

To SeneddEIS@assembly.wales

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Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee: Consultation on Regional Skills Partnerships

Response from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

HEFCW does not engage directly with the RSPs, which limits our ability to address the consultation questions posed. Our input is limited, therefore, to a consideration of how HEFCW might better link to the business of the RSPs in future.

Further and higher education appear to have variable engagement across the partnerships, with the relationships being more meaningful in some partnerships compared to others. Our view is that the inclusion of HEFCW as an observer on the RSPs would help to ensure that the voice of higher education providers is more consistent across all three partnerships, and would facilitate the adoption of good practice in relation to HEFCW's remit more broadly.

HEIs operate on a pan-Wales as well as on a regional basis. They function within a national and international environment that might not always align with the needs of a regional approach. The current RSP structure does not support a pan-Wales strategy, and RSP boards might not be representative of industrial sector requirements. As a consequence, potential high-level regional demand and opportunities for upskilling via a sector approach with priority employers could be missed.

We understand that our 2019-20 remit letter will ask HEFCW to work with Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) to identify opportunities for Higher Education which directly reflect the needs of the region aligned to business clusters, regional infrastructure opportunities and high value priority sectors. In order to do this it would be helpful for HEFCW to have a more structured engagement with the RSPs. At present we do not engage directly with the RSPs. We are observers on the Wales Employability and Skills Board (WESB) and its Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board (WAAB), and hear the outcomes as reported to those groups. We have also set up regular meetings with the HE provider members of the RSPs. However, it would be helpful for HEFCW to at least be corresponding members of the RSPs, enabling us to receive papers and minutes of meetings. Ideally we would like to be observers to the RSPs so that we can engage directly. This will enable HEFCW to contribute more effectively to reviews such as this, as well as enhancing our contributions to WESB and WAAB.

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=24100>

