

# **SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON SEEDA's APPROACH TO LABOUR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT**

Submission from: **Oxford Brookes University**

Date: **September 2008**

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## **Written Submission for the Committee's Consideration from Rex Knight, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Registrar, Oxford Brookes University**

1. No. The priority actions in the RES related to employment and labour force focus on 'levelling up' economic performance across the region on getting those not in work to enter the labour market and on basic skills. As indicated in paragraph 5.5 on page 9 of the issues paper, there are no stated priority actions relating to the core goal of global competitiveness. With scarce resources, there is clearly an argument for targeting areas of weaker performance, and this appears to be the approach taken in the RES. Equally, there is an argument for investing in success, and this does not appear to be addressed. If the regions across the world are focusing on the development of successful activity, and on innovation, creativity, knowledge transfer and increased employment in high-tech high added value activity, the south east will be at a disadvantage.

2. Oxford Brookes University employs around 2500 staff. Each year, we produce over 4000 graduates at undergraduate and postgraduate level, the vast majority of whom will seek employment in the south east region. As an employer, I am not aware of any engagement with SEEDA or SEEDA's partners in identifying ways in which the University might be engaged in meeting the objectives in the RES, or how the RES might contribute to meeting the needs of the University. In respect of our role as a provider of higher education, we have had a productive and supportive relationship with SEEDA over the development of individual subject areas, eg motorsports. The relationship through HEFCE could be more effective, although the number, diversity and range of locations of HE institutions in the south east region will always present challenges to the effectiveness of a representative body.

3. Yes, the focus is appropriate and benchmarking against other similar regions consistently identifies this as an area of weakness.

4. It would be helpful to see some explanation of how these initiatives will address the needs of employers in Oxford and Central Oxfordshire Diamond for growth, for example in relation to the supply of trained technicians.

5. No comment, except that changes in the economy are likely to mean that truly sustainable employment will increasingly be for highly skilled and qualified people.

6. We can only comment from our own experience as a large employer that there has been no engagement that we are aware of.

7. We are not aware of any interaction with the regional skills for productivity alliance.

8. We have had very effective engagement with SEEDA in supporting our activity in motorsports, and to a lesser extent in publishing. SEEDA has also been very supportive of the Commercialise project which will have a positive impact on employment by supporting early stage businesses. There has not been any dialogue about the employment needs of the region, taking in to account the RES, and engaging a wide range of partners in discussion. Our impression is that attention is generally focused on the south coast and the Thames gateway as these are seen as

areas of greatest need.

9. No comment.