

The possible linking of institutions into effective educational and training agencies

1. Introduction

The linking of colleges and universities is encouraged by a number of factors:

- globalisation of provision;
- increasing use of institutional rankings in the marketing process;
- changes in student needs and expectations;
- provision of on-line independent learning materials;
- growing role of the private sector;

Wales has developed major plans for the integration of colleges and universities. The plans promote national policies and increased standards of learning and attainment.

2. Reasons for integration

There are a number of reasons favouring links between further and higher education institutions:

- 2.1 establish a continuous learning pathway which encourages the smooth and efficient transition of students between schools, colleges of further education and institutions of higher education;
- 2.2 provide integrated course provision that avoids the duplication of study programmes;
- 2.3 promote the provision of specialist studies in selected centres;
- 2.4 develop training schemes linked to defined development plans;
- 2.5 rationalise estate costs and the joint negotiation of purchase and operating costs associated with software, hardware and other resources.

In the short term estate costs can be significantly reduced and in the longer term staff salaries can be saved.

3. A review of possible collaborations between institutions by the Higher Education Funding Council England identifies three types of linkage:

3.1 Collaboration

Two or more partners working together in a particular area of business which may involve combining existing operations, the pooling of areas of expertise and the possibility of creating new initiatives. The project may involve institutional arrangements rather than relationships between groups of academics. Collaboration may involve joint research developments or the merging of facilities. Ventures may be known as partnerships or co-operative agreements.



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3.2 Alliance

Systematic collaboration between institutions covering a wide range of operations and the retention of their separate identities.

3.3 Merger

Two or more partners combine to create a single integrated institution which may retain the name and legal status of one of them or be an entirely new legal entity. Institutions may retain their name, brands and operations with the integrated operation.

In Wales national policy is based on the linking of further education colleges with an annual turnover of less than £15 million, school sixth forms with a minimum number of at least 150 students and collaboration with universities and other providers of advanced studies.

4. The Five Case Model

The Welsh institutions use a five case model¹ to propose and evaluate possible links between institutions. Under the model business cases are split into five different aspects:

- strategic
- economic
- financial
- commercial
- management

Key questions can be identified to assist the preparation of development plans.

5. Case Studies

Learning Partnership models provide evidence for local authorities, and educational or training providers, seeking to maximise the efficiency of their operations.

Discussions between colleges have identified possible mergers.

College 1	College 2	New College
Welsh College of Horticulture	Deeside College	
Llysfasi College	Deeside College	Deeside College
Barry College	Coleg Glan Hafren	Cardiff & Vale College
Swansea College	Gorseinon College	Gower College, Swansea
Coleg Llandrillo	Coleg Meirion Dwyfor	

- 5.1 In Caerphilly seven schools and the local college share the provision of 16–19 courses. The integration delivers in excess of 80 learning programmes and a clear progression to specialist and cost effective studies.

