

# Children, Young People and Education Committee

## Sixth Senedd Priorities Consultation

July 2021

In order to help inform our strategic planning and forward work programme, we are asking for your views on what you think, at this stage, our **main priorities should be during the Sixth Senedd (2021-2026)**. Where overlaps between committee remits exist, we will ensure that relevant issues are shared with other committees.

We are keen to start this work as soon as possible, to make sure our plans take account of your views. We know people take a well-earned break over the summer, and many education institutions also pause for a holiday, so we will run this consultation until **Friday 17 September 2021** to make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute when they return to work. Please be aware that it may not be possible to take into account responses received after this date.

A key priority for us is to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard in our work. To do this in a meaningful way, we know that we need tailored and appropriate ways of engaging. In light of that, **this consultation is not aimed at children and young people. Instead, we will run activities with children and young people in the autumn to help us understand their priorities for the Sixth Senedd.** We will share the findings of this work with all Senedd committees. If you are – or your child is – under 16 and interested in being involved in this activity, please email us on [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales) to let us know. You can also use this mail address to send us your ideas on how you would like to see us engaging with children and young people – we have lots of ideas ourselves, but we're also interested in yours!

Information about consultations, which you should consider carefully before submitting a response, is available in our [privacy notice](#). Please answer questions 6-8 at the end of this proforma to enable us to process your response appropriately.

The Senedd has two official languages, Welsh and English. In line with the [Senedd's Official Languages Scheme](#), we request that you submit your response in both languages if you are able to do so. If your response is not submitted bilingually, we will publish in the language submitted, stating that it has been received in that language only. We expect other organisations to implement their own standards or schemes and to comply with their statutory obligation.

If you have any queries about this consultation, please contact the Committee team on [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales).



**1. Name:**

Sophie Douglas

**2. Email address:**

[Sophie.douglas@uniswales.ac.uk](mailto:Sophie.douglas@uniswales.ac.uk)

**3. Please tell us in what capacity you are responding to this consultation** (Please select one answer only.):

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Individual responding in a personal capacity (go straight to question 4)        | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Individual responding in a professional capacity (go straight to question 4)    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Individual responding on behalf of an organisation (please answer question 3.1) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**3.1.** If you are an individual responding on behalf of an organisation, please tell us the name of the organisation you are representing and your job title:

**Universities Wales**

Universities Wales represents the interests of universities in Wales and is a National Council of Universities UK. Universities Wales' membership encompasses the Vice Chancellors of all the universities in Wales, and the Director of the Open University in Wales.

Our mission is to support a university education system which transforms lives through the work Welsh universities do with the people and places of Wales and the wider world.

**4. Would you like to be added to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's contacts list in order to receive updates about our work?** (Please select one answer only.)

*Please note that you can unsubscribe by emailing [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales)*

|     |                                     |
|-----|-------------------------------------|
| Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| No  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |



**5. What do you consider to be the main priorities or issues that the Committee should consider during the Sixth Senedd? Where possible, please set out your view about how the Committee could address them.**

Please answer in relation to as many of the themes below as you are able.

Please keep your response to no more than 2000 words in total.

**Theme 1: School-age education**

**Theme 2: Further and higher education**

**Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill**

Universities Wales understands that the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill is set to be laid before the Senedd this year. Universities Wales would welcome the opportunity to support the Committee in its scrutiny of the Bill.

Given the challenges that Wales is expected to face as a result of the pandemic and the wider challenges of climate change and the changing workplace, ensuring that universities are empowered to continue to deliver locally, regionally and nationally will be crucial in ensuring we mitigate these challenges.

Higher education in Wales is a significant economic driver, generating over £5bn of output per year. Universities provide employment across Wales, and collaborate with small and medium sized businesses on research and innovation projects, as well as undertaking world-leading research in fields such as climate change and biosciences. Welsh universities draw in vital income to Wales through international research partnerships, and are recognised for their excellence, bringing leading academics to work in Wales. It is therefore essential that legislative developments impacting the higher education sector take this into account.

We have been broadly supportive of the development of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill through the consultative process. For higher education in Wales, there are a number of key priorities for the Bill including:

- Research and innovation - ensuring R&I in Wales is well-placed to draw in vital additional funding to Wales
- Quality - ensuring arrangements in the Bill allow Wales to continue to benefit from the international recognition of our quality assurance and enhancement system



- Ensuring the Commission is able to deliver on the objectives of the Bill by operating at arm's length
- Academic freedom and institutional autonomy – ensuring this is recognised and protected so that Wales is able to continue to operate competitively on the global stage, including through bringing world-leading researchers to live and work in Wales
- Widening access and social mobility – ensuring universities continue to be able to provide opportunities to students from all backgrounds

Universities in Wales are well-placed and eager to be collaborative partners in the nation's post-pandemic recovery and building Wales' future. Universities benefit the Welsh economy, through providing employment and through research and innovation activity in partnership with businesses. Universities also support wider society through civic mission projects benefiting local communities. Universities Wales is keen to support the Committee in their scrutiny of the TER Bill in order to ensure the vital role that universities play, and the opportunities they generate to partner with business and government to deliver tangible benefits to Wales, is upheld and understood.

