

LONDON
HIGHER



London's Higher Education Sector into the 2030s

Our vision and strategy
2026-2030+

About London Higher

London Higher represents the higher education sector in London. We:

Influence and advocate

We represent our members in key conversations, using insight and evidence to shape policies and practices that help them and their students thrive.

Showcase and celebrate

We highlight achievements across our sector, demonstrating how higher education supports economic, social and civic priorities in London and the UK.

Convene and collaborate

We bring people and organisations together to collaborate, learn and innovate, driving coordinated action and greater impact for London and its communities.

Cover: UAL. Staircase view, East Bank | Photograph: Ana Blumenkron

Introduction

Liz Hutchinson

Chief Executive of London Higher



The scale and diversity of higher education in London is not just a measure of size, but a powerful asset.

This concentration of talent and expertise brings people and organisations together to drive collaboration, innovation and opportunity. London's leading industries, such as creative and life sciences and its world renowned public services such as health and education are underpinned by our members.

This strategy sets out how we will act as London Higher. We will bring members together around shared priorities, co-create activity that strengthens our sector and our city, and deepen partnerships across London, nationally and with other regions to maximise our collective impact for the benefit of the whole country.

This is how we will realise our vision of a sector that is locally loved, nationally valued and leading the world.

I took on this role in 2025 because I believe London's higher education sector is one of the most powerful and distinctive in the world, and that we can do more to realise and articulate its full potential.

We are operating in a context of tightening resources, declining trust and increasing scrutiny of higher education's value. Yet every day I see the impact our members have; transforming lives through education, driving innovation and enterprise, supporting public services, tackling global challenges such as climate change, disease and inequalities, strengthening communities and extending London's influence across the UK and the world.

Our members

Birkbeck, University of London Bloomsbury Institute
London Brunel University London Central School
of Ballet City St George's, University of London
Escape Studios Goldsmiths, University of London
Guildhall School of Music & Drama King's College
London London Metropolitan University London
School of Economics and Political Science London
School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine London
South Bank University Middlesex University London
Queen Mary University of London Ravensbourne
University London Rose Bruford College of Theatre
and Performance Royal Academy of Dramatic Art
(RADA) Royal Academy of Music Royal Central
School of Speech and Drama Royal College of Art
Royal College of Music Royal Holloway, University of
London Royal Veterinary College SOAS, University
of London St Mary's University, Twickenham, London
The Courtauld Institute of Art The Institute of Cancer
Research The Place Trinity Laban Conservatoire
of Music & Dance University of the Arts London
University College London University of East London
University of Greenwich University of London
University of Reading University of Roehampton
University of West London University of Westminster

AccessHE

Brunel University London City St George's, University of London Escape Studios Imperial
College London King's College London Kingston University London London Metropolitan
University London School of Management Education Middlesex University London Mont
Rose College Queen Mary University of London Ravensbourne University London Rose
Bruford College of Theatre and Performance Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA)
Royal Veterinary College SOAS, University of London The Courtauld Institute of Art
University of East London University of Greenwich University of West London University
of Westminster University of Roehampton Goldsmiths, University of London University
College London Waltham International College

Centres Group

Aston University London Bath Spa University London Coventry University London DMU
London GCU London Health Sciences University Istituto Marangoni Northumbria University
London NTU London Sheffield Hallam University in London Teesside University London
University of Hull London Study Centre Université Paris Dauphine – PSL University of
Portsmouth London University of Sunderland in London University of the West of Scotland,
London Campus York St. John University, London Campus Study Group

London Healthcare Education Group

Anglia Ruskin University London Buckinghamshire New University City St George's,
University of London Coventry University London King's College London Kingston
University London London Metropolitan University London South Bank University
Middlesex University London St Mary's University, Twickenham, London The Open
University University College London University of East London University of Greenwich
University of Hertfordshire University of Roehampton University of West London NHS
England Council of Deans of Health Imperial College London Health Sciences University
University of Westminster University of Sunderland in London

London Medicine

Imperial College London King's College London London School of Hygiene and Tropical
Medicine Queen Mary University of London The Institute of Cancer Research University
College London Brunel University London NHS England

Our members



Our diversity is a defining strength, creating opportunity for students and partners and resilience for the wider economy.

London Higher's membership represents the full diversity of higher education across the capital – from large multi-faculty universities to specialist colleges, conservatoires and research institutes.

