



Ellie Dowse-Davies, Wimbledon College of Arts, UAL. Photo by Orlando Myxx

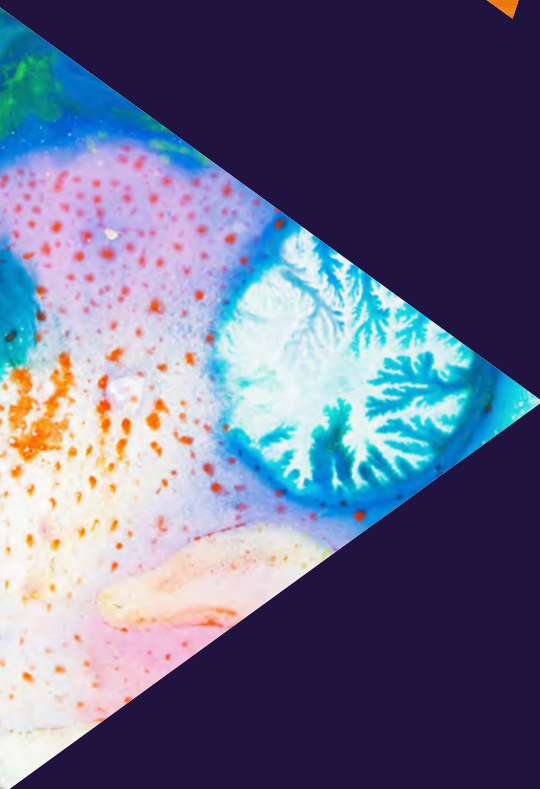


Royal Holloway, University of London

LONDON

The Higher Education Capital of the World

—
First Edition



The Institute of Cancer Research



Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance



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Foreword

By Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan

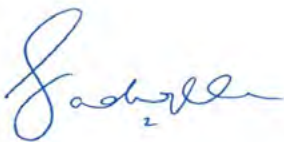
London is an extraordinary city, with opportunity on a scale few others can match. As someone who grew up on a council estate in Tooting and went on to study law at London Metropolitan University, I know first-hand how transformative the opportunity of higher education can be. Higher education in this city changed my life, and every year it changes the lives of hundreds of thousands of students from every borough, every region of the UK and every corner of the world.

What makes London’s higher education offer so distinctive is not just its scale – educating over half a million students at over 100 institutions – but its extraordinary diversity. From world-leading research universities to specialist conservatoires and creative colleges, and from institutions driving social mobility in some of our most underserved communities to those producing globally significant breakthroughs in life sciences and AI, London’s higher education ecosystem is unmatched. In other great university cities, excellence tends to concentrate in a single institution. In London, it’s distributed across many.

This is what makes our higher education sector so vital to London’s future. Our universities and colleges are civic anchors: major employers, research partners and engines of innovation embedded in communities across the capital. They educate the teachers, healthcare workers, entrepreneurs and creative professionals our city depends on. They work with industry and public services to drive growth and tackle shared challenges. And they attract the international talent and investment that sustains London’s position as a global capital. A strong higher education sector in London strengthens the country as a whole.

Our universities collaborate with partners in every region of the UK, and the research, skills and enterprise they generate drive national productivity, support public services and bolster the UK’s competitiveness and influence on the global stage.

As Mayor, I see higher education as a core part of our mission to build a fairer, safer, greener and more prosperous London for everyone. This report sets out, with evidence, the scale and depth of that contribution. I hope it makes the case – as I believe it does – for London as the higher education capital of the world. It deserves to be recognised, supported and celebrated as such.



Sir Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London





Introduction

by Professor Shitij Kapur, Chair of London Higher
and Vice-Chancellor & President of King's College London

London needs no introduction. Whatever your reason for visiting, living, studying or working here, you will find a historic capital overflowing with culture, knowledge, industry and innovation.

London's powerhouse universities contribute significantly to the life of the capital, the UK and global economies, driving everything from frontier industries to the arts. This report sets out, with robust evidence, why London's higher education is the best on the planet and why its contributions are needed now and long into the future.

We are operating in a context of tightening resources and increasing scrutiny. Yet as major employers, research partners and community anchors, London's universities develop the skills, research and partnerships that strengthen communities and power a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient economy.

These attractions are not abstract to me. As someone who has studied and worked in five universities on four continents and has finally made London their home – the constellation of students and staff from around the world, the chemistry and collaboration across the universities, and our interaction with our local communities, industries and governments is unrivalled.

The breadth of this work is too vast for any one report to capture. Our intention is to offer as varied a snapshot as possible, and to keep advocating for the brilliance of London's institutions for years to come.

Professor Shitij Kapur
Chair of London Higher



London's higher education: crunching numbers

LONDON'S HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR...

IS HOME TO NEARLY

550,000 students

more than **205,000** of them international.

HAS

140+ institutions:

research-intensive and multi-faculty universities, world-class conservatoires and specialist colleges, plus satellite campuses opened by leading institutions from across the UK and around the world.¹ That's more students and more institutions than New York City, Boston or Singapore.²

IS A BIGGER EMPLOYER

than Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer, or Barclays nationwide, generating

188,000 jobs.³

IS WORTH

£60.9bn

a year to the economy through teaching, research and innovation.⁴

GENERATES

£27bn

in economic output annually - equivalent to **23%** of the **UK total of £115.7bn.**⁵

ADDS MORE TO THE ECONOMY
than the Premier League

£14.8bn

in GVA against **football's £9.8bn.**⁶

RETURNS

£14

to the economy for every **£1 of public money** invested.⁷

¹ This includes the 116 higher education institutions registered with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in the London region, along with known foreign universities with a campus in London, and UK universities with a satellite campus in London.

² <https://edc.nyc/sites/default/files/2024-11/NYCEDC-Insights-Academia-NYC-Report-Nov-2024.pdf>; <https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2025/06/Boston%20Housing%20Report%202025%20-%20Final%20Draft.pdf>; <https://tablebuilder.singstat.gov.sg/table/TS/M850251> (accessed 3 July 2026)

³ <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/weaker-uk-regions-most-dependent-on-universities/> (accessed 3 July 2026)

⁴ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/economic-impact-higher-education> (accessed 3 July 2026)

⁵ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2023-09/LE-UUK-Economic-Impact-of-UK-HEIs.pdf> (accessed 3 July 2026)

⁶ <https://www.premierleague.com/en/news/4461419/research-shows-premier-leagues-growing-contribution-to-uk-economy> (accessed 3 July 2026)

⁷ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/economic-impact-higher-education> (accessed 3 July 2026)

London is the best place in the world to...

Access world-class talent

Two of the **world's top 10 universities**, and 10 of the UK's top 50.

