

LONDON
HIGHER



ANNUAL REVIEW

2020-21



INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CHAIR

There can be no doubt that the past year has been one of the most difficult we have ever seen. When we met for last year's AGM, we had only started to see the impact of an unfolding global pandemic. We've since been grappling with a situation which has significantly impacted our teaching and research and has led to some of the most rapid change we have seen in our lifetime.

This has also been a year of changes for London Higher. I was delighted to announce in September 2020 that, following an extensive recruitment process, we had appointed Dr Diana Beech as the new Chief Executive of London Higher.

Diana joined with a vast body of experience across the UK higher education sector, from previous roles as Director of Policy and Advocacy at HEPI, to serving as an Advisor to the last three Universities and Science Ministers. Since she has started, London Higher's activities have visibly increased and she has taken our agenda to an even-higher level.

New activities include: building fresh strategic relationships with key stakeholder organisations across London and within the higher education sector, both nationally and internationally; speaking regularly at conferences and panel discussions led by other stakeholder groups; and hosting strategic member conversations focusing on emerging issues. This year has also seen us enhancing and reorienting our membership offer to reflect the changing – and demanding – times in which we live.

From our "Next Step" campaign, which aims to encourage international students to London, to our London Weighting report, London Higher has demonstrated rapid responses to pressing issues. We have also reformed our communications function, so that our social media platforms now showcase members' achievements, as well as the contributions they make to local communities and the national economy. We are keen to show the collective power of London's higher education sector and the fantastic impact of our members on our great city.

More details about the individual initiatives we have undertaken can be found in this document and on the London Higher website; and, of course, we always welcome your suggestions for work we should tackle in the future, as well as offers to get involved in what we do.

On a personal note, this is my last AGM as Chair of London Higher, and I can confirm that it has been a really rewarding experience taking the organisation to where it is now. Although I may be stepping down as Chair and entering my last year as Vice-Chancellor of Royal Holloway, I am keen to stay involved with the work of London Higher and to support the team as we make the case collectively for higher education in the capital.



Professor Paul Layzell, Principal,
Royal Holloway, University of
London and Chair, London
Higher

CAMPAIGN

By expertly responding to policy concerns through large-scale advocacy campaigns, we seek to raise awareness of our members' positions within Government and, also, create new opportunities for partnership.

This year, alongside our #SaveLondonWeighting campaign, we have focused on the impact of COVID-19 by demonstrating the importance of London's HEIs in ensuring the city is safe and welcoming to staff and students, as well as to local residents. We have also worked with partner organisations to highlight member's integral role in the capital's and the UK's recovery.

London weighting Report

Responding to the OfS consultation on recurrent funding, London Higher worked with members and Frontier Economics to produce a report looking at the potential impact of removing the subsidy.

- Tried to get the UK Government to reconsider plans to cut the 'London Weighting' element of the Strategic Priorities Grant which is given to higher education institutions across the capital
- Invested in a major research report
- Engaged with parliamentarians and policymakers
- Generated media interest in the topic – in London, in the HE sector and nationally
- Submitted a consultation response on 6 May

Showcasing London

We continue to promote London's contribution to local and national economies, and showcase London as a global destination of research and study.

Covid-secure Charter (July 2020)

- Designed by our Operations group to showcase the role of London's HEIs in keeping their campuses and the city safe and secure

The "Next Step" campaign (January 2021)

- Partnered with London and Partners to showcase London as an international study destination of choice, resulting in increased awareness of the opportunities in London for students across the globe

Mayoral Priorities document – *putting London HE at the heart of the capital's recovery* (May 2021)

- Showcasing the strength of London's HE sector, and the huge role we will play in the capital's recovery

Contributions from London's healthcare students to the pandemic (May 2021)

- Showcasing the contribution of London's healthcare students throughout the pandemic, and highlighting the lessons learnt.



COMMUNICATE

We are a collective, influential voice for our members, promoting policies and positions that help London thrive.

We seek to deliver the right message, to the right people, at the right time.

We communicate our messages to policy makers in different ways, from responding to the current COVID-19 situation by offering practical help and advice to ministers and other higher education institutions, to advocating our ideas to government and the GLA on behalf of our members to ensure a healthy London higher education and research sector.