The vast majority of the UK's world-leading specialist institutions are based in London, and a third of our members are creative institutions.

Our members open doors, unlock talent, drive discovery and power a dynamic knowledge economy. Together, they provide the skills, research and innovation that underpin London's position as the UK's leading economic engine and a driver of national growth and global competitiveness.

In other top university cities around the globe, world No.1 subject rankings cluster within a single dominant institution. In London, they are held by several different London Higher members - spanning art and design, art history, education, veterinary science and architecture.

That world-class excellence is matched by impact closer to home. Fifteen of the top 20 universities for social mobility in England are London Higher members who open doors for the students and communities who need them most.

Our students

London has one of the largest and most diverse student populations in the world, with over half a million students studying across our members each year – around 19% of the UK total, including more than 200,000 international students. Around a half of these students are 'commuters', studying close to home while balancing work, family and other commitments.

Students study at our institutions and in this city for opportunity and transformation and in return bring energy, creativity and diverse perspectives. They make a significant economic and civic contribution strengthening London's workforce, supporting the UK's skills base and long-term growth and contributing to communities across the capital.

Many international students remain in London to build careers, while others return home as lifelong ambassadors, creating global connections and supporting inward investment long after they leave.

We recognise both the opportunity and the challenges of studying in a global city, not least the cost of living and access to housing. We are committed to ensuring that talent can access, succeed in and benefit from higher education in London.

We will widen participation and fair access, champion equity and inclusion, and ensure that all students, whether they study close to home or travel across the city, can thrive, belong and shape their futures here.

By the 2030s, we want London to set the global standard for student experience in a capital city. We will ensure the student voice is heard clearly in regional decision-making; support the professionals and services that enable student success; learn from other leading student cities and work collectively to make London the best place in the world to study.



We are here to support the students who choose London – from every borough of the capital, every region of the UK and every corner of the world.



London College of Communication,
University of the Arts London
Photograph: Alys Tomlinson

Our Mission

To strengthen and champion London's higher education sector by showcasing its impact and enabling stronger collaboration across our sector, in London and beyond.

Our vision for the 2030s

In the next decade, London's higher education sector will be:



Locally
Loved



Nationally
valued



Leading
the world

The sector will be easier to engage with as a collective and more visible in its impact and contribution to regional and national growth and renewal. Working together, we will ensure that students from all backgrounds can access, thrive in and benefit from higher education in the capital.

Strategic Priorities



At a time of significant change, London's higher education sector must be more visible, more connected and more collaborative than ever.

London's higher education sector is operating in a period of significant challenge and change. Financial pressures, rising living costs, shifting student needs, technological disruption and growing scrutiny of higher education's value are reshaping the landscape, while expectations of the sector's role in driving growth, skills, innovation and opportunity continue to grow. At the same time, the sector's collective contribution is not always fully visible or understood.

Our response is to work more collaboratively and strategically as a sector. These four strategic priorities set out how we will strengthen partnerships, showcase impact and ensure London's higher education sector is more visible, connected and valued.

1

Embed higher education at the heart of London's future

2

Showcase and sustain London as the higher education capital of the world

3

Advocate for London's higher education sector and its value to the UK and the world

4

Strengthen collaboration and collective impact across our sector and beyond

1

Embed higher education at the heart of London's future.

Our member institutions are deeply rooted in their communities. They educate Londoners, drive innovation and create opportunities that transform lives. As major employers, research partners and civic anchors, they contribute to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of every part of the capital. They develop the skills, research and partnerships that support public services, strengthen communities and power more sustainable, inclusive and resilient economy.

Yet the sector's full contribution is not always visible or easy for partners to navigate and engage with.

We will change this by making London's higher education sector more accessible, connected and embedded in the city's systems of growth and governance. We will provide coherence, convening power and strategic support to the Mayor, local authorities and other key partners, including schools, further education, industry and public services.

