



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu  
The Enterprise and Learning Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 5 Mawrth 2008  
Wednesday, 5 March 2008**

**Cynnwys**  
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Education

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,  
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.  
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Alun Cairns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Michael German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Kirsty Williams) Welsh Liberal Democrats (substitute for Kirsty Williams)
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Huw Lewis	Llafur Labour
David Melding	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Sandy Mewies	Llafur Labour
Janet Ryder	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Kirsty Williams	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Yr Athro/Professor Barry Burnham	Dirprwy Is-ganghellor, Prifysgol Cymru, Llanbedr Pont Steffan Deputy Vice-chancellor, University of Wales, Lampeter
Dr Brian Clarke	Cyfarwyddwr Adnoddau a Gweithrediadau, Coleg y Drindod, Caerfyrddin Director of Resources and Operations, Trinity College, Carmarthen
Ben Gray	Llywydd, Undeb Cenedlaethol Myfyrwyr Cymru President, National Union of Students Cymru
Carl Harris	Dirprwy Lywydd, Undeb Cenedlaethol Myfyrwyr Cymru Deputy President, National Union of Students Cymru
Dr Medwin Hughes	Prifathro a Phrif Weithredwr, Coleg y Drindod, Caerfyrddin Principal and Chief Executive, Trinity College, Carmarthen
Rob Humphreys	Cyfarwyddwr, y Brifysgol Agored yng Nghymru Director, the Open University in Wales
Michele Looker	Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol (Cynllunio ac Adnoddau), y Brifysgol Agored yng Nghymru Assistant Director (Planning and Resources), the Open University in Wales
Yr Athro/Professor Robert Pearce	Is-ganghellor, Prifysgol Cymru, Llanbedr Pont Steffan Vice-chancellor, University of Wales, Lampeter
Yr Athro/Professor Ian Roffe	Cyfarwyddwr y Ganolfan Gwasanaethau Menter, Ewropeaidd ac Ymestyn, Prifysgol Cymru, Llanbedr Pont Steffan Director of the Centre for Enterprise, European and Extension Services

Siân Taylor Rheolwr, Undeb Cenedlaethol Myfyrwyr Cymru  
Manager, National Union of Students Cymru  
Jane Williams Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol (Dysgu ac Addysgu), y Brifysgol  
Agored yng Nghymru  
Assistant Director (Learning and Teaching), the Open  
University in Wales

**Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol**  
**Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance**

Dan Collier Dirprwy Glerc  
Deputy Clerk  
Dr Kathryn Jenkins Clerc  
Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.02 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.02 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau**  
**Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

[1] **Gareth Jones:** Bore da bawb. Estynnaf groeso cynnes i chi i'r cyfarfod hwn o'r Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu. Croesawaf yr Aelodau, y tystion ac aelodau o'r cyhoedd. Fe'ch atgoffaf i ddiffodd unrhyw ffonau symudol sydd yn eich meddiant ac unrhyw ddyfais electronig arall. Nid oes angen i chi gyffwrdd â'r meicroffonau yn ystod ein trafodaethau. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os ydym yn clywed y larwm yn canu, bydd yn rhaid inni symud allan o'r adeilad o dan arweinyddiaeth y tywyswyr. **Gareth Jones:** Good morning everyone. I welcome you to this meeting of the Enterprise and Learning Committee. I welcome Members, witnesses and members of the public. I remind you to switch off any mobile phones that you may have and any other electronic devices. You do not need to touch the microphones during our discussions. We are not expecting a fire drill, so if we hear the alarm, we will have to evacuate the building, following the ushers' lead.

[2] Bydd y cyfarfod yn ddwyieithog ac mae clustffonau ar gael. Gobeithiaf fod yr offer yn gweithio'n effeithiol. Gwelaf eu bod. Mae cyfieithiad o'r Gymraeg i'r Saesneg ar gael, a gellir clywed hwnnw drwy'r clustffonau, sydd hefyd yn medru cael eu defnyddio i chwyddo'r sain, sy'n ddefnyddiol ar adegau. Bydd Cofnod o'r cyfan a ddywedir yn gyhoeddus. The meeting will be conducted bilingually and headsets are available. I hope that the equipment is working effectively. I see that it is. Interpretation from Welsh to English is available and can be heard through the headsets, which can also be used for sound amplification, which is useful at times. There will be a Record of everything that is said publicly.

[3] Croesawn Mike German, a fydd yma am ryw awr, yn ôl yr hyn a ddeallaf, oherwydd fod gan Kirsty fater arall o bwys. Nid oes unrhyw ddirprwyon eraill. Deallaf hefyd y bydd Sandy Mewies efallai yn gorfod gadael cyn diwedd y cyfarfod. We welcome Mike German, who I understand will be here for around an hour, because Kirsty is dealing with another important issue. There are no other substitutions. I also understand that Sandy Mewies may have to leave before the end of the meeting.

9.04 a.m.

**Tystiolaeth i Ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor i Gyfraniad Economaidd Addysg Uwch  
Evidence to the Committee Inquiry into the Economic Contribution of Higher  
Education**

[4] **Gareth Jones:** Un sesiwn graffu sydd, ond bydd tair rhan iddi. Gan fod amser yn gyfyng heddiw, mae'n bosibl na fyddaf yn medru galw pawb a fydd yn dymuno siarad cyn belled ag y mae un rhan o'r tair sesiwn yn y cwestiwn. Os cewch eich siomi ac yn methu dod i mewn ar un rhan o'r sesiwn graffu, byddwch yn cael blaenoriaeth, os y dymunwch hynny, pan fyddwn yn symud ymlaen i ail neu drydedd rhan y sesiwn. Gan obeithio bod hynny'n glir, symudwn ymlaen.

**Gareth Jones:** We have just one scrutiny session, but it will be in three parts. As time is limited this morning, I may not be able to call everyone who will want to speak in each session. If you are disappointed and cannot come in on one part of the scrutiny session, you will be given priority, if you wish, when we move on to the second or third part of the session. In the hope that that is clear, we will move on.

[5] Croeso cynnes i gynrychiolwyr Undeb Cenedlaethol Myfyrwyr Cymru. Gyda ni y mae Ben Gray, llywydd Undeb Cenedlaethol Myfyrwyr Cymru, Carl J. Harris, dirprwy lywydd, a Siân Taylor, rheolwraig UCMC.

We extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the National Union of Students Wales. With us are Ben Gray, the president of the National Union of Students Wales, Carl J. Harris, the deputy president, and Siân Taylor, the manager of NUSW.

[6] Cawsom eich papur, ac yr ydym yn ddiolchgar am y crynodeb. Nid oes angen felly ichi fynd dros y cynnwys hwnnw yn drylwyr. Yr ydym yn apelio am gyflwyniad o bum munud ar y mwyaf, gan fod amser, fel y dywedais ar y cychwyn, yn dynn y bore yma. Yr ydym yn edrych ymlaen yn arw at yr hyn sydd gennych i'w ddweud ac at y drafodaeth ddaw o'r cwestiynu. Trown yn awr atoch am gyflwyniad byr o ryw bum munud.

We received your paper, and we are grateful to you for the summary. There is, therefore, no need for you to go over the content in any great detail. We appeal to you to make a presentation of five minutes at most, because time, as I said at the outset, is tight this morning. We are greatly looking forward to your presentation and to the discussion that will flow from the questioning. I now hand over to you for your short presentation of about five minutes.

[7] **Mr Gray:** Thank you for inviting us to give evidence to your scrutiny session. We hope to open up your knowledge in this area.

[8] We aimed to set out a broad overview of the perception of a student, who is prospectively entering higher education or is going through higher education, and then of the potential links there are once he or she graduates. We have not sought to justify our existence; we just see this as giving a citizen-centred approach. We want to point out that a lot of information goes out to students very early on in their studies, and it can seem like a bombardment. Students' engagement in activities that could be construed as entrepreneurship or engaging with careers information depends on the sort of department they are engaged with as well as what the experience is of the lecturers they talk to.

[9] My colleague, Carl, wants to talk about the Webb review and how we think it links up to the strategy, so I will hand over to him, briefly.

[10] **Mr Harris:** I can talk about the Webb review now or, alternatively, if it comes up later during questions, I can talk about it then. It is one of the areas to focus on. The Welsh Assembly Government is launching several consultations. 'Skills That Work for Wales' has

been launched and we had the Webb and Leitch reviews before that. It is important that we look at them all in context to see how they work together.

[11] The Webb review is more about the 14-19 learners. One thing that we picked up and put in our report is that consistency and continuity are needed for entrepreneurial opportunities at a younger age—but we can talk about that as we go along.

[12] **Mr Gray:** We have tried to set out that there should be an overall strategic approach to engaging with the idea of entrepreneurship and soft skills from further education through to higher education. The ideas about engaging in schemes such as your own employment scheme or perhaps going abroad for part of one's studies should be advertised strongly to those in the 16 to 18 bracket, and even to those who are younger than that, to ensure that they take up those opportunities as soon as they enter higher education rather than grappling to try to upskill themselves at the end of their degree courses.

[13] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr am y cyflwyniad ac am fod mor gryno. Mae pum Aelod am ofyn cwestiwn, felly, bydd cadw'r cwestiynau'n fyr yn hwyluso'r drafodaeth. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you for that presentation and for being so succinct. Five Members have questions to ask, so keeping the questions short will facilitate the discussion.

[14] **Alun Cairns:** Mr Gray, I read your paper with interest, and I have heard your comments about life skills, entrepreneurial skills and so on. Some of the evidence that we have had to date has called for more entrepreneurship to be taught as a main part of subjects, and not just in business studies. Do you recognise a need for that?

[15] What role can the NUS play in helping to develop students' life skills more—perhaps reflecting on the Webb report—for example in terms of supporting colleges, universities and so on?

9.10 a.m.

[16] **Mr Gray:** On the first question, if any strategy, such as a strategy for Welsh-medium education, is going to work it cannot just be undertaken in one department and one centre. When it comes to entrepreneurship and engaging with business, a broad, institutional approach is needed. As for whether it should be taught as part of a subject that is not in the business area, I know that there would be a lot of debate on how that would fit into a curriculum on politics for example, but I see the link in terms of society. I do not think that we should necessarily teach citizenship lessons as part of a higher education degree—it should be a foundation in education—certainly, having departments other than just business departments working more closely on projects like that would be very useful.

[17] **Mr Harris:** On the second part of your question with regard to what role—

[18] **Alun Cairns:** Before we go on to the second part of the question, can I probe a bit further? The sort of examples that I was thinking of were chemistry, physics or other such subjects that have a strong influence in industry. Do you feel that there is a stronger role for entrepreneurship there?

[19] **Mr Gray:** I would definitely agree with that. In terms of encouraging more people to take up those subjects, and picking out chemistry, physics and those kinds of departments that have been closed in some Welsh universities in recent years, if there is a stronger link in the eyes of the prospective student to jobs at the end of it, and that there is a way of developing a career, that could be used as a useful way of ensuring that a wide variety of people enter different subjects in higher education.

[20] I will move on to the beginning of the second answer. In terms of how the NUS or member unions in different universities might be able to help with a drive towards life skills, as it stands, we train and support student officers in student unions to increase their skills in participating in committee meetings, for example, or in engaging with the institution and we encourage them to bring a more diverse range of members into their union rather than just catering for the 18 to 21-year-olds. We certainly have the structures in place to expand that more widely and to ensure that that is part of the agenda. There is a role for student unions to have that greater impact on the soft skills agenda—if I can call it that—within the institution and I think that it would be very useful to look into that.

[21] **Mr Harris:** To add to that—and Ben touched on this—we are here to support and train student union officers and to champion student unions. Where the student union can play a part, and where we can help it in turn, is with the student community action and volunteering projects that are run through student unions. They enhance students' employability at the end of the day. Where we could help perhaps more directly is in championing those student unions and training those student officers to go out and run more volunteering programmes and community action projects.

[22] **Alun Cairns:** Very briefly, you touched on the Webb review, which would take this to further education too, which is sort of on the margins of this. Does the NUS have concerns about the development of life skills within FE, for example, given that you are talking about where we need to go?

[23] **Mr Gray:** We have seen the FE sector developing more higher education courses and structures, and we make no bones about the fact that we were not particularly happy with the representational side within FE. We could certainly say to you 'Yes, tomorrow, give us a little more money and we could deliver a Wales-wide strategy in higher education to encourage entrepreneurship through student unions', because there is a network of established representatives and active members on the ground but, when it comes to further education, that network does not really exist. I know that we have spoken with Members individually around this table about the fact that we believe that the Webb review could have gone further, and it certainly could have included some of the recommendations that were made in the Foster review in England, for example the recommendation that there are two FE student governors. Things like that would encourage the soft skills that we expect from graduates and really develop them in the run-up to higher education.