Partnership across London and the HE sector

- Partnered with 'London & Partners' on an inspiration campaign to showcase London as an international study destination of choice
- Partnered with London First on joint letter to the Education Secretary, highlighting joint opposition to the proposed removal of London Weighting
- Worked with GLA and key stakeholders to host roundtables with the Mayor of London, and have input into our Arts and Minds report, showcasing the importance of London's creative arts higher education provision

**Over 70
Media
mentions**

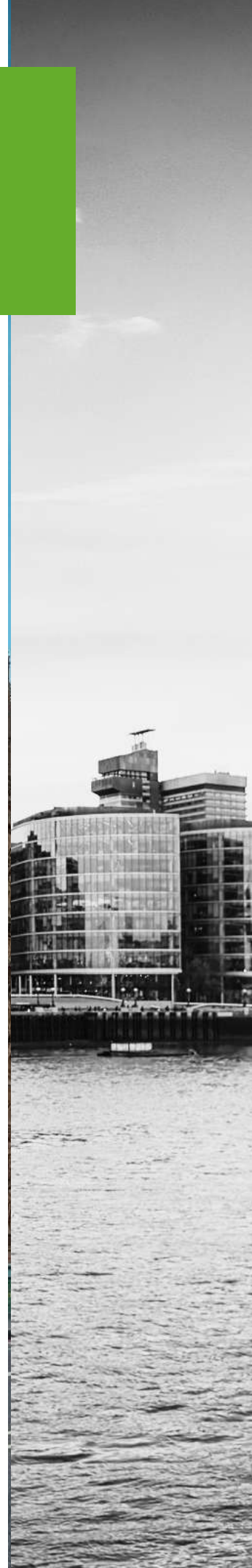
**Multiple blogs and
podcast appearances,
including**

- HEPI
- Wonkhe
- Research Professional News
- BIG South London

**Reform of membership
communications**

- Newsletter
- Twitter
- Calls in lockdown
- Calls with London stakeholders e.g. TfL
- CEO 1-2-1s
- Strategic conversations

**3 Reports showcasing
London, generating
over 25 proactive
stories**



COLLABORATE

Hosting powerful and highly influential networks and events, we provide opportunities for collaborative initiatives amongst our members and with stakeholders across London.

We provide advice, guidance and a space for the sector to collaborate and share ideas. This year we have reformed our network offering, providing the forum for high-level discussion on topics relevant to members, and to national and local government, to ensure tangible outcomes that benefit higher education in London.

We have transformed our network offering, with sixteen networks providing an opportunity for input and collaboration for the full diversity of London higher education, from the current challenges of ensuring Covid safe campuses, to ongoing concerns around sustainability and our role in harnessing and showcasing our civic engagement programmes, as individual HEIs, and collectively across our capital.

Over 60 meeting with key stakeholders

And growing relationships with London-based groups such as London First, London Councils and GLA to national organisations from UUK and AoC to the Government.

70 network meetings and over 100 hours of discussion

Case Study:

Covid has caused serious challenges for both domestic and international students in the UK. Joining forces with UUKi, we produced guidance for use at HEIs across the country, including;

- Equal eligibility for hardship funds
- Emergency support (food, clothing, accommodation)
- Covid testing provision and isolation support
- Flexible fee payment plans
- Proactive engagement and compassionate comms



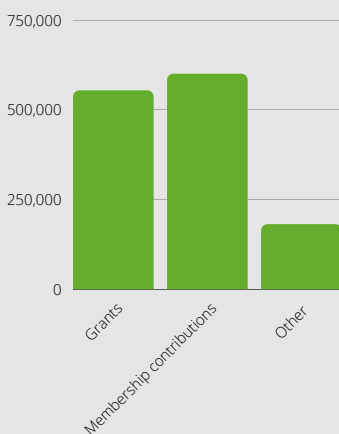
FINANCE

Our financial aim continues to be the fostering and expansion of the London HEI network. We achieve this by periodically reviewing our offer to the members and by always delivering in a cost-effective and transparent mode.

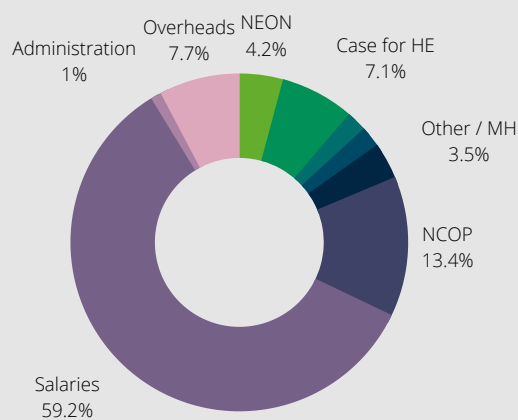
Like all organisations, we have had to adapt quickly to the ongoing global health crisis and be savvy in trying to fit activities in line with changing Government guidelines and restrictions. In the end, we achieved some costs savings this year but project income has witnessed a decline. Despite these difficulties, the structure and approach of the organisation is such that the team is able to work quickly and flexibly to respond to new and emerging developments, risks and opportunities. London Higher has also reformed our internal structure.

