

Kirsty Williams sets five new tests at Wales's first social mobility summit

Speaking in Cardiff at The Open University in Wales' 'Bridging the Gap: A Social Mobility Summit', where she was joined by the former chair of the UK Social Mobility Commission, the Rt Hon Alan Milburn, the Education Secretary outlined 'tests' in the following key areas:

1. An increase of at least 10% in the number of students studying at Masters level;
2. Doubling the number of students benefiting from the experience of studying or working abroad;
3. An expectation that nearly every pupil will be entered for a Science GCSE;
4. A 10% increase in Welsh students attending Sutton Trust universities;
5. The elimination of the gap between Wales and the rest of the UK at all qualification levels in ten years, and ensure in future as a minimum, we maintain our performance relative to the rest of the UK.

Kirsty Williams said:

"We are taking direct action to open up opportunities and improve the life chances of all learners, particularly those from the poorest backgrounds. But there's always more to do. The tests I am announcing today are some examples where I am demanding improvement.

"It is clear to me that progression into postgraduate study is our next challenge in widening participation. By introducing equivalent living costs support for master's students, we will address this challenge. Therefore I can give a commitment that over the lifetime of this government we will see an increase of at least 10% in the number of Wales domiciled students studying at Master's level.

"Next year we will launch – starting with a pilot scheme – a funded programme to ensure many more Welsh students have international study and work experience opportunities. This will play a part in meeting our ambition to see the number of Welsh students who spend time abroad as part of their studies double by the end of this government

"It is with regret that until recently we had some schools where the majority of 16 year olds were studying for BTEC science – particularly in more disadvantaged areas. That is a culture of lowered expectations that we must, and will, reject. We are already seeing an increase in the numbers being entered for Science GCSE.

I expect that momentum to continue so that by the end of this Assembly term nearly every pupil in our system will be entered for

a Science GCSE.

“Our Seren Network is already doing a fantastic job and raising ambition and aspiration all across the nation. We cannot put a limit on the ambitions of our young people – from all backgrounds. I am setting an aspiration that the percentage of all Welsh domiciled undergraduate first years going to Sutton Trust institutions will increase by 10% over the next five years.

“It is essential that people are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to ensure they can exploit the opportunities an evolving labour market presents. Working across departments and sectors, we will eliminate the gap between Wales and the rest of the UK at all qualification levels in ten years, and ensure in future as a minimum, we maintain our performance relative to the rest of the UK.”