#1 in the world in subjects from architecture to veterinary science to history of art.⁸

Top city in the world for human capital.⁹

Live, work and study

Ranked **world's best city 11 years running**: “the capital of capitals”¹⁰

Top in England for **student life satisfaction**¹¹

A lower homicide rate than every US state, and than Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Madrid¹²

Innovate and collaborate

7,100 alumni founders from London universities¹³

Two of Europe's top 10 universities for spinout value creation¹⁴

A third of all UK university startups and IP income¹⁵

The best city in the world for **female entrepreneurs**¹⁶

A world-class collaborative network of universities, further education colleges and research institutes

Launch a creative career

The best city in the world for culture¹⁷

51% of the UK's creative industries economic output

over **80% of London's creative jobs held by graduates**¹⁸

Pioneer in healthcare and life sciences

Five networks of university teaching hospitals - among the highest concentrations in the world

Top-ranked courses globally in Veterinary Science (#1), Nursing (#2) and Public Health (#3)¹⁹

Home to the institution that **discovers more new cancer drugs than any other on earth**²⁰

Open the door to opportunity

Nearly half of free-school-meals pupils in London progress to higher education, vs 29% nationally²¹

71% of working-age Londoners hold a degree, apprenticeship or similar qualification²²

17 of the UK's top 20 universities for social mobility are in London²³

Behind every statistic included here are hundreds more achievements we could have highlighted. Search for London & Partners' **Team London** resource for more on the capital's strengths.

⁸ <https://www.topuniversities.com/> (accessed 23 June 2026)

⁹ <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/global-cities-index/#> (accessed 23 June 2026)

¹⁰ <https://www.worldsbestcities.com/rankings/worlds-best-cities/> (accessed 23 June 2026)

¹¹ <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/reports/the-student-academic-experience-survey-2026/supporting-documents> accessed 19 June

¹² <https://www.worldsbestcities.com/rankings/worlds-best-cities/> accessed 19 June

¹³ <https://dealroom.co/tech-ecosystem-index-2026/> (accessed 23 June 2026)

¹⁴ <https://raeng.org.uk/policy-and-resources/research-and-innovation/accelerating-enterprise/> (accessed 23 June 2026)

¹⁵ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/business-community/ip-and-startups> (accessed 23 June 2026)

¹⁶ <https://dellforstartups.com/hubfs/D4S/PDF%20Resources/WE%20Cities%202023/WE-Cities-Report.pdf?hsLang=en> (accessed 23 June 2026)

¹⁷ <https://www.timeout.com/london/news/london-is-officially-the-best-city-in-the-world-for-culture-in-2026-according-to-timeout-051326> (accessed 23 June 2026)

¹⁸ <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/London%E2%80%99s%20Creative%20Industries%20-%20Sector%20deep%20dive.pdf> (accessed 23 June 2026)

¹⁹ <https://www.topuniversities.com/subject-rankings> (accessed 23 June 2026)

²⁰ <https://www.icr.ac.uk/research-and-discoveries/our-research-achievements> (accessed 24 June 2026)

²¹ <https://londonhigher.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Hyper-diversity-revisited-Londons-student-population-in-2035.pdf> (accessed 24 June 2026)

²² https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/09/education-at-a-glance-2024-country-notes_532eb29d/united-kingdom_618cbed0/c3bad31e-en.pdf (accessed 24 June 2026)

²³ <https://www.suttontrust.com/universities-and-social-mobility-data-explorer-rankings/> (accessed 23 June 2026)

Global university cities: how London ranks

WORLD-CLASS INSTITUTIONS AND DEGREES

The capital is home to higher education institutions which rank among the best globally. In the QS World University Rankings 2027, London has two of world’s top 10 universities: Imperial College London (Imperial) & University College London (UCL)²⁴ and five of the UK’s top 20 institutions: Imperial, UCL, King’s College London (King’s), London School of Economics (LSE), and Queen Mary University of London.²⁵ London universities have been in the top three QS rankings for seven years running.

In other top university cities around the globe, world No.1 subject rankings cluster within a single dominant institution. By contrast, London institutions hold world-leading positions across the disciplines:

#1

IN THE WORLD

#1 in the world, History of Art
Courtauld Institute (new for 2026)

#1 and #2 in the world, Art and Design,
Royal College of Art and University of the Arts London

#1 in the world, Veterinary Science,
Royal Veterinary College

#1 in the world, Architecture and Built Environment,
UCL

#1 in the world, Education,
UCL

#2

IN THE WORLD

#2 in the world, Development Studies,
SOAS University of London

#2 in the world, Nursing,
King’s

#2 in the world, Master’s in Management,
London Business School (the only non-French institution in the top six)

TOP 10

IN THE WORLD

Top 10 in the world, Music and Performing Arts,
Royal College of Music, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Royal Academy of Music, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Top 6 in the world, Life Sciences and Medicine;
Top 10, Biological Sciences, UCL²⁶

²⁴ <https://www.topuniversities.com/world-university-rankings> (Accessed 23 June 2026)

²⁵ <https://www.topuniversities.com/world-university-rankings> (Accessed 23 June 2026)

²⁶ <https://www.topuniversities.com/subject-rankings> (accessed 23 June 2026)

²⁷ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from> (Accessed 23 June 2026)

²⁸ <https://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-london-warns-uk-not-pull-drawbridge-international-students> (accessed 2 June)

²⁹ <https://londonhigher.ac.uk/resource/global-city-talent/>

³⁰ <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2025/10/23/hepi-kaplan-2025-soft-power-index-harvard-and-oxford-top-the-tree> (accessed 2 June 2026)

³¹ <https://www.lse.ac.uk/about-lse/lse-people/lse-world-leaders> (accessed 3 June 2026)

HALF A MILLION STUDENTS

Londoners are more likely to choose London as their region of study than any other UK region. Also, the capital’s student body is proudly global and diverse, with more than 205,000 students²⁷ from outside the UK contributing an estimated £12.5bn in annual net economic impact.²⁸ That global talent is prized by the city’s employers: in a 2025 poll, 90% of London’s business leaders said they value international talent, with only one in 10 favouring tighter immigration controls.²⁹

INFLUENTIAL MINDS

Nobel laureates

London’s universities count well over a hundred Nobel laureates among their alumni and staff. In 2025, LSE economist Philippe Aghion shared the prize for his work on innovation-driven growth, a year after two members of the UCL community won in a single week: Sir Demis Hassabis took the 2024 Chemistry prize for AI-driven protein-structure prediction, and Geoffrey Hinton the Physics prize for the neural-network research underpinning modern AI.

They join an impressive historical roster of London-affiliated laureates, among them UCL’s Sir Roger Penrose, recognised for his work on black holes, LSE labour economist Sir Christopher Pissarides, the late Friedrich Hayek of LSE and the physicist Patrick Blackett of Imperial.