[24] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you for your written submission and your oral statement. I am frightened to say that, in 1974, when the NUS was formed, I was the president of Cardiff University's students' union. I am glad that you have built on the firm foundations that we laid all those years ago. You may have answered my first question in part, but I want to give you more of an opportunity to talk about the links between the FE and HE sectors. I recognise that, as a union, you represent HE and FE students. I think that you are right to point out that there is a lot that HE can learn from FE, especially in terms of developing links with industry and that entrepreneurial spirit, and providing teaching courses, as opposed to research work, that are more linked to the needs of industry and employment in Wales. Perhaps you could tell me a bit more about how the NUS engages to try to ensure that the good practice learnt in FE is translated across to HE, wherever possible, in terms of the soft skills, as you call them, and the key skills. You mentioned the year in employment scheme. Could you say a bit more about how that works? You do point out that it is not suitable for everyone, and I accept that, but how does it work and are there examples of good practice?

[25] You mentioned the Erasmus scheme and the development of modern foreign languages. The impression that I get is that that is not always there for everyone, and perhaps it should be encouraged a little more.

[26] **Mr Gray:** I will try to digest all three of those questions. When it comes to HE learning from FE, we come back to the problem of the established network's not being there as much in further education. Where there are good examples from further education and active colleges, those colleges will come to engage in joint events that we run throughout the year. We have policy events at which we come together to share best practice. Jeff came to speak at our assembly day at the beginning of the academic year; we hold a number of events during the year, and they are a chance for us to share best practice and train up other officers by saying, 'Right, so you want to try to achieve this in your colleges. This is how you go about doing it'. Beyond that, I do not think that there has been too much of an exploration of how we transfer what happens in FE to HE. There is a lot of focus on increasing the FE representation to the HE level. I do not think that the second stage of that, in terms of ensuring that we understand how business works with FE and how that can be transferred to HE, is happening as much at the student level as it perhaps could do—I would accept that. Carl has particular responsibility for our further education unions.

[27] **Mr Harris:** I would agree with what Ben said. We try to advocate as many networking opportunities as possible. Going back to our submission to the Webb review, we said that there really is not a sufficient number of representatives in further education, so it is often difficult to get the networking working properly because it does not have a sufficient number of officers in place to come along and teach the HE sector to take local further education colleges under its wing. That is one of the difficulties that we find.

[28] **Mr Gray:** I will move on to the year in employment scheme, if there is nothing further on FE. The scheme has been running in various guises since Siân was at the University of Glamorgan studying for her degree—I think that it was called the year in industry scheme then. What happens is that the careers service will probably advertise it generally and when it has a number of interested students for the following year, it will seek a placement with the active partners that it has in certain industries. I know of students in the information technology sphere who have gone out and done that, and it also tends to be quite a positive thing in business. From my own experience in Aberystwyth, I would say that around 12 to 15 students a year take part in the scheme, which could be dramatically increased. I think that we do not sell it enough or make it clear that this is a real chance for students, at the end of their study, to have the business skills, that they will be paid for a year—although many students find it hard to adapt to going back to living on £3,000 a year again—and that, although this is not an open ticket to a job with an employer, the employers take this on board seriously. One thing that we refer to in our evidence is that too many students go to the student volunteering offices in their unions in the second term of their third year and say 'Great, I want to do some volunteering because I want it on my curriculum vitae'. We need to tackle that to get people engaging with the skills earlier, at least in higher education, but we must also try to embed it in further education, so that when people are moving on, that is part of what is happening.

9.20 a.m.

[29] In terms of Erasmus, the outward mobility of students in the scheme in Wales is shockingly low—it is about 300 students. A target has been set by somebody in Government to have 2,000 students by 2010, and that just will not happen. As it stands, most of those 300 are studying modern foreign languages, and many of them are at Swansea University, which has a massive Erasmus scheme. However, when it comes to engaging with Erasmus, not enough is said about the fact that there are English-language courses overseas that students can take, for example at the University of Maastricht, where everyone can speak English, although I would advocate learning the local languages. It is an opportunity to have a term or a year away; the word 'Erasmus' is thrown around, but few people understand the scheme. Increasing outward mobility will add to diversification in higher education in Wales, and to



the cosmopolitan atmosphere on campus. Even if we lose the students who go overseas, in the long term we will engage more students. So, I would say that if we are really going to engage and get outward mobility up, there needs to be a big drive, either in terms of a policy change in how we advertise it or in resources to ensure that students are not financially worse off if they go overseas. For instance, there are certain complications around the student loan that could be sorted out. Ultimately, these complications put people off from engaging in the scheme. I do not think that it is purely a language issue, and people are missing out on opportunities.

[30] **Gareth Jones:** On the follow-up to the Erasmus scheme, Sandy will ask her question first, and Mike will follow.

[31] **Sandy Mewies:** My question concerns Erasmus, but is not confined to Erasmus—it is just one part of the question. I would like to know about equality of opportunity for students. Do you think that all students are aware of what is available to them in terms of outward mobility, not just to European countries but to other countries too? It sometimes seems to me that a chosen few are made aware of opportunities that could benefit more people. That is just a perception, and I may be totally wrong. I do not see it as your job to do all the publicising; there are plenty of other people with more resources who could do it. I have made the point to higher education institutions that inward mobility is also extremely beneficial to us in our universities and FE colleges, and it should be encouraged. I will have more questions later about communication and making people aware of opportunities, but particularly in this case, do you think that there is real equality of opportunity for students, from the time they are in the sixth form onwards, in terms of their being told about, and being encouraged to participate in, these schemes?

[32] **Mr Gray:** When it comes to sixth forms, on the whole I would say that there is no information about the Erasmus schemes that are available in higher education, but there may be a couple of colleges that prepare their students well, so that they are ready to go into higher education and seek out Erasmus schemes. I studied abroad for a semester, in Canada, and I was one of five people who applied for four places. I do not think that we were sent letters as the chosen few, but I had to make an economic contribution to get out there and, when I reached Canada, I discovered that a friend who had come over from Leeds had had her flights paid for by her LEA in Liverpool. Her LEA had subsidised her going out there and I had not been able to achieve that, yet we had broadly the same level of parental income.

[33] The system is hard to understand, and it is hard, even for me, to get a cross-Wales picture. It is worrying that students have to try to decipher the system, and then recognise that it is important to go. I do not think that there is enough coherent education, and although people are not picked out, the way in which they are supported, and the information that is available, may be angled towards a middle-class student who can afford to make the investment in going overseas. There are a few more incentives when it comes to Erasmus than there are for other overseas exchanges, but I certainly think that those things play a part.

[34] **Michael German:** I would like to pursue this matter. We know that the numbers are shockingly low for Erasmus. The difficulty is that each university institution must put forward a plan and bid for the programme. If an institution has not bid for the programme, there are not any places to offer it. Do you have any knowledge of the pattern of Erasmus programme opportunities among the higher education institutions in Wales? Is it skewed to modern foreign languages and will people therefore not go if they are not studying a modern foreign language? We may want to train and get more people with experience in, say, neuroscience, but there are not many courses being run for neuroscience with French or Spanish. Do you have any knowledge of the Erasmus Mundus programme, which has a huge amount of money for working with universities in eastern Europe and Africa? I understand that there has not been a single bid for that programme from Welsh universities. Is that an opportunity lost? Do you have the pattern of programme opportunities? Does anybody have that pattern? Does

anybody know what is happening with Erasmus, and is it widely available?

[35] **Mr Gray:** I cannot point to a particular statistic. I am the NUS UK representative to the European Students' Union and I talk a lot about Erasmus Mundus, Bologna and so on. I would say that a lot of the Erasmus programme is skewed towards inward mobility. Where it is affecting outward mobility, it is tacked on to make a language course more attractive, rather than being offered as a chance to broaden a student's horizons and to go out and explore another country. I spoke at a conference that Higher Education Wales put on about Bologna and employability. A KPMG representative was there and said that when it comes to the interest that a student has and what a graduate has been able to achieve, what is important to KPMG is the fact that they have engaged with another society. I do not think that enough is being done to advertise that. It is skewed towards languages and trying to get bums on seats and people into Wales.

[36] I understand that Swansea University is about to apply for some Erasmus Mundus stuff. Huw Morris, in Swansea, who oversees its European stuff, has been doing some work around that. I do not think that it is taken up enough. I do not think that universities know enough about it to engage with the opportunities that are there for them. Obviously, Erasmus Mundus focuses on postgraduate education and I think that it offers a real chance to incentivise people to come back to study at that level.

[37] **Michael German:** Could I ask you to put your finger on the fault? If you could take one action to improve outward mobility through Erasmus, and the use and pick-up of the Erasmus Mundus programme, what would it be?

[38] **Mr Harris:** I think that an example would be what we discussed in terms of the Bologna process: it is to get principals and vice-chancellors on board with it. If the principals and vice-chancellors are confident in the system and what they would get back in return—perhaps the transfer of credits and things like that—that would be a very good start in getting more people to take part in the programme.

[39] **Mr Gray:** In terms of a user perspective, I think that it would be very useful to put it front and centre when it comes to the opportunities that are there for you to shape yourself for work after higher education. There are 10 different ways in which you could achieve that, but the one thing that I would do is ensure that it is in the front and centre of the minds of prospective students.

[40] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you very much. We Symudwn ymlaen yn awr at David Melding. will now move on to David Melding.

[41] **David Melding:** Thank you, Chair. I have a quick point on soft skills, because I particularly want to concentrate on that. We are looking at graduates with higher level skills and a lot of their soft skills will get developed fairly quickly, if you are looking at younger graduates in their first job, rather than mature students. Speaking as an employer who has often interviewed very recent graduates, the one thing that I would say is that poor communication skills make it difficult to recruit very effectively, even if you try to have an interview and selection process that caters for that. It is the one area that I would say causes me most concern, as I have not always seen candidates demonstrate their natural ability because they have had difficulty with basic communication. Would the NUS be in a good position to develop soft-skills training? It is a bit analogous, I suppose, to the trade union scheme. What is it called? It is the wolf scheme, or the lion scheme—some carnivore.

[42] **Jeff Cuthbert:** It is WULF, the Wales union learning fund.

[43] **David Melding:** That is it.

[44] These sorts of skills are developed not less formally, but perhaps in such a way as to make the person gaining the skills more relaxed. So, the whole system is easier to use than something more structured.

9.30 a.m.

[45] Secondly, you made an interesting point that might also relate to the fact that more and more students are now studying beyond the age of 18 to 22, which is the traditional window. In my day, mature students were rather exotic creatures, but, thankfully, we now have a very different system, and some universities specialise in providing lifelong learning and courses for local students. However, you made the point that graduates are not very well supported by universities, and I think that you are right. If an alumnus can do something for the university, like give money or take another course, they are contacted, but, generally, when you graduate, you are left to go out into the wider world. Looking at universities particularly as community resources, do you consider that situation to be a weakness currently? Realistically, could they be developed to provide a better service and better support systems?

[46] **Mr Gray:** I shall try to remember both parts of your question. On the first part about engaging in soft skills and this idea of communication, to be quite radical for a moment, given that the average student in higher education gets only six hours of contact time, how are people supposed to develop one-to-one communication skills? Rather than adding on another scheme designed to teach communication skills, why do they not communicate more throughout their education and get assessed periodically? Instead, they cram it all in and have three two-hour exams at the end of the semester.

[47] That aside, yes, we can provide help when it comes to training and support for skills. We are working with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales on a project to do with student and course representatives. We are trying to develop a strategy that is different to the Scottish model, SPARQS, Student Participation in Quality Scotland, on which I could go into detail for half an hour. That is an integrated approach with the student union at the heart of academic representation, ensuring that the 300 or so course representatives in a medium-sized institution are well trained and able to question their institution. We have been delivering training on behalf of student unions to aid the process. In Bangor, we managed to train 300 course representatives, and we think that they now have the skills to meet with their departments, about three times a year, and really question what is going on.

[48] We can develop such skills, and we have the training structures in place to deliver more. We are certainly not a trade union, and we do not have the necessary resources to provide the sort of scheme that you mentioned as it stands. People opt out of membership with us; we are a broad representational organisation. However, we have delivered training effectively to a large number of students already, and we will continue to do so. Please remind me of the second part of the question.

[49] **David Melding:** It was on graduate support.

[50] **Mr Gray:** I touched on the support for graduates in the written evidence. Yes, people get phone calls to say, 'You are an alumnus of Swansea University, and it is really important that you give something back, so we will put your name on a plaque and ensure that your £100 is put to good use'. I do not think that there is the level of support that there could be when it comes to providing graduates with opportunities or finding graduate recruitment placements for them. There tend to be graduate recruitment fairs a few months before people

graduate, which will be suitable for the 50 or so people who will get on to the graduate fast-stream schemes with the civil service or with private companies, but we need a link-up, or even just a website, for graduates. Graduate Opportunities Wales has links to help graduates to see what they can do, but that does not connect to what the whole university does. That goes back to Alun's point about the whole university engaging with this. If you are saying that higher education is a means to a better working life or better engagement with society, that needs to be at the core of everything that students are aided with.

[51] **Alun Cairns:** At graduate fairs, where I would imagine that private companies look to recruit individuals, do you have enterprise agencies suggesting to some of those chemistry graduates that I talked about, 'Why do you not start up your own business if you have this great idea'?

