

## London Research Excellence Group

### CONSTITUTION

#### Background

1. London's universities and higher education colleges are a world class research cluster that rivals those found in Cambridge, Massachusetts and Southern California. 25 percent of research active staff in London are working in departments ranked with a top 5\* by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in their Research Assessment Exercise, one aspect of which measures the frequency of internationally recognized research publications.<sup>i</sup>
2. *London Higher* is a membership organization that promotes and acts as an advocate for London's higher education. It is an 'umbrella' body representing 43 publicly funded universities and colleges. London Higher is the biggest and most varied of the regional university associations in the UK. As well as working with, and for, the institutional members, London Higher works closely with the London Development Agency, the Greater London Authority, the Association of Colleges London Region and with the business sector with Barclays Bank plc and through London First.
3. A number of London Higher members have argued that London Higher should be promoting the research excellence that exists across the London HE spectrum.
4. In November 2005 London Higher convened a workshop with a group of HEIs to discuss the issue in more detail. That meeting agreed to set up the London Research Excellence Group. The London Higher Steering Committee approved the establishment of the Group in December 2005.

#### Terms of Reference

5. It is proposed that the group should explore and evaluate the depth and breadth of London's research excellence in a variety of fields.
  - a) create a balanced picture of research in the capital;
  - b) identify performance measures that reflect the full diversity of research activity;
  - c) advocate and promote this excellence to a variety of funders and stakeholders
6. The outcomes are expected to be: a) an appreciation among HE stakeholders (especially the Treasury, OST, DH, LDA etc.) of the strength of London as a centre of research excellence compared with other regions in the UK; b) an understanding of the challenges and opportunities for research in London; c) initiatives, where remitted to do so, to facilitate, growth or otherwise support research in London.

7. The group is expressly tasked with assisting the London Development Agency (LDA) in coordinating HE research initiatives.
8. The group should have an **executive function**, i.e. that it should exist to produce tangible outputs, such as networking events, briefings and other lobbying activity.
9. The group should not involve itself in brokering between individual member HEIs, or groups thereof, unless specifically sanctioned to do so by a majority of the group.
10. The group does not represent the collective views of universities and higher education colleges in London. However, it may, if called upon, submit its perspective as discerned through its deliberations. Such perspectives will be clearly attributed and, if appropriate, made publicly.

### **Constitution**

11. *Establishment of the Group.* In order to establish the group, London Higher will first nominate an interim Chair and membership. The term of office for the interim Chair and membership shall be one year from establishment. Thereafter, the following clauses shall govern the operation of the group.
12. *Officers.* a) The group will elect a Chair from among eligible members; b) the Chair and Secretary shall hold office for a term of two years; c) the Term is renewable once; d) London Higher will oversee elections; e) Members may nominate themselves for election or another member (with their agreement); f) Nominations must have a second; g) Each member of the group has one vote; h) in the event of a tie, the Chair of London Higher has a casting vote; i) elected officers must be ratified by the London Higher Steering Committee or its equivalent.
13. *Secretariat.* Whilst the principles set out in paragraphs 10 and 11 are being met, London Higher will provide support and service the group. It will do this through: a) allocating an annual budget to resource meetings; b) providing a secretariat; c) supplying certain executive functions in respect of mutually agreed initiatives (e.g. organizing events, managing initiatives, commissioning research and drafting documents).<sup>1</sup>
14. *Membership.* The following shall govern the members of the group: a) membership is open to all members and partners of London Higher; b) a majority of members shall be drawn from the London Higher membership; c) where feasible, the HE membership shall be broadly representative of the London HE group; d) the membership may also include HE stakeholders or other agencies as deemed appropriate; e) HE membership is restricted to institutions or organizations operating wholly, or with substantive interests, in the London region as defined by the Government Office;<sup>2</sup> f) members have an unlimited term of office;

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<sup>1</sup> In the event that the principles set out in paragraphs 5 and 7 are **not** met, London Higher reserves the right to withdraw the services set out in paragraph 13.

<sup>2</sup> Broadly defined as within the M25.

g) to ensure a balance of interests, institutions and organizations may be restricted in the number of representatives permitted as members.

15. *Representatives.* Table 1 represents the groupings and suggested institutions as set out above. Where there is no current member for an institution or organization it is proposed to invite the Head of Institution or CEO to nominate a representative.
16. *Quorum.* Six members, to include the Chair.
17. *Documentation.* The secretariat (as defined in paragraph 13) undertake to maintain a formal record of the group's deliberations. The record shall be approved by the group. Such records shall be available to the membership where appropriate.
18. *Frequency of meetings.* The group will meet formally three times a year, in approximation of the academic year.
19. *Sub-groups.* The group may establish smaller working group(s) to carry forward specific and defined pieces of work. In all cases, the London Higher Steering Committee should be informed in writing of the establishment and disestablishment of such sub-groups. Terms of Reference for sub-groups should be agreed by the membership of the group.
20. *Venue.* London Higher will host the meetings. These will most likely take place at, or close to, London Higher's offices, currently in Senate House, Malet Street.
21. *Proposed Name.* The group shall be known as the '**Research Excellence Group**'.
22. *Project Funding.* London Higher will bear services costs according to paragraph 16. Further costs, such as those entailed in producing substantive outputs (e.g. reports or research), must be met by other means and will not be borne by London Higher. However, where an initiative is approved by the London Higher Steering Committee (or their equivalent), the Executive may sanction such match-funding as is determined by the Steering Committee. In such cases the contribution from London Higher will be conditional upon external funds being received.
23. *Disestablishment of the group.* Unless the provisions set in paragraph 12 are undertaken the interim group shall cease to exist after one year from the date of establishment. Thereafter the group may be disestablished at any time by a formal agreement from the London Higher Steering Committee, or its equivalent.

#### **Approval Schedule**

24. A draft of this Constitution was approved by the London Higher Steering Committee on 15 December 2005.

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<sup>i</sup> HEFCE (2004). *Regional Profiles of Higher Education 2003*.