Professor David Eastwood comments on Government's Higher Education Funding proposals

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Minister of State for Universities and Science, David Willetts, issued the Government's response to the Browne Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, in Parliament today [03 November 2010]. For further information on the Government's response please visit the Department for Business Innovation and Skills news website at **http://www.bis.gov.uk/studentfinance (http://www.bis.gov.uk/studentfinance)** .

Professor David Eastwood, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, said:

"These proposals mean that no UK student will pay fees up-front. Graduates, not students, make a contribution to the cost of their education, and they will only do so when they can afford it and are benefiting from their time at university.

"Following the significant cut to universities public funding a cap of £9,000 is the minimum required for leading universities to compete in the global higher education market. The Government has rightly accepted Lord's Browne's argument that higher graduate contributions are crucial to ensuring that the UK's leading universities can continue to deliver a world-class academic experience for all of their students.

"A progressive long-term strategy that increases student choice, enhances competition and widens access is necessary to ensure the success and stability of the sector and allow universities to offer the very highest academic experience to students from all backgrounds."

Fair Access

"The Government's acceptance of Lord Browne's progressive recommendations to offer more generous support and maintenance grants for students from the poorest backgrounds and introduce support for part-time students is a welcome announcement and good news for students.

"Universities such as Birmingham have led the way in pioneering fair access to leading universities and we will continue to strengthen our outreach and access programmes.

"I strongly agree with Michael Gove's comments that attainment at school is the primary factor in widening access to leading universities. I welcome the Government's commitment to drive up attainment at schools of those from the poorest backgrounds and we will support Government and schools in these efforts."

Student Choice and Quality

"Quality is best enhanced through increased competition. Lord Browne's proposals give students the ability to make a more informed choice of where and what to study. As these reforms develop, the Government must be careful to ensure that student choice and competition is increased. The forthcoming White Paper must build effectively on recommendations to allow universities to respond to student demand."

Notes to Editors:

Professor David Eastwood is Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham and was a panel member of Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Support chaired by **Lord Browne** of Madingley. Professor Eastwood's full biographical details are available at **http://www.council.bham.ac.uk/membership/profiles/eastwood.shtml (/university/welcome/vcprofile.aspx)**

For the full report of the Browne Review, visit: **http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview (http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview)**

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The University contributes more than £660 million to the City of Birmingham and £780 million to the West Midlands region, with an annual income of more than £420 million.

For further information

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