[52] **Mr Harris:** It depends on the individual institution, and its careers department. There is no set list of organisations or companies that go along to each graduate trade fair; it depends on each institution. Perhaps what the Welsh Assembly Government could do is recommend to institutions that a number of organisations of a certain level be invited, perhaps a few from each sector. That could be a way forward.

[53] **Mr Gray:** On freshers' fairs, I have seen an add-on or extension to the Young Enterprise scheme. I do not know whether you know much about Young Enterprise, but it gives schoolchildren a chance to start their own businesses, with the support of an aide in the school. I think that there are some examples of it in further education, and I do not see why such a scheme, perhaps with a slightly different name, could not work in higher education, to give students a chance to set up and run their own business. I took part in it when I was at secondary school, and I gained a lot from it. There was even a boardroom takeover, and I ended up as the manager of Young Enterprise; it gave me some great skills. *[Laughter.]* To be serious, it would be great to be able to say that it is supported by the university. Students could run a small business in their spare time, but the university would also be supporting their chance of getting a job within the curriculum. That would be good.

[54] **Gareth Jones:** We intend to follow up that point about schools at one of our future sessions. Do you want to come in on this point, Sandy?

[55] **Sandy Mewies:** I do. I wanted to explore careers advice, the fairs that you referred to, and the Young Enterprise scheme, as they are all about the support that students get. We have talked a lot about the client grouping of HE comprising business and commerce, but you represent the biggest client grouping of all, and we should not forget that. I do not see education happening in bits; it happens from the time you go into an educational establishment at a young age, and carries on.

[56] I am concerned about the graduate careers fairs, to some extent, because of their timing and their frequency, and the support given to would-be graduates during them. Anecdotally, I have heard that students are sometimes left to wander around a bit, and are not guided beforehand. They need to know what questions they should prepare, and they need to have some idea of a career pathway. That is the end process.

[57] However, on the early process, Young Enterprise schemes are extremely valuable if they are run properly, but they are not valuable at all if they are just used to put certain young people in the scheme who do not really want to do anything else. However, they can be extremely valuable when run properly and supported by correct and ongoing careers advice and support from an early teen age. Do you think that that is available, and is followed through? I am interested in further education, but do you think that it is followed through in higher education establishments as well? Is there somewhere that students can go to get good, solid advice, given the contact time that you have talked about?

[58] **Mr Gray:** There is a tendency to run graduate fairs knowing that private companies have a budget for the stands, and to capitalise on the opportunity to make money from the company. I feel free to say that because I do not work for an institution. Some universities may have them as part of their graduation ceremony, but my experience of institutions across Wales is that they are happening at inappropriate times. As a result of that interest in having a graduate fair, there is not a joined-up approach to what you should be asking, and I would agree with that.

[59] Consider the sort of careers advice that you get at school, and follow that through to careers advice at university. In secondary school, you may be asked to fill in a questionnaire, which gives you 30 jobs that might be applicable to the skills that you have. There is not necessarily a link-up that says, 'You thought about doing this when you were at school, and you have done a degree in this subject, but what are your interests?'. That information is not necessarily shared. However, when it comes to support for going out to the market, it is very much user led. People need to go along and seek the information.

9.40 a.m.

[60] Some departments have a careers adviser embedded within them; others seek not to do that, quite actively so in certain circumstances. Universities might say that they ensure that all their departments have careers advisers, but I would argue that more established departments do not see it as their role to ensure that their students get employment afterwards. I hope that I have dissected your question properly. There can be more support, and well run Young Enterprise schemes, using a slightly different version for higher education, would be beneficial for students, too. However, once again, it is another scheme in which students could take part without their necessarily having those skills after leaving higher education. That needs to be embedded.

[61] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch. Trown yn awr at Janet Ryder am y cwestiwn olaf. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you. We will now turn to Janet Ryder for the last question.

[62] **Janet Ryder:** You may feel that you have already answered this question, but I would like to expand on it a little. When you go into HE, there are some courses that you can say are definitely vocational, and many of the medical courses, physiotherapy, teaching courses and so on are vocationally oriented. Part of those courses involves teaching you how to do job while you are training; it is part of the training to work in hospitals or schools, and you learn what you will have to do. There has always been a debate about educating for education's sake, so that the educational levels of the population are raised, and that is what a degree does; it just shows that you can learn to that level. You then choose what you want to do as a vocation after completing your degree. If we are to look at developing and targeting the skills that Wales needs—to which the Webb review refers—do we now need to review all the courses that we offer at HE level? Should we conclude that we need to provide courses that raise educational levels, but that we also need to develop the skills that are needed to drive business forward as part of those courses? From your experience, how would you say we need to change some of those courses, if any change is needed?

[63] **Mr Gray:** I certainly advocate a wide range of choice in higher education and students having the freedom to choose to study a course that they will find interesting and engage in for three years. When courses are advertised to prospective students, there is a tendency to say that a certain degree will set you up and give you certain skills. Let us take the example of a history degree. You may be told that you will have analytical skills and be able to pull things apart and, ultimately, that may help you to become a manager in the future. When you give a seminar presentation, it might give you a spur to have done something like that. However, that is forgotten as soon as the student is signed up. If that history course

included a seminar to pull apart historical evidence but to put it into a business perspective, that may be useful. I do not think that you need to change the nature of the course or limit the number of people undertaking a particular course, but it would be useful to find a tangible way of linking the two together.

[64] Regarding the need to encourage a larger number of people to take those less popular courses—and I know that there is a shortage of mathematics teachers and that too few people take chemistry courses—the question relates to my comments regarding embedding industry in a department’s activities to make it worthwhile for a student to study a certain subject. Rather than limiting the number of people who read media studies because too many people want to do it, you could say, for example, ‘Yes, you could study media and communication, but you also did well at chemistry and this university has a long history of placing people with this company, so why do you not consider taking chemistry?’. It should be about choice, but it should also be about making sure that the degree reflects the skillset that it sets out to give the student, and should not be lost when a student has finished reading the prospectus.

[65] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch. Definitely finally this time is Christine.

[66] **Christine Chapman:** With an increasingly competitive job market, HE students are doing exceptionally well. Qualifications seem to be improving every year, which is a good thing. However, when employers take people on, it is not just about their qualifications; it is almost about the informal learning that may have undertaken. That could be in the form of a part-time job, or an internship. I know that there has been a big debate about whether unpaid internships disadvantage poorer students. Do you think that higher education supports students enough in those respects?

[67] We now have the Welsh baccalaureate in the schools system—it is to be rolled out throughout Wales, though it is not in all areas yet—and that looks at all this. It is about pulling together all the informal learning, such as part-time jobs, research and community work, which is a good idea. Do you think that higher education is doing enough to support students in similar projects? If not, what more should it be doing to encourage it?

[68] **Mr Gray:** We recognise that, with more students being able to study at higher education, there is a need for them to have skills suitable to take into the job market. When it comes to part-time work, that can give you certain skills, but working in a Subway or other fast-food restaurant will not give you the same level of skills as a structured work placement scheme would, or by integrating work experience in the institution. I do not have the statistic to hand, but an alarming number of students work more than 20 hours a week to fund their education, so it then becomes less about getting those skills and more about being able to live, which gives them a different outlook on why they are doing the work.

[69] To go back to what I said earlier, the issue is about embedding it in everything that is happening, and so there should be more schemes and opportunities at the front and centre. I drew the analogy of the amount that students are told about plagiarism when they enter higher education, such as ‘You must not cheat, or this is what goes wrong, so please be careful’, and first-year students in higher education are petrified that they will be hung, drawn and quartered because they forget to include a footnote. That same level of advertisement should be given to opportunities such as Erasmus, new employment schemes, placements, and young enterprise—if that is spread out—and so on. That is the way to tackle it. So, to answer your question about whether it is supported enough, I would say ‘no’. There are opportunities, and dedicated people in careers services throughout Wales are working on trying to deliver these opportunities, and on trying to engage students in what is happening, but, because it is not at the top of the institution’s agenda—just at the top of the careers service’s agenda, or perhaps that of the pro-vice chancellor for x, y or z—the level of take-up is low.

[70] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr i'r tri ohonoch. Diolch am eich cyfraniad hollbwysig—ac nid wyf yn gwenieithu wrth ddweud hynny, gan ei bod yn bwysig ein bod fel pwyllgor yn trin a thrafod pethau gyda chi fel myfyrwyr. Cynhelir sesiynau tystiolaeth eraill hefyd pan fyddwn yn gwahodd graddedigion a fu drwy'r system i rannu eu profiadau gyda ni. Felly, gobeithiaf y bydd y darlun yn eithaf cyfan ac eang o safbwynt y myfyrwyr, gan fod hynny'n allweddol bwysig. Os bydd gennych bwyntiau ychwanegol i'w cyflwyno, mae rhyddid ichi ysgrifennu atom, a byddem yn falch o glywed gennych. Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn bwysig, ac mae eich llais yn allweddol bwysig. Felly, ar ran y pwyllgor, diolch am ymuno â ni a dymunwn y gorau i chi yn eich astudiaethau.

**Gareth Jones:** Thank you to all three of you. Thank you for your invaluable contribution—and I am not saying that just to flatter you, as it is important that we, as a committee, discuss matters with you as students. There will be other evidence sessions when we will invite graduates who have been through the system to share their experiences with us. So, I hope that the picture will be relatively comprehensive and far-reaching from the student's perspective, as that is vital. Should you have any additional points to convey, you would be welcome to write to us and we would be glad to hear from you. This report is important, and, as I said, your voice is vital. So, on behalf of the committee, I thank you for joining us, and we wish you well in your studies.

9.50 a.m.

[71] Estynnaf groeso cynnes yn awr i'r tystion o'r Brifysgol Agored yng Nghymru i'r sesiwn graffu. Yr ydym yn falch o'ch cyfarfod ac eich bod yn ymuno â ni. Gyda ni mae Rob Humphreys, sef cyfarwyddwr y Brifysgol Agored yng Nghymru, Jane Williams, cyfarwyddwr cynorthwyol, dysgu ac addysgu, a Michele Looker, cyfarwyddwr cynorthwyol, cynllunio ac adnoddau. Gwyddoch am y cefndir i hwn. Yr ydym yn hynod ddiolchgar ichi am y papur yr ydym wedi'i dderbyn a'i ddarllen. Gobeithiaf y gallwch wneud cyflwyniad cryno inni ar y cychwyn, a chredaf y bydd Mr Rob Humphreys yn cyflwyno am ryw bum munud ar yr eithaf, gan ein bod yn awyddus i ofyn cwestiynau i chi. Edrychwn ymlaen at sesiwn hynod ddiddorol.

I now extend a warm welcome to the witnesses from the Open University in Wales to the scrutiny session. We are glad to meet you and to have you here with us. We have with us Rob Humphreys, director of the Open University in Wales, Jane Williams, assistant director, learning and teaching, and Michele Looker, assistant director, planning and resources. You will know the background to this. We are extremely grateful to you for the paper that we have received and read. I hope that you can give us a brief presentation to begin with, and then I believe that Mr Rob Humphreys will make a presentation for about five minutes at the most, as we are eager to ask questions of you. We look forward to a most interesting session.

[72] **Mr Humphreys:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd.

**Mr Humphreys:** Thank you, Chair.

[73] I thank the committee for the opportunity to appear here today to contribute to your work. I know that time is tight, so I will largely let our written evidence stand for itself and, no doubt, you will have questions arising from that. As a preliminary but nonetheless important point, we concur with the substance and thrust of the evidence given here before Christmas by Professor Merfyn Jones and Amanda Wilkinson of Higher Education Wales, both on the critical importance of higher education to the future prosperity of our country and on the concerns expressed about the investment gap between HE in Wales and HE in England.

[74] I will be as brief as possible. I have five introductory points. First, we are a distinct higher education institution in at least two ways. As you know, we are a distance-learning university, and our students are exclusively part time. I will return to that part time issue in a

moment. In addition, the OU in Wales is part of a UK-wide higher education institution with a global reach. Our relatively recent move to receiving funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales—and the process has yet to be completed—enables us to align ourselves with the needs and demands of Wales, but there are also strengths to be derived from being part of the wider OU, not least from the investment in cutting-edge pedagogic developments, such as our virtual learning environment. Another example of the OU's commitment to innovation is the pilot initiative across the UK, which is led, as it happens, by staff in Wales. That comprises a course on recognising achievement. This level 1 course makes a learner's own work experience the subject through which he or she develops skills of critical analysis.

[75] Secondly, part-time HE in general is a vital component of the broad higher education landscape in Wales, even if it is sometimes less visible than it ought to be in public terms, in our view. Members of the committee will know, I am sure, that around 50 per cent of all students, via head count, are part time. Of those, the vast majority are domiciled in Wales. Part-time HE makes an important contribution to widening access, as we know, but it also contributes to the higher level skills agenda. Lord Leitch pointed out in his report that skills development in an advanced, twenty-first century economy cannot simply be a front-loading model. Lifelong learning should be a reality by way of recurrent education and training. Moreover, Leitch pointed out that the demographic change in falling birth rates means that two thirds of the 2020 workforce is already of working age. If we are to increase the participation in HE of that 2020 workforce and future generations, part-time HE for adults must be a significant policy driver and component part of the wider provision at HE level.

