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The Future Lies with our Children

Jane Hutt, Minister for Children Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

It has been said that, at one time, Wales' second largest export after coal was teachers. I am not sure how true this is but it is recognition that education has been as much at the centre of Welsh national life as our past industrial heritage.

Since the establishment of the National Assembly too, education has been a high priority. As Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, it is my firm intention that education remains at the top of the agenda and that we build steadily on what has already been achieved.

I am not in favour of change for change's sake. Too often, new initiatives are not given time to really settle down before they are overtaken by new ones. I intend to ensure that those programmes and policies to which the Assembly Government is already committed in my portfolio are properly implemented, supported and given time to prove their worth.

This does not mean that we will not be able to innovate or to improve the educational opportunities available to the people of Wales. There are some exciting



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developments already in the pipeline, across the whole age range.

Wales was one of the first countries in the world to develop a national play policy and I have this year announced the establishment of the National Centre for Playwork Training and Education in Wales to consolidate the delivery of this important policy.

Wales is set to lead too in the provision of early years education through the roll-out of the Foundation Phase (an imaginative and strongly evidenced curriculum for three to seven year olds) and the Flying Start initiative (a targeted programme of help and support to some of Wales' most disadvantaged under threes). To ensure the effective delivery of these programmes, I launched the Early Years, Play and Childcare Workforce Recruitment Campaign in August. This is a further major investment in the children's workforce.

The flexible routes and additional support given to young people provided by the 14-19 Learning Pathways programme, which will shortly include ten new work-based learning pathways, and the continued success of the Welsh Baccalaureate will reinforce my commitment to preparing young people for further and higher education and for



entry into employment. I anticipate using the new powers available to the Assembly to give effect to the recommendations made by the Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales that is currently underway.

There are some difficult issues to tackle too. It is increasingly recognised that we need to improve our planning for school places in the light of changing demographic patterns and levels of local demand. This will mean local education authorities having to make very difficult choices about how they invest their resources. I am considering ways in which capital funding might be able to assist them in making their plans. I am concerned at the number of young people in Wales who are not in employment or education and at the gender gap that seems to affect attainment levels at GCSE and A level. As well as having responsibility for education, I am the Children's Minister and I want to ensure that the rights and entitlements of vulnerable groups are fully recognised alongside those of our high achievers.

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Both as a Minister and as a parent, I am very mindful of the importance we all attach to education. We have a great deal to be proud of in Wales, particularly the dedicated, skilled and talented teachers and others who provide the opportunities for our young people. But we can be proud also of our young people themselves who repeatedly show themselves to be amongst the most creative, enthusiastic and talented members of our community.



Newport Business School

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Newport Business School, part of the University of Wales, Newport is truly embedded within the business community and economy of South East Wales.

Dr Tim McIntyre-Bhatty, the Dean of the School notes: "One thing that sets us apart from other business schools and universities is the high proportion of part-time students. In the case of the Business School 60-64% are part-time with many working for SMEs within a 20 mile radius. As a consequence our services are highly influenced by and geared to local business needs."

Regular forums and focus groups with local employers and close contact with training officers help guide the curriculum into a practical asset for the region.

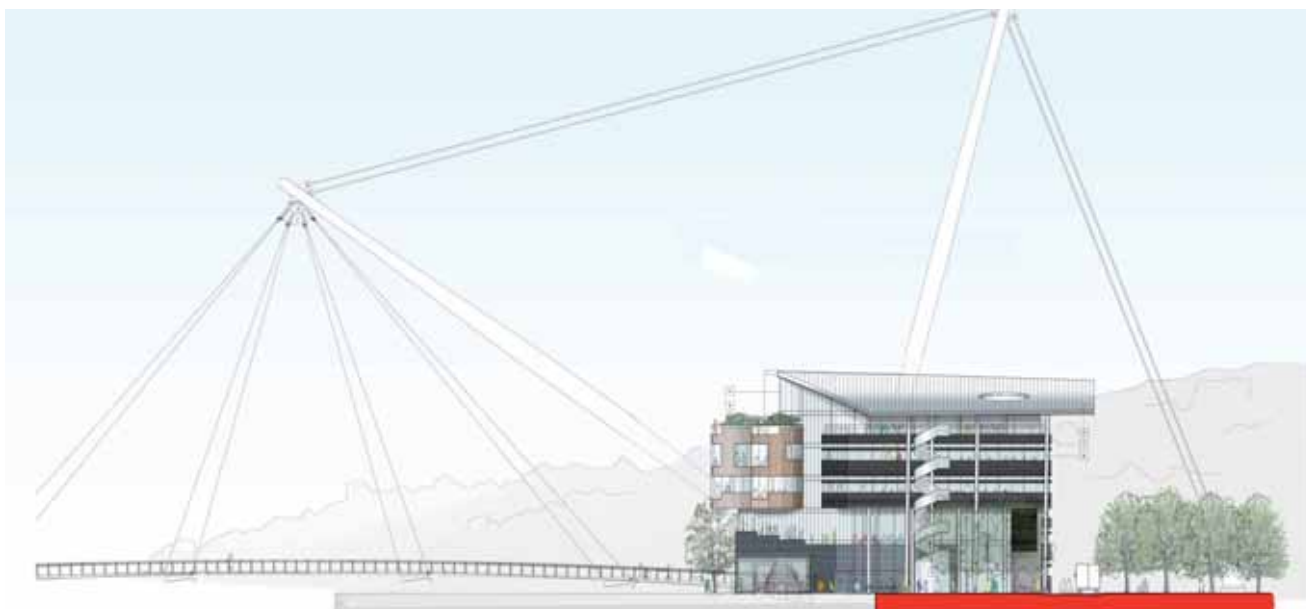
The National Student Survey placed Business related subjects at Newport Business School top in Wales in 2007 in all categories and joint first in the UK for overall student satisfaction in Business subjects. For three years now Business related subjects within the School have been first or second in the UK and first in Wales – a consistent track record of high achievement.