By the 2030s

London's higher education institutions will be seen by local and national government, business, civil society and Londoners as:



Universities and colleges that are 'for London', in service of our communities



Engines of growth and innovation and partners to London's industries, particularly creative, life sciences and tech



Core members of 'Team London', working in partnership with schools, further education and others to support skills, opportunity and progression and playing our part in making London the best place to live, study and to work

We will:

- › Act as the collective voice of the sector in London-wide policy and growth conversations, including across the wider education and skills system
- › Provide coordination and strategic support to the Mayor, boroughs and key partners
- › Convene partnerships between higher education, further education, schools, industry, public services and civil society to address shared challenges
- › Develop mechanisms to enable London's industries, public services and civic society to harness the research, insight and talent within our institutions
- › Build the evidence base and provide platforms to showcase the sector's collective 'offer' to London, particularly our creative strength

So that:

- › Public services deliver better outcomes in partnership with academic expertise and research
- › Businesses increase productivity and innovation by engaging with London's talent and research base
- › London's skills, growth and opportunity strategies harness the strengths of higher education to deliver economic and social impact
- › Londoners feel their 'local institution' is for them, providing opportunity and enriching their neighbourhoods

We will know we've succeeded when:

- › Higher education is embedded in key London strategies and partnerships
- › London Higher is consistently engaged by the GLA, boroughs and key partners as a core delivery partner
- › External stakeholders report that London's higher education sector is easier to navigate and engage with



2

Showcase and sustain London as the higher education capital of the world.

Globally, London's universities and colleges are leaders in teaching, research and innovation, attracting talent, investment and ideas from every continent. No other city can match the scale, diversity and excellence of our higher education offer. That's why London is a top choice for students and researchers worldwide.

We will champion the value of this diversity on the national and international stage, demonstrating the impact of a broad and varied higher education system on the economy, student choice and London's cultural and civic life.

While London offers unparalleled opportunity, the experience of studying here can be challenging. We will work to strengthen both reputation and reality of the student experience, ensuring London remains the best place in the world to study, research and learn.

By the 2030s

London will be recognised globally for the excellence, diversity and impact of its higher education sector.



As one of the greatest cities in the world to study, research and learn in



For collaborative efforts to attract global talent and ensure an excellent student experience



As a diverse higher education system that, in its variety, strengthens the city's economic, cultural and civic agendas

We will:

- › Speak up for the value of diversity across London's higher education offer through reports, events and policy interventions
- › Seek to influence regional and national policies that shape the student experience
- › Develop collaborative activity with members and partners to ensure international students feel welcomed and supported
- › Lead the International Education strand of the London Growth Plan
- › Mobilise London's global alumni as ambassadors and connectors for the capital and its institutions

So that:

- › There is increased awareness and understanding of the value of international students among key stakeholders
- › Global talent continues to choose London, strengthening the UK's skills and research base
- › There is increased collaboration and a systematic approach to pan-London elements of the student experience across our membership and with stakeholders

We will know we've succeeded when:

- › A shared commitment to a world leading student experience is embedded across London
- › More stakeholders actively champion our sector and our global student body
- › London's reputation for higher education remains strong among international students



3

Advocate for London's higher education sector and its value to the UK and the world.

A strong and diverse higher education sector in London benefits the UK and the world. Our institutions collaborate nationwide to tackle shared challenges, from health inequalities to climate resilience, while driving innovation, supporting industry and attracting investment that benefits the whole country.

This includes globally significant strengths, such as London's creative higher education institutions; developing talent, providing national infrastructure, sustaining the UK's creative industries and underpinning London's and UK's global cultural influence and reputation.

Together, our sector boosts the UK's soft power, export economy and global position. However, this contribution is not always fully understood or recognised in policy and how funding decisions are made.

We will also find opportunities to collaborate and share with other regional consortia and capital cities in the UK and internationally.

By the 2030s

Our members will be recognised by policy and decision makers in government and the wider sector nationally and internationally as:



A key driver of the UK's industrial strengths, including creativity, life sciences, professional services and more



A leader in cross-sector and cross-city collaboration



At the forefront of research, innovation and delivery

We will:

- › Commission and share research to show our contribution to national productivity and wellbeing
- › Co-ordinate activity with members and other stakeholders to influence national policy, which will have a particular impact on London
- › Use our platforms to showcase the impact of London's HEIs across the UK
- › Build relationships with individuals and organisations with political and policy influence to secure advocates for London's higher education sector

So that:

- › Government policy is informed by evidence and delivers better outcomes
- › London's contribution to the UK is clearly recognised and national policy and investment reflect the scale and potential of the city's higher education sector
- › The UK benefits from London's global reach, networks and cultural influence

We will know we've succeeded when:

- › London Higher is recognised as a leading voice in higher education policy
- › The impact of London's higher education is more visible nationally and internationally
- › There is evidence of London's higher education sector influencing policy, practice and collaboration beyond the capital

Right: Centre for Nutraceuticals
Overleaf: Ambika



4

Strengthen collaboration and collective impact across our sector and beyond.

