

# THE PURSUIT OF UNIVERSITY TITLE

## PROGRESS

2.1 Since NHSU was set up its priorities have been influenced by its efforts to acquire University title. Use of the title is tightly controlled and NHSU as currently envisaged neither conforms to the standard criteria nor has the necessary track record. It is now clear, from extensive exploration by NHSU, that neither of the two routes to a title is currently open to it –

- the Royal Charter route is not supported by DfES and any application would face the risk of credible legal challenge
- the alternative – obtaining title through primary legislation – would be contentious and unlikely to get a slot in the legislative programme.

2.2 NHSU has also explored a number of other possibilities, including affiliation to an existing University (which would, however, make it subject to another organisation) and, more recently, the possibility of becoming an independent chartered body rather than a University.

## IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF QUEST FOR UNIVERSITY TITLE

2.3 NHSU's quest for University title has already had an impact on its development –

- it has created a perception that NHSU's prime aim is to be a provider of degree-level education, adding to the uncertainty about the organisation's role
- it has created suspicion that NHSU is "trying first and foremost to be a University, rather than getting on with the job", undermining its credibility with key stakeholders

## THE CASE FOR UNIVERSITY TITLE

2.4 NHSU has argued that the 2001 Labour Manifesto carries a commitment for NHSU to seek University title. However, the manifesto wording ("we will set up a University of the NHS...") can also be read as a way of conveying the idea of a corporate university, rather than necessarily meaning University in its technical sense. The early papers produced by the DH Strategy Unit emphasised the corporate university model, although they also looked at the possibility of NHSU moving to become a formal grant-awarding body.

2.5 NHSU has always argued that there are good reasons for seeking University title. Its main arguments are that such title would –