

## Press release

**Date:** 14 June 2010

**Title:** Business successes for universities in Wales

The latest UK-wide survey on how higher education (HE) institutions work with and generate business shows that universities in Wales are helping both businesses and the economy to weather uncertain times and lay down sound foundations for future recovery.

The HE-BCI Survey shows how Wales's universities are applying their knowledge, expertise and facilities to contribute widely to the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities of social justice and supporting a buoyant economy.

In 2008/2009, Welsh universities, which amount to 5% of UK higher education, generated 10% of all UK graduate business-start-ups and more than 12% of estimated turnover (around £16.5 million) from all active UK graduate start-up firms.

They also provided 8% of all learner days of continuing professional development or continuing education delivered by UK universities.

However, the current economic climate impacted unfavourably on the volume of interactions between universities and businesses. In line with the rest of the UK, Wales has seen a fall in levels of consultancy and continuing professional development services provided to both small and medium enterprises (SMEs),

and large businesses. Wales has also seen a decline in income from collaborative research involving both public funding and funding from business.

Professor Philip Gummatt, Chief Executive of HEFCW, said: “As the Welsh higher education sector continues to address the current economic challenges, it is encouraging to see this updated evidence of the sector building further on its achievements of recent years.

“In a number of key respects, Wales’s universities continue to punch above their UK weight even in today’s turbulent economic times. This performance represents a sound platform, but we need to continue the work to build even stronger, better focused HE-industry links to underpin and drive economic recovery in Wales. Our recently published call for regional HE strategies will help to address the need to improve local access by employers to higher education support”.

[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10\\_14/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10_14/)

Professor Robin Williams, FRS, Chair of HEFCW’s Research, Innovation & Engagement Committee, said: “The economic challenges facing Wales are considerable, and we need a strong, business-facing higher education sector to help lead Wales forward.

“Much remains to be done to deliver the Welsh Assembly Government’s strategy for HE in Wales, but these impressive figures can reassure us that the Welsh HE sector is already rising to the challenge.

“Wales is too small a country for us to seek to meet these major challenges individually, but together there is huge potential for our universities to be a springboard for economic recovery.”

Other findings showed that universities:

- increased their volume of contract research on behalf of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by 21% and associated income by 77% compared with the previous year
- accounted for 6% of all UK consultancy contracts with SMEs
- produced 7% of all UK HE institution business spinouts and staff start-ups, and now account for 6% of total employment in university spinout and staff start companies across the UK
- increased income from commercialising their intellectual property by 20%, and are continuing to improve their overall share of UK patenting and licensing activity.

All universities in Wales have a dedicated enquiry point for SMEs and offer a wide range of business services.

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## Notes

The ninth annual *Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI)* survey report is a joint publication by the Department for Business, Innovation, & Skills (BIS), and the higher education funding bodies in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

*(Case studies can be provided)*

**The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)** is an Assembly Government Sponsored Body responsible for administering funds made available by the Welsh Assembly Government in support of:

- education in higher education institutions (HEIs);
- research undertaken by HEIs; and

- higher education courses at further education colleges.

HEFCW is also responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, HEFCW provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.