



Education White Paper puts UCLan ahead of the game

Universities across the UK have waited with baited breath for the Government's White paper *The Future of Higher Education in England and Wales* delivered by Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education. In spite of the radical changes that will create sweeping changes across the system, the University of Central Lancashire is already on target to fulfil many of the proposals. Healthy financial management, strong industrial links and a vigorous partnership scheme with colleges and Higher Education Institutions across the region demonstrate that UCLan's management and policies have been forward thinking and far-reaching.

A major employer and contributor to the local and regional economy, the University at its campuses in the heart of Preston and Cumbria has educational partnerships with nineteen colleges and HEIs which allow local recruitment and progression through degree courses close to home for many students, removing as many obstacles to access as possible. The partnership network also places it in a good position to deliver the two-year foundation degree courses. The University of Central Lancashire's stated plan to increase its student population to 50,000 by 2010 ably demonstrates its commitment to the growth called for by the White Paper.

UCLan has long been a champion of access to HE for those who have not otherwise considered participation in post 18 provision. Its Widening Participation policy which encourages the high percentage of mature students and students from non-traditional backgrounds fulfils one of the main tenets of the Government's proposals. Contrary to popular belief regarding student funding, these students are now likely to be better off thanks to the return of the student grant for those on low incomes.

Strong industrial links and visiting professorships conferred upon leading practitioners in the field mean that our students are exposed to the latest industrial trends, market changes and workplace practices which make them sought after graduates when it comes to employment.

There are many changes to be addressed in the White Paper, and along with other universities, the University of Central Lancashire is considering the proposals with great care and interest. However, it cautiously welcomes the advances in the sector and is confident of maintaining its lead in bringing opportunities in higher education to all who can benefit.

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