



University and College Union

‘Further, higher, better’

**Submission to the government’s
second Comprehensive Spending
Review**

Section 12

12 Teaching infrastructure

Further education

Sir Andrew Foster, who led the recent review of further education:

‘One of the things which stood out for me from doing this study ... is the need for further capital investment in FE around the technology it has. If you are going to drive for world-class technological skills, because the global economy is changing, there is no point in training people on old equipment which does not suit them for the jobs they go out to, and frankly some of the FE estate is very tired.’⁴³

In March 2005 the Chancellor pledged an extra £350m for investment in buildings for further education in 2008-10.

In the 2006 Budget, the Chancellor announced a further increase in the level of capital spending on further education colleges, saying: ‘... we will match these further education reforms that promote individual choice, increase local accountability and business engagement, and reverse failure with £500m of capital investment ... by 2008.’

Comment

We welcome the additional funding recently announced for England, but strongly suspect that it will not be sufficient to equip FE colleges to do their work successfully over the next decade.

We urge the government and the relevant funding bodies for further education to undertake research in further education, along the lines recently carried out in the higher education sector, into the current state of teaching infrastructure, and the expenditure needed to upgrade facilities.

Higher education

The report of JM Consulting for HEFCE, Universities UK and the Standing Conference of Principals, *Teaching and Learning Infrastructure in Higher Education* (June 2002), concluded that the government should provide capital funding worth £5bn over several years to meet universities’ needs for remedial infrastructure. This would cover updating buildings, providing modern teaching facilities, improving use of space, providing facilities that can attract students and staff, updating libraries and replacing and upgrading information and communications technology.

A further £100m over a five year period was recommended for project-based funding for advanced facilities for e-learning and widening participation. The total public bill for teaching and learning infrastructure recommended by JM Consulting came to £5.1bn for the UK.

Following the 2002 Spending Review, the government provided higher education in England with capital grants for IT and other items of £206m in 2003-4, £376m in 2004-5 and £441m in 2005-06.⁴⁴ In the period 2006-8 £550m is being allocated to institutions in England for learning and teaching capital items, of which £60m is to address the backlog of under-investment in science and engineering teaching laboratories.⁴⁵ HEFCE's aim is that by 2010 all science and engineering laboratories should be classed as at a good standard or better.

In Wales, higher education institutions have been allocated £7.5m in 2003-4,⁴⁶ £5m in 2004-5 and £5m in 2005-6 for capital funding for learning and teaching and IT infrastructure.⁴⁷ In 2006-7 there will be £7.6m for learning and teaching and IT infrastructure, and the same amount in the following year. In Scotland, SHEFC allocated institutions £15.5m in 2004-5, and a further £28m in 2005-6 for modernising teaching infrastructure.⁴⁸

This leaves a shortfall of approximately £3.5bn of teaching infrastructure investment needed, according to the JM Consulting report, plus inflation (it is likely that since the report was produced, in 2002, additional needs have arisen and will need to be quantified).

Teaching infrastructure expenditure

	England*	Wales	Scotland
	£m	£m	£m
2002-3	154		
2003-4	206	7.5	
2004-5	494	5	15.5
2005-6		5	28
2006-7	550	7.6	
2007-8		7.6	
Total	1,404	32.7	43.5

* Amounts for 2002-3 and 2003-4 classified as 'IT and other capital' (excluding research), as itemised in the annual grant letter from the DfES.

Comment

We are concerned at the shortfall in spending on teaching infrastructure. We call on the government to work with the sector to address this problem with additional expenditure over the decade from 2008. If additional funding is not made available, then the sector will be hampered by poor quality buildings, inadequate IT resources and the inability to equip students with the key skills they need because of outdated equipment.