



Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0870 0012345 dfes.ministers@dfes.gsi.gov.uk
Kim Howells MP
Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education

Sir Graeme Davies FREng FRSE
Vice Chancellor
University of London
Senate House
London
WC1E 7HU

November 2004

Dear Graeme

Further to Alan Johnson's letter of 28 July, I am writing to respond to the HE Research Forum's advice on the issues it was asked to consider by Alan Johnson and Lord Sainsbury. I have now had an opportunity to consider the reports and to discuss them with Lord Sainsbury, and this response reflects the views of both our Departments.

I am aware of the complexity of issues surrounding teaching and research in particular, and it is to the Forum's credit that it has suggested a practical and comprehensible way forward. The argument you have made is convincing, and I have asked officials to further investigate the resource implications and consider, with HEFCE, how best to take a scheme forward.

The Forum's advice on collaboration is similarly helpful. As you say, a "bottom-up" approach is most likely to succeed here and I believe there is scope to do more to encourage this. HEFCE will be taking note of your recommendations in developing the future direction of its Strategic Development Fund.

I know there has been a great deal of interest in your proposals from the sector and beyond and, subject to your agreement, I suggest we add the two reports, and this response, to the Forum page of our HE website.

I should like to echo the thanks Alan Johnson extended to the Forum members for your work and for the efforts you made to capture stakeholders' views. We shall keep you informed as we take the recommendations forward.

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