World leaders

In the latest index of where today’s serving Presidents, Prime Ministers and Monarchs studied, London is the only city with two institutions in the global top tier: LSE and UCL both rank among the handful of UK institutions that have each educated three or more serving world leaders (four and three respectively).³⁰ More than 40 past or present world leaders have studied at LSE alone.³¹



London students and researchers fuel Frontier Industries

Frontier innovation begins with discovery: making scientific breakthroughs and turning them into the products, services and industries that follow. London is a global leader in all frontier industries, with its exceptional institutions and talent key to the capital’s successes. Its universities also anchor a wider research ecosystem, including national institutions such as the Francis Crick Institute, the Alan Turing Institute, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency and the AI Security Institute. Science, technology and engineering account for more than a third of the capital’s postgraduate enrolments, and London is home to over a fifth of all the UK’s postgraduates in these fields.³²



The Institute of Cancer Research

AI, DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY

- **London is a leading global technology ecosystem**, ranking fourth in the world and first outside of the United States weighing up venture capital, enterprise value and links to higher education.³³
- **London is Europe’s leading city for AI researchers**, home to 9.2% of the continent’s AI research community, and its three largest AI employers are Google, Meta and UCL.³⁴
- In early 2026, the largest UK funding rounds were overwhelmingly **London AI companies**.³⁵
- **AI currently accounts for 74% of all UK venture capital**, a fivefold rise since 2022.³⁶

GOOGLE DEEPMIND

DeepMind was co-founded in 2010 by UCL PhD students Demis Hassabis, Shane Legg and Mustafa Suleyman, and acquired by Google in 2014. Deepmind co-led the development of AlphaFold, which predicts the 3D structure of nearly all 200 million proteins known to science - work scientists can now do in minutes rather than years - accelerating drug discovery and research on diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer’s. In 2024, Demis Hassabis and colleague John Jumper were awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, the first time the prize recognised AI’s contribution to science.^{37 38}

³² <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-49>
³³ <https://content.dealroom.co/uploaded/2026/05/The-Global-Tech-Ecosystem-Index-2026-Dealroom.pdf> (accessed 3 June 2026)
³⁴ <https://dealroom.co/reports/uk-innovation-update-q1-2026> (accessed 4 June 2026)
³⁵ <https://dealroom.co/reports/uk-innovation-update-q1-2026> (accessed 24 June 2026)
³⁶ <https://ffnews.com/newsarticle/uk-vc-investment-gathers-pace-in-q1-2026-as-ai-and-megarounds-drive-late-stage-surge> (accessed 12 June 2026)
³⁷ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2016/nov/neuroscience-intuition-and-superhumans-how-deepmind-co-founder-and-ucl-alumnus-demis> (accessed 4 June 2026)

SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO BECOME ENTREPRENEURS

- London’s universities accounted for 34% of registered UK-wide student startups.
- London’s universities earned £90.2m from their intellectual property, from licensing patents to selling spin-out shares - representing 30% of the UK total.³⁹
- London hosts two of the top ten European universities for spinout value creation: the combined value of spinouts from UCL and Imperial totals £8.9bn.⁴⁰
- When UK universities sold equity stakes in companies built on their research, a third of that income, £10.9m, was earned in London.⁴¹
- University of the Arts London registered 479 startups in 2024-5, more than any other university in the UK.
- Student startups from UCL alone have raised over £422m in external investment over five years and currently employ over 2,200 people.⁴²
- Camden (68) and Westminster (57) local authorities place in the top ten nationwide for the number of spinouts in their areas, and are home to a comparable number of spinouts as the entire cities of Belfast and Glasgow respectively.⁴³

³⁸ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/about/search-faces-ucl/smart-tech-smarter-minds-demis-hassabis-ai-and-neuroscience-trailblazer> (accessed 4 June 2026)
³⁹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/business-community/ip-and-startups> (accessed 22 June 2026)
⁴⁰ https://raeng.org.uk/media/0kybrz3v/01_spotlight_report_final_-for-publication.pdf (accessed June 2026)
⁴¹ <https://raeng.org.uk/policy-and-resources/research-and-innovation/accelerating-enterprise/> (accessed 22 June 2026)
⁴² <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise/about/entrepreneurship-impacts-and-achievements> (accessed 10 June 2026)
⁴³ <https://www.beauhurst.com/research/spotlight-on-spinouts-2025/> (accessed 22 June 2026)

Many of London’s institutions offer comprehensive support for entrepreneurial students, like business incubators and accelerators. For example, the University of East London’s flagship programme BACK:ED has supported 340 new student start ups and 19 new social enterprises since 2020.⁴⁴

King’s College London’s Women’s Entrepreneurs Network (WEN) has led to King’s start-up accelerator achieving gender parity amongst founders for four years, without quotas, unique amongst UK university accelerators.

Imperial College London offers a range of specialist accelerators – covering AI, medtech, climate tech and security. Its medtech superconnector alone has supported over 75 Early Career Researchers and received over £18mn in translational grant funding and venture capital investment.⁴⁵

Quantum Sciences

- 56% of VC-backed quantum startups in the UK are university spinouts.⁴⁶
- The UK ranks third globally in terms of quantum research impact, and has the highest per-capita concentration of quantum-relevant talent in the world.
- London provides a leading research base in quantum, and is home to London Quantum Cluster, a Mayor-backed coalition whose founding university members are UCL, King’s and Imperial, working to accelerate the development of quantum technologies.⁴⁷
- Royal Holloway, University of London is home to SuperFab, the national centre for nanofabrication in the rapidly advancing field of superconducting quantum electronics.⁴⁸

Life Sciences

London is no.1 in Europe for Life Sciences, attracting the most venture capital investment.⁴⁹ It hosts some of the world’s major research centres for life sciences, underpinned by seven innovation clusters anchored by universities, including:⁵⁰

- **The East London Life Sciences Super Cluster**, anchored by Queen Mary University of London with the University of East London and City St George’s, draws on a population of over 2.5 million people from nearly 100 nations - a uniquely diverse base for clinical research and trial recruitment, and home to Europe’s largest single lab-enabled life sciences building.⁵¹
- **The Knowledge Quarter**, within a mile radius of the British Library, is one of Europe’s largest life sciences research clusters, with around 59,500 people employed across 176 companies and eight universities — including UCL, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and the Royal Veterinary College.^{52 53}

- **The London Cancer Hub in Sutton**, led by the Institute of Cancer Research, is Europe’s leading cancer research district, with a planned £1bn+ expansion set to support around 13,000 new high-skilled jobs.^{54 55}
- **London’s first bioscience innovation centre (LBIC)**: Established in 2000 to address central London’s shortage of lab space, LBIC, owned by the Royal Veterinary College, has supported over 228 companies and created over 5,000 jobs. Its companies have raised over £2.5bn, and 27 have floated or been acquired.⁵⁶

⁴⁴ <https://www.uel.ac.uk/your-career/be-your-own-boss>

⁴⁵ <https://medtechsuperconnector.com> (accessed June 2026)