[76] This is an important note for the future: we would point out to committee members that any future review of the HE tuition fee regime needs to take into account the needs of part-time learners and part-time provision. To construct new fee regimes that deal with full-time learners alone risks damaging a major part of the higher education ecology in Wales, which would result in capacity for HE skills development in the round being weakened and reduced.

[77] Thirdly, and turning to some of the committee's other central concerns, the flexibility that Open University provision offers is attractive for employers and employees and those wishing to return to the labour market. OU students can study at a time of their choosing; they do not necessarily require release from employment. That is a particular attraction for hard-pressed small and medium-sized enterprises, and it is also an important reason why the OU has a strong record on attracting and retaining disabled students and carers.

[78] You will have seen from our written submission that our overall curriculum offer includes a significant portfolio of courses in the sciences, technology and in mathematics. Perhaps that is a slightly different balance from some of the other part-time provision in the Welsh HE sector. Indeed, to push the boat out a little here, it may be that employer engagement, at least in the teaching side of HE, and widening access may not be the separate policy arenas that they are sometimes perceived to be.

[79] Fourthly, I know that adaptability and responding to employer demand have been raised in previous sessions of your inquiry, and rightly so. Russell Lawson of the Federation of Small Businesses threw down some sharp challenges for the HE sector. You will have seen from our submission that we have had some success in attracting sponsorship from employers for their employees to study with the Open University in Wales. We believe that we can build further on this, and we are about to make some new appointments that will help us to do that, not least with the sector skills councils. We are looking to work and engage with SSCs and other employer bodies to enhance and expand on our existing links. A lot rests on the SSCs, it should be said. They comprise a series of fulcrums on which Government skills policies and strategies rest. A lot also rests on the work of trade unions in this area, many of which have an



established track record of promoting and providing learning for their members in partnership with providers, be they in FE or HE.

[80] A related point here—and it also has a bearing on widening access, which Members may wish to pick up in discussion—is that of broadband reach. That is a critical area for us as a provider. We are, inevitably, concerned about the digital divide, particularly as it relates to broadband take-up in households—and I am thinking of poverty and disadvantage here—but also the take-up of small and medium-sized enterprises.

[81] Finally—and I do not want to leave this forum today without saying a little about this—the final point of your terms of reference points to a further vital role for higher education, not just in Wales, but also in modern democratic societies in general. The Open University takes seriously its role, indeed its duty, to contribute to fostering and sustaining a vibrant democratic and diverse culture and society.

[82] You will be aware, no doubt, of our strong links with the BBC through which we co-produce world-class documentaries and other productions. Many of these reach international audiences. You will also have seen from our written submission that our OpenLearn initiative makes significant parts of our provision accessible to a global audience via the internet, free of charge. There is a rich tradition in Wales of higher education being open and accessible to adults from all backgrounds. Indeed, much of the best of the Wales that we inherit owes something to what adult education in the round achieved in the last century. That role for higher education institutions is vital today, we contend, even though its mode of delivery may well be different in the internet age. Think of debates on migration, multiculturalism, climate change, or the ethical choices that face citizens or a society or, indeed, declining electoral participation. Part-time HE has a crucial role to play in sustaining an informed citizenry as well as a highly skilled workforce. The Open University in Wales looks forward to playing its part as part of a wider HE sector in Wales in both those crucial policy arenas. Diolch yn fawr.

[83] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch am y **Gareth Jones:** Thank you for that useful cyflwyniad defnyddiol hwnnw. Mae nifer o presentation. Many Members are keen to ask Aelodau yn awyddus i ofyn cwestiynau, gan you questions, starting with Jeff Cuthbert. ddechrau gyda Jeff Cuthbert.

[84] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you not only for that oral presentation, but also for your written presentation, which is extremely comprehensive and interesting. In the time that is available to us, there is no way that I can ask all the questions that I want to ask. That would take all day. However, what comes across strongly is the flexibility of the Open University, and how it works in partnership with a wide range of groups. You mentioned trade unions, the SSCs and the Workers' Educational Association in your document. I wonder why we are not working far more closely with you on addressing those issues facing people who are looking to return to work, or who are already in work but want to enhance their status. However, others may return to those subjects.

10.00 a.m.

[85] I wish to address two particular points. First, there is a brief paragraph in your submission on your work with prisoners. We know that basic skills are a serious problem, particularly for many younger offenders as well as adult offenders. I would be grateful if you could say a little more about the type of work that you do. I notice that it involves only about 30 people at the moment, mainly in Usk, but it strikes me that if it works there, there must be scope to use it a bit more. We do not want people to come out of prison, re-offend and go back to prison. I would argue that, to a large degree, educational attainment is responsible for that happening.

[86] Perhaps I missed your addressing this—and I apologise if so—but does the Open University engage with European structural funds either alone or in partnership? If so, how is it working with the new round of funding?

[87] **Mr Humphreys:** Thank you for your questions, Jeff. I shall leave the more general issue of how we can work more closely for the wider discussion later. On prisoner education, you are right that there are many basic skills issues—literacy and numeracy issues—that it is not the job of a higher education institution to tackle. The offenders studying with us are studying at higher education level, and some at graduate level. Indeed, I have to go to Usk soon to conduct a graduation ceremony for a prisoner. The key issue is one of progression, because further education, basic skills agencies and so on will be involved at that level, but the issue is trying to ensure that long-term offenders at least can progress to the kind of provision that we offer. Not every offender is in custody for a long time, so hanging on to those people once they have been released becomes an issue for us with regard to the retention of our student numbers, and, more significantly, with regard to maintaining that commitment to learning. You mentioned the figure of 30; it is 30 per annum, although some of that number are recurrent students. That figure is significant in all sorts of ways.

[88] Turning to EU structural funds, we are partners, but not the lead partners, in several projects under the old EU Objective 1 programme, including the Community University of the Valleys project, and the gaining work, learning and advice in rural areas, GWLAD, project for rural learners, led by Bangor University. That has been a more difficult issue for us to engage in, because we have only recently transferred to funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and we will be in transitional funding mode until 2010. That means, for example, that we are unable to draw down third mission funding. That source is not available to us to use as match funding. We have no complaints about that; HEFCW has been very co-operative to ensure a smooth transition so that we are directly funded from it in all ways possible by 2010. We will certainly wish to explore convergence funding in partnership or alone in due course.

[89] **Janet Ryder:** Some of the evidence that we received from the University of Wales in Newport a few weeks ago pointed to the conclusion that we are, to some extent, perhaps moving away from campus-based education towards the virtual university—which is what the Open University is—specifically in supporting businesses and offering part-time courses. Delivering part-time courses is a speciality of the Open University. Please elaborate on any barriers that exist to recruiting—particularly from businesses—to working with businesses, and to developing the sort of courses that businesses need. Can you put that into perspective given some of the things that Adrian Webb has said about the need to target the skills that we need to develop in Wales?

[90] **Mr Humphreys:** I think that you are right that higher education in future will be an experience of learning throughout life rather than this front-loading model where people take a course at a particular place when they are 18 or 19. In many ways, looking at the demographic of higher education in Wales—or in advanced industrial societies generally for that matter—that form of education is already developing, but perhaps people have not really noticed it.

[91] On your question about barriers, let me describe them as ‘difficulties’ or ‘challenges’. I am sure that you have rehearsed this with other witnesses, but the first challenge is that small and medium-sized enterprises have tight time pressures and tight budgets and releasing staff for training is an issue for them. Potentially, and in actuality, in much of our provision we are able to get around that for them, because we provide a flexible offer. However, rapid response to employer demand is a challenge for all higher education institutions, and it is also a challenge for us because if you are predominantly a web-based provider, things cannot be changed quite as quickly as it might appear. That is rather counterintuitive: you tend to think

that because something is on the internet, it can be altered quickly, but if it is a set of pedagogic tools rather than just a lump of information, it is a rather a more sophisticated operation. In an orthodox mainstream HEI you can alter the lecture weekly, if necessary. That is a recognised way of operating pedagogically. If you have materials on the web, and so on, that is not quite as easy. We offer a series of short bespoke courses to businesses, which offer that greater flex, but in terms of our more general provision, it is more difficult, but not insurmountable. Is that helpful?

[92] **Janet Ryder:** How would we develop that? If we are going to look at developing those skills and upskilling workforces by working with businesses, how do we marry those two things together? Where do we need to get that expertise from or do we need to look at other ways of working with institutions such as yours that already have that expertise fully developed?

[93] **Mr Humphreys:** There are a number of issues there. We have a lot to offer, and not necessarily simply as the Open University in Wales. We may have things to offer to a greater extent in partnership with other providers, whether at HE or FE level, in assisting businesses, and so on. There is another side to that equation, which is how demand is best articulated by business and the private sector in Wales. Sector skills councils are new bodies and, to some extent, they are still relatively fragile bodies. There are real issues there, which face us all as citizens—I am not speaking simply as a representative of a university here. There are real issues in ensuring that there is clarity of articulation in the way that employer demand comes through, in particular as regards the small employers, who may be less connected to sector skills councils as compared with the large private sector employers or the public sector, which is much better organised in that sense. HEIs or providers in whichever sector are required to do things, and rightly so, but the other side of the equation has to operate well if we are to get the added value out of what higher level skills provision can offer.

[94] **Huw Lewis:** Thank you for your submission. I am a huge personal Open University enthusiast—I am an OU graduate myself and I regard it as one of the greatest civilising achievements of the Wilson era. It is a fantastic and unique institution.

[95] It seems to me, and I wonder whether you agree, that the Welsh Assembly Government is taking its time to recognise the importance of the Open University in a Welsh context and how it fits so perfectly with many of the stated aims of WAG. Before we start any constructive collaborative working, you are already out there working and penetrating communities to a greater depth than any other HEI. A quarter of your students are on low income and 8 per cent of your students are disabled, therefore, you are engaged in upskilling hard-to-reach people that other HEIs just do not reach.

10.10 a.m.

[96] Before you begin, there you are; you are out there doing the work that WAG has been talking about for a considerable time. I am curious as to why it takes until 2005-06 for WAG, in effect, to start becoming involved with your funding. Was that because the OU was hiding its light under a bushel, or was it because WAG was just very slow off the mark in recognising a devolved role for the OU and, therefore, a role for devolved Government in supporting your work? What is happening around the corner; what work will the Welsh Assembly Government be doing with you to enhance such things as your student numbers? Currently, I think that you receive £7 million a year from devolved Government—and that is a real bargain for WAG, in my opinion. There are 6,000 students out there, and you are getting £7 million a year from WAG. That is just incredible.

[97] Are discussions taking place? Is there a strategy? Are you talking about in-work training with WAG? You are specialists in that field, and that is now a big issue in the skills

review that we are undertaking. What can we look forward to in the next five to 10 years from the OU in Wales?

[98] **Gareth Jones:** Before you answer that, Sandy, do you have another question?

[99] **Sandy Mewies:** Yes. You will recall, Chair, that I, too, am an OU graduate. I am still a huge enthusiast—I still watch the programmes, now and again. I wish I had the time to do more. Like Huw, I was keen to see the OU included in this process, as it was left out, originally. What more can the Welsh Assembly Government do to include the OU, given that you can attract huge number of graduates with various needs from various walks of life in a way that other institutions cannot?

[100] It is a long time since I graduated, but a particular concern of mine is that accessing funds as a graduate to pursue courses was not easy. I do not recall any support from various local education authorities. It is extremely difficult for students who have paid their way to graduate then to have to pay to study at postgraduate level. We know that SMEs, for example, would love to encourage postgraduate students to go with them. I think that sometimes asking the SME itself to bear that cost is an enormous burden. Is there more that we can do to ensure that, if there is a real skills need, we can somehow encourage as part of our economic development some form of financial support for that sort of postgraduate student to go into the SME sector? As you said, it is not such a problem in the public sector and in the big companies.

[101] **Christine Chapman:** Following on from Huw's comments about the benefits of the Open University, there are some wonderful stories of people whose lives have been turned around and their outlook changed completely as a result of the Open University. I wanted to make that point.

[102] Huw talked a bit about the hard-to-reach groups in society, and the Open University has a lot of success with that. Can you say whether more could be done to reach people who really could benefit from the Open University? In cases of economic inactivity, this is what we need to change the economy. Would you like to say anything about that, Rob, in that context?

[103] **Mr Humphreys:** There were several questions there, and no doubt the Chair or one of the questioners will prompt me should I forget to answer one of them.

[104] Starting with Christine's questions first, with regard to the hard-to-reach groups, the nature of what we offer poses some challenges. We have a very good track record, as Huw says, but the digital divide is an issue for us, because access is spatially uneven in Wales and there is a divide related to poverty and disadvantage and so on. We try to supplement our provision via face-to-face openings, that is, access to higher education provision, working with the Workers' Educational Association, to try to attract students. It helps retention if students are working with a peer group, and that gives them the confidence and skills to move on to our more orthodox provision, or, indeed, to move on to another higher education institution. We should be thinking flexibly. You will be interested in the fact that we are just now exploring building out from that to work with Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority in terms of face-to-face provision, and we are seeking to use some of the very welcome investment from the Assembly Government—the additional resources via the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales for part-time education—in this kind of face-to-face provision so that we can do even better in getting at the harder-to-reach groups, which have no track record in HE and so on.

