



Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru's) Response to Delivering Skills that Work for Wales: Draft Regulations for Collaborative Arrangements between Further Education Institutions and Further Education Institutions and Schools

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

In September 2008 ATL launched the Association of Managers in Education (AMiE), a joint venture with the Association for College Management (ACM). AMiE will bring together ATL's senior leadership team members in schools and colleges with ACM's leaders and managers in further and higher education. AMiE will represent over seven thousand leaders and managers across education in the UK. Therefore, this paper should be read in conjunction with the ACM/ AMiE response.

ATL Cymru welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft regulations. ATL Cymru supports the WAG's focus on collaboration between institutions but has some concerns regarding the implementation of these proposals.

Regulation 3 paves the way for greater collaboration between Further Education Institutions and between Further Education Institutions and Schools. ATL and ACM/AMiE welcome this developed but must raise concerns regarding the differences in the terms and conditions between school teachers and college lecturers which cannot be ignored. While pay parity has largely been achieved, terms and conditions are still very divergent. This issue must be addressed before larger scale cooperation can take place. It is crucial that issues surrounding terms and conditions are addressed by WAG, *fforwm* and lecturers' unions. Teachers' unions will also be keen to ensure that future cooperation is not to the detriment of their members' terms and conditions of service.

Given the importance that Governors have on the proposed joint committees ATL Cymru and ACM/AMiE believe that a detailed and rigorous training programme for Governors will need to be put in place to ensure that they can discharge the responsibilities delegated to them by the partners in an effective and efficient manner with due consideration to the needs of not only the learners, but the staff who work at the parent institutions.

ATL Cymru and ACM/AMiE believe that it will be important to ensure that the composition of the joint committees is representative, and that the quorum is carefully defined. It would not be acceptable for a joint committee to consider and vote on matters where the views of important stakeholders could not be heard and represented by dint of absence. The issue of the possible 'weighting' of votes should also be considered, is equal weighting appropriate in all circumstances?

Regulation 4(5) appears ambiguous. ATL Cymru agrees with ACM/AMiE's interpretation that this clause means that only the non- staff school and college Governor Members of the joint committees may act as chair. As currently written it allows college staff members to act as chair.

ATL Cymru has some concern regarding the practical implementation of some of the proposals contained in the draft regulations. Many ATL Cymru members are experiencing difficulties with current collaborative arrangements between schools and FE institutions. Many schools already plan their timetables around link courses with FE colleges and this causes problems because FE colleges have different term times than schools. Many teachers are frustrated as they feel like the poor relation, they *perceive* that FE institutions receive more funding, are dictating school timetables, and leaving schools to be responsible for the welfare of students while they themselves are shut.

ATL Cymru members also express concern that the current collaborative arrangements between schools and FE institutions reduces the amount of time schools have to deliver the core curriculum, which is being squeezed so that a wider range of learning options can be offered across authorities. The WAG needs to ensure that schools and FE colleges are resourced adequately to enable them to deliver suitable learning options for all students. Inadequate funding impacts on the number and types of courses that can be offered. If there are not a sufficient number of students taking up a particular course then it cannot be run for budgetary reasons.

ATL Cymru believes the proposed regulations have not adequately addressed key issues such as child protection, student tracking arrangements, etc. It is imperative that the regulations address such issues to ensure that the duty of care for pupils is not compromised.

The draft regulations do not address the issue of collaborative funding arrangements. This is an issue that needs to be examined as a matter of urgency as, at present, the main barrier to cooperation is the current funding arrangements which encourages competition rather than cooperation. With significant representation in both FE colleges and secondary schools, ATL Cymru is uniquely placed to see how this competitive funding mechanism is destructive of good will in both schools and colleges. It can create a climate of suspicion. While funding, which translates into resources and, crucially, jobs is organised as hitherto institutions are bound to compete for students.¹ The revelation in the Webb Report of chronic under-funding of FE in Wales has only served to increase anxiety within the schools sector which is also under-funded in relation to the rest of the UK. There needs to be a significant and incontrovertible increase in the quantum of education funding for both schools and colleges. This increase could then be used to guarantee present funding levels for institutions, relieving some of the competitive pressures and the 'extra' allocation could be allocated by the clustering arrangements to develop and deliver the broadest possible high quality, sustainable options menu for learners.

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¹ See the National Audit Office (England) *Partnering for Success: Preparing to Deliver the 14 -19 reforms in England* on the risks posed by the dysfunction of government policy based on the rhetoric of collaboration and a funding system that in practice is based on competition.
http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/07-08/070899.pdf