⁴⁶ https://raeng.org.uk/media/0kybrz3v/01_spotlight_report_final_-for-publication.pdf (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁴⁷ <https://www.londonquantumcluster.uk>

⁴⁸ <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/research-and-education/departments-and-schools/physics/research/superfab> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁴⁹ <https://app.dealroom.co/curated-heatmaps> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁵⁰ <https://lifescience.london/places> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁵¹ <https://lifescience.london/place/east-london-life-sciences> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁵² <https://www.knowledgequarter.london> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁵³ <https://lifescience.london/place/knowledge-quarter> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁵⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwy84lp0qeno>

⁵⁵ <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/news/2024/london-borough-sutton-selects-aviva-and-socius-deliver-world-leading-cancer-and-research-district> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁵⁶ <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/news-and-events/rvc-news/lbic-is-awarded-outstanding-contribution-to-life-sciences-at-the-one-nucleus-annual-awards-2025> (accessed 10 June 2026)



Brunel University

GREEN ENERGY, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

University-led initiatives across the capital advance clean energy research and train the engineers behind it: the University of East London’s London Renewable Energy Laboratory (LREL); London South Bank University’s (LSBU) Centre for Energy Engineering; and UCL’s The Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources (BSEER).^{57 58 59}

Testing ammonia as shipping fuel: Engineers at Brunel, University of London, are running tests to find out if ammonia could replace diesel in commercial ships, as part of a government-funded push to clean up maritime emissions. Scientists are testing how ammonia burns inside an engine, using specialist lab rigs to examine fuel spray patterns and combustion behaviour. The study focuses on ships that move equipment and workers between ports and offshore sites, known as offshore support vessels.⁶⁰

Financial aid for climate-impacted developing nations: Between 2017 and 2019, SOAS, University of London led the first comprehensive research project to quantify the link between climate vulnerability and the cost of capital, finding that vulnerable countries paid an additional US\$62bn in interest over two decades, and that investing in resilience reduces these costs. The Vulnerable Twenty (V20) Group of Finance Ministers used the findings to launch two financing mechanisms now helping 48 countries access finance for climate adaptation and renewable energy.⁶¹

#ShowYourStripes: The climate stripes were created at the University of Reading in 2018, showing clearly and vividly how global average temperatures have risen over nearly two centuries. Shades of blue indicate cooler-than-average years, while red shows years that were hotter than average. Stripes images for more than 200 countries, states and cities are available to download for free, so people in every country can see how their home is heating and share the images, helping to start conversations about climate change. The stripes have been downloaded and shared millions of times, and have lit up national landmarks from London’s BT Tower to New York’s Times Square.⁶²



⁵⁷ UEL, London Renewable Energy Laboratory (LREL): <https://www.uel.ac.uk/our-research/research-institutes-centres-groups/london-renewable-energy-lab-lrel> (accessed May 2026).

⁵⁸ <https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/london-centre-for-energy-engineering> (accessed May 2026)

⁵⁹ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/environment-energy-resources> (accessed May 2026)

⁶⁰ <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/UK-scientists-test-ammonia-as-shipping-fuel> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁶¹ <https://www.soas.ac.uk/research/centres-institutes-and-research-clusters/centre-sustainable-finance> (accessed 3 June 2026)

⁶² <https://showyourstripes.info/> (accessed 24 June 2026)

London’s universities support a healthier UK and wider world

From the discovery of penicillin to gene therapy that slows Huntington’s disease, London is a city where medicine moves forward. Five university medical schools underpin London’s academic healthcare network, with leading teaching hospitals providing essential care to local people.⁶³ London is home to 14 of England’s 57 teaching hospitals, nearly a quarter of the national total and one of the largest concentrations of teaching hospitals anywhere in the world.⁶⁴

The capital hosts more than 30% of England’s medicine and dentistry students and 24% of the UK’s. Across all health subjects — medicine, dentistry and allied health — it educates over 21% of England’s health students and 17% of the UK’s.^{65 66}

London’s universities are the training engine of the NHS’ workforce, placing tens of thousands of students a year in hospitals, GP practices and clinics across the capital. Around half of the country’s oncologists pass through the Institute for Cancer Research’s MSc in Oncology.⁶⁷

WORLD-FIRSTS AND BREAKTHROUGHS

Treatment for Huntington’s Disease: Huntington’s was successfully treated for the first time in 2025 by researchers at University College London Huntington’s Disease Centre. The treatment, a type of gene therapy given during 12 to 18 hours of delicate brain surgery, slows disease progression by 75%.⁶⁸

Studying toddler brain development: The Wohl Wolfson ToddlerLab is the first research centre in the world to study toddler brain development, building on Birkbeck’s existing BabyLab, enabling scientists to track development seamlessly over the first five years of life.⁶⁹

Bladder cancer treatment doubles survival rates: A clinical trial led by Professor Tom Powles at Queen Mary University of London and Barts Health NHS Trust has produced the first new treatment for advanced bladder cancer in 40 years. Combining two existing drugs, it has doubled survival rates and stopped the disease from progressing, with 30% of people achieving full remission. It is now the first-line treatment worldwide, including on the NHS.⁷⁰

Setting the global standard for rehabilitation: Researchers at St Mary’s University wrote the world’s first guidelines on blood flow restriction (BFR) training as a clinical rehabilitation technique. The guidelines have been adopted by the Football Association, Lawn Tennis Association and Rugby Football Union, and by the American Physical Therapy Association, which adopted BFR into its scope of practice for the first time in its 99-year history, directing its members to St Mary’s guidance. The research now underpins an estimated 3.5 million BFR sessions a year worldwide, and is used across the US Department of Defense to treat lower-limb trauma in military personnel.⁷¹

Breast cancer trial cuts treatment visits from 15 to five, improving patient care and saving a projected £40m a year: A study by the Institute of Cancer Research found that a one-week course of post-surgery radiotherapy is as safe and effective as the traditional three-week course for people with early-stage breast cancer. Following more than 4,000 patients for a decade, it showed that the shorter course is not only more convenient but also reduces hospital visits and eases pressure on radiotherapy services, making treatment more accessible.⁷²

Pioneers in cancer treatment: The Institute of Cancer Research discovers more new cancer drugs than any academic institution in the world.⁷³



City St George’s, University of London

⁶³ <https://www.medschools.ac.uk/for-students/applying-to-medical-school/medical-schools> (accessed 12 June 2026)
⁶⁴ HESA, What do HE students study? (2026): <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study>
⁶⁵ HESA, What do HE students study? (2026): <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study>
⁶⁶ The Complete University Guide: Undergraduate health and medicine courses in London: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses/search/undergraduate/health-and-medicine/all/london?pg=4#h0>
⁶⁷ <https://www.icr.ac.uk/research-and-discoveries/cancer-blogs/detail/science-talk/our-former-students-are-leaders-in-cancer-research-across-the-uk-and-the-world> (accessed 12 June 2026)
⁶⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cevz13kxpro> (accessed 4 June 2026)

