

UNISON Cymru/Wales submission to Welsh Government consultation on proposals for the establishment and operation of the Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales.

1. UNISON Cymru/Wales represents roughly 22,000 members of staff across all sectors of education and notes the proposals of Welsh Government regarding the establishment and operation of the Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales.
2. Whilst large parts of the consultation document are, rightly, dedicated to learners, UNISON Cymru/Wales feels strongly that any changes that may come during the establishment of the Commission must take account of the needs of the workforce.
3. Our members cover a wide range of positions across both Further and Higher Education and any attempt to restructure these systems, including changes to governance and responsibility, must ensure workers' protection and trade unions must be fully engaged in the process.
4. In addition, during any structural and oversight changes, funding must also be taken into account.
5. In the consultation paper, there does not seem to be much emphasis on Further Education. FE offers vital second chances to adults returning to education and to those from more deprived communities; the majority of learners in FE are women and FE also supports students with learning difficulties. Despite this, FE has suffered budget cuts and lacks the prestige of Higher Education.
6. For some years there has been an imbalance in the amount of HE/FE funding. In order to allow both HE and FE to flourish, this imbalance needs to be corrected and both must be well funded and well resourced to prepare them for the future reskilling agenda that will occur as automatisisation changes the Welsh working landscape.

7. Similarly, sixth form colleges provide vital post-16 education that may be better suited to certain learning needs and styles. UNISON Cymru/Wales is concerned about the ability of the Commission to be able to have the final say on opening and closing schools' sixth forms. The ultimate body to take far-reaching decisions such as these is the Welsh Government, as it is able to take wider, community-based concerns into account.
8. UNISON Cymru/Wales notes the proposal of Welsh Government for Welsh Ministers to appoint the Chair, Chief Executive and non-executive board members of the Commission. UNISON Cymru/Wales also notes that proposed membership of the Commission will be on the basis of skills and experience across the Commission's functions.
9. UNISON/Cymru Wales strongly feels that any and all membership of the Commission should be reflective of those that it serves. The Commission must draw from the wide pool of capable and qualified talent within the Welsh education system to find its membership, however the consultation does not mention any form of workforce representation on the Commission. UNISON Cymru/Wales believes that membership of the Commission should include a seat allocated for a Trade Union representative.
10. The members of the Commission must also be democratically accountable to those that they serve. UNISON Cymru/Wales believes that all members of the Commission must be elected from the sectors which the Commission represents.
11. As has occasionally been an issue in the past, there can be an accountability issue with arms-length Welsh Government bodies. UNISON Cymru/Wales believes that the roles and responsibilities of Commission members should be clear and transparent. There is a need for clear lines of accountability and understanding by organisations and the workforce of who does what.

12. UNISON Cymru/Wales notes the proposal that the functions of both the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) and the Wales Apprenticeships Advisory Board (WAAB) should be brought inside the Commission's remit and both boards abolished.
13. UNISON Cymru/Wales does not oppose the abolishment of these boards. However Welsh Government must take into account the existing membership of the WESB and WAAB and take steps to ensure that the trade union voice is retained.
14. Any committee established by the Commission that has responsibilities for advising on employment, skills and the development of apprenticeships must include at least one trade union representative. These trade union representatives should also be democratically accountable.
15. UNISON Cymru/Wales believes that good quality apprenticeships helping people move from education to work and into quality jobs is essential. Young people entering the world of work or in higher education face immense difficulties. Wales has a high level of youth unemployment and an apprenticeship system that isn't working.
16. UNISON Cymru/Wales' *#respectouryouth* charter calls for fairer apprenticeships, including a real Living Wage regardless of age, quality apprenticeships, fair employment, equality in the workplace and training and development opportunities.
17. UNISON Cymru/Wales believes that delivering apprenticeships funded by the public purse through FE could revitalise the sector as well as delivering better value for money by re-investing money currently siphoned off as private profit.
18. It is for this reason, that UNISON Cymru/Wales notes with interest the numerous mentions of 'degree apprenticeships' throughout the consultation document. However, there does not yet

appear to be a definition of 'degree apprenticeships'. UNISON Cymru/Wales would welcome further clarification on the definition and remit of 'degree apprenticeships'.