Given the diversity of our provision and as the longest established regional consortium in the UK, we are well placed to deliver the regional collaboration that is increasingly expected of our sector and to share our learning, capacity and networks in ways that add value to each other and across the UK.

Delivering this strategy will depend on working more effectively together: as a connected sector and as part of a wider education and skills system, in partnership with schools, further education, employers and public services.

We will strengthen collaboration within the sector, across London and beyond, focusing on areas where greater coordination can improve outcomes for Londoners, particularly widening access and participation, student success and experience, skills and employment, the transition to a net zero city, and engagement with the cultural and sporting offer of our institutions. This includes supporting delivery of the London Skills Improvement Plan and working with partners across the education system to align pathways and opportunity.

We will also find opportunities to collaborate and share with other regional consortia in the UK and with global capital cities.

By the 2030s

London's higher education sector will be recognised for collaboration that delivers impact across London and beyond.



London's higher education sector connects and co-ordinates on shared issues in our place



London is recognised for leading effective models of collaboration across higher education and the wider education system



London Higher collaborates with other regional consortiums to share best practice and deliver shared outcomes

We will:

- › Deliver a Regional Access Partnership, building on our long-standing widening participation work
- › Develop joint campaigns to showcase our collective cultural, sporting and community offer to Londoners
- › Strengthen our networks to support peer learning, knowledge exchange and skills development
- › Deepen partnerships with the GLA, NHS, Association of Colleges and others to support the skills agenda, including the London Skills Improvement Plan
- › Strengthen collaboration with other UK regional consortiums

So that:

- › London's higher education sector works more effectively as a connected system, delivering greater impact for Londoners
- › Collaboration improved outcomes in access, student experience and the skills needed for industry and public services
- › Best practice developed in London is shared and adopted across the UK

We will know we've succeeded when:

- › There is greater cross-institution and cross-sector collaborative activity in priority areas
- › Members report higher levels of engagement and value
- › Collaboration has led to new programmes or initiatives, coordinated sector responses and a stronger collective influence on policy and practice



How we will deliver this strategy

London Higher is a small but ambitious organisation. We are valued for our agility, responsiveness and action-focused approach, and for the strength of our relationships across London and nationally.

To deliver this strategy, we will build on these strengths and focus our efforts where we can add most value, strengthening engagement with our members and using evidence, insight and technology to maximise our impact. We will learn and adapt.

A detailed implementation plan and a set of KPIs have been developed. We will share our plans with our members and update them regularly on progress. The London Higher Board will review progress against the plan each quarter.



Our values underpin everything we do and shape how we work with our members and partners.

We stand up and speak out

- › We are experts in our field and a trusted voice in the sector
 - › We believe in our mission and always act with integrity
 - › We use our knowledge to challenge and speak authoritatively on behalf of our members
-

We make things happen

- › We are agile and can adapt to changing landscapes
 - › We are resourceful, proactive and resolute
 - › We deliver genuine impact for London
-

We are collaborative by nature

- › We harness collective expertise to work towards our goals
 - › We invite diverse opinions and ensure all voices are heard
 - › We have strong relationships and connections in the higher education sector and beyond
-

Plan on a page

Mission

To strengthen and champion London's higher education sector by showcasing its impact and enabling stronger collaboration across our sector, in London and beyond.

Our vision for the 2030s

In the next decade, London's higher education sector will be:



Locally
Loved



Nationally
valued



Leading
the world

Strategic priorities

Position higher education at the heart of London's future

Showcase and sustain London as the higher education capital of the world

Create opportunities for collaboration and connection

Demonstrate how London's higher education sector strengthens the UK and the world

Key cross cutting themes

Health and Life
Sciences

Creative

Access and
Success

Global
Talent

What success will look like

1

Higher education is embedded in London's key partnerships, policy and growth agendas.

2

London is recognised globally as a leading city for higher education, students and research.

3

The contribution of London's higher education sector is recognised nationally and internationally.

4

London's higher education sector works more collaboratively to deliver greater impact.

Our ways of working

Our values

- › We stand up and speak out
- › We make things happen
- › We are collaborative by nature

Our approach

- › Convene and collaborate
- › Showcase and celebrate
- › Influence and advocate

To find out more, visit www.londonhigher.ac.uk