### **UK context and post-18 reforms**

More broadly, the Committee may also wish to consider the dynamic environment that universities are currently having to navigate. The anticipated post-18 reforms in England, in addition to UK Government legislation such as the Internal Markets Act and the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, will all possibly impact post-16 education in Wales and require a policy response from the Welsh Government.

Given the potential impact of post-18 reforms in England, the Committee may wish to closely monitor developments across the border. Due to the large cross-border flow of students between England and Wales, changes in England could have significant impact on the Welsh higher education sector. Any response from Wales to changes in England should continue to allow for social mobility, to enable institutions to deliver for their communities and continue to support Wales in tackling the challenges we face as a nation. Universities Wales is very happy to support the Committee in their consideration of these multifarious issues.

### **Flexible learning**

Due to the adaptations to learning put in place as a response to Covid restrictions, educational institutions are more comfortable and equipped to deliver learning and teaching via digital means. There is an opportunity now to capitalise on this increased capability to consider how this can be utilised in expanding the delivery of adult education through flexible means. In a changing world, with an increased need for higher-level skills in the growing fields of automation and digitalisation, it is more important than ever that the population is given the opportunity to access higher education through upskilling alongside their work, or studying part-time.



The Committee may wish to work with the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee (given the overlap between education and skills) to explore the future of flexible learning and its benefits to Wales, in light of the pandemic and future skills needs. Universities Wales would be happy to assist the Committee by providing evidence and case studies, and making recommendations for how we can expand the reach of higher education for people from all backgrounds.

### **Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)**

#### **Mental Health**

Universities Wales provides the secretariat to the CPG on Universities. At meetings of the CPG during the fifth Senedd, members discussed student mental health and wellbeing, and stakeholders agreed to develop some policy recommendations for Welsh Government to consider, encapsulating mental health support for all students in post-16 education.

These recommendations will be shared with Welsh Government and the Committee in the next few months, and we would be grateful for the Committee's consideration of the proposals.

Areas of recommendation will include longer-term, ring-fenced funding, sector-wide initiatives such as GP passports and requiring effective information sharing between key partners, to ensure students don't 'fall through the gaps' in provision of care.

#### **Learning Recovery**

More broadly, students starting university this year in particular have missed out on a significant period of schooling in-person, and may not have had the opportunity to attend university open days to prepare them for a significant life change. Although universities are well-placed to support students from all backgrounds and adapt teaching to take account for lost learning, there will be a significant deficit in learning that needs to be recovered. Universities Wales understands that learning recovery is a key priority for Welsh Government, and will wish to ensure additional support on offer is provided in a timely and efficient manner. Universities Wales would be happy to support the Committee in scrutinising the methods for supporting universities in learning recovery.

### **Theme 4: Children and young people**



## **Civic Mission**

As well as the work universities do in widening access, teaching and learning and research that directly and indirectly benefit children and young people, our universities also engage in a range of civic mission activities many of which bring additional benefits to children and young people. These activities range from providing sporting facilities and opportunities to mentoring programmes in areas such as physics and modern languages.

A key area of civic mission work during the pandemic has been the launch of University Ready to support young people's transition to university.

University Ready is an online portal designed to offer advice and support to young people entering university life from school or college. It was created after a need was identified to give prospective university students help after a year when open days and university visits have not happened. With resources provided by all of Wales' universities, the platform gives a guide to what undergraduates can expect in their new academic and social environments as well as giving access to mental health support, financial advice, study skills learning, and a host of other assets aimed at nurturing well-being at a difficult time for many.

More broadly, all Wales' universities are signed up to the Civic Mission Framework, which puts the Well-being of Future Generations Act at the centre of how higher education can contribute to civic life in Wales.

Universities Wales would be happy to facilitate opportunities for the Committee to hear more and engage with those involved in universities' civic mission projects.



## USE OF YOUR INFORMATION

In order to enable us to handle your information in accordance with our [privacy notice](#), please complete the questions below. We will be unable to process your response if these questions are not completed.

**6. We have stated our intention to engage meaningfully with children and young people, in tailored and appropriate ways, in the autumn. However, if you are responding using this proforma and are under 13 years old, we will only be able to accept your response if your parent or guardian has confirmed that you can participate.** They can do this by sending us an email to [SeneddChildren@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddChildren@senedd.wales).

### Are you under 13 years old?

|                         |                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I am under 13 years old | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| I am 13 or over         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

### 7. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you would prefer that your name is not published alongside your evidence.

We will not publish the names of people under the age of 18.

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| I am aged 18 or over and I am content for you to publish my name alongside my evidence          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| I am aged 18 or over and I would prefer that you did not publish my name alongside my evidence. | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| I am under the age of 18  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

### 8. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you have agreement from any third parties referred to in your evidence that you can share information that may be used to identify them and that they understand that it may be published.

|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| I confirm that any third party I have referred to in my evidence has agreed that I can share information that may be used to identify them, and that they understand that it may be published. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| I do not have the agreement of one or more of the third parties I have referred to in my evidence.   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| I have not referred to any third parties in my evidence.   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

