

UCU Cymru Briefing

Carwyn Jones: manifesto commitments

Carwyn Jones has been elected to succeed Rhodri Morgan as both leader of Welsh Labour and as the Assembly Government's First Minister. Carwyn is the Assembly Member for Bridgend.

His manifesto (*'Time to Lead'*) makes a series of important policy commitments that will have a significant impact on post-16 education and on UCU members in Wales.

Below are the relevant policy proposals. For the purpose of this briefing they are broken down into further education, higher education and those that cut across both sectors.

Further education related pledges

On some key issues Carwyn remains committed to the current Assembly Government programme. This includes a broad commitment to the transformation policy (he commits to 'action to address unnecessary competition between FE colleges and schools') which should signal that the current process of proposals for collaboration in each local authority area will continue.

However, there are three pledges which do signal both substantial policy changes and a potentially new approach to further education. These pledges relate to incorporation, governance and a national contract. All three are policies proposed by UCU in our recent manifesto. Carwyn has committed to:

- Ending incorporation of FE colleges (although no statement is made on future status or structures);
- Reforming governance structures to give proper representation to staff, students and communities;
- An all-Wales contract for FE lecturers.

Higher education pledges

Much of the future direction of travel of higher education has been set out in the recent 'For Our Future' strategy document and we shouldn't expect any departure from it. The fact that the strategy was launched on the day before the leadership election polls closed might explain why there were not more substantive commitments on higher education in his manifesto.

The three main (and very broad) commitments made are:

- a new focused agenda on winning more research money for universities in Wales;
- better matching university courses and the Welsh economy;
- Driving partnerships between HE and Wales' major anchor companies.

Cross sector / trade union pledges

During the campaign Carwyn made was regarded as a significant pledge on education funding. He made a pledge to *'increase education spending by at least one per cent above the block grant we receive from the UK Government.'*

Alongside this he made a commitment to refocusing the educational investment to ensure that a greater proportion reaches the frontline of schools, colleges and universities.

Aside from the issue of funding, Carwyn also made commitments in other areas that will have a clear impact on the work of UCU. These are:

- Ensure equal pay audits across the public sector and give priority to equality representatives in the same way as for health and safety representatives;
- Continue to support national pay agreements and maintain opposition to local pay variation;
- Allow more flexibility so that people can move between the civil service and other public services, including health, universities and local government. Secondments between the public sector and other bodies such as trade unions, the third sector and the private sector;
- Support social partnership, including through the procurement process. This pledge recognises that unionised companies are more equal companies and ones with a stronger commitment to environmentalism. He explicitly states that he sees trade unions as being part of this continued social partnership.

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