

Proposal for a London Barometer

Background

1. In April 2009 London Higher was invited by HEFCE to set up a facility to support and promote the contribution of the HE sector to address the needs of the economy and society in the economic downturn.
2. The request asked London Higher to develop a proposal to deliver regular, systematic and comprehensive reporting on the London HE response to the economic downturn.
3. The same request has been made of all English HERAs and London Higher is aware of the responses of these regional associations; this has informed our own proposal, together with discussions with the HEFCE London regional team.

Proposal

4. It is proposed to seek data from all our members (N.B. currently LSE is not a member of London Higher). However, we consider it unlikely that all forty-one will choose to respond. In order, therefore, to ensure that we gather data from a representative and consistent sample of London's HEIs we will attempt to secure the co-operation of a core 10 institutions representing a c. 25% sample reflecting as far as is possible to make-up of the London HE group. This group will be our minimum return.
5. We propose to collect data every two months (subject to funding).
6. We propose to use a self-reporting methodology. We will synthesize the returns and submit to HEFCE a summary report identifying trends and interesting examples, illustrated by a small number of case studies.
7. We propose to establish a lasting resource for London HE in connection with this project.

Methodology

8. It is envisaged that a sequence of analyses along the following lines will best meet the main goals of the initiative:
 - a) We will invite a representative sample of ten London HEIs (to include specialist institutions and research intensives as well as multifaculties) to be our core data source. Where possible we will try to ensure that the sample reflects the discipline spectrum in London as well;
 - b) We will hold a half-day workshop with the sample members to discuss the data requirements and how they might best be met; We would expect a HEFCE representative to attend this meeting;
 - c) We propose to set up a microsite dedicated to the London barometer project on the London Higher website. We will create a comprehensive suite of guidance tools for the HE sample members to assist them in completing the survey and to address questions they may have. We also propose to use this space to promote the projects results.
 - d) For each reporting period we will email ALL London Higher members a Word template which contains agreed questions. Each HEI will be requested to

- complete the template in as much detail as possible with a reference point of the last 60 days; we will manage the response rate accordingly;
- e) We will synthesize the data into one word document. Where appropriate we will annotate the data to suggest patterns, explain anomalies and highlight areas of effective practice. This document will be returned to HEFCE's nominated officer by the stated deadline;
 - f) London Higher proposes to make available the combined document to all HEIs participating in the data snap one month in arrears;
 - g) London Higher proposes to gather insights from all participants, possibly through a dedicated seminar, and present these to the wider community in the form of a brief report with recommendations.
9. There exists the option for London Higher to use some of the data thus collected to produce its own analysis of the emerging picture for London. Should we wish to do this we will first seek permission to use the data from both the participating members and from HEFCE.

Outputs

10. Outputs can be divided into three groups: a) 'primary' outputs, being the core findings; b) 'contingent' outputs, related to subsequent dissemination of the findings; and c) 'reflective' outputs where information is sought on the efficacy of this approach:
- a) *Primary Outputs.* The primary output in each reporting period will be a **Word document** summarizing the impacts of London HEIs in the specified areas of activity and supplemented with a small number of case studies. Themes may include i) schemes introduced, or significantly re-purposed, to address the present economic downturn;; ii) evidence of increased demand; iii) evidence of falls in demand/gaps in activity; iv) evidence of partnerships and networking; and v) other evidence;
 - b) *Contingent Outputs.* These will include a variety of options relating to the delivery of the barometer and may include: i) **understanding** about how London HEIs monitor and collect data in areas of concern to the Barometer; ii) a **project website**, which may include additional evidence not presented in the templates; iii) a kick-off **workshop** for core HE members to ensure they are best able to comply with the data requirements; iv) dissemination of London's activities in this area to the wider group via a **newsletter** or other mechanism;
 - c) *Reflective Outputs.* A **report** based upon our experiences of running the project analyzing the methodology and operation of the initiative itself, outlining effective practices, obstacles and making recommendations for future studies of this type.

Outcomes

11. We anticipate that our core group will provide a general impression of the contribution London's HEIs are making in response to the economic downturn. Other HEIs who choose to respond should augment this picture. But note – it is unlikely that all HEIs will submit data; **we do not expect to be able to quantify the overall level of activity as the London HEI group is particularly large and diverse.**
12. In addition, a successful project may: i) improve our understanding of how London HEIs contribute to the regional and wider economy; ii) suggest ways in which London HEIs may monitor and collect data on their regional economic impacts; iii) assist London HEIs in

sharing effective practices amongst themselves; and iv) identify for (regional) policy makers the obstacles to further HE contributions in this area.

Project Structure

13. The survey will comprise three phases:

- *Phase One* – Preparation. a) To agree the word template (attached) with our HEFCE contact; b) to select and agreed a core group of London HEIs and agree these with our HEFCE contact; c) to approach and secure the partnership of these members; d) in collaboration with the core HEIs and HEFCE to agree a method of working that is suitable to all; e) to set up a microsite for the project on the London Higher website;
- *Phase Two* – Data Collection. To issue, chase and collect the datasheets from each HEI; b) to maintain a Q&A section on the project website; c) to send combined returns to our HEFCE contact; d) to monitor initial collections and recommend improvements to the system; e) from time to time disseminate updates to the wider HE London group to engage interest;
- *Phase Three* – Evaluation and Dissemination. To include all or some of the following: a) re-purpose the project micro-site from essentially a supportive tool, to a promotional one; b) to prepare summary statistics on the London performance; c) to identify and showcase effect practices; d) to conduct post-project seminar/evaluation with our partners to examine areas for further development; d) to produce a report or brochure summarizing the contribution London HEIs have made

Management of the project

14. The project will be managed in the same way as other projects run by London Higher. That is:

- a) *Advisory Group*. London Higher will convene a Project Advisory Group to oversee member interest in the project. In this case we may elect to use the London Higher Skills Board or the Advisory Group for the London Business Development Unity (BDU. It may also include representatives from business, the LDA (skills), London First and HEFCE. It may also include specialist advisors. The Advisory group will have a Chair. London Higher will provide a secretariat for the advisory group and the group will be run according to London Higher's policies on such groups. The advisory group will approve the final project brief, review progress, assure quality and determine dissemination strategies;
- b) *Project Management*. London Higher will have overall management for the project and will appoint a project manager to oversee the day-to-day running of the project; the project manager will be responsible to the Advisory Group.
- c) *Contractors*. In the event that parts of the project are contracted out, London Higher will offer the work to tender and the Advisory Group, or its nominee will assist in appointing a contractor. Contracts will be with London Higher, on behalf of the Advisory Group and ultimately its members.

Timescale

15. This is a **three-stage project** over an unspecified period. We estimate to make the first call for data in June 2009.