

## **Review of Higher Education in Wales**

**25 June 2008**

### **Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills**

I am pleased to announce that I have established a Task and Finish Group to look at the Assembly Government's policies for higher education in Wales. The Review will be in two stages.

The first stage of the review, to conclude by the end of September 2008, will consider student finance arrangements in Wales. In particular, the group will assess the extent to which student finance is targeted to widen access and encourage take up of priority subjects as well as the need to identify options to help tackle graduate debt.

The second phase will focus on reviewing the purpose and role for higher education in Wales taking account of the vision set out in *Reaching Higher* – the Assembly Government's strategy for the higher education sector in Wales and its skills and employment strategy, *Skills that Work for Wales*. It will also look at higher education policy developments in England and Scotland as well as analysing the current and likely future demands and needs of learners, the economy and society. The second stage of the review should be completed by the end of February 2009.

*Reaching Higher* is the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for a competitive, robust and sustainable higher education sector in Wales. It set out a vision for an inclusive and world-renowned sector and the steps that need to be taken to achieve it, charting a clear course for Government, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the Welsh higher education sector to 2010.

Since its publication in 2002, there have been a number of significant strategic developments such as *One Wales*, *Making the Connections*, *The Learning Country 2* as well as the recent publication of the Webb Review report *Promise and Performance*. It is therefore time to refresh the strategy in light of these new agendas and ensure we respond to the many challenges and opportunities faced by higher education in Wales.

I am pleased to announce that Professor Merfyn Jones, Vice-Chancellor of Bangor University will be chairing the group. Professor Jones has been chosen due his professional expertise, this includes as the Chair of Higher Education Wales and Vice-President of Universities UK. He will be supported by Danny Saunders, Head of the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Glamorgan; Roger Thomas, Chair of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales; Rob Humphreys, Director of the Open University of Wales; Robin Williams, Honorary Professor at the Multidisciplinary Nanotechnology Centre, School of Engineering, Swansea University; Alison Itani, Director of Wiltan Ltd; Louise Casella, Director of Strategic Development, Cardiff University and Ben Gray, President designate NUS Wales.

The task and finish group will review the Assembly Government's policies for higher education with a view to advising the Government on a new vision and strategy which will enable higher education provision in Wales-including its research base- to meet the needs of a modern knowledge based, globally competitive economy and inclusive society. Within this context, the task and finish group will consider opportunities for increasing responsiveness to identified need, assess the potential

for new forms of delivery and evaluate the capability whereby research, knowledge development and transfer can contribute to the economic and social advancement of Wales.