The survey has a number of sets of questions one of these concerns assessment and feedback. Newport Business School scored highest in this section and well above the UK median. Dr Tim McIntyre-Bhatty commented: "We go out of our way to ensure our students get early feedback and assessment in a non-threatening and constructive fashion. Timely feedback can make all the difference in steering students in the right direction and helping them to achieve their full potential."

The School teaches a wide range of subjects including accountancy, law, human resource management, computing, engineering and marketing and has top quality lecturers that are recognised and acclaimed as leaders in their field. In 2006 Lionel Griffiths, Head of the Business Professions Department, was presented with a global achievement award from ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), the world's largest

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New University campus adjacent to iconic Newport Footbridge over the river Usk



Staff and Students on Newport's MBA



international accountancy body. This follows on from ACCA conferring Newport Business School with Premier Plus/Platinum status for the quality of their accountancy courses, a status that applies to just six universities in UK.

Other accolades held by Newport Business School include being a CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accounting) Learning Quality Partner and a CIM (Chartered Institute of Marketing) Accredited Study Centre and also has strong international links.

Newport Business School has recently introduced a revised MBA with over 300 students enrolled for 2007. The Dean says: "Our MBA is designed to meet the needs of the local business community be they SMEs or global corporations. Students can steer their MBA in directions that particularly suit their situation. Some will want to follow an entrepreneurial route whilst to others an international perspective will be more important."

Dissertations, which constitute 33% of the MBA, are almost always based on real life work situations that put theory into practice in a useful way. One of the students, who works for Unilever at the nearby Pot Noodle factory, is preparing her dissertation into new markets that Pot Noodle could enter, including China. Another student has just completed her dissertation in Property Development looking at the impact of major

competitions such as the Ryder Cup (to be hosted by Newport in 2010) and the Olympics and whether developers would make more money in the UK or abroad.

A characteristic of the curriculum is that the boundaries between disciplines are pushed aside to create learning experiences that reflect the real world as opposed to academic silos. A good example is the BSc in Robotic and Intelligent Systems Engineering which pulls together engineering, computing and business skills.

There is a "new world" feel to the curriculum with subjects such as computer games development. Adam Griffiths has recently graduated with a first class degree in Games Development & Artificial Intelligence. "The computer games industry is one of the biggest in the world yet there are very few companies in Wales making games," said Adam, who is

Newport's riverside University City Campus in 2010.



now in the process of setting up his own games company. According to ELSPA (Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association) global sales of games and edutainment software are predicted to exceed £10 billion in 2007.

Cyber crime is another new subject area in which Newport Business School is offering a range of courses to train people to become highly employable professionals who can effectively police cyberspace and manage, implement and conduct security and computer forensic investigations.

The relationship with the business community is two-way. Ed Perreira is a former student of Newport who has gone on to found Pear Media which publishes some of Wales' market leading magazines and is the largest independent magazine distributor in Wales. Ed contributes back into the School by giving guest lectures and providing students with real life work examples and feedback on their work from an industry perspective.

Newport Business School is at the heart of business life and will be moving to the new £45m University of Wales, Newport campus close to the city centre with construction due to begin in early 2008.

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