

Link between universities and schools must go beyond teacher training – Kirsty Williams

In a speech to higher education leaders and academics from across the UK, she outlined how Wales can lead the way on civic engagement and the role of universities in their communities.

The call takes forward Ms Williams's challenge to universities to recapture their civic mission by doing more to connect campus, community and the country.

In the speech she said:

“The university as the link between the global and the local will be ever more important as we meet the challenges of Britain.

“Universities are global in their outlook, but they must be first and foremost being good stewards of their place and the people living there.

“This is how they will contribute to developing a confident, international and innovative Wales.”

Setting out actions for enhanced university-school links, the Education Secretary proposes that:

- Universities work directly with schools to support leadership development, financial management and attainment programmes;
- There should be a significant increase in the number of university senior managers and leaders on local school governing bodies;
- That there are more industry and undergraduate programmes in schools to promote learner opportunity and student experience in key disciplines, building on success in languages and coding.

Ms Williams also said:

“I would like to see Welsh universities pursuing ‘boundary spanning’ civic leadership.

“I want to see you working beyond the higher education sector and engaging with other key civic leaders at a national and community level.

“Universities should use their expertise, experience and resources to deliver social innovation and civic engagement, building future

leadership capacity, and supporting community and educational organisations.

“Improving education is our national mission. Raising standards, reducing the attainment gap and deliver a system that enjoys public confidence and is a source of national pride.

“Our higher education sector must further contribute to this – going beyond preparing tomorrow’s teachers, important work though that is.”

The Education Secretary’s speech praised the activity underway in Welsh universities and cover four themes: leading place, the contribution to raising school standards, developing active citizenship and acting as the engine of social enterprise.