

National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

HEB 05

Higher Education (Wales) Bill – Stage 1

Evidence from : CITB Cymru Wales

CITB Cymru Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Consultation on the Higher Education (Wales) Bill. As the Sector Skill Council and Industry Training Board for the construction sector in Wales, representing over 10,000 construction employers, we are ideally positioned to advise on how the Welsh Higher Education system can support the future skills needs of Wales. Our regional construction fora in North, South West, and South East Wales bring together education providers, employers and local construction companies who are actively involved in promoting training and skills development which reflects the needs of industry at the coal face.

Is there a need for a Bill for these purposes? Please explain your answer.

The Bill is thorough though complex and will provide additional clarity to funding matters and HEFCW's role. Universities will in most cases welcome such clarity in a period where change has been expected. For these reasons the Bill is needed and is timely.

Do you think the Bill, as drafted, delivers the stated objectives as set out in the Explanatory Memorandum? Please explain your answer.

As noted above the draft Bill is detailed and complex so it is very difficult within the detail to be able to confirm if the objectives will be met or not.

Are the sections of the Bill as drafted appropriate to bring about the purposes described above? If not, what changes need to be made to the Bill?

There is no mention within the Bill regarding employers or employability of students; this is an omission which should be considered, as the quality of education may be excellent but irrelevant to the 21st century.

How will the Bill change what organisations do currently and what impact will such changes have, if any?

The Bill may add clarity to an organisation's role with regards to the promotion of equality; this does not appear to be a significant issue amongst Higher Education institutions in Wales. Should employability criteria be included this would have an impact

Are there the potential barriers to implementing the provisions of the Bill (if any) and does the Bill take account of them?

Changes in the funding and regulation of Higher Education in England including fees and non-conditional offers, and inconsistency in entry requirements such as teacher training entry could affect the bill achieving its aims, and should be taken into account.

Powers to make subordinate legislation

What are your views on powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (i.e. statutory instruments, including regulations, orders and directions)?

Used properly this is a positive thing which will hopefully protect the viability and integrity of the Higher Education sector in Wales as compared with the open market approach being suggested in the Higher Education sector in England.

What are your views on the financial implications of the Bill?

The cost of Higher Education in general is far too high and improvements in efficiency and effectiveness of the sector should be sought. This can also have an impact on universities' commerciality and as a result employability and economic contribution.

Are there any other comments you wish to make about specific sections of the Bill?

It is unclear how this Bill will impact on Higher Education provision in Further Education institutions or similar, and the role and benefits (if any) which industry has in its implementation and monitoring.

The effects of changes in England and unintended consequences weakening the Welsh Higher Education sector need to be looked at very carefully throughout scrutiny of the bill.

CITB Cymru Wales – June 2014