

Baroness Wilcox

Parliamentary Secretary for Business,
Innovation & Skills

Baroness Garden of Frognal
The House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

18 June 2010

Dear Lady Garden (Susan!)
QUEEN'S SPEECH DEBATE

I would like to respond to the points you raised regarding the Government's position on support to Higher and Further Education during the Queen's Speech debate (*4th day*) of Wednesday 2 June 2010.

It is the government's highest priority to rebuild the economy and secure sustainable growth. The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills has written to University Vice Chancellors and College Principals acknowledging their central role in achieving that, and making an explicit commitment to continuing investment to support our universities and colleges.

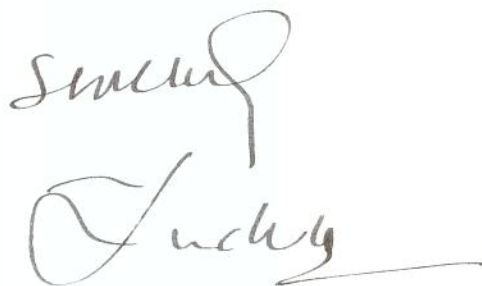
Further Education colleges and training organisations train nearly 5 million people a year in a whole range of skills vital to our economy and to achieving social mobility and social justice. We want them to be able to respond quickly and flexibly to the skills needed in their local communities including, with employers, increasing the number of apprentices. The coalition agreement made clear that the government would free colleges from direct state control, to give them greater scope to innovate and excel, and we are taking steps now to make it easier for colleges to focus on measurable outputs to meet local economic and community needs.

The Government believes that the UK's higher education sector retains a good reputation for overall quality, and attracts large numbers of international students and researchers, who bring revenue and expertise. Our strongest universities are among the best in the world. They create, directly and indirectly, around 670,000 jobs and create export earnings worth £5.3 billion.

The nation's future skills needs require a Higher Education sector that can respond flexibly and quickly to employer need for high skill levels. However, more must be done to meet employers and individuals' changing requirements and employers for their part need to be very much clearer in articulating their needs to Higher Education providers.

You will be aware that Higher Education institutions are not centrally managed by Government and have institutional autonomy, and that the Higher Education Funding Council is clear that their information requirements and accountability checks on institutions will be proportionate to risk.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the House of Lords library.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'S. Wilcox' on the first line and 'Baroness Wilcox' on the second line, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

BARONESS WILCOX