

RUSSELL GROUP KEY POINTS FOR LAMBERT REVIEW

The implied distinction between the activities appropriate for research-intensive and non research-intensive universities could constitute an unnecessary barrier to certain types of collaboration. All universities should be able to consider - against their mission, track record and evident strengths – how they can best support business. The third mission operates on a continuum from so-called softer elements to harder ones. As Russell Group universities we have a role in both. The government's main emphasis is on commercialisation, at the harder end. Yet companies, public agencies and community groups will choose to work with whichever university they wish. In reality many corporates will only work with those universities that they consider to be world class. There is a danger with the Knowledge Exchange proposal of creating a new organisation that will compete with ones which are already operating in the market place.

There is also a concern that the focus – particularly for the research-intensive universities - is confined solely, or at least primarily, to the science and technology activity. We have assumed that 'business' includes the cultural and creative and public sectors, and they have much to gain from the extensive expertise held by many Universities in Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities. Research-intensive universities may have up to half of their research activity in these areas, with enormous potential for influencing, and even leading, the development of public policy and practice. This is particularly true of those based in large cities, and we believe that an important role for them is 'thought leadership', along the lines originally conceived by the Victorians in establishing the Civic Universities.

In similar vein, universities are major businesses in their own right and most have an implicit, if not explicit, commitment to corporate social responsibility in their mission. They should be encouraged in this, and knowledge transfer funding streams should take account of the costs of actions that flow from this.

Universities are considered to operate a supply-driven model in supporting business, and are frequently exhorted to take more account of industry and business demands. However, there is limited scope in tight modern funding regimes for extensive market research into industrial/business demands, and they would be better able to meet market need if more 'intelligent demand' was articulated by the commercial sector. Perhaps the CBI could be encouraged to help in this by developing a greater awareness and understanding of the HE sector's activities and capabilities. The Russell Group Enterprise Group is currently seeking to begin discussions with the CBI on this basis.

Recognition in knowledge transfer funding streams is required for the additional resource required to enable others in universities to support the activities of those more closely involved in knowledge transfer. The range and extent of funding streams, the different and varied nature of staff working in the area, the support for the complex partnerships and networking, and the effort required to change culture, all have a knock-on overhead effect on other institutional functions.