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Cardiff Bay  
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Dear First Minister

I am writing to you as President of the **Learned Society of Wales** to express the Society's grave concerns if the proposed cuts to HEIs in Wales outlined in the draft Welsh Government budget are implemented. These cuts risk jeopardising the excellent work undertaken by universities and Government over the past decade to improve the quality, reputation and capacity of research, teaching and scholarship in Wales. The welcome Sêr Cymru programme is widely admired and has further helped improve the perception of research in Wales.

It should not be forgotten that in the last REF, the impact of research in Wales was demonstrated to be amongst the most positive in the UK, with much of the research internationally leading and attracting the best to Wales. This much improved performance of Welsh HEIs has enhanced their ability to gain external grants, all of which contributed to improving the economy for Wales

As Wales first national academy, we are seriously concerned at the likely negative effect of these proposals on scholarship and research, and ultimately for the health of the economy. We set out these concerns earlier in a letter to the Education Minister in January in partnership with some of the UK's most prestigious learned societies. (see <https://www.learnedsociety.wales/letter-to-minister-for-education-and-skills-december-2015/>)

We, and others, have analysed the implications of the draft budget and cannot see how it can be implemented without a significant reduction in HEFCW's QR funding to Universities. The findings of the National Assembly Committee for Children, Young People and Education underlined the longstanding and disproportionate consequences predicted for key areas covered by the HEFCW grant. For its own part, the Finance Committee recently raised the equally important concern around the long term impact on the Welsh research base and the Welsh economy. As QR funding underpins research, scholarship and ultimately the contribution of our Universities to economic development, the significant cut proposed has the potential to reverse the progress made in research and will inevitably lead to a downward spiral for Wales.

It is important to remember that QR funding from HEFCW has been used effectively by universities in Wales to lever considerable further funding from outside Wales. Without this base, the external funding will rapidly reduce to the severe detriment of the research base in Wales, a crucial element in economic regeneration. Given the level of cuts proposed we fail to see how rapid and large cuts in staff can be

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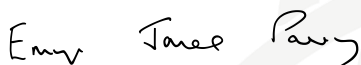
avoided. It will be difficult for universities to recruit new Sêr Cymru stars while at the same time having to reduce the numbers of experienced staff.

Moreover the reduction in research income for Welsh universities is likely to exacerbate what is for many already a difficult financial position. A significant part of the student tuition fee is allocated to meeting the requirements of Fee Plans. Income is heavily dependent on attracting students. The sector needs to provide high quality teaching and a positive student experience, backed up by world class research. All these elements risk being jeopardised if these cuts are implemented.

Given independent evidence that Welsh Higher education had begun to turn the corner and catch up on other parts of the UK, the proposed Welsh Government draft budget risks setting back the good progress the last decade achieved. We are not alone in our conclusions.

The Learned Society therefore would urge you to reconsider the scale and impact of the proposed budget cuts given their predictable negatives consequences for higher education's capacity to be the economic driver capable of delivering world class research and innovation that Wales needs.

Yours Sincerely



Sir Emyr Jones Parry GCMG FInstP PLSW

Cc: Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills; Edwina Hart MBE AM, Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



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