inquiry.

On 29 October 2008, the Minister made an [Announcement of membership and remit of the Coleg Ffederal Planning Board](#) and the group, chaired by Professor Robin Williams published their report in June 2009: [Professor Robin William's report on a Coleg Ffederal model](#)

If not included above, links to all the documents mentioned in Section 2 are included in the following sections.

3. Welsh Government information

3.1. Key policy documents

- [Review of Higher Education in Wales - Phase 2](#), 27 April 2009.
- [Review of Higher Education in Wales - Phase 1: Student Finance Arrangements](#), October 2008
- [Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales - Delivering Skills that Work for Wales](#), September 2008



- [*Skills that Work for Wales*](#), July 2008
- [*Reaching Higher*](#), March 2002
- [*Widening Access*](#)

3.2. Press releases

- Welsh Assembly Government press release, [*£67.3 million capital investment for education in Wales*](#), 21 October 2009.
- (The Da Vinci Arts and Innovation Centre at Bangor University will receive £15million for a new centre for Science and the Arts).
- Welsh Assembly Government press release, [*A new virtual skills centre for mid and north Wales*](#), 8 October 2009
- Welsh Assembly Government press release, [*£14.3 million for vibrant higher education sector in west Wales*](#), 2 October 2009
- Welsh Assembly Government press release, [*£3m funding boost for Welsh College of Horticulture*](#), 9 September 2009
- Welsh Assembly Government press release, [*Higher education in the Heads of the Valleys secured*](#), 23 June 2009
- Welsh Assembly Government press release, [*Wales celebrates excellence in higher education*](#), 18 December 2008
- Welsh Assembly Government press release, [*Reconfiguration continues to be the key priority for higher education*](#), 9 June 2004
- Welsh Assembly Government press release, [*Jane Davidson congratulates Welsh Higher Education sector on research success*](#), 14 December 2001

3.3. Decision Reports

- Welsh Assembly Government, [*Reform of student finance delivery in Wales*](#), 28 September 2009
- Welsh Assembly Government, [*Proposals to refocus higher education student finance statement - 18 march 2009*](#), 6 May 2009
- Welsh Assembly Government, [*Approval of funding for Wales Institute of Visual Computing*](#), 18 December 2008
- Welsh Assembly Government, [*Funding to support the development of a Biosciences and Environment Alliance between Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities and its post funding evaluation if agreed*](#), 16 July 2008



- Welsh Assembly Government, [*Approval for capital investment for Bio-science and Environment Alliance to create sustainable research, teaching & enterprise capacity at Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities*](#), 11 July 2008

3.4. Consultations

- Welsh Assembly Government, [*Proposals to refocus higher education student finance*](#), 8 December 2008.

3.5. Miscellaneous

- Welsh Assembly Government, Jane Hutt (Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills), [*Welsh Assembly Government's response to the Merfyn Jones Higher Education Review*](#), Cabinet Oral Statement, 23 June 2009.
- Welsh Assembly Government, Jane Hutt (Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills), [*Higher Education Student Finance*](#), Cabinet Oral Statement, 18 March 2009
- National Assembly for Wales, Jane Davidson (Minister for Education & Lifelong Learning), [*Strategy for Higher Education in Wales*](#), Cabinet Oral Statement, 7 March 2002.

4. Committee Reports

4.1 National Assembly for Wales

- Enterprise and Learning Committee, [*The Economic Contribution of Higher Education in Wales*](#), 7 October 2009.
- Audit Committee, [*Collaboration between Higher Education Institutions*](#), 30 May 2009.
- Enterprise and Learning Committee, [*Interim Report on the Economic Contribution of Higher Education in Wales*](#), 21 January 2009.
- Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee (Second Assembly), [*Review of Science Policy in Wales*](#), September 2006



4.2 House of Commons

- Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee, [*Students and Universities*](#), 2 August 2009, HC 170-I 2008-09
- Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee, [*Putting Science and Engineering at the Heart of Government Policy*](#), 23 July 2009, HC 168-I 2008-09
- Welsh Affairs Committee, [*Cross-border provision of public services for Wales: Further and higher education*](#), 16 January 2008, HC 57 2008-09
- Education and Skills Committee, [*The future sustainability of the higher education sector: international aspects*](#), 5 August 2007, HC 285-I 2006-07

5. Members' Research Service publications

Members' Research Service Research Paper 09/021, [*In Figures: Higher Education Research Paper*](#), June 2009

6. HEFCW (Higher Education Funding Council for Wales)

HEFCW, [*The Funding Gap 2006/07*](#)

HEFCW, [*Consultation on changes to funding arrangements*](#), 30 September 2009

HEFCW, [*Research Excellence Framework: Second Consultation*](#), 23 September 2009

[Higher education institutions](#)

[Reaching Higher strategy for higher education](#) – background information from HEFCW website.

7. Other information

Trinity University College press release, [*Trinity and Lampeter Welcome £14.3 Million Funding Boost for a New University*](#), 2 October 2009

University of Wales Lampeter press release, [*An historic name for an historic occasion... University of Wales: Trinity Saint David is created*](#), 16 April 2009

Scottish Parliament Information Centre Briefing 09/10, [*The Future for Scotland's Universities*](#), 11 February 2009



[Research Assessment Exercise 2008](#)

[Previous Research Assessment Exercises](#)

8. Useful sources

[Student Finance Wales](#)

[Higher Education Wales](#)

[Association of Teachers and Lecturers](#)

[University and College Union](#)

[UCAS](#)

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