[105] Turning to the questions from Huw and Sandy, I am reluctant to criticise the Assembly Government, Huw—I will leave that to you, I think. These things take time. In

terms of our coupling with HEFCW, rather than the Higher Education Funding Council for England, that has taken some time. That is no-one's fault. We have to get it right, and there are some difficult financial arrangements to set up and so on. In terms of how the Assembly Government could help us, it has helped us in terms of making additional resources available to part-time education. As I said in my opening remarks, it would be risky, perhaps even catastrophic, if a future rearrangement or a new settlement for tuition fees in HE neglected part-time education. That would be disastrous, not just for us, but across the sector as whole because Wales has a very distinct pattern, which includes much part-time education. So, when policymakers—politicians—think of and conceptualise HE, they need to include part-time education in that conceptualisation. When you meet an adult in a street, one in every so many could well be a student; it is not necessarily someone who is aged between 18 and 21. That is quite significant. There almost needs to be a checklist when one is developing HE or education policy. However, we also have a job of work to do in terms of promoting ourselves as a distinctly Welsh institution and we are on a mission to do that—to embed us much more within the sector, within the economy and within Welsh public life and civil society more widely. We have a job of work to do; it is our responsibility to do that.

[106] In terms of how the Government can specifically help us, I would say that there is untapped potential arising from the fact that we are part of the largest HEI in the UK, measured in terms of student numbers. So, Wales can perhaps benefit from the developments that are funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council or Higher Education Funding Council for England because the work is being funded and conducted, whether it is new innovations or trials in terms of our virtual learning environments. There is a new HEFCE-funded initiative now whereby we are working in partnership with a number of English HEIs on enhancing work in subject shortage areas, such as chemistry and physics, I think, but also Arabic, Mandarin and German. Wales will benefit from that—we have to find ways, working with HEFCW and the Assembly Government, to ensure that we reap the full benefit from that, and not just have a drip-down kind of process.

[107] Sandy asked a question that I may have answered, but I suspect not.

[108] **Sandy Mewies:** It was about small and medium sized enterprises and whether it is more difficult for you and postgraduates because of the funding issues.

[109] **Mr Humphreys:** Again, the additional Assembly Government resource for part-time education is welcome there and we are able to underpin our student support. In contrast to when you did your degree, perhaps, there is more support for students now. In terms of support for SMEs, I draw attention again to the broadband issue. The latest Ofcom statistics suggest that in the household take-up of broadband, setting aside the issue of poverty and disadvantage, Wales has largely caught up with England and Scotland. In terms of SME take-up of broadband, Wales is still some way behind. That is an issue for us and something that we should all be concerned about in terms of economic development, the potential for SME growth, and so on.

10.20 a.m.

[110] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you very much for the range of questions and answers. I hope to accommodate another two questions, from David Melding and Kirsty Williams.

[111] **David Melding:** I am not an OU graduate, but I have attended several graduation ceremonies, which have been reaffirming human occasions, in contrast to the stiff, cold formalities that I went through in a more formal setting. I have two questions, but I would like to say first of all that the range of subjects that are studied are very interesting and seem to me to reflect many of our economic needs in relation to the demand that is being created among people who are acquiring new skills. I would like to move straight to the work that you do to

promote enterprise. As you have pointed out, there are several modules on this, such as: ‘Investigating Entrepreneurial Opportunities’, and ‘You and Your Money: Personal Finance in Context’. Could you give us an idea of the course content, the number of students enrolled on the courses, the usual age range of those studying; and any outcomes as to business start-ups that follow? That is the first question.

[112] The second question perhaps takes some of this into practice. You referred to Metrix, which will be a big development. It is in the planning stage at the moment, but it will have a huge impact on the economy of this area. If you are looking at the SME sector with regard to the supply chain and providing services, is the Open University active at the moment in seeing what it could offer, so that our local economy gets the maximum benefit from what is really a UK economic development in having the training academy in St Athan?

[113] **Mr Humphreys:** You point to what we might loosely call the enterprise component of our overall curriculum offer. It works in two ways. The modules are directly open, in the first instance, to those studying business and management; it is largely in that field. The entrepreneurship module offers what you would expect in terms of how to run a business, and notions of risk, and so on. ‘You and Your Money’ is a much broader offering, which, if you wanted to put it under headings, might come under business management, but could also come under financial literacy—which is a significant issue for Wales in all sorts of ways—or economics. That is something that can be carried around depending on the rubric under which you are studying with the Open University. I was interested in the questions of your colleague, Alun, to the NUS earlier; if you are doing an open degree within the Open University, you can mix and match. So, you could be studying ‘You and Your Money’, but be majoring—to use an American expression—in History, for example. That may be something that we need to make more widely known to students and potential students.

[114] We are a partner in the Metrix consortium, as I am sure you know. Along with City and Guilds, which is validating the provision below HE level, we will act as a validator and an accreditor of the provision. We do not know what much of that provision will be, because it is still at an early stage of development. We will certainly seek to engage with supply chains, as you said, because it is not just about the defence academy; there will be a set of related activities in the area of business and economic regeneration, and so on. We are also not necessarily the only higher education institution in Wales that is involved in the overall arrangements, although we are the only one that is a member of the consortium. Sorry, those answers may be slightly vague.

[115] **Kirsty Williams:** To build on what David has just said about the Welsh levels of participation in some of these entrepreneurial courses, I appreciate that it is early days, and that Venture Navigator is only just up and running, but I wonder if you have any evidence or figures about how it is being used by Welsh students or Welsh businesses. I note that, throughout the paper, and in your comments here today, you have talked a lot about your collaboration with English institutions, and how that benefits Wales. However, the paper is short on examples of Open University collaboration with Welsh HEIs. There are a few mentions of Swansea University—I do not know whether Swansea University is particularly good, but if it is, could you explain what it is about Swansea that makes working with it so successful? Do you think that there is room for the Open University to work with other Welsh HEIs to develop issues? I am hugely struck by what you said about part-time students. We do not need to explore that any further, but it is something that the committee needs to take serious note of. I am interested in the geographical disadvantage for SMEs in terms of broadband access, but also in influencing the kind of training that they need. You referred to the critical comments from the Federation of Small Businesses in its evidence, and I wonder what you think the barriers are for you and other HE institutions in terms of working more successfully with SMEs, especially given the fact that the OU, in large parts of rural Wales, may be the only institution of higher education that people have access to.

[116] **Mr Humphreys:** There are three points there. First, I can sort of an answer a question that David asked earlier and which I did not answer. In terms of Venture Navigator, it is at a very early stage, and I cannot give you details of Welsh businesses that have accessed that. I would probably be able to do that in about a year's time. In terms of start-ups, David asked a question and I failed to answer it. One thing that has been made clear to us following our move to funding from HEFCW is that the data collection does not allow us to disaggregate the OU in Wales from the OU at the UK level. So, we could give you a figure—I would have to dig around in my papers here—for business start-ups by OU graduates at a UK level, but that would not disaggregate the figures for Wales, Scotland and England, which we need to do. So, that answers an earlier question, and that is perhaps something that WAG could help us with—if we could drill down to those data, it would be helpful to the Government. So, unfortunately I cannot help you, but at least I feel better for having now answered the question.

[117] Kirsty, on your second question about Welsh HEIs, alas, you limited us to six pages, so we could not give you a long list of our various collaborations. As I mentioned earlier, we have collaborated significantly, particularly on the widening access agenda, with HEIs in Newport, Swansea, Bangor, and others that I forget at the moment. We have recently discussed greater collaborative activity with Lampeter, and we have an arrangement for Welsh history across the whole of the Welsh HE sector, which enables students to study with us and have portable credits so that they can mix and match with courses in Aberystwyth, for example. However, there is a lot more that we can do, and one of the issues that we have explored at the sketchiest level with the funding council is whether, given our part-time offer in the sciences—and, again, we are drawing on the strength of being a UK HEI there—there are things that we can bring to the table for the sector as a whole that could help in specialist subjects, or subject shortage areas. I suspect that there may well be. We have a lot of talking to do yet, but we are keen to explore what we can do by sharing provision with the sector as a whole and bringing something distinct to the table. Having said that, we certainly do not see our institution as a gap filler. The OU is a university in its own right—we will collaborate, as all HEIs should, but we are not here simply to make up the numbers, as it were. We have a legitimate, wide-ranging and distinct offer in our own right.

10.30 a.m.

[118] In terms of SMEs, I could refer you the answer that I gave to Janet earlier. You are picking up Russell Lawson's real challenge. If I remember rightly, Russell did say that it was not all new graduates and he was rather complimentary about us, but I do not think that he was exempting us, generally, from the challenge as a whole. Again, it comes back to the ability of higher education institutions to be quicker on their feet and more responsive—I am sure that you have come across that before in your deliberations—but it also requires clarity of articulation from business. There needs to be greater clarity about needs and the necessary structures, which need to be resourced adequately in order to enable them to do that. Bear in mind, also, that, in terms of the small and medium-sized enterprise sector, higher-level skills are crucial, but so are other levels of skills. I do not think that we should become fixated about the role of higher education with SMEs. Many SMEs will quite rightly go to the further education sector because that is the most appropriate sector for them. I think that there needs to be a balance: we must not bring too much inappropriate weight to bear on the HE sector and we must bear in mind that it needs a cross-sectoral approach.

[119] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. Daw hynny â'r rhan hon o'r sesiwn i ben. Diolch i'r tri ohonoch am eich cyflwyniad ac am y papur gwreiddiol, sy'n gynhwysfawr ac yn hynod o ddifyr. Yr ydych wedi amlygu **Gareth Jones:** Thank you. That brings this part of the session to a close. Thank you to the three of you for your presentations and for the original paper, which was comprehensive and extremely interesting.

dimensiwn gwahanol, ac mae hynny hefyd wedi bod yn amlwg yn ein trafodaethau. Gofynnwyd cwestiynau anodd hefyd. Er gwybodaeth i bawb, byddwn yn cynnal sesiynau craffu gyda'r Gweinidog yn y dyfodol a bydd cyfle, bryd hynny, i ofyn rhai o'r cwestiynau yr oedd Huw Lewis, er enghraifft, yn cyfeirio atynt. O ran y berthynas â busnesau bach a chanolig eu maint, bydd sesiynau craffu eraill ac efallai y cawn gyfle i fynd ar ôl y trywydd hwnnw. Diolch i chi am eich syniadau, eich gweledigaeth a'ch negeseuon pwysig. Byddwn yn eu cofnodi. Mae eich cyfraniad wedi bod yn hynod o adeiladol ac wedi dod â dimensiwn ychwanegol hollbwysig i'n trafodaethau. Yr wyf yn sicr y bydd hynny yn cyfoethogi'r adroddiad terfynol. Diolch yn fawr a'n dymuniadau gorau i chi.

You have shown a different dimension, which was also evident in our discussions. Difficult questions have also been asked. As a point of information, further scrutiny sessions will be held with the Minister and there will be an opportunity, at that time, to ask some of the questions that Huw Lewis, for example, referred to. On the relationship with small and medium-sized enterprises, there will be other scrutiny sessions and we may have an opportunity to go down that route. Thank you for your ideas, your vision and your important messages. We will note them. Your contribution has been extremely constructive and has brought another all-important dimension to our discussions. I am certain that that will enrich the final report. That you and our best wishes to you.

[120] Croeso i'r tystion nesaf. Bore da i bob un ohonoch a chroeso. Yn gyntaf, yr wyf am ymddiheuro ein bod yn rhedeg ychydig yn hwyr. Mae'r trafodaethau yr ydym yn eu cael yn hynod o ddifyr ac yn bwysig i ni o ran o gwaith yr ydym yn ymgymryd ag ef ar gyfer yr adroddiad terfynol. Estynnaf groeso cynnes i chi i'r rhan olaf o'r sesiwn graffu hon. Yr ydym yn croesawu, o Goleg y Drindod, Caerfyrddin, Dr Medwin Hughes, prifathro a phrif weithredwr y coleg, a Dr Brian Clarke, sy'n gyfarwyddwr adnoddau a gweithrediadau. O Brifsgol Cymru, Llanbedr Pont Steffan, croesawn yr Athro Robert Pearce, yr Is-ganghellor, yr Athro Barry Burnham, y Dirprwy Is-ganghellor, a'r Athro Ian Roffe, Cyfarwyddwr y Ganolfan Gwasanaethau Menter, Ewropeaidd ac Ymestyn.

I will now welcome the next witnesses. Good morning to all of you and welcome. First, I would like to apologise that we are running a little late. The discussions that we are having are extremely interesting and they are important for us in terms of the work that we are undertaking for the final report. I extend a warm welcome to you to the final part of this scrutiny session. We welcome, Dr Medwin Hughes, principal and chief executive of Trinity College, Carmarthen, and Dr Brian Clarke, the director of resources and operations. From the University of Wales, Lampeter, we welcome Professor Robert Pearce, the Vice-chancellor, Professor Barry Burnham, the Deputy Vice-chancellor, and Professor Ian Roffe, the Director of the Centre for Enterprise, European and Extension Services.

