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Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-204
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/05568/11

William Powell AM

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29 July 2011

Dear William,

P-03-204 Public Accountability and Consultation in Higher Education

Thank you for your letter dated 14 July enquiring about the Welsh Government's response to the Independent Review of Higher Education Governance in Wales (the McCormick Review) and public consultation within the higher education sector.

The McCormick Review Panel's Report *Achievement and Accountability - The Independent Review of Higher Education Governance in Wales* was published in March.

The Review's findings were supported by evidence which included detailed research on trends and issues in higher education, and comparative systems of national governance. The panel undertook interviews with chairs of governing bodies, institutional leaders, external experts and key stakeholders. In addition, there were two formal written consultation exercises, one of which received a submission from the Petitioner.

The Welsh Government's proposals in response to the Review's recommendations were considered by Cabinet on 26 July. These proposals will address the need for reform of national governance, improvements in institutional governance, and changes to the legislative and regulatory framework. The changes being proposed will also address several Manifesto commitments. In particular, the need to strengthen the governance of higher education institutions by introducing more external challenge at council level and by ensuring that the learner experience and the learner voice are central to the good governance of higher education institutions in Wales.

Consultation on the proposed changes will be undertaken in Autumn 2011. Once the proposals have been finalised, it is my intention to incorporate any legislative changes required into the Welsh Government's second Education Bill (Structures, Governance and SEN).

Committee members may be aware that I have recently received advice from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) on proposals for restructuring the Welsh higher education sector. Earlier this month I published HEFCW's report in full. I intend to seek representations from stakeholders and the public on the Council's recommendations over the course of the summer. I will be inviting all interested stakeholders to comment on the analysis and recommendations set out in the HEFCW report before reaching an initial view on the most appropriate structure for the future. Before any final decisions are made in relation to individual higher education corporations, further consultation will be undertaken with the institutions affected.

With regard to public consultation within the higher education sector I have previously stated that higher education institutions, as independent and autonomous bodies, are responsible for their own academic and administrative affairs. It is the responsibility of individual institutions to ensure that they consult with all relevant stakeholders on the issues of academic, staffing and structural changes arising from institutional mergers.

Yours sincerely



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