

David Lammy



David Lammy was appointed Minister of State for Higher Education and Intellectual Property at the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills, (DIUS) in October 2008. Previously David was the Minister for Skills at DIUS with responsibility for the Commission for Employment and Skills, Leitch implementation, Train to Gain, Skills academies, Skills for Life and apprenticeships. David Lammy was appointed as Minister for Culture at The Department of Culture Media and Sport in May 2005 with responsibility for arts, galleries, museums, libraries, heritage and cultural proprieties. He was previously appointed as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Constitutional Affairs on 13 June 2003. He was elected Member of

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Parliament for Tottenham in June 2000 following the death of Bernie Grant. Before being appointed as Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for Constitutional Affairs, David Lammy was Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health, appointed on 29 May 2002. He was Parliamentary Private Secretary for Rt Hon Estelle Morris at the Department of Education and a member of the Greater London Authority with a portfolio for Culture and Arts. David Lammy studied Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in the University of London and was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1995. He achieved a Masters degree in Law at the Harvard Law School in 1997. He has practised in both England and the USA.

In your view, what is the most probable or desirable future scenario for government's role in higher education?

It is possible to see elements of all four [CERI] scenarios in the UK at present. We are seeing universities collaborating with peers across the globe in research and increasingly in teaching; we are investing in new small community-focused HE provision; we are seeing increasing levels of commercial activity, involving knowledge transfer to businesses and the creation of new commercial ventures; and there is an important role for choice, with universities facing incentives to respond to demand. It is not a matter of choosing between the scenarios. All of them are relevant to today's world and tomorrow's.

An important role for Government is to ensure a balance between these scenarios as they unfold. This means ensuring that there is diversity within the university sector, to meet the diverse challenges we face. Government should promote a healthy ecology within the system, ensuring that higher education is able to respond effectively to all the legitimate calls that are made on it by society.

In your opinion, what is or should be the most important objective for higher education in the future? Why?

At root, higher education is about knowledge and understanding. About extending that knowledge through research, and imparting knowledge to learners. So the most important objectives for higher education in the future must be excellence in research and in teaching. It is impossible to imagine any scenario for 2030 in which society would not be enriched by such excellence.

There are then a number of important further questions, such as how we can ensure access to learning for all people in society? How can businesses and public services harness the power of learning and wider knowledge? What distribution of universities and organisation within universities will best achieve these objectives? These and other questions are inevitably the ones on which we as

policy makers will spend most time. But as we answer them, let us not lose sight of the fundamental and timeless purposes of higher education.

What do you consider to be the main future challenge(s) for higher education systems? Why? (Please indicate no more than three main challenges)

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Three challenges that I believe to be important are:

- For universities to identify the areas where they really can achieve excellence, and also the institutions where they can most effectively collaborate. This may mean making some hard choices about which areas a university should no longer engage in
- Developing teaching methods and a curriculum relevant for our times. This includes the imaginative and effective use of learning technologies; providing programmes that are accessible and valuable for non-traditional groups of learners, such as mature students; and increasingly allowing the learner to plan their own development, breaking down barriers between academic departments and individual universities
- In the future the economic case for public and private investment in HE will become even stronger than now; but public and private funders will face increasing demands on budgets because of secular trends such as an ageing population, increasing health costs, and climate change. An ability to control costs and to demonstrate this to funders will be paramount.

In your opinion, what would be the worst, but possible, way to tackle these future challenges? Why?

There are two possible fundamental mistakes, which are polar opposites to each other.

One would be to establish a detailed plan for the next two decades. Such an approach would be counterproductive. It would consume resource and energy. But inevitably some of the assumptions that it made would be wrong. At worst, governments and universities could find themselves tied into a set of actions increasingly irrelevant to the world around them.

But we should also avoid the opposite temptation, of simply letting the future be determined by a set of uncoordinated individual decisions. If we do not have a vision of a good higher education system for the long term and an awareness of challenges, government is unlikely to invest effectively; and universities will not develop sound strategies for the future. The diversity that we need will not come about. A clear and open debate needs to take place between all those involved in delivering higher education and this is what we are aiming to do in England at the moment.

What do you consider to be the best possible way to tackle the above mentioned future challenges? Why?

Working towards a sound future for higher education must involve an effective partnership between government and universities. That is why in England we have launched a debate on the future of higher education which is involving universities themselves and all those who have a stake in the future of higher education. In 2009 we shall be producing a Framework for the future development of higher education which will include not just a vision of how Government should act, but also a vision for how universities themselves can meet the challenges ahead. The Framework will not be a rigid plan. It will be capable of being adjusted over time as the world changes. But we intend that it will set a compelling vision for long term success, and allow all parties to take stock of how far we are progressing towards that vision.