[121] Yr ydym yn ddiolchgar i chi am ymuno â ni. Yr ydym hefyd yn ddiolchgar am y ddau bapur yr ydych wedi eu paratoi ar ein cyfer. Yr ydym wedi cael cyfle i'w darllen yn drylwyr. Gan bod amser yn pwyso, a fydddech mor garedig â chyflwyno eich pwyntiau allweddol am tua phum munud yr un? Dechreuwn gyda Choleg y Drindod, yna Llanbedr Pont Steffan, ac yna cawn gwestiynau'r Aelodau. Gobeithio bod hynny'n dderbyniol i chi.

We are grateful to you for attending, and we are also grateful for the two papers that you have prepared for us. We have had an opportunity to read them thoroughly. As time is pressing, would you be so kind as to present your key points in about five minutes each? We will start with Trinity College, then Lampeter, and then we will take Members' questions. I hope that that is acceptable to you.

[122] **Dr Hughes:** Diolch am y cyfle i gael cyflwyno tystiolaeth i'r pwyllgor. Yr ydym wedi cyflwyno dwy ddogfen i chi—dogfen

**Dr Hughes:** Thank you for the opportunity to present evidence to the committee. We have presented you with two documents—a



gefndir, a chopi o adroddiad Bute.

background document, and a copy of the Bute report.

[123] You will have received two documents—one relating to the evidence presented by the college, and the second is a copy of the Bute report. That is an independent report that was published by Bute Communications and Cardiff Business School on the economic value of Trinity College in west Wales.

[124] I wish to address three key issues in particular. The first issue is the strategic role of Trinity College, Carmarthen in the context of west Wales. This institution is focused on a mission-specific curriculum. It has over 2,000 students, over 90 per cent of whom come from Wales, and 83 per cent of whom come from a 50-mile radius. Within six months of graduating, 90 per cent of those students are in jobs. The evidence presented in the Bute report is clear. This is an independent report that was commissioned by the governors, asking about the economic value of this relatively small higher education college to west Wales. I would draw your attention to one of the key conclusions of the report:

[125] ‘From our research we were able to pinpoint evidence that demonstrates the College’s added value in contributing to social inclusion, community development and broader economic development’.

[126] I believe that it is fair to say that, over the last six years, the college has gone through major restructuring, and we have restructured the whole curriculum. We now have a focused curriculum that addresses vocational needs in west Wales. The evidence of that is clear in the curriculum that we have established, the development of new, innovative, flexible and part-time courses, in working with local employers, and in addressing workforce needs.

[127] Mae pwysigrwydd y Gymraeg a dwyieithrwydd yn ganolog i waith y coleg. The importance of the Welsh language and bilingualism is central to the college’s work.

[128] In taking forward the Government of Wales’s priorities, looking to ‘Cymru Creadigol’ and ‘Iaith Pawb’, it is clear that Trinity College, and Bangor University, are offering the most number of courses through the medium of Welsh. Those are not only traditional courses, but also new courses, focusing on relevant vocational issues.

[129] I also wish to focus on the importance of partnership activity. The Assembly Government’s 2010 vision of higher education focusing as networks and not as individual institutions is crucial to driving forward economic activity in Wales. The evidence in this paper underlines the added value of the development, through the virtual university of south-west Wales—a large university such as Swansea, which is focused on international research, focusing with Coleg y Drindod and Swansea Metropolitan University—of driving forward the development needs and the innovative skills-based needs of west Wales. The evidence of that is clear—it works extremely well; I believe that the same evidence has been presented to you by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, as well as Swansea University.

[130] Trinity focuses on key, cluster-specific areas. It focuses on social inclusion, the needs of bilingualism, and the creative arts. My colleague will offer evidence in a moment on the development of the new creative arts centre in west Wales. After developing a new centre in Carmarthen, we are seeing inward investment, and new international companies looking to the potential of investing in west Wales. Two companies from Canada are interested in coming to west Wales to develop a centre for animation, working with us and with Tinopolis.

10.40 a.m.

[131] The benefit of having a strong learning hub in Carmarthen, and focusing with

Swansea on addressing the needs that are identified in the spatial plan, is clear. What you have within the college's strategic plan is a very focused business strategy that deals with the needs of west Wales and ensures that these graduates remain within the area and make a major contribution, not only to the economy, but to the social context of the area.

[132] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you. We will now turn Trown yn awr at Brifysgol Cymru, Llanbedr to the University of Wales, Lampeter. Pont Steffan.

[133] **Professor Pearce:** I will give a brief introduction, as I know that there are many questions that you wish to ask. You have read our written submission and that from Higher Education Wales, which show that, across Wales as a whole, institutions are contributing to the economy in three principal ways: as employers and consumers of goods and services; through the provision of skilled people; and through the application of knowledge. You will find that every higher education institution in Wales contributes to those three areas in different ways, depending on their character and position. You will see some of those contrasts between Trinity and Lampeter universities today.

[134] In Lampeter, we believe that we, like Carmarthen, are a small institution, and that we fit in with the concept that Wales has of being a small and clever country. We believe that, as a small institution, we can be agile and responsive in a way that some larger institutions might find more difficult. We contribute significantly, particularly in the context of the rural area in which we are located, to the local economy. We have given some facts and figures on that in our submission. The average wage levels in Ceredigion are very low, and if it were not for the presence of Aberystwyth and Lampeter universities, I think that you would find the figures to be even lower. The direct contribution that we make to the local economy is very significant, and there are also indirect benefits that come from the presence of students and some of our other activities, such as conference activities over the summer and vacation periods. We also believe that we can make an even more significant contribution to the area in the future. I will draw your attention, if the opportunity arises later in the session, to the Lampeter regeneration plan, which puts Lampeter at the heart of redevelopment in our particular area. So, we contribute as employers and consumers of goods and services.

[135] We also contribute through the provision of skilled people. Our focus is on the arts and humanities, but we have a very good employability record, and we are seeing increasing work in personal and professional development in which we have a very long and sustained record. We also have a commitment to social inclusion. We have a very high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and with disabilities, and we believe that we provide an environment and support that suits those students.

[136] We also have an increasing contribution to make through the application of knowledge. Pro rata, if you compare us, size for size, with other universities, we have a very good record of encouraging enterprise and graduate start-ups. If you look at the figures in the abstract, without doing a comparative analysis, it may look like a small contribution, but when you bear in mind the size of the institution, comparatively, we are doing extremely well in that regard. We are also seeing an increase in other work, including contract research through archaeology, and work in theology, with the Imaging the Bible in Wales project being an example. So, we believe that we contribute in a wide range of ways, which is appropriate for our particular character as a research-led institution.

[137] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch i chi am y ddau gyflwyniad ac am y wybodaeth gefndirol yr ydych wedi ei chyflwyno i ni; **Gareth Jones:** Thank you for the two presentations and the background information that you have submitted; it has been very useful to Members. We have had an opportunity to read the information and to bu'n ddefnyddiol iawn i'r Aelodau. Cawsom gyfle i ddarllen y wybodaeth ac i wrando ar

eich cyflwyniadau. Yr wyf am droi at listen to your presentations. I will now move  
gwestiynau'r Aelodau, gan gychwyn gyda on to Members' questions, beginning with  
Janet Ryder. Janet Ryder.

[138] **Janet Ryder:** Thank you both for your presentations. We have received evidence from the University of Wales, Newport about the changing nature of HE colleges, which are moving towards having a more virtual base, and we have just taken evidence from the Open University, which is very much a virtual university, which can provide courses anywhere, at different levels. We have also heard evidence from you this morning about moving towards having that kind of institution, and away from people going to HE colleges at a certain time in their lives, and having an ongoing interaction with communities, businesses and the local area. Please could you both expand on that? We know of the traditional benefits of having a university based in an area, but, as we are looking ahead, how have you worked with your local areas to identify the skills needed there, and how have you worked with businesses, local authorities and others to develop the necessary courses? How are you able to react to any changes in markets?

[139] **Gareth Jones:** Before you answer, I think that Jeff wants to add to that.

[140] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Part of my question is on this point. I am particularly interested in the response of Trinity College Carmarthen, but I would also welcome Lampeter's view. You mentioned increasing the proportion of students from Communities First areas. I must say that not many of your higher education colleagues have mentioned that explicitly in the way that you have. Is that the result of a proactive engagement on your part, and, if so, how did you go about it?

[141] **Dr Clarke:** Perhaps I can give you some exemplification of the way in which the college is developing its strategy to offer provision in communities rather than its business being focused in the college. There are several examples that I like to give, the first of which is the early years development programme. The early years team—a centre of excellence within Trinity College—has been developing a programme of education and training for early years practitioners across Wales. It is being delivered in partnership with Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and supported strongly by the Welsh Assembly Government. It has already trained approximately 250 practitioners across Wales. As well as the ability to deliver that training at a distance, we have developed a series of e-learning programmes to support distance learning. That is one clear example of flexible and appropriate training that, essentially, delivers the aims of 'Iaith Pawb'.

[142] We have also developed a programme on social inclusion, focusing on youth and community workers. It was developed in association with a number of local authorities, particularly in south-west Wales. It is delivered at the premises of the employer, at the local education authorities' offices. Again, it is an example of very good practice; the college is developing provision that meets and matches the requirements of local industry. I must say that there is still a way to go, and we wish to develop significant other programmes in these areas. I wish to make the point that, given the concentration of small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales, one must be aware of the difficulties that they face in releasing individuals for training and education. Coupled with that, SMEs face financial constraints, and we have therefore adopted an approach that provides flexible delivery at the premises of these businesses. We have also taken the strategic decision to lower the part-time fees as far as we possibly can to encourage participation across the board.

[143] On the Communities First agenda, Carmarthenshire is comparatively affluent, but the college is looking at Llanelli and Pembroke Dock as areas where it should provide key, almost access-type provision and where it should support the communities in that learning. The early years and social inclusion programmes are targeted and can support that transition

from community learning, and can lower the barriers so that individuals can move on to higher level programmes. We have been focusing considerably on that interface: the easy point of access.

10.50 a.m.

[144] I would like to touch on one other area, which is the strategic role that we see ourselves as having in delivering via strategic partnerships. One example is that, as a college, we have invested £2.5 million in a cultural innovation and enterprise centre. We were careful at the outset to ensure that this was a sustainable development that could be supported in the long term without further investment. As a result of that, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru, which is the national Welsh-language theatre of Wales, will be present for at least 10 years on campus. That has obvious advantages for our students, but also to the theatre for its community development. In addition, seven other companies, all related to the cultural sector, are based in that unit. The key element is that it is above that critical mass, and we have a group of SMEs that are mutually supportive and are generating economic activity. It was completed in September 2007 and it was full to capacity three months prior to its opening, and that unit now employs 47 people. The facility did not exist a year ago. Of those 47 jobs, around 50 per cent are new jobs; the others are jobs that have moved from other areas, such as Cardiff and Swansea, into the west Wales region. So, the economic impact has been very strong. Those are some of the key examples that we have of the institution's economic, cultural and social development in what is, essentially, our third mission strategy.

[145] **Dr Hughes:** To come back to the balance between the traditional mode—the campus experience—and the need to be much more radical in the way that universities offer a new curriculum, Trinity College has tried to look to workforce development needs over the past two or three years, to see how the university can develop higher level skills, new products, and competency-based learning, not only through a traditional three-year degree, but through new examples and new products, to take them to the workforce. One of the interesting developments, from working with local authorities and health trusts in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire as they develop their continuing professional development plans, is the way in which universities can broker new training schemes, which I think will be crucial. Lampeter has an enormous amount in the virtual context, e-learning, but the need to take the training into the workplace and develop new innovative products is crucial.

[146] On your point about Communities First, the commitment of the university is clear: that is central to the work of the university college, and there is potential for us to empower those people to consider university education, and also for them to develop their own social enterprises. What we have seen over the past two or three years is the benefit of people coming into university education for the first time and then having the confidence to go back to their communities to develop new social enterprises that will have a major effect on the social and economic context of those Community First areas.

[147] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch am hynny. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you for that.

[148] **Professor Pearce:** I think that there were three strands to the question, which was fairly complex. The three strands were: the relevance or role of virtual learning and part-time study; engagement with employers; and engaging with disadvantaged communities. I will pass some aspects of the question onto my colleagues to answer, as they will be able to give a fuller response than I.

[149] On the question of part-time learning and virtual learning, I wholeheartedly agree with Medwin. We have seen the statistics in Wales and the UK in general that growth in part-time study has been much faster than growth in full-time study. It is important that institutions, particularly those on the periphery of Wales take learning to where people need

it, rather than expecting people to come to you for their learning, and we have made that a part of our strategy at Lampeter. Some of the work that we have done in partnerships has been instrumental in reaching people who would otherwise not have been able to benefit from higher education.

