

29.4.2026

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**Title**

Government getting closer : higher education and devolution in the UK

**Publication year**

2004

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education quarterly. - 58 (2004) 2/3, S. 151 - 175

**Inventory number**

18495

**Keywords**

Ausland : Großbritannien : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Ausland : Großbritannien : Studium, Studenten, Lehre ; Finanzierung der Hochschulen : allgemein ; Studiengebühren

**Abstract**

Since 1997 there has been a series of far-reaching constitutional changes in the UK through the devolution of power from Westminster to new legislatures and executives in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In addition, an elected assembly in London and the English regional development agencies have been established. This paper examines policy developments in higher education in the four countries of the UK between 1997 and 2004, and the impact devolution may have had on the sector, looking in particular at funding, increasing participation and widening access, tuition fees and student support, and business links and technology transfer. There is a strong sense that the devolved administrations want and expect more from 'their' higher education institutions. While institutions are often proactive in seeking links with regional businesses and communities, the relationships between universities and devolved administrations have important implications for institutional autonomy which need to be carefully thought through. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)