⁶⁹ <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/news/birkbeck-opens-the-worlds-first-toddlerlab> (accessed 3 June 2026)
⁷⁰ <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/research/progress/groundbreaking-treatments/bladder-cancer-breakthrough> (accessed 12 June 2026)
⁷¹ <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/news/2017/st-marys-research-confirms-blood-flow-restriction-training-is-an-effective-rehabilitation-method> (accessed 12 June 2026)
⁷² <https://www.icr.ac.uk/about-us/icr-news/detail/one-week-radiotherapy-course-shown-to-be-safe-and-effective-in-the-long-term-for-early-stage-breast-cancer> (accessed 12 June 2026)
⁷³ <https://www.icr.ac.uk/research-and-discoveries/our-research-achievements> (accessed 12 June 2026)

REACHING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Building trust in black barbershops to treat high blood pressure: London South Bank University set up a UK-first initiative taking blood pressure testing into Black barbershops across South London, using the cultural trust of the barbershop to reach Black men — a group with disproportionately high rates of hypertension who are consistently under-served by conventional healthcare routes. The scheme is expanding, recruiting community health champions across Southwark and Lambeth, and has been endorsed by musician Seye Adelekan. The absence of a clinical setting is the point: public health practice meeting communities on their own terms.

Revolutionising care for people with dementia: Researchers from the University of West London are working to standardise and improve care for people with dementia on mental health wards. Researchers will conduct a national survey of mental health wards which provide dementia care, interviews with carers of people with dementia, and an ethnographic study at three hospitals in England and Wales.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ <https://www.uwl.ac.uk/research/research-centres-and-groups/geller-institute-ageing-and-memory/research/findme> (accessed 12 June 2026)

⁷⁵ <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/files/improving-health-worldwide-2026.pdf> (accessed 12 June 2026)

⁷⁶ City St Georges: World-first platform for transparent, fair and equitable use of AI in healthcare (accessed 12 June 2026)

⁷⁷ <https://www.uel.ac.uk/nhh> (accessed 11 June 2026)

⁷⁸ <https://www.citystgeorges.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2025/september/a-cheek-swab-test-could-identify-children-with-potentially-deadly-heart-condition> (accessed 12 June 2026)

⁷⁹ <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/files/improving-health-worldwide-2026.pdf> (accessed 12 June 2026)

SUPPORTING NHS REFORM

Launched in 2025, the Government’s 10 Year Health Plan for England aims to reinvent the NHS through three radical shifts - and London’s health institutions are delivering innovative solutions at pace to deliver on its mission.

Hospital to community:

Evaluating Pharmacy First: The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is working on generating evidence of this period of NHS transformation. For example, they are evaluating the new Pharmacy First, which aims to provide frontline treatment for a set of common illnesses through pharmacies, reducing the burden on an overstretched GP service. Early findings have already contributed to refining incentives for participating pharmacies.⁷⁵

Analogue to digital:

Revolutionary AI detection for diabetic eye disease: A revolutionary AI platform for detecting diabetic eye disease has been proven safe for use in the NHS. Led by City St George’s in collaboration with Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Kingston University and Homerton Healthcare NHS Trust, researchers have developed the world’s first real-world head-to-head testing platform to determine whether commercial AI algorithms are fit for NHS use to detect disease in a fair, equitable, transparent and trustworthy way, using diabetic eye disease as the first example.⁷⁶

Sickness to prevention:

Keeping people well: The University of East London’s new Neighbourhood Health Hub in Stratford is the UK’s first university-led primary care pilot, comparable to a university hospital in the community, offering Newham residents practical, prevention-focused health and wellbeing services such as physiotherapy, counselling, and health checks. It has had more than 1,000 patients since opening in October 2025.⁷⁷

Cheek-swab test detects heart condition in children: A simple cheek swab test developed by scientists at City St George’s could detect children who have genetic heart condition arrhythmogenic cardiomyopathy, which is responsible for more than 10% of sudden cardiac deaths in children. The study suggests a simple two-minute cheek swab can detect the dangerous heart condition potentially years before someone might otherwise be diagnosed.⁷⁸

Vapes and health: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine researchers are producing evidence to inform the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, demonstrating the negative effects of vaping on young people through links to subsequent tobacco use, and respiratory health conditions such as asthma.⁷⁹



University of East London

London universities feed world-class creativity and entertainment

More than 50,000 students studied design, creative and performing arts subjects in London in 2024–25, which represents more than 25% of the UK’s total creative students that year.⁸⁰

London had 795,500 creative industry jobs in 2021 (one in seven jobs) and accounted for 51% of the UK’s creative industries economic output in 2022.⁸¹

More than 80% of creative industry jobs in London were held by degree-qualified people, higher than other UK regions, and higher than the average of London’s overall workforce.⁸²

London is one of the most creative cities on earth, known for its theatre, music, art, dance, film and television. The capital’s cultural life is underpinned by unmatched creative education; few cities host the same density, prestige and variety of creative training in one place. London’s conservatoires, specialist institutions and university arts faculties educate highly skilled graduates, serve as cultural anchors and employers, and open routes into the creative industries for young Londoners.

Behind the scenes too — from theatre producers to sound engineers, curators to videographers — much of the talent powering the UK’s creative industries trained in London. For example, alumni of Escape Studios, a leading animation, games and VFX school, won across categories at the 2026 Academy Awards, including Best Visual Effects, Best Animated Feature and Best Picture.⁸³

INNOVATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY

Safeguarding authorship in the era of AI

CoSTAR, part of Royal Holloway, University of London, is accelerating the use of AI across the UK’s creative industries, while protecting authorship and intellectual property. Its ‘AI For Creativity’ programme offers UK companies research, workshops, funding, and access to AI compute and cloud infrastructure as they adopt the technology responsibly.⁸⁴

Boosting film production in Barnet

Middlesex University London has joined Barnet Council, Barnet and Southgate College and Troubadour Brent Cross Studios to launch Screen London Barnet, building a screen-skills ecosystem to establish the borough as a hub to film, TV, animation, gaming and immersive media.⁸⁵



⁸⁰ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study> (accessed 3 June 2026)

⁸¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/London%E2%80%99s%20Creative%20Industries%20-%20Sector%20deep%20dive.pdf> (accessed 23 June 2026)

⁸² <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/London%E2%80%99s%20Creative%20Industries%20-%20...> with “ibid”

⁸³ <https://www.escapestudios.ac.uk/news-and-blog/escapees-sweep-2026-oscar-with-multiple-academy-award-wins> (accessed 10 June 2026)

