



LONDON HE AND THE 2012 OLYMPICS LEGACY

BRIEFING PAPER

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Supporting Higher Education in London

London HE and the 2012 Olympics legacy briefing paper

Introduction

As we come to the end of the 2022 summer of sport, following the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and the European Championships in Munich, this paper looks back on the contributions that London's universities made 10 years ago during the London 2012 Olympics and the continuing legacy of their involvement in the Games.

Context

The Olympic summer of 2012 showed the world the UK capital at its very best. From 27 July to 17 August 2012, London and its residents welcomed athletes and spectators from across the globe for a sporting celebration like no other. Yet, even though a whole decade has passed since the Olympic flame lit up the London skyline, the legacy of the Games lives on it and its impacts are still felt across the city.

Ten years on from the Games, the regeneration of East London continues apace, and London's higher education sector continues to play a vital role in this success. From the world-leading higher education institutions creating a knowledge and creative district in the area, to the role played in opening up access to world-class sporting facilities, this paper looks at how London's higher education institutions have picked up the baton to build on the Games' success over the past decade – including continued regeneration and investment, sustainable development and community projects building on the Olympics' sporting legacy.

Regeneration and investment

The 2012 London Olympics provided the opportunity for the largescale redevelopment of the areas surrounding the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, breathing new life into East London and bringing billions of pounds of additional investment to the area for a whole host of activity including transport links, business districts and entertainment.

London's higher education institutions have been a key part of this regeneration from the start, through their involvement in visual arts and sports projects or the physical development of specialist campuses, with many of London Higher's "Centres" now based in this area.¹ Indeed, **Loughborough University London** originated from the [Government thinking about how to get the most out of the legacy of the London Olympics](#). **Staffordshire University London**, too, is part of the growing [esports community at the 'Here East' development](#), building on the legacy of the Games. The [Rocket League World Championship](#), hosted at the Olympic Park in June 2022, also helped to inspire London universities' developing esports talent, such as [the team](#) at the **University of Roehampton**.

Spotlight on the University of the Arts London

[London College of Fashion](#) is moving to a new single campus on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park as part of a new development known as East Bank. East Bank will be a powerhouse for innovation, creativity and learning and the new campus will house multi-purpose lecture theatres as well as community events. There will be public spaces featuring students' work and there will be a public route through the college so the community can see into the college's workspaces – making it a unique space for creative, academic and civic activity.

¹ London Higher's "Centres" Network is for higher education institutions whose headquarters are located outside of London but operate one or more of their business units within the Government Office region for London.

Sustainable development

A [Green Enterprise District](#) (GED) designated across East London is helping to attract sustainable technology businesses to the area and is already becoming a magnet for recycling, waste reduction and reprocessing, and engineering expertise. **The University of East London** is an important part of the GED and runs several research and development (R&D) programmes into sustainable development through the Sustainability Research Institute.

Several other world-class research centres in London also support the GED, including the Department of Materials at **Queen Mary University of London**, the Manufactured Aggregates Research Centre at the **University of East London**, and the Centre for Contaminated Land Remediation at the **University of Greenwich**.

Spotlight on UCL East

[UCL East](#) is University College London's new campus on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford, East London. The first building, One Pool Street, is opening in autumn 2022 and will comprise multidisciplinary research labs and studios exploring ecology, robotics, urbanism, culture, disability and heritage. The second building, Marshgate, opening in autumn 2023, is setting new standards for sustainable solutions and features key sustainable elements such as rainwater harvesting, underground cycle storage, efficient mechanical ventilation and low energy LED lighting. Together, the UCL East buildings will provide facilities for cross-disciplinary research and open innovation, new approaches to practical learning, opportunities for public engagement and student living spaces that are both modern and sustainable.

Community projects

One of the greatest strengths of the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games was their unique ability to inspire and influence positive change across the whole country. Through community projects taking place across London, the capital's universities and higher education colleges captured and enhanced the Olympic spirit and set about positively transforming the lives of the people around them.

