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The benefits and challenges of:
**A focus on integrated
tertiary models**

Professor Maria Hinfelaar





What is an integrated tertiary model?

Draft Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill, 2020, expected to be signed into law by the newly elected Welsh Government later in 2021. Key features:

- One oversight body responsible for all post-compulsory (post-16) education: universities, further education colleges, 6th form providers, apprenticeships
- Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) to be appointed by and answerable to Welsh Government
- Primary roles: strategy and policies, funding, regulation, QA (“in partnership with other bodies”)

“My ambition is to develop a joined up post-compulsory education and training system in Wales that is easy to navigate for our learners, maximises its public value, creates a highly skilled society, tackles inequalities, and has a civic mission at its heart.”

Kirsty Williams
Minister for Education

Proposed responsibilities of the Commission

STRATEGY

The Commission will, in partnership with providers, learners, and practitioners, prepare and deliver a strategy for the PCET sector, which addresses social, economic, cultural and environmental priorities outlined by Welsh Ministers.



FUNDING

The Commission will plan and allocate funding for HE and FE, school sixth forms, adult community learning, apprenticeships and research and innovation, in accordance with its strategic priorities.



OVERSIGHT

The Commission will regulate and measure the performance of providers, protect and promote the interests of learners, students, and apprentices, and ensure that the PCET sector is delivering positive outcomes for Wales.

Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

QUALITY

In partnership with Estyn and other bodies, the Commission will assure and promote improvement and enhancement of the quality of education and training in the PCET sector.



APPRENTICESHIPS

The Commission will develop and approve apprenticeship frameworks, in partnership with employers, professional bodies, and training providers.



DATA AND INFORMATION

The Commission will be a hub for insight and data, it will provide and publish information to better inform students, partners, providers and employers on the options available to them.



What might be the benefits?

- A coherent approach with clear information and opportunities for learner pathways within the Welsh system: easy to navigate for students
- The chance to incentivize collaboration on a regional basis, avoiding unnecessary duplication or competition
- Rationalisation of complex national governance systems in a small country (Wales only has a population of 3.136m, roughly 5% of the UK total)
- The chance to align FE/HE provision with industrial strategy, local businesses and other societal needs such as healthcare training
- Better learner protection



What might be the challenges?

- Too much direction from Government (through the new CTER body), undermining the autonomy of academic institutions
- A sole focus on short-term economic needs within Wales, whereas 50% of Welsh universities' enrolments are from the rest of the UK or from abroad and universities are globally positioned institutions
- The extremely broad remit of CTER which may drown out parts of the system
- 'Wales only' solutions, for instance to QA, which may be difficult to sustain
- Administrative overload for institutions, for instance complex 'outcome agreements'



Quotes from *Summary of Consultation Responses to Draft Bill, Welsh Government, March 2021:*

“Respondents emphasized the importance of higher education quality and standards remaining aligned to existing UK- and European-wide frameworks.”

“Respondents argued that whilst the needs of the economy and employers is an important and potentially vital factor, this should not totally override the wider needs and aspirations of the learners. They highlighted the risk that if this were allowed to happen many benefits to the learner and the wider population could be lost, including building resilience and adaptability as the needs of our economy change, and wider social, linguistic and cultural needs emerge.”