

Cardiff University's Presentation to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

31 January 2001

The University generally supports the views expressed by Higher Education Wales in its submission to the National Assembly and, in particular, that diversity is the key to effective higher education in Wales. Cardiff's mission is to pursue research of international excellence and research-led learning and teaching of the highest quality and its three main priorities are the output of appropriately skilled graduates from all sections of society; the identification of new knowledge; and the utilisation of its expertise and facilities to promote the region's economic development and quality of life.

Diversity

Wales needs a diverse higher education sector and Cardiff recognises its responsibilities as a major research-led institution. The University will continue to strive for research excellence and feed back the benefits to the Welsh economy. The Government's recent *Science and Innovation* White Paper emphasises that research-intensive universities have the major impact on local economies.

The Level Playing Field

Every Welsh university must be able to compete effectively with comparator institutions in the UK. Severe difficulties will be posed if the National Assembly fails to provide appropriate core funding levels or to match initiatives operating in the English and Scottish sectors. In times of limited resources, it is important that funding is targeted appropriately to enable each university to develop its individual strengths to the advantage of Wales.

Co-operation

Collaboration and the establishment of strategic alliances are the key factors in realising the full potential of a diverse higher education sector. Cardiff has well-established and valuable partnerships with neighbouring institutions – in particular, with the University of Wales College of Medicine and also with the other institutions in the Cardiff Quartet. Additionally, in line with its international ambitions, Cardiff is a member of the influential Russell Group of UK research-intensive universities; such links will serve to promote Wales at a global level.

Efficiency

To compete effectively in today's market-place, the higher education sector must not only be innovative and entrepreneurial but must also be able to react quickly to the rapidly changing external environment. Cardiff prides itself on the efficiency and effectiveness of its decision-making processes. As corporate bodies set up by Royal Charter, universities operate within

local systems of governance established by statute. This is properly balanced by the requirement for transparency and accountability in the use of the public and an increasing proportion of private funds for which they are responsible. However, a recent study by the Higher Education Funding Council for England has suggested that the current systems of accountability may be over-intrusive and cost-ineffective and can inhibit the development of entrepreneurial activities.

Social Inclusion

Nationally produced performance indicators show that Cardiff performs above its benchmarks in terms of attracting students from under-represented groups. However, the University recognises that many of the barriers facing these entrants are often established at an early stage in life and cannot be removed by the higher education sector acting in isolation. Partnerships are generally the most effective way forward and through the activities of the Cardiff Quartet, partnerships with further education colleges, schools and other initiatives, the University will continue to promote social inclusion which is at the heart of this Assembly's agenda.