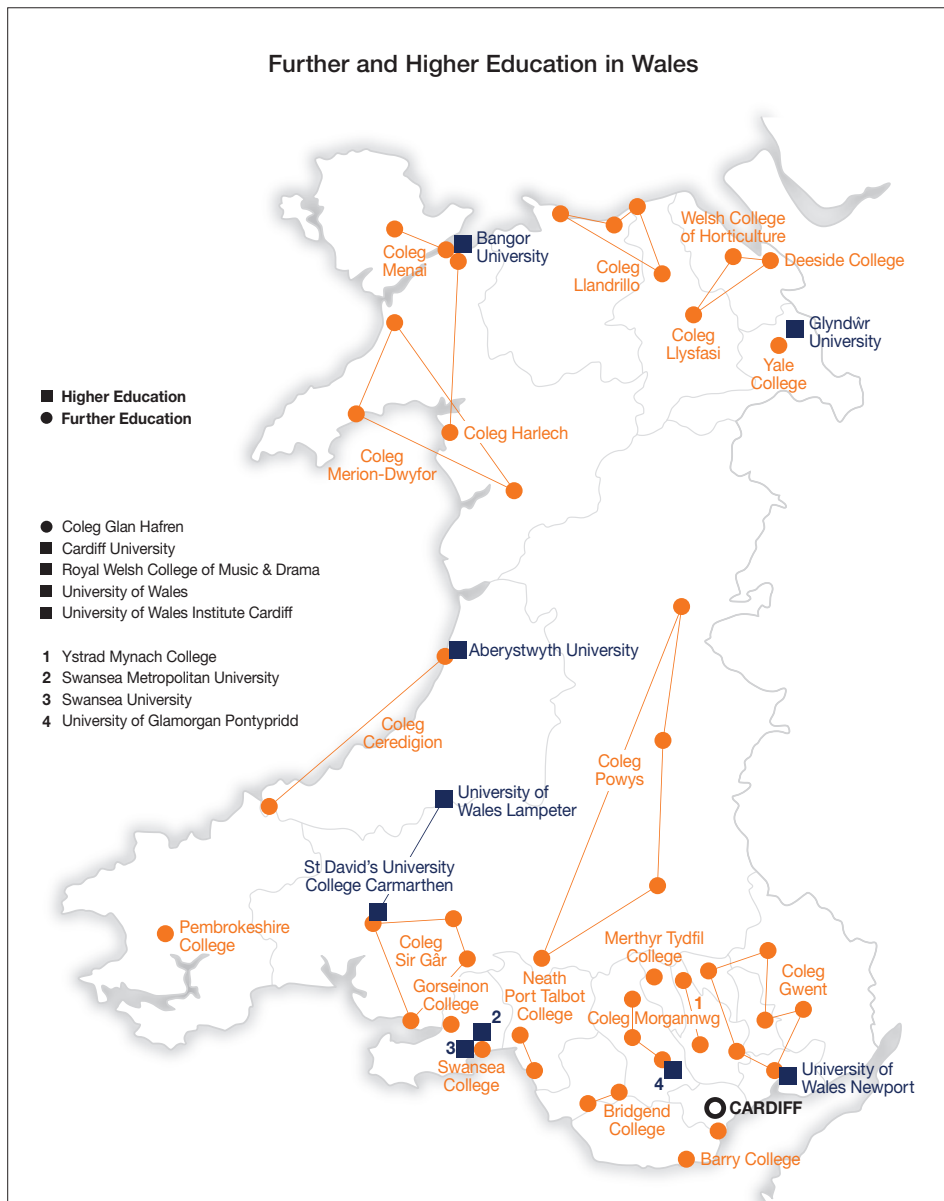
¹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/economic_data_and_tools/greenbook/data_greenbook_business.cfm

5.2 In the Heads of the Valleys area Merthyr Tydfil College merged with the University of Glamorgan in 2006 to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery and to better engage with work based learning providers and employers. In Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent there are long standing plans to provide all 16+ course provision through the establishment of Lifelong Learning Campuses.

Stellae has played a leading role in the design of a lifelong learning campus in Ebbw Vale.

5.3 Yale and Deeside Colleges announced a plan to develop a feasibility plan for training in the north east of Wales. Coleg Llysfasi has since become a partner in the project.

The map illustrating links between further and higher education suggest the plans for an integrated and co-ordinated system of education and training.



6. Mergers involving universities have proved more difficult. A report suggested a merger between 3 universities in South East Wales.

- Cardiff Metropolitan University
- University of Glamorgan
- University of Wales, Newport

Each institution has expressed distinctive views.

- Cardiff Metropolitan University, previously known as the University of Wales, Cardiff (UNWIC) said it accepted possible collaboration but did not support a merger plan.
- University of Glamorgan accepts there was a 'continuing business case' for a merger with Cardiff Metropolitan University but no justification for a link with the University of Wales, Newport.
- University of Wales, Newport has highlighted its record based on existing collaborative projects.

A confidential report prepared by Sir Delan Hopkins said a full scale merger was 'unrealistic at this time'. The Welsh government has continued to favour integration. Cardiff Metropolitan University has responded by stating it is prepared to contest a move to integration in the high court.

The funding agency believes the evidence that integration will create one of the most powerful institutions of higher education at home and abroad. The increasingly extreme views being expressed hamper the resolving of the proposed plan to integrate the institutions.

7. An English Initiative

Warwick University and Queen Mary, University of London have announced one of the closest alliances between two of the leading institutions in England. The collaboration will take various forms.

- 7.1 Academic staff at the two universities will teach each other's degree courses in English, History and Computer Science from the autumn of 2012. In future more courses are likely to be jointly taught.
- 7.2 The two universities will work together on their outreach activities in schools and on increasing the diversity of their student populations.
- 7.3 The two institutions will conduct research together in the future. It is already planned to collaborate in the history of mental health, discrete mathematics, the renaissance and functional molecular materials.

Professor Simon Gaskell the principal of Queen Mary, University of London said the strategic partnership was a response to the 'high level of uncertainty' that has been created by the reduction in public funding for higher education, the raising of the maximum tuition fees to £9,000 a year and the increased difficulty of recruiting overseas students. Both institutions will charge maximum fees from the autumn of 2012.

Stellae has a unique space modelling system which can indicate the possible savings associated with the integration of study centres. The modelling process takes into account all existing or proposed strategies associated with course provision, and demonstrates the feasibility of plans based on workable timetables.