

Cross Party Group on Universities

Wednesday 15 March 2024 / 12.30pm - 1.30pm (Hybrid)

Attendees

Amanda Oliver, ChUW (Chairs of Universities Wales)
Amanda Wilkinson, Universities Wales
Ben Lewis, Open University
Calum White, Head of Policy at CTER
Cerith Rhys-Jones, Open University in Wales
Damian Walford Davies, Cardiff University
Dave Hagenydk., Colleges Wales
David Sweeney, CTER
Elwen Evans, Vice Chancellor, UWTSO
Eve Alcock, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Gareth Lloyd, UCU
Georgia Marks, UCAS
Gwenllian Griffiths, Coleg Cymraeg
Harriett Barnes, HEFCW
Jamie Insole, UCU
Jon Timmis, Vice Chancellor, Aberystwyth University
Julie Lydon, CTER
Kathryn O'Loan, QAA
Katie Spackman, CBI
Keira Marshall, Plaid Group
Kieron Rees Universities Wales
Naomi Stocks Clerk, Education Committee
Paul Boyle, Swansea University
Paula Keys, University of South Wales
Rachael Langford, Vice Chancellor, Cardiff Metropolitan University
Simon Pirotte, CTER
Sophie Douglas, Universities Wales
Naomi Williams, CAMLAS
Joe Davis, CAMLAS

Minutes

Hefin David MS opened the meeting with a short introduction, all in attendance then introduced themselves.

1. Universities Wales remarks – Professor Paul Boyle

Professor Paul Boyle provided some opening comments, mentioning that universities in Wales have consistently supported the CTER.

He spoke about the financial situation at universities in Wales, in particular raising concern with the downturn in overseas international students.

2. CTER perspective – Julie Lydon and Simon Pirotte

Julie Lydon spoke about the governance arrangements for the CTER. She highlighted the work the CTER have done over the last year in terms of recruitment and establishment of the Commission. She mentioned the vast amount of experience in the Commission. She added that they are recruiting further members to improve diversity and experience on the Commission.

Simon Pirotte mentioned that the CTER welcomed the recent statement of priorities. Two particular areas of focus are the financial challenges for the sector, and dialogue about the future of the sector. He highlighted the importance of data to the Commission's work going forward. He mentioned they are focused on being a trusted organisation in Wales. One challenge he mentioned for the Commission is the breadth of the sector. He stated they will be working on a strategic plan over the next year.

3. Open discussion – led by Hefin David MS

Mike Hedges asked about ensuring people from disadvantaged backgrounds can experience and value post-16 education, asking how the Commission can help with this.

Simon Pirotte responded, saying that great work in regards to this is happening in pockets across Wales. They are keen to work with stakeholders and open up possibilities.

Julie Lydon added that collaboration is needed, and stated that not enough has been done on this in Wales. Partnership will be required.

Paul Boyle spoke about the impact on the HE sector of UK Government policy in regard to overseas students.

Julie Lydon mentioned that the sector needs to work together to understand better how to make the move to using AI effectively.

David Sweeney (CTER Deputy Chair) responded saying that outcomes will be quick, there won't be an immediate return.

Paul Boyle added that investment in Wales is much lower than in England.

Hefin David MS asked about his view of the CTER's role as a broker of good practice in Wales.

Julie Lydon stated that they should/will take a facilitating role.

Gwenllian Griffiths (Coleg Cymraeg) mentioned that Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol have been having very positive discussions with CTER, and are working towards a MoU.

Simon Pirotte agreed that dialogue between the CTER and the Coleg has been really fruitful.

Amanda Wilkinson (Universities Wales) mentioned that the duty for research and innovation has yet to be commenced. She asked about the CTER's plans for consultation on the strategic plan.

David Sweeney said their priority at the CTER is to ensure a smooth transition to the new funding arrangements.

Hefin David MS spoke about the apprenticeship levy. He asked how the CTER could help bring parity to vocational qualifications.

Julie Lydon stated that levels of young people not in education, employment or training was a concern. .

4. Meeting close

Hefin David MS thanked the attendees and ended the meeting.