



Ein cyf/Our ref VH/00182/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

29 April 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 28 March regarding Petition P-06-1523 - Reverse the Closure of Post Grad Counselling and Psychotherapy Courses at University of South Wales (USW).

This is a difficult time for the higher education sector in Wales and indeed across the UK, with higher education institutions facing financial pressures and needing to find ways to respond to these challenges. I have met with the Vice Chancellor of every Welsh university, representatives of Universities and Colleges Union, and the National Union of Students, to further understand the pressures facing the sector and explore how the Welsh Government can provide support through this difficult period. These discussions build upon the ongoing dialogue I have had with the sector since being appointed in September.

In February, the USW announced that it would be reviewing its range of courses offered and its areas of research and launched a statutory consultation with staff and trade unions. The university subsequently extended the consultation until 11 April. The university stated it would not be publicly releasing information on which courses are affected until after the consultation closure, to enable constructive discussions with staff. There has, however, been press coverage of this issue where staff and students have reportedly advised that among courses at risk are integrative counselling and psychotherapy. The USW has confirmed that any courses affected will remain open for existing students to finish their studies but there will be no new intakes.

I recognise the impact the university's plans may have on staff and students and acknowledge that the university has support services in place for affected staff and students to raise their concerns directly. At challenging times such as this I expect institutions to adhere to the principles of social partnership and that the trade unions and the affected workforce are involved and engaged on the proposed restructuring process and fully supported. I also expect to see support in place for those students on affected courses to finish their studies with minimum disruption.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

As an autonomous institution, the USW is responsible for its own academic affairs, including course delivery and provision. It would not be appropriate for Welsh Ministers to intervene in such matters. However, my officials have spoken with the USW for clarification on these particular courses. The USW has confirmed that the Masters level courses in Integrative Counselling and Play Therapy were being considered for closure under the proposals but an early decision has been made by the University to retain them. During the consultation period, alternative delivery models were proposed that will reduce operating costs and make the courses financially viable and therefore both have been removed from the consultation process. Staff and learners have been informed of this.

I want to emphasise my commitment to supporting our universities. Our universities are crucial to our ambitions for improving public services, growing the economy, and enabling the wellbeing of future generations. Welsh Government will continue to work with the sector and other partners, alongside Medr, to negotiate this challenging time and safeguard the future of higher education in Wales. The [Written Statement](#) of 3 March sets out the Welsh Government commitment and the next steps we are taking in supporting a sustainable higher education sector in Wales.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Howells', with a long, sweeping underline stroke extending to the right.

Vikki Howells AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education