

New commission with responsibility for higher and further education in Wales to be created

The Welsh Government White Paper also sets out how the new body, which will succeed the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, will regulate the skills sector and have responsibility for funding research and innovation.

In March 2016 Professor Ellen Hazelkorn published her independent review of post-compulsory education in Wales with a range of recommendations that were accepted by the Education Secretary in January this year.

A consultation on the White Paper has today been launched, with the key proposal being the establishment of the Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales to provide oversight, strategic direction and leadership for the post-compulsory education and training sector.

The functions of the new Commission include:

- Protecting the interests of learners, ensuring that vocational and academic routes are equally valued and make sure Wales has the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive economy.
- Strategic planning of educational and skills delivery across all post-compulsory education and training in Wales.
- Oversee and coordinate all Welsh Government research and innovation funding with the aim of creating a more dynamic and responsive-to-need research, innovation and knowledge environment in Wales.
- Funding, contracting, quality, financial monitoring and audit of higher education, further education, work based learning, adult community learning, and relevant employability and employer-led programmes.
- Developing better links between higher and further education and Welsh business.

The Commission would report annually to the Welsh Ministers on the performance of the post-compulsory sector.

Kirsty Williams said:

“I am publishing proposals for a ‘made in Wales’ approach to post-compulsory education and training so that it is easier for people to learn and acquire skills throughout their careers.

“Our lives and economy are undergoing huge technological change. The knowledge and skills needed in a transformed workplace mean that ‘average is over’. There is rapid change in other parts of the UK and the realities of Brexit. Doing nothing, or maintaining the status quo, is not a viable option.

"Our national mission does not stop at the school gates. We need to ensure that those leaving our schools progress into a post-compulsory system which provides genuine parity of esteem for vocational and academic routes, and which equips them with the skills required for sustainable and rewarding careers. . Such a workforce will allow our economy to be more productive and competitive and our people more prosperous and secure."