

Kirsty Williams, AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education

21 March 2017

Legislative Consent Memoranda for the Higher Education and Research Bill

Dear Kirsty

As you will be aware, the Children, Young People and Education Committee recently considered and reported on the Legislative Consent Memorandum, and Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum relating to the Higher Education and Research Bill currently before the UK Parliament. Consent for both memoranda was granted by the Assembly on 14 February.

Consideration of the two Legislative Consent Memoranda did not highlight any issues of concern relating to the consent, and the Committee was content to support the Legislative Consent Motion tabled. However, the Committee would welcome clarification on two of the policy intentions flowing from the Bill.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The Higher Education and Research Bill enables Welsh Ministers to consent to Welsh higher education institutions participating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) ratings scheme if they so wish.

As part of the consultation on the LCM, the Committee received a letter from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) in which they said that it was appropriate for this to happen. Universities Wales also welcomed this development. However the Committee received correspondence from the National Union of Students (NUS Wales) who have some significant concerns about the Teaching Excellence Framework. In its response to the Committee, NUS Wales confirmed that it “does not believe that the



proposed changes are truly part of an attempt to create a system that works for students; rather, they are part of an attempt to further create a market-driven HE sectors and substantially raise tuition fees. The metrics of TEF . . . do not adequately measure teaching excellence”.

While the Committee was content with the amendments proposed in the LCM, it would welcome clarification on your plans in respect of permitting Welsh higher education institutions to apply to participate in the Teaching Excellence Framework and specifically how you will address the concerns of the NUS Wales.

Research funding

The Bill clarifies and extends the Welsh Ministers’ powers to award funding for research. The amendments include power to make grants, loans or other payment for research purposes on such terms and conditions as is considered appropriate.

Again, while the Committee was content with the amendments proposed, we would welcome reassurance that you have no plans to change the current system whereby core funding for research in Wales is provided via HEFCW under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Universities Wales in particular are concerned that any changes for example to direct funding for Research from the Welsh Government could potentially fail to provide adequate safeguards for the institutions.

I would be grateful for your views on the above points.

Yours sincerely



Lynne Neagle AC / AM

Cadeirydd / Chair