⁸⁴ <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/about-us/news/costar-launches-1m-ai-for-creativity-initiative-to-back-responsible-innovation> (accessed 4 June 2026)

⁸⁵ <https://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-faculties/faculty-of-arts-and-creative-industries/mdx-studios/screen-london-barnet> (accessed 4 June 2026)

Linking global brands with creative students

Ravensbourne University London’s Creative Lab connects students with brands and organisations like Apple, Deloitte and the Obama Foundation, making films, prototyping digital products and designing communications.⁸⁶

Using VR to improve the wellbeing of hospital patients with dementia

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama works with dementia care staff at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust to bring 360-VR to long-stay patients, creating bespoke videos of meaningful places to ease isolation and improve wellbeing. The practice received the National Dementia Care Awards 2019 award for Outstanding Arts and Creativity in Dementia Care and The Guardian University Awards 2020 Teaching Excellence Award.⁸⁷

HOW LONDON’S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS WIDEN ACCESS TO THE ARTS

Access to acting training

Originate Actor Training, run by Theatre Peckham, Young & Talented, Guildhall School and RADA, is a free nine-month programme for 17–23-year-old Londoners from lower-income families, culminating in an industry showcase.⁸⁸

Culture on tap

Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, a free public gallery in a Grade II-listed former bathhouse reimaged by Turner Prize-winning collective Assemble, ranks 16th in Time Out’s top 50 London galleries.^{89 90}

Jazz tasters for young Black and female musicians

Trinity Laban’s partnership with Tomorrow’s Warriors creates pathways for young musicians aged 11–16, with a focus on Black and female players, through workshops, mentoring and a weekly jazz residency.⁹¹

Discounted ballet classes for local adults

The Central School of Ballet offers discounted classes for adults living in Southwark or Lambeth. Their ‘Neighbourhood Classes’ offer an opportunity for Southwark and Lambeth residents to come together, try something new, and engage in the joys of dance.⁹²

Music-making and mentoring for children and young adults

Alchemy, Goldsmiths, University of London’s free Saturday programme, has for nine years given 13–21-year-olds a place to compose, record, perform and work with industry professionals, with mentoring routes for over-18s.⁹³

AWARD-WINNING ENTERTAINMENT

London’s institutions train some of the world’s most celebrated cultural figures; from actors like Dame Judi Dench (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama) and Daniel Craig (Guildhall School of Music & Drama), to musicians Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber (Royal College of Music), Annie Lennox and Sir Elton John (Royal Academy of Music), artists David Hockney and Dame Tracey Emin (Royal College of Art), fashion designers Grace Wales Bonner and Stella McCartney (Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London), and Oscar-winning director Sir Steve McQueen (Goldsmiths, University of London).

Changing lives

Adolescence, starring Rose Bruford College alumni Stephen Graham and Hannah Walters, swept the 2025 awards season and sparked national debate on youth, masculinity and online harm — prompting the Prime Minister to support the series’ free distribution to UK secondary schools.⁹⁴

Redefining musical genres

Alumni from Trinity Laban’s jazz degrees, including Mercury prize and BRIT Award-winning Ezra Collective, Nubya Garcia, Moses Boyd and KOKOROKO, have redefined British jazz, blending it with afrobeats, grime, soul and electronic music. Their success has positioned London as one of the world’s most exciting centres for new jazz, attracting global audiences and contributing to a thriving creative sector that extends beyond jazz music into fashion, media and culture.

Setting records

Pioneering musician Jacob Collier, who studied at the Royal Academy of Music, became the first British musician to win a Grammy for each of his first five albums.

Behind the scenes

London’s institutions produce technical and production talent that power everything from Olivier award-winning lighting and stage productions to games voice overs, whilst alumni of The Place have choreographed for stars like RAYE and Lady Gaga, feature films, and top brands like Chanel and Nike.

⁸⁶ <https://www.ravensbourne.ac.uk/industry/creative-lab> (accessed 4 June 2026)
⁸⁷ <https://repository.cssd.ac.uk/id/eprint/1682> (accessed 4 June 2026)
⁸⁸ <https://www.rada.ac.uk/access-participation/originate-actor-training> (accessed 4 June 2026)
⁸⁹ <https://goldsmithscca.art> (accessed 2 June 2026)
⁹⁰ <https://www.timeout.com/london/art/best-art-galleries-london> (accessed 2 June 2026)
⁹¹ <https://tomorrowswarriors.org/2020/11/30/we-announce-jazz-hang-with-trinity-laban> (accessed 4 June 2026)
⁹² <https://www.centralschoolofballet.co.uk/dance-classes-courses/adult-dance-classes/#/events> (accessed 4 June 2026)
⁹³ <https://sites.gold.ac.uk/alchemy> (accessed 3 June 2026)
⁹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/downing-street-opens-doors-to-adolescence-creators-for-vital-discussion-on-protecting-our-children> (accessed 4 June 2026)

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance



London's universities open the door to opportunity

London is a city of stark contrasts. It is home to some of the most deprived communities in the country: 18 of its 33 boroughs rank among the most deprived fifth nationally, and four of the five local authorities with the highest income deprivation in England are found in East London. Child poverty, in particular, is concentrated in the capital.⁹⁵

And yet, London has been setting standards for widening participation in higher education for many years. 17 of the top 20 universities for social mobility are based in London⁹⁶ and 64% of London's pupils progress to higher education by the time they turn 19 – compared to a national average of 49.8%.⁹⁷ 71% of Londoners aged 25-64 obtain a tertiary qualification, meaning a degree, apprenticeship or similar.⁹⁸

This success stems in large part from efforts to encourage 18 and 19-year-olds to progress into higher education, as young Londoners are increasingly progressing straight from Level 3 study like A Levels and BTEC to university. London is likely to continue leading the way on access to higher education well into the 2030s, with increasing numbers of young Londoners from a diverse range of backgrounds set to enter higher education at much higher rates than elsewhere in England.^{99 100}

Free School Meals

This trend includes young Londoners from socio-economically deprived backgrounds who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) during their secondary education in the capital. These students are more likely to progress to higher education even than their non-FSM-eligible peers in some other English regions like the South West and North East. The higher education entry rate for FSM students in London is almost 50%, rising to 51.3% in Inner London specifically. This compares to an England-wide rate of 29%. In 15 London local authorities, more than half of FSM-eligible pupils are currently progressing to higher education, projected to increase to 22 local authorities by 2035. At current rates, the progression rate for FSM-eligible pupils in London is expected to reach 60% in the next ten years.¹⁰¹

Ethnic hyper-diversity

London has a proud record of ethnic hyper-diversity in its student population. As of 2023, the share of students from Black African, Black Caribbean, and Other Black backgrounds was 22%, and for students from Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and Other Asian backgrounds the figure was 26%. White students account for just over 20% of students entering higher education from London by age 19. This same pattern is expected in 2035, suggesting the ethnic mix of young Londoners accessing higher education is stabilising.¹⁰²