[150] I am sure that Barry will be able to say more about franchise work, where we have worked with FE colleges on a relatively limited scale compared with the University of Glamorgan, for instance; nevertheless, what we are offering enables people with family commitments who are unable to move from their area to study and achieve degrees. Some of the transformations that you see through part-time study—for instance, in our certificate in interpersonal skills for volunteers—are remarkable. I was chairing an award ceremony for one of these groups a couple of years ago, and one woman who had been part of a learning group of six or eight gave a very moving talk. She said that nearly all of them were on antidepressants before they started their course, and, by the end, less than a third of them were. That is anecdotal evidence; it is not hard, empirical evidence. However, it is an indication of the way in which part-time learning can transform people's lives. We see that as extremely important. Ian may be able to say a little more about engagement with employers.

[151] **Professor Roffe:** Thank you, vice-chancellor. Among the great privileges of working in this field is seeing the transformation in people when you shift them up from one level of skills and qualifications to another level of greater education added value.

[152] On the specifics of working with employers, I draw the committee's attention to our location in Wales. The central rural Wales area is somewhat different from the area in which Carmarthen is located, for example, particularly because of the transport difficulties. We have heard a lot about the knowledge economy and we have spoken this morning about small and medium-sized enterprises. SMEs are not a homogeneous group: you have selections of them working in different sectors, they are of different sizes and they have different objectives and requirements. Assuming that you can treat them all in the same way is useful for categorising them, but is not so useful for delivering to them. We try to take a view about what is helpful for them, what fits with their competitive strategy, what the business aims are, and how we can improve their profitability and growth and so on. Finding the best means of approaching them has puzzled me for a long time. We live in a very high-skilled area, and the knowledge economy is on the Welsh Assembly Government's agenda and is on everybody's lips these days. The characteristic that I have considered for a number of years is that most of these companies engaging in the knowledge economy are trading with markets that are outside the rural Wales area, so they are choosing to live and prosper in these areas but their main markets are elsewhere. That leads us to ask, 'What can we as higher education institutions and universities do to address that?'. We can address the skills agenda and affect their business a little, but we cannot act wholly on our own; we have to act in concert with the local authority, and particularly with the Government, on improving infrastructure, transport, ICT and the skills that allow the businesses to trade outside the rural area. So, we take a combination approach to the needs. We try to analyse them holistically by having a dialogue, by engaging them with our local Lampeter enterprise network, by doing research studies on them, and by engaging in performance improvement through consultancy, skills improvement and a variety of other means. However, the key approach to improving them, in the knowledge economy, is to give them the facility to trade outside the area.

[153] **Gareth Jones:** Barry, do you want to come in?

[154] **Professor Burnham:** Sorry, but I was not quite clear whether the question was going to be passed on to one of my colleagues.

[155] Our document makes it plain that Lampeter has a long-standing commitment to widening access and to social inclusion, and all the statistics that I see suggest that we

outperform our benchmark, and that we are successful. We try to do that in two ways: by working in partnership, and by working as a standalone institution. We have committed ourselves over the past few years to the Reaching Wider partnership, which is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and we participate in several initiatives. The flagship is the all-Wales summer university programme, which caters for about 130 students between the two institutions. That six-week product is specifically designed to raise awareness among students who might not otherwise think of going to university, and who may be from families that have no tradition of going to university. Our intention is that they learn basic, core skills and that they learn about and engage with particular subjects. The idea is that that upskilling will improve their performance, and the aspiration is that they will go to university—and whether that is Lampeter, Aberystwyth or Trinity is open to debate. That is a flagship that has been highly successful. We talk about 60 to 70 per cent going on to some form of higher education.

[156] We do not just deal with the front end of people immediately coming to universities, because widening access is a longer term agenda. We have focused on GCSE, schools revision classes, designed to ensure that students perform better and think about aspiring. We are also beginning to engage more with parents about their aspirations for their children, and we are also beginning to engage with teachers, because part of the problem is engaging, through them, the schools at which they work. We have done various after-school clubs, so there is an active sequence of things that we do with Aberystwyth and our FE partners in the regional and wider grouping.

11.00 a.m.

[157] We have done other things as well; the vice chancellor mentioned franchise outreach, and we have had a long-term commitment for over 10 years with Coleg Powys, and, more recently, with Coleg Morgannwg, whereby we specifically provide courses in the community, in Brecon, at one point in Newtown, and also down in the Rhondda and in Aberdare. What we are doing in that context is small-scale: we are talking about some 70 to 80 students over the course of three years, but it engages with people who cannot travel to a university close to them, and who want to work and live in their own community. We have been particularly successful with women returners, people with families who would otherwise not access HE, but who are now going out into the community with those skills, seeking employment and making life-changing decisions.

[158] Another internal action is that we have begun to provide level 3 foundation studies courses. We used to do access work many years ago, but we now do foundation studies work. Hitherto, much of that has been in Lampeter, but we are beginning to export that into other areas and we are looking to other communities where we can provide level 3 courses as a bridge into higher education, and that might lead to options for how people might study level 4 courses in their own communities as well. So, we are doing a range of different things, and I hope that gives you a flavour of our activities.

[159] **Dr Hughes:** Partnership is crucial. I was listening to the questions that you asked the National Union of Students at the beginning of this session about developing enterprise culture and the importance of partnership activity there. In the context of partnership, we have seen Swansea University, Swansea Metropolitan University, as it is now called, and Trinity develop a west Wales skills academy, whereby we bring the capacity of the three institutions together to create a one-stop shop to broker their needs with employers and look to economic value.

[160] Looking to the other spectrum of working with secondary schools, it is important that we develop an enterprise culture at an early age. The college is developing an associate

faculty, in which partnership schools—up to 60 secondary schools in Wales—will be members. As a result, youngsters in years 12 and 13 will have the opportunity to have enterprise education and will then have some experience at HE level. Some, hopefully most of them, will stay in Wales, but they will certainly have the opportunity to gain an understanding of that culture and to use that in their university education.

[161] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you for that point; we intend to follow that up at a later stage in the course of these meetings. Christine is next.

[162] **Christine Chapman:** First of all, thank you for your presentations. We have covered some of this, but the evidence that we have had so far from different institutions is throwing up different things, although there is a lot of consistency as well. From your perspective, as you are both small institutions, if you were going to offer some universal principles to explain how your institutions have succeeded in engaging with employers in a meaningful way, whether locally or, as some of you have mentioned, more internationally, what sort of principles would you be reinforcing as an exemplar to others who wanted to be successful? You may have referred to some of this, but it would be useful to hear it again, because you have had this experience, and obviously learned from it.

[163] **Professor Pearce:** It is hard to identify universal principles, because you will find that needs are different in different areas, and when you move into the areas in which Trinity and we operate, even more so in Lampeter than in Carmarthen, you are essentially dealing with a community of small and medium-sized employers. I am sure that Ian will want to expand on this. For us, a success would be seeing an employer taking on an employee, rather than operating as a sole trader: that could be a doubling of employment opportunities in the area. In urban areas, you would expect to see midsize firms expanding into larger ones. So, I do not think that you can say that there is a one-size approach that fits all.

[164] **Professor Roffe:** As members of an educational enterprise, we have particular interests. We are trying to create education with a particular purpose—to make it interesting and exciting and so on. When we meet businesses and employers, they have different perceptions, different organisational goals and stakeholders and have different business requirements, and profit may be an objective. Education is not their No.1 reason for existing. As educators, we then need to appreciate that and to consider holistically what they are about, analyse that and construe it as best we can. It may not be just in selling courses; for example, it may be about giving advice, making referrals or giving pointers to where they can receive mezzanine loans. You can give them a whole raft of useful information, and it is important not to approach them with any preformed views.

[165] **Dr Clarke:** The key is a multi-faceted approach. In my experience, probably the least effective mode of communication is via formal consultative committees. Small employers and businesses need to see a direct benefit to their organisation from the activity undertaken by HEIs. I have jotted down some examples where I feel that the direct approach is much more effective.

[166] We have recently initiated a scheme of internships as a result of the fee plan regimes that have been introduced by the Assembly, where we are able to support students for a month in their summer period in a placement with an employer. That offers a direct benefit in terms of engagement between the employer and the student, but also in the feedback that comes back into the institution that then feeds back into our strategic plan.

[167] We have several examples of European projects—a key one is a development with University College Dublin and Trinity College whereby we developed a multimedia e-learning package related to procurement. That package is delivered across 11,500 SMEs between Ireland and Wales. That project is ongoing and is very successful. It enables small

employers to bid for major contracts by acting in a network environment. That is a direct link.

[168] Enterprise clubs are a key element in terms of the contribution that small employers can make by giving students direct input, ideas and linking them in with the dynamo role model programme.

[169] On our future strategy, we are looking at how we can engage with employers in terms of the new developments on the planned new campus. For example, we are looking at media developments in terms of our curriculum development going in one direction, at links, as Medwin said, with new employers coming to the area and with organisations such as Tinopolis and looking at the whole e-learning agenda—not in isolation as an institution, but in terms of co-operation with the key media players as appropriate. That is reflected not only in media circles, but also in performing and other creative arts.

[170] So, there is not one right approach. One has to tailor the approach in terms of what is appropriate for local employers, what the institution is able to provide and one has to be able to be flexible enough to accommodate employer requirements.

[171] **Dr Hughes:** We are also seeing the benefits, in restructuring the curriculum at university level, of ensuring that employers are involved in that process so that they have a say in terms of looking at what the needs are in the context of undergraduate training schemes. If you look at tourism and management business, how we structure a university curriculum in west Wales—and most of our students there will remain in west Wales—will affect their industries, so ensuring the engagement of these industries from the creation of the course to its validation is absolutely crucial.

[172] On Brian's point about the internships, their potential for undergraduate students is enormous. If those could be accredited in the undergraduate curriculum, there is a lot of potential, not only for the students, but also for the employer.

[173] **David Melding:** My point was just covered by Dr Clarke; it was on SMEs and the project that has been developed in co-operation with the Republic of Ireland. However, further evidence would be quite useful, so I would be grateful if you could send further information, particularly on any evaluation of that project in terms of SMEs that have secured contracts.

11.10 a.m.

[174] I was also interested to note that you mentioned the local service board. I think that it was the first time that we have heard that in evidence. The Beecham review, which was published last year, said that if public services in Wales are to get the maximum value for the pound, we need to develop a much more mixed economy. I took that to be a euphemism to get a left-wing Government to be more open to the private sector, but perhaps I am just a jaundiced old Tory. It is very early days for local service boards, but do you think that the procurement culture is changing and that they are looking at how and from where they commission? If SMEs are looking outside of west Wales for much of their business, they are clearly missing some opportunities. We are, potentially, sometimes getting weaker public services because of that.

[175] I do not know whether Lampeter wants to reflect on the thrust of my question, because you mention the Ceredigion procurement initiative, but, again, without very much detail on what sort of outcomes and changes in behaviour are occurring among commissioners and what success there is for local SMEs, where they have got into contracts. Currently, under half of public service spend, in terms of what you can procure, is coming from outside of Wales. I am not saying, in a chauvinistic way, that we can have 100 per cent



of it from within Wales, because we cannot, and some of our firms are successful outside of Wales and there is a natural cross-border movement. However, we do not seem to be doing as well as we could in getting public service spend to have a maximum impact on local economies.

[176] **Dr Clarke:** Perhaps I could comment on what we have learned from the procurement Tenderwise initiative. The first phase involved raising awareness of SMEs about what was possible in terms of their ability to procure or to enter the procurement process with major employers. There is another stage that we recognised early on in phase 1, which has led onto the phase 2 process, in that they not only need the information and facilitation in terms of what the requirements are, but also need more hands-on assistance, because tender contracts are immensely problematic for small employers. So the idea of the second phase is to be much more proactive in supporting employers and helping them to write a tender, or writing the tender on their behalf. There has been a series of training events across Wales in the last week that have focused directly on the ability of a HEI—it does not matter whether it is the University College Dublin or ourselves—to do the tender process for SMEs and then to pass that, and we can do that on a contract basis. It is early days for the project and there is a long way to go to support SMEs in their ability to enter the regime.

[177] On the local authority point of view, I cannot answer on behalf of the local authorities, but, again, there is a lot of facilitation that local authorities could undertake in terms of engaging locally—not keeping the SMEs at such a distance, but engaging with them more positively, indicating the potential tenders that are coming up and then having some sort of facility locally that will provide a forum. There is a gap there that local authorities could fill.

[178] **Professor Pearce:** Again, it was a complex question with a number of layers that need addressing. It is worth starting by saying that there have been some significant developments in procurement methods recently, and one of the most exciting is an online tendering process—which is being led Wales-wide, I believe, but I am not sure whether it is confined to higher education—with a wide variety of suppliers having access to it. The system that is being adopted is SME-friendly, provided that SMEs have access to the internet—and it would be rare now if a supplier did not—in order to participate in the exercise. That is one development.

[179] The Ceredigion procurement initiative was an exciting project because it was the first example in Wales of a genuinely cross-sector inclusive partnership that involved all public sector organisations in Ceredigion—the universities, the health boards, the FE college and the county council. We have seen some significant benefits in that. It is unlikely that the whole partnership will be kept together, but the intention is for a network to be created to enable some local purchasing to be done.