Throughout 2020/21, London Higher has reinvested funds in some brand new initiatives and campaigns, which have been very well received across the membership, from our "Next Step" campaign, encouraging international students to study in London and highlighting the opportunities available in our great city, to our London Weighting report, looking at the implications of the removal of the London weighting from the Strategic Priorities Grant. We have responded quickly and dynamically to upcoming challenges.

Following nine successful years, NEON has developed into a standalone organisation, allowing London Higher to streamline our offering, ensuring that we invest in projects that create a positive impact for our members.



Forecast income
2020-21 (pre-audit)



Forecast expenditure
2020-21 (pre-audit)



CEO CLOSING REMARKS

It is hard to believe I am no longer a new face at London Higher. By the time the 2021 AGM comes around, I would have been at the organisation for exactly nine months and will, no doubt, be looking forward to the (hopefully) “quieter” months of summer to take stock of our activities over the academic year just gone and to work with the team to put in place processes and workflows for the new term ahead.

The past nine months have been quite some journey. Not only have I had to adjust to my first ever CEO position, but I have had to get up to speed quickly with one of the largest and most diverse membership bodies in the sector without even leaving my front door!

In more normal times, I’m sure I’d have spent my first 100 days in the job getting “out and about”, meeting members in person. Yet, I only got to visit two members’ campuses before enhanced restrictions set in for the winter. Instead, I’ve spent much of the past year engaging with members online – including via one-to-one “Teams” calls and new Heads of Institutions update meetings.

As a new CEO, I’ve been keen to get things right. That’s meant taking time to understand you, our members, and to listen to your needs and concerns. It’s also meant working out how best to represent you, locally, nationally and internationally. I’ve worked hard with the London Higher team to boost our presence, establish key stakeholder relationships, refresh our networks, and ensure we are speaking out about the issues that matter – and, more importantly, are being heard by those that matter.

Looking back on how far we have come, I am pleased with progress. Through our new network structure, we now have a more inclusive membership offering, harnessing talents and interests at all institutional levels. Through our new communications strategy, we have ensured our activities and outputs are timely and targeted to local and national strategic priorities. And through our publications programme, we are finding our “London voice” and using it to influence positive change.

While the timing of the Government’s plan to cut the London Weighting was less than ideal, less than four months into my tenure, the resulting #SaveLondonWeighting campaign we produced is testimony to our drive and determination to look after our members and to step up in times of turbulence. As well as engaging with Ministers, London MPs and the OfS, we invested in a robust research project, which I hope will continue to serve the needs of our members should other anti-London policies arise.

Similarly, I hope our latest creative arts report, highlighting the importance of London’s creative higher education provision to local and national recovery, goes some way to encouraging the Government to think again about plans to reprioritise funds away from the arts, as well as emboldens the Mayor of London to take steps to protect London’s creative talent base.

Communicating the “London story” is firmly at the heart of everything we do. As CEO, I continue to embrace opportunities to speak up for London at conferences and events, to author blogs and appear on podcasts. I hope we can build on the interest shown in London Higher over the past few months and I look forward to many more exciting and impactful outputs in the years ahead.



None of this would, of course, be possible without you, our members, and your valuable input and ideas. It would also not be possible without the hard work of the entire London Higher team whom I would like to thank for bearing with me as I learn on the job and for getting behind our mission to better support our members. I'm particularly pleased that some recent internal restructuring has brought our AccessHE division even closer to the core London Higher team, as our dedicated widening participation arm of the organisation under the new leadership of Dr Richard Boffey. So, I look forward to building on this closer relationship to maximise our outputs and influence as we move forwards together as a whole.

The new term ahead is set to be a challenging one. At London Higher, we stand ready to support our members in the best way we can. And I know I speak for all of us when I thank the Board for their continued guidance and steer – not least Professor Paul Layzell for his dedicated Chairmanship over the past four years.

Taking London Higher into the next phase of its journey is a real team effort. So, I look forward to seeing what we can do together to bring about positive policy outcomes for London and to showcase our capital as the place to be for HE!



Dr Diana Beech
Chief Executive, London Higher

