

**Pwyllgor yr Economi,  
Masnach a Materion Gwledig**

**Economy, Trade and  
Rural Affairs Committee**

**Welsh Parliament**

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Jeremy Miles MS,  
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

18 October 2021

Dear Jeremy,

**Essay mills**

On 5 October the UK Government released a statement stating that it would use the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill to ban 'essay mills'. The statement set out that the UK Government "intends to make it a criminal offence to provide, arrange or advertise these cheating services for financial gain to students taking a qualification at any institution in England providing post-16 education including universities."

On the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018, the then First Minister Carwyn Jones told plenary that "plagiarism has been an issue in higher education for as long as higher education has been there, but it's got worse", and that whilst he thought essay mills were an issue for universities to deal with in the first instance, he was open to the idea of UK-wide legislation to ban essay mills as he did not think Wales-only legislation would work.

The Committee believes that essay mills not only facilitate plagiarism but that they also often exploit vulnerable students who would be better supported by seeking help from their university.

On 13<sup>th</sup> July the Business Committee referred the Legislative Consent Memoranda (LCM) on the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill and the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) Bill to both the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee and the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPE). In order to make the most effective use of Committee time, I agreed with Jayne Bryant MS that we would lead on scrutiny of the ARIA Bill LCM and that CYPE would lead on the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill LCM.

As a result the Economy Committee will not be issuing a formal report on the current Post-16 Education and Skills Bill LCM. However, the Committee would urge Welsh Ministers to work with the UK Government to extend the proposed ban on essay mills in England, which is due to be inserted into the legislation, so that it also covers Wales. This amendment would seem an expedient way to protect the interests of students in Wales, and it can then be scrutinised, and hopefully approved, by the Senedd under the legislative consent procedure set out in Standing Order 29.

I have copied this letter to Jayne Bryant MS, Chair of CYPE Committee and Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee. Members agree with the view expressed by the former First Minister for Wales in 2018 that this is an issue suited to a UK-wide approach, and so I am also copying this letter to Stephen Kerr MSP, Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee, and to Chris Lyttle MLA, Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Assembly's Education Committee, for their information.

Yours Sincerely,



Paul Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.