

## Mayoral Priorities 2021

### *Putting #LondonHE at the heart of the capital's recovery*

London is home to one of the largest and most diverse concentrations of universities and higher education colleges of any city in the world. At London Higher, we're proud to represent over forty higher education institutions across London – all of which have a vital role to play in shaping the future of our great city.

Whoever becomes the next Mayor of London should know they can rely on all our members to help lead the green, skills-based and jobs-led recovery that our capital and our country need. Both the Mayor and the GLA can also look forward to long-lasting and rewarding partnerships with higher education institutions right across the 32 London boroughs.

We therefore ask that the next Mayor of London:

- recognises the collective power of London's higher education sector to help shape the capital's post-Covid recovery efforts and actively engages with the full diversity of our membership to help build back better for the individuals and communities most affected by the pandemic;
- seeks to ensure that higher education in London receives the funding it needs to provide an excellent student experience and continue conducting life-changing research, ensuring that levelling-up does not mean levelling-down for London;
- advocates for London's higher education sector on the global stage, in full recognition of the vital contribution that London's higher education institutions make to bolstering the capital's international standing, including leading the coordination for a bid for London to become a UNESCO Learning City;
- harnesses the research and leadership potential of London's universities and higher education colleges to promote a cleaner and greener capital and help London achieve the status of a #CarbonNeutralCity by 2030 as planned; and
- supports graduates by working with London's public and private sector employers to open up clear career pathways, including developing programmes in conjunction with London's higher education institutions to encourage entrepreneurship and support graduates into the labour market.

## **Shaping recovery**

London's higher education sector is extremely diverse – comprising large, research-intensive and often global names through to more modern and vocationally-orientated universities or small, specialist conservatoires. Many of these institutions are located in the Greater London boroughs most severely impacted by the effects of the pandemic and, as such, are best-placed to contribute to the recovery efforts in their particular areas.

At London Higher, we ask the next Mayor of London to recognise the full diversity of London's higher education sector and work with the most appropriate institutions to effect targeted local change, improving opportunities for the communities and individuals who need them the most. Given the community role that London's higher education providers already play, it is essential that the Mayor engages them as partners in the Coronavirus Recovery Missions, in particular the 'New Deal for Young People' and 'Helping Londoners into Good Work' missions.

As part of this, we ask the next Mayor to make London's universities and higher education colleges a strategic part of regenerating the sectors and industries hardest hit by Covid in the capital. For example, Brunel University London can play a major role in regenerating West London and the badly affected areas around Heathrow, while the Central School of Speech and Drama or Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance can provide the skills and expertise necessary to revive London's West End.

## **Protecting funding**

At present, the London Weighting element of the Strategic Priorities Grant awarded to higher education institutions across the capital is under threat, as the Government believes it is not commensurate with its new "levelling up" agenda. [Recent research](#) by London Higher reveals this is akin to knowingly underfunding the capital's higher education sector and could leave several of the city's universities in deficit.

At London Higher, we ask the next Mayor of London to work with London's higher education institutions to make the case for continued investment in the capital's knowledge and skills base – to ensure that London's universities and colleges do not become a casualty of the wider levelling up agenda and that London's students are not left behind.

We also ask that London's university funding is actively defended as we head into the Comprehensive Spending Review later this year to avoid further cuts for the capital's higher education and research base. This is particularly pertinent as we await the Government response to its Review of Post-18 Education (expected this summer), as any changes to fees or admissions criteria could affect participation rates and risk turning back the clock on years of progress in widening access across the capital.

### **Advocating internationally**

London has long been an attractive destination for international students and researchers. However, it is not yet clear how both the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit may have affected the in-flow of international talent into the capital and the economic and cultural benefits that come with them.

That's why, at London Higher, we are asking the next Mayor of London to advocate for London's higher education sector in the international arena and demonstrate why London should remain a global study destination of choice. This includes the next Mayor actively working with the Mayors and equivalent ambassadors of other global cities to develop strong bilateral partnerships on which London's higher education institutions can build.

We also ask that the next Mayor works with London Higher for the benefit of our members to coordinate a bid for London to become the next [UNESCO Learning City](#) – a title already held by several other cities across the UK. Becoming a UNESCO Learning City would cement London's credentials as a global city with education firmly at its heart and would help embed London's universities and higher education colleges in strategic networks with other Learning Cities around the world.

### **Going green**

Many London higher education institutions are already committed to driving change when it comes to achieving a cleaner and greener future for our capital city. From conducting the ground-breaking research that will help us achieve a zero-carbon recovery to developing the diplomacy and leadership that will bring about lasting and necessary behavioural change in our local communities, London's higher education sector is a collective force for transformation on the road to Net Zero.

Several of our members already have ambitious green pledges in place, including those of Goldsmiths, University of London, which aims to become [carbon-neutral by 2025](#), or the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), which has [committed to embedding environmental sustainability across all its operations](#).

At London Higher, we ask the next Mayor to recognise and utilise the impressive knowledge base and convening power of London's higher education institutions within their own boroughs, as well as across the city more generally, working with schools, colleges, employers, local government and investors – among others – to build momentum around the shift to a decarbonised future.

### **Supporting graduates**

Before the onset of Covid-19, London was the powerhouse of the UK economy and graduates in the capital enjoyed one of the best employment rates and starting salaries in the country. However, with the pandemic having hit the London economy particularly hard and uncertainty persisting about the future health of London's labour market, today's graduates need a helping hand to kick-start their careers and match their talents to the city's skills needs.

At London Higher, we ask the next Mayor to work with London's higher education institutions and the capital's public and private sector employers to create clear employment pathways and signposting to help today's graduates into fulfilling and rewarding careers – both to provide opportunities for individuals and to boost the capital's economic recovery.

As part of this, we also ask the next Mayor to invest in schemes which promote entrepreneurship among graduates in London – to ensure the city can benefit from fresh ideas and innovations and help to restore London's place as a hub for innovative and lucrative start-ups, borne from our diverse and forward-thinking higher education sector.