[180] That takes me to the third aspect, which is the matter of sustainability within the local area. Lampeter's town and university are both engaged in looking at the Cittaslow and transition town initiatives, which are very much based on local sourcing and sustainability. Despite being in its early days, we see that as being important for the character of our area and for the character of our institutions. There can sometimes be conflict between looking for the cheapest products and those that are sourced locally, but we think that these initiatives will help us to find an appropriate balance.

[181] **Kirsty Williams:** I can see the desirability of using employers' expertise in developing curriculum and course content. That might easily be achieved if you are dealing with large-scale employers in a particular area. If you have Broughton next door, then that is easy to achieve, but that is far from what you are dealing with in Lampeter or in Carmarthenshire. What mechanisms do you use to bring small companies on board in

developing your tourism courses? What have you learned from that experience about how you can best engage small businesses in developing course content in curricula?

[182] You heard the OU's evidence. Do you share its concern about the fee regime as it affects part-time students? Do you also share the concern about the growing digital divide between those who have access to broadband and those who do not?

[183] **Dr Clarke:** On tourism, we had an initiative that was essentially a follow-on from the Welcome Host initiative based at Trinity College. We developed a HR development programme, and that was delivered by our development unit right across south-west Wales.

[184] Getting SMEs is the \$64,000 question in terms of what we are looking at. Y Llwyfan is a good example of how we can engage with nine small employers in the cultural field to identify exactly what their needs are and to provide direct provision. As a small institution, we know what our niche is. At the moment, we engage those companies to which we can an appropriate service. Essentially, we are talking about the fields of sport, performance, creative arts, media and advertising. We have to focus on that area—it is pointless going outside our remit. Much of the contact is made personally. We have recently conducted a review of staff expertise across the college in preparation for some of the developments that we are looking at. We have classified all the contacts that those individuals have with small companies. That has been key. We have identified, critically, those links. The internships are another mechanism, as I have mentioned.

[185] You mentioned the digital divide. Perhaps I can comment, on behalf of the college and on a personal level. I am really concerned about the services that we in Wales can offer, particularly to media companies, which require very high levels of broadband—we are not talking about one or two megabytes. This has become evident in north Wales, and it is certainly evident in west Wales communities.

11.20 a.m.

[186] If we want to attract media companies to the area, our broadband provision is nowhere near what their needs are. The broadband service that we have is not close to being appropriate, not only for the major media companies, but for individuals in the communities and the social enterprises that we are trying to promote. We have recently developed a very small pilot scheme, which we have not made public. We have a wireless node on the tower block at the college, and we have made it accessible to a group of around 10 individuals in the community. They are mostly retired people, but they are providing a test bed for that free wireless access that links in with the educational provision that the college operates. We are negotiating with the county council to develop that wireless project further, because the council sees that it has development potential. Our pilot scheme will only cover a radius of around 2 km or 3 km, but we would really like to see how we address the problems of the digital divide within the community and get a service right out to communities across Wales. I know that there is potential for digital television to make a contribution in this regard, and although that particular element has probably stalled at the moment, there are other opportunities that we need to investigate. HEIs are key in terms of allowing and enabling access in terms of the digital divide. There is a bit of mixed access for the SMEs because of the digital divide, which is a serious issue in west Wales.

[187] **Dr Hughes:** In terms of training for SMEs, there are two particular schemes that will be of interest. We have Master of Business Administration courses in tourism management, heritage management, and arts management—I think that it is the only MBA course that focuses on arts management. We established those following a skills audit that was linked to around 10 or 15 different small companies, which we then engaged in the development of the curriculum. We make sure that it offers additionality to them, and we make sure that the

needs are linked to the development of higher level skills by our graduates.

[188] **Professor Roffe:** I will answer Kirsty's question, and I will ask Robert to answer the last bit about the part-time fee issue. To take it from the top in terms of how we engage with small or micro SMEs on the curriculum, I think that Brian was right in saying that it is a personal issue. I am currently engaged, for example, in looking at a study of how HE can work in Wales by looking at the workforce development needs and developing higher skill levels, and what formulation we can bring together in higher education to meet those needs. We are working as a part of a large consortium of seven HEIs in Wales, which was established by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and is run through the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff. The themes are divided up with different HEIs looking at different aspects. I have been looking at management and innovation, and, to a subsidiary extent because someone else has the main role, sector skills involvement. I have been approaching it by sectioning off the groups and sectors of the industry and accommodators and asking them what their view is, what they are currently doing in practice, how the niche would develop, and what opportunities they can see us fulfilling in the future, and having a dialogue with them to identify gaps in that way. So, it is an ongoing dynamic process to improve the curriculum by speaking to customers who will be the beneficiaries of the programmes that we provide.

[189] You mentioned the digital divide, and my initial comments focused on the importance of IT access for companies and individuals. There are significant patches of mid Wales that do not have broadband access. This must be a concern for the Welsh Assembly Government in terms of allowing equity of access not only for firms and individuals, but for a range of uses. That then reflects on what we do about this as HEIs. Digital citizenship is really crucial in pursuing the Lisbon agenda. We have no doubt about that, and we have been pursuing this for 20 years and it is still part of our agenda to respond to groups and individuals and to provide them with the skills so that they can access and use services that they cannot get in rural areas.

[190] **Professor Pearce:** I will be a fraction more positive about broadband access. I can see that there are problems, but I think that the Assembly Government's broadband initiative has been extraordinarily successful in getting broadband access to most people across Wales.

[191] **Professor Roffe:** Yes, that is true.

[192] **Professor Pearce:** However, there is still an issue about small pockets and bandwidth. I would certainly echo the point that Brian made on that. I am glad, too, that the question about part-time students was raised, because it is a particular preoccupation of mine, having served on the Graham review. The one bit of advice that I would prioritise is that it be remembered that 45 per cent of students in Wales, I believe, are part-time. That is 45 per cent in terms of a head count, not the volume of study. It is an area that has grown faster than any other. We know that with the Leitch agenda, and with an ageing population, we will increasingly need to provide education to people over the age of 25, and that will largely be through part-time provision. We need to stop thinking of the full-time school leaver as the paradigm of the student model. One of the problems that we have experienced with funding arrangements is that they were designed around the full-time school leaver and based around what was appropriate for them; part-time students were considered afterwards. It needs to be looked at holistically. I am afraid I do not have any solutions, but that is the approach that needs to be adopted.

[193] **Gareth Jones:** We are approaching the end of our session, but I believe that there are follow-up questions from Christine and Jeff. Then we will finish.

[194] **Christine Chapman:** May I just pick up Brian's point about an audit of staff and

their relationships with employers? I was interested in that one. I wonder whether you feel that we need to encourage a new breed of academics to come into universities. We have had this debate around teachers, asking whether they are just there to teach a subject, or whether they should have all the other skills as well. I wondered what comments you have on that.

[195] **Dr Clarke:** It is important. At Trinity College, we have seen a shift to a more vocational curriculum that is appropriate to the needs of the locality and the needs of students. If you talk about a vocational curriculum, you cannot have academics who are totally divorced from what goes on in the business world and in the economy.

[196] We can manoeuvre in two ways. We can look at the recruitment of staff, to ensure that we have staff coming in with the latest expertise—that is something that we are proactively engaging with. More importantly, we must look at the staff that we already have and ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge. I would not say that we have cracked that problem yet, but we have been looking at freeing up staff for periods of time so that they can have the equivalent of an academic internship, perhaps to write something appropriate—a good example is a colleague who is head of the School of Early Years Education, and took a sabbatical to write a book on how early years developments were affecting the real world of education outside. That was critical, and was leading-edge stuff. So, the whole scheme on sabbaticals is focused on real-life developments, and is a re-engagement of academics with the commercial environment.

[197] **Dr Hughes:** We need to ensure that our universities and colleges have the infrastructure for the highest level of scholarship and research, while adapting to the context of what is recent and relevant for the needs of the economy.

[198] **Jeff Cuthbert:** On the last two answers, the point about part-time students is very well made, especially following the Rees and the Graham reviews; it is certainly something that we want to pursue. However, my question relates to European structural funds. I notice that both institutions have made use of them in the past, and I wonder what your plans are for the new round of structural funds.

[199] **Dr Clarke:** At Trinity College, we are in detailed discussions with our partner institutions, the University of Swansea, and with local authorities. We are developing several innovative programmes linked to knowledge transfer opportunities and infrastructure for new capital developments in west Wales, focusing on Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. I have already mentioned the west Wales skills academy, to address the higher level skills. The three institutions will be presenting a substantial bid for convergence funding to take that forward.

11.30 a.m.

[200] **Dr Clarke:** Perhaps I can supplement that with the fact that we have a proposal to develop a centre for inclusive living, which will cater for the needs of disabled students across south-west Wales. Initially, that was developed as a partnership arrangement between Carmarthenshire County Council and ourselves. It has subsequently been taken on board by the coastal partnership to develop the centre for inclusive living as a model that could be transferable across other local authorities in Wales. It is incumbent on county councils to look at developing CILs by 2010. We are happy as an institution to take the lead on that because, again, in terms of the social inclusion agenda that we have within Trinity College, it meets the curriculum aspirations of that school in moving forward. In partnership with all the agencies, we have undertaken a feasibility study that covers the entire voluntary sector and other agencies to look at their needs. As a result, we have a model for the centre for inclusive living that we think is exceptional. We would then look to secure funds to support that development and act as a flagship proposal for the rest of Wales. That is one of our future aspirations.

[201] **Dr Hughes:** The key strategy that we have is focusing on the spatial plan, ensuring that Carmarthen is a knowledge hub between the Swansea bay and western valleys and Pembrokeshire, and that Carmarthen is a hub for learning and teaching.

[202] **Professor Roffe:** I think that the big challenge for the convergence fund concerns large strategic partnerships and how higher education institutions fit with those strategic partnerships. Our approach in Lampeter is to work in parallel with other HEIs, so that we are partners within the large umbrella schemes that have been put forward among Welsh universities. You are probably aware that HE in Wales is convening a group of pro-vice-chancellors and others and considering the mechanism by which we can put together large, contributing schemes, covering such things as foundation degrees, work-based learning and PhDs, or at least advanced doctorates in the workplace. It may not necessarily be PhDs—it could be work-based doctorates. We look to take as full a part as we can in these. That is our position. We are also interested in European regional development fund, particularly areas where the enterprise agenda could be advanced. An interesting scheme is going forward to help undergraduate students engage with entrepreneurship while still studying; it is called Speed and we wish it speedy progress.

[203] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. Dof â'r cyfarfod i ben yn awr ac ymddiheuro ein bod wedi rhedeg dros amser. Fodd bynnag, mae'r ffaith ein bod hanner awr dros amser yn dangos faint o ddiddordeb sydd gennym yn yr hyn yr ydych wedi ei rannu. Diolchaf i'r ddau sefydliad am ein hatgoffa o gymhlethdod yr her. Pan soniwn am y berthynas rhwng addysg uwch a datblygiad economaidd, mae'n her arbennig. Ar ran yr Aelodau, diolchaf ichi am rannu gyda ni sut yr ydych yn ymdrechu ac yn gwneud cynnydd mewn maes heriol—deallwn hynny. Yr ydych wedi cyfeirio at eich lleoliadau yng Nghymru a mor bwysig yw hynny, a sut mae hynny hefyd yn rhan allweddol o sut yr ydych yn ymateb i'n cymunedau ni.

**Gareth Jones:** Thank you. I will draw the meeting to a close now and apologise for the overrun. However, the fact that we have overrun by half an hour shows the interest that we have in what you have shared with us. I thank both institutions for reminding us of the complexity of this challenge. When we talk of the relationship between higher education and economic development, it is a particular challenge. On behalf of the Members present, I thank you for sharing with us how you are striving and progressing in a challenging area—we understand that. You have also referred to your geographical locations in Wales and how important that is, and that is also a crucial part of how you respond to communities in Wales.

[204] Yr ydych wedi rhannu profiadau pwysig iawn gyda ni ac mae popeth wedi'i nodi. Mae'ch cyflwyniadau chi a'r drafodaeth a gawsom yn sicr o atgyfnerthu ein hadroddiad terfynol. Yr ydych hefyd wedi cyfeirio at nifer o bethau o bwys; mae'r band llydan, myfyrwyr rhan amser a phopeth felly yn bethau y dylem eu cofnodi, a mawr obeithiwn y gwelwn, yn sgîl yr adroddiad, gynnydd yn y maes hwn. Mae'n faes dyrys, fel y dywedais, mewn perthynas ag addysg uwch a datblygu'r economi. Diolch i chi am ymuno â ni, a gwerthfawrogwn eich amser a'ch cyfraniadau. Diolch yn fawr. Dyna ddiwedd y cyfarfod.

You have shared some very important experiences with us and everything has been noted. Your presentations and the discussion that we have had this morning will certainly strengthen our final report. You have made reference to a number of important issues; broadband, part-time students and all of these issues are things that we should note, and we very much hope that, in the wake of our report, we will see progress in this area. It is a complex area, as I said, in terms of the relationship between higher education and developing the economy. Thank you for joining us; we appreciate your time and contributions. Thank you. That brings this meeting to a close.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.35 a.m.  
The meeting ended at 11.35 a.m.*