From the redesign of local landscapes to the use of the Olympic legacy to encourage local Londoners to better understand themselves and their connection to the city, London's universities have utilised their positions as 'anchor institutions' in the years following the Games to make a positive contribution to the communities that surround them.

Spotlight on London Metropolitan University

London Metropolitan University's ambitious [Aldgate Project](#) saw 400 architecture, art and design students transform parts of East London in time for the 2012 Olympic Games. Students and tutors at the University developed projects with local community groups, charities and stakeholders, intended to better connect the University with the people who surround it, particularly in the areas of Aldgate and Whitechapel. On the fifth anniversary of the Games in 2017, students from the University published '[Conversation Pieces](#)' – a book aimed at engaging Londoners in conversations about themselves, their lives, their work and the ways in which they experience the capital.

Sporting legacies

Whether introducing Londoners to new sports or providing them with specialist facilities and equipment, the London 2012 Olympics laid the foundations that continue to transform Londoners' relationship with sport, exercise and wellbeing – whatever their age, background or ability. During the 2012 Games, several London universities built strong links to some of the world's best athletes, and it is these connections that are still enabling them today to inspire and aid future generations of healthy citizens and budding athletes. For example, at **Royal Holloway, University of London** which was the home of the Olympic Rowing and Canoe Sprint Village for the 2012 Games, the Olympic success spurred on plans for the [development of the University's riverside facilities and redesign of the boathouse](#) to continue the Olympic legacy and make it fit for all levels of competitor and enthusiast.

Spotlight on the University of East London

During the London Olympics, the University of East London's Docklands campus, including SportsDock, its elite and community sports complex, provided residential and training facilities for the 2012 'Team USA', which included the 200m gold medallist Allyson Felix and basketball legend LeBron James. As a thank you at the end of the Games, [Team USA donated all of their training equipment to UEL's SportsDock facility](#) and it is estimated that over 35,000 students and people from the local community have used it over the past ten years. The University of East London now works with over 2,000 primary school children weekly in the local area to raise aspirations as part of its 'Sport in the Futures' programme. Sport England also supports UEL to run the East London talent hub for athletes with economically disadvantaged circumstances. In addition, UEL has become London's talent hub for Basketball England and is part of [The East London Phoenix](#), the British Wheelchair Basketball Women's Premier League, which is the first of its kind for women's wheelchair basketball in the world and the very first professional para-sport league in the UK.

Spotlight on St Mary's University Twickenham

As well as representing London's universities on the 2012 Forum, which was one of the main consultative bodies for the 2012 Olympic Games organising committee, St Mary's University Twickenham is also home to 'Team GB's Olympic legends, Sir Mo Farah and Moe Sbihi – both alumni of the University. Following the 2012 Olympics, Sir Mo Farah continued to train at St Mary's and [speaks affectionately of the role that his alma mater played in shaping his success](#). To celebrate his Olympic achievements and ensure his legacy continues to inspire budding athletes for generations to come, the University named their athletics track in his honour. In 2013, the year following the Games, Sir Mo Farah also launched the [Mo Farah Academy](#) to provide financial and technical support for elite sports training programmes at both St Mary's University Twickenham and **Brunel University London** to build on the Olympic legacy and help develop home-grown sporting talent with two of the capital's higher education centres of sporting excellence.

At London Higher, we remain proud of our members' varied contributions to the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games and their ongoing efforts to build on London's Olympic legacy. Our refreshed networks at London Higher focus, among others, on London's higher education sector's growing civic activities and sustainability efforts and provide the perfect fora through which members from across the capital can continue to come together to build on their valuable work in the decade ahead. We look forward to supporting our members to enhance their Olympic legacy further to 2032 and beyond!

If you would like to discuss this briefing paper further, please contact London Higher Chief Executive Officer Dr Diana Beech at diana.beech@londonhigher.ac.uk.