Care leavers

Similarly, for students from vulnerable groups, London comes out on top; the University of East London ranks first in the UK for the proportion of undergraduates who are care leavers, topping the Civitas Breaking the Care Ceiling league table.¹⁰³



London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

⁹⁵ <https://ocsi.uk/2026/02/03/deprivation-in-london-analysis-of-the-english-indices-of-deprivation-2025/> (accessed 18 June 2026)

⁹⁶ <https://www.suttontrust.com/universities-and-social-mobility-data-explorer-rankings/> (accessed 23 June 2026)

⁹⁷ <https://londonhigher.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Hyper-diversity-revisited-Londons-student-population-in-2035.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2026)

⁹⁸ https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/09/education-at-a-glance-2024-country-notes_532eb29d/united-kingdom_618cbcd0/c3bad31e-en.pdf (accessed 24 June 2026)

⁹⁹ <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/qualifications-obtained-borough> (accessed 2 June 2026)

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/latest/insights-and-analysis/what-do-we-mean-tertiary-education> (accessed 3 June 2026)

¹⁰¹ <https://londonhigher.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Hyper-diversity-revisited-Londons-student-population-in-2035.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2026)

¹⁰² <https://londonhigher.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Hyper-diversity-revisited-Londons-student-population-in-2035.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2026)

¹⁰³ <https://www.civitas.org.uk/content/files/Breaking-the-care-ceiling.pdf>

SUPPORTING LONDON’S STUDENTS INTO THE WORKFORCE

Diversifying the pipeline to frontier innovation: Recent research reveals that London’s higher education sector is delivering over 190 widening participation interventions that directly upskill underrepresented groups, facilitate their pathways into frontier innovation study and careers, or target the equalities gaps facing the sector. This work is driven by a wide range of providers: more than 30 higher education institutions in London deliver activity aligned with the priority skills needs and equalities challenges facing frontier innovation. These figures likely understate the full picture, as a further, broader category of intervention supports the transferable skills frontier innovation employers need.¹⁰⁴

Supporting care leavers into jobs: The University of Roehampton is helping care-experienced young people aged 18-29 to pursue a career in healthcare. The I-CAN project includes a blend of learning activities and hands-on experience, to help care leavers to gain employability skills and understanding of the NHS, to ensure opportunities for career progression. The programme covers learning areas from Introduction to Health and Social care to Communication skills and Working in Healthcare. Care leavers can join without a GCSE pass or equivalent in Maths and English, as the programme gives them the opportunity to gain these functional skills.¹⁰⁵

AWARD WINNING WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The University of West London recently won a NEON Award for its Inclusive Reading Lists initiative, recognised for promoting equitable student outcomes and a greater sense of student belonging. The initiative has contributed to a more inclusive curriculum and led to one of the greatest reductions in the ethnicity degree-awarding gap across the whole higher education sector.¹⁰⁶

Addressing inequality in London’s Higher Education

Regional collaboration is key to tackling unequal access to London’s universities, colleges and conservatoires. Inequality in access to higher education is not down to a lack of commitment by individual institutions; it in fact illustrates that London’s higher education sector lacks a mechanism for coordinated action to tackle systemic barriers.

Universities in London - and other UK regions - need to band together and take shared ownership of local risks to equality and access. London Higher’s collaboration with the Greater London Authority (GLA), aligning university outreach provision with the Holiday Hope programme during school holidays to provide safe spaces and positive opportunities for young Londoners from vulnerable backgrounds, represents a promising step in this direction. It is supported by the University of Greenwich, the London School of Management Education, the University of Westminster, the University of Roehampton, SOAS University of London, and Goldsmiths, University of London.



¹⁰⁴ <https://londonhigher.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/London-Higher-A-New-Frontier5.pdf> (accessed 12 June 2026)
¹⁰⁵ <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/study/academic-areas/life-and-health-sciences/i-can-care-leavers-into-healthcare> (accessed 12 June 2026)
¹⁰⁶ <https://www.uwl.ac.uk/news/uwl-celebrates-neon-award-win-inclusive-readings-lists-initiative> (accessed 22 June 2026)

Goldsmiths, University of London

London's Higher Education serves communities and places

Universities and colleges anchor their local areas, working beyond the campus to support businesses and communities across London, and sharing their knowledge, expertise and resources with the public.¹⁰⁷ Many are involved in strategic partnerships and formal collaborations, sometimes borough-wide, that address health inequalities, work and training opportunities, and procurement, while others work with local businesses, charities or community groups.

Institutions including London Metropolitan University, King's College London, the University of East London and Goldsmiths, University of London have formal civic agreements with their borough councils, alongside grassroots involvement in interfaith dialogues, supply chains, community festivals, and policy advice for local and regional councils.¹⁰⁸

BOLSTERING LOCAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Collaborating to boost business and innovation in South London: Universities and further education colleges in South London are partnering to help local businesses find the expertise they need and to help residents move more easily from education into high-quality jobs. 10 institutions have formed the South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, working with several borough councils to accelerate the area's economy, attract investment, and support more people into well-paid, secure jobs. Priority sectors include health and life sciences, digital and creative industries, the visitor economy and green technologies.¹⁰⁹

Securing business contracts: The London Anchor Institutions Network, which includes London Higher and universities like UCL, University of East London and University of London,¹¹⁰ has secured £1.75bn in Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) contracts, 7,200+ London Living Wage uplifts, more than 4,000 apprenticeships, and £2m in levy transfers, demonstrating the potential for universities to drive positive change at scale.¹¹¹

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY SKILLS AND EQUALITY

London Met Lab works with more than 600 partner organisations to improve lives, tackle inequality and deliver social justice in London. Through the university's network of partners, the Lab runs academic research projects and provides practical support to co-design solutions to social challenges that disproportionately affect the communities London Met serves. It runs five low-cost and pro bono clinics for the local community, and students can choose community work placement modules as part of their degrees.¹¹²



St Mary's University

¹⁰⁷ London Higher Civic Map: <https://londonhigher.ac.uk/our-work/civic-map> (accessed 12 June 2026)

¹⁰⁸ <https://civicuniversitynetwork.co.uk/beyond-boroughs-universities-collaborating> (accessed 12 June 2026)

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/news/2026/bold-new-partnership-to-back-skills-jobs-innovation-and-investment-across-south-london> (accessed 12 June 2026)

¹¹⁰ <https://www.anchors.london> (accessed 12 June 2026)

¹¹¹ <https://civicuniversitynetwork.co.uk/beyond-boroughs-universities-collaborating> (accessed 12 June 2026)

¹¹² <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/london-met-lab> (accessed 12 June 2026)

