

**Welsh Conservative
Consultation
on
Shorter Degrees**

Welsh Conservatives are launching a consultation on fast-track degrees, seeking to understand how undergraduate degrees could be shortened, and what the impact would be on the quality of education, the professionals and research fellows as well as the cost benefits and implications.

We believe that for certain degrees, it could be possible to study the course over two years rather than three. Shorter study time could cut student debt and slash the repayment period, reducing costs for students, parents and the Welsh Government. Completing qualifications earlier could enable swifter moves to further study, industry or the world of work.

Launching the consultation, Angela Burns AM, Shadow Minister for Education, said, "Three years is a long time to complete a degree and to delay entering the world of work, so Welsh Conservatives are launching a consultation on introducing a fast-track option to reduce the term of study for certain courses to two years.

"Students could study exactly the same content and number of credits but over a more concentrated time period, thereby retaining the rigour in Welsh higher qualifications. Student debt is rising year on year and could in future become a significant barrier to higher education so cutting debt and reducing the time taken to pay the money back could make Higher Education more accessible to people from less well-off backgrounds."

We in the Welsh Conservative Group in the National Assembly, would like to ask for your views on this subject to help form our policies and how we can successfully put forward a Higher Education strategy for the future.

Please return your answers to these questions to Anthony Pickles on behalf of the Welsh Conservative Group in the National Assembly for Wales, CF99 1NA by 1 September 2014.

Thank you for taking the time to help us.

1. Do you believe there would be any benefits for students, universities, lecturers or businesses if some undergraduate degrees were shorter?
2. Do you believe there would be any potential pitfalls to some undergraduate degrees being shorter?

3. What would be the best length for an undergraduate degree?
4. Does the subject of the undergraduate degree make a difference to the length of study?
5. What would you like a future Welsh Government to implement with regards to university education?
6. How could study time be better distributed if undergraduate degree length stayed the same?
7. Do you have any recommendations regarding postgraduate degrees?
8. What are your views on the Welsh Government tuition fee subsidy?
9. Do you believe mature students have equal access to degree courses?
10. What impact do you believe a change in study hours would have on important research time for lecturers and teachers?
11. Do you have any views on the accessibility of post-graduate degrees?
12. Could you outline your views on the funding post-graduate degrees?
13. Please rank the following in terms of barriers to Higher Education:
 - Time
 - Cost
 - Availability of courses
 - Employability after taking the course
 - Ability to take the course for interest instead of employment
 - Links with business or sector of study