

12 March 2009

Rt Hon John Denham MP
Secretary of State
DIUS
66-74 Victoria Street
LONDON
SW1E 6SW

Dear John

Re: Changes to post-1992 governance

The University and College Union (UCU) is writing to you with our concerns about the proposal to slim down the size of post-1992 higher education governing bodies.

We are very concerned that there has been no consultation with staff and student representatives over revising Schedule 7A of the Education Reform Act 1988 (in fact, the first our union heard about it was in a Times Higher Education article).

UCU fears that the revision of Schedule 7A is being proposed so that staff and student representatives can be removed from post-1992 higher education governing bodies. We believe this would be a retrograde step and contrary to best practice. For example, a number of universities have found that in times of a governance crisis staff members are more willing to hold the executive to account than 'independent' members.

We would also point out that the principle of collegiality and staff participation on university governing bodies is enshrined in the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel. It would be a shame, in the run up to the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in July, that the UK Government was sanctioning a significant departure from the spirit of the 1997 Recommendation.

In the current climate we are surprised that DIUS remains committed to a deregulation agenda in higher education. UCU urges you to abandon the current plans to reduce the size of post-1992 governing bodies and would like to suggest a meeting with you to discuss these issues in more detail.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Sally Hunt
General Secretary