Reaching Latinx communities with English lessons: ‘EmpowerESOL: supporting local Latin American parents’ is a project run by King’s College London to help Latinx parents living in London to increase their understanding of the UK educational system, higher education, housing, legal rights, healthcare and employability through improving their proficiency and confidence in speaking English. The project also aims to ultimately increase the representation of Latinx students at King’s as, despite an estimated 12,000 young Latin Americans aged 15-24 living in London, only 41 Latinx students based in the UK enrolled at King’s in the 2022-23 academic year.¹¹³

Digitally upskilling underrepresented women: In March 2025, the University of Westminster teamed up with The Rebel School and Netcompany to offer free digital upskilling and business programmes for underrepresented women from diverse backgrounds. The initiative offers a week-long series of upskilling workshops in both London and Glasgow, delivered by The Rebel School with support from University of Westminster academics to equip women with skills like website building, social media for businesses and using modern digital tools like Artificial Intelligence. Participants also have access to Q&A sessions with colleagues from international IT consultancy Netcompany to gain professional insight into the digital business world.¹¹⁴

Anchoring opportunity in southeast London and Kent: The University of Greenwich is deeply rooted in the communities it serves: 70% of its undergraduate applications come from within a 30-minute drive of its campuses and it runs outreach with more than 200 local schools and colleges. Through a strategic partnership with Charlton Athletic Community Trust, its “Make it Make Sense” programme brings skills and careers development to some of the most disadvantaged young people across southeast London and Kent, using the reach and trust of a local football foundation to connect with young people conventional outreach can miss.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/empoweresol> (accessed 12 June 2026)

¹¹⁴ Westminster launches community programmes with The Rebel School and Netcompany to empower women from marginalised backgrounds (March 2025): <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/westminster-launches-community-programmes-with-the-rebel-school-and-netcompany-to-empower-women-from-marginalised-backgrounds> (accessed 24 June 2026)

¹¹⁵ <https://www.gre.ac.uk/articles/public-relations/university-of-greenwich-and-charlton-athletic-community-trust-help-raise-aspirations-of-young-people> (accessed 24 June 2026)



Guildhall School
of Music & Drama

Spotlight on London Higher Members

London Higher is the voice of higher education in London, representing the full diversity of the capital's universities, specialist colleges, conservatoires and research institutes, from large multi-faculty institutions to world-leading specialist providers.

Our role is to convene and collaborate, showcase and celebrate, and influence and advocate: bringing members together to drive coordinated action, highlighting the sector's impact on London and the UK, and shaping the policies that help our members and their students thrive.

Alongside our core members, listed below, we convene a wider range of members around shared priorities, from health and medicine to satellite campuses, access and widening participation. The profiles that follow have been compiled using information from The Times Good University Guide and the QS World University Rankings.



Trinity Laban
Conservatoire of
Music & Dance



BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Based in leafy Bloomsbury, Birkbeck is in the University of London heartland. Known as London's night university, it has long offered part-time study through evening classes on campus from 6pm to 9pm, playing a vital role in making higher education accessible to students who are combining work or childcare with their studies. Birkbeck is also a University of Sanctuary, waiving the fees for a limited number of forced migrants under the Compass Project.¹¹⁶

BLOOMSBURY INSTITUTE LONDON

Bloomsbury Institute is a higher education institute delivering degrees in business, law and accounting. Founded in 2002 as The London School of Business and Management, it launched its innovative two-year degrees and rebranded as Bloomsbury Institute in 2019. Bloomsbury Law Clinic was launched by the institute in 2022 to provide free legal advice for people who are not eligible for Legal Aid and cannot afford legal fees. That same year, the National Student Survey ranked Bloomsbury first in London for its law degree.¹¹⁷



BRUNEL UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Named in honour of the eminent Victorian engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the west London institution has a technical slant to its provision, and many of its courses include professional qualifications. The original academic focus on engineering, science, technology, education and management has expanded to include the performing arts, humanities, health, sport sciences and business. QS ranks Brunel as a top 40 UK university, both overall and for employer reputation.

¹¹⁶ <https://www.thetimes.com/uk-university-rankings/birkbeck-university-of-london> (accessed May 2026)

¹¹⁷ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/about-us/> (accessed May 2026)

CENTRAL SCHOOL OF BALLET

The Central School of Ballet is a specialist conservatoire based in London’s South Bank, founded in 1982 and recognised as one of Europe’s leading centres for professional dance training. The school typically admits a small cohort of around 35–40 students each year, creating an intensive and highly focused training environment. A distinctive feature is Ballet Central, the school’s touring company, through which final-year students gain professional performance experience across the UK. The school produces versatile graduates, with a high proportion securing employment in the dance industry.



Central
School
of Ballet



CITY ST GEORGE’S, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

City St George’s, University of London educates more than 27,000 students from over 170 countries across three campuses in Clerkenwell, Moorgate and Tooting. The University is now one of the largest higher education destinations for London students and one of the most significant suppliers of the health workforce in the capital. By combining legacy St George’s world-leading specialism in health and medicine with legacy City’s excellence in a breadth of disciplines including business, law, communications, policy and global affairs, and science and technology, the merger has created opportunities to generate significant change in healthcare through interdisciplinary working — including changes to treatment, population health monitoring, workforce development and leadership, policy, and advocacy.

ESCAPE STUDIOS

Escape Studios is one of the UK’s leading creative schools, supplying the industry with studio-ready talent across animation, games, VFX, concept art and motion graphics, with courses designed and delivered alongside industry experts. Based in London’s Design District on the Greenwich Peninsula, it works with world-class partners including Industrial Light & Magic, Framestore, DNEG and Creative Assembly, and was the UK’s first Unreal Authorized Training Center through its partnership with Epic Games. At the 2026 Academy Awards, Escapees had worked on every film nominated for Best Visual Effects.



ESCAPE
STUDIOS



Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Progressive, creative and rooted to its original southeast London campus in New Cross, the university offers degrees across the creative arts as well as social sciences and humanities, management, law and computing - all underpinned by its renowned critical and creative ethos, and socially engaged thinking. The alumni list reads like a Who’s Who of the creative industries, from designer Mary Quant to Oscar-winning film director Sir Steve McQueen via three out of four members of the Britpop blue bloods Blur. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), 79% of work submitted by Goldsmiths was rated world-leading or internationally excellent, and the university ranks joint 26th in the world for art and design in the QS World University Rankings by subject 2026.¹¹⁸

GUILDHALL SCHOOL OF MUSIC & DRAMA

The Guildhall School of Music and Drama is a leading specialist conservatoire located within the Barbican Centre in the City of London, established in 1880 and widely recognised for its world-class training in the performing arts. With just over 1,000 students from more than 70 countries, the school offers intensive undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in music, drama and production arts. Guildhall consistently ranks among the top institutions globally, placing within the top four worldwide for music and performing arts in the QS World University Rankings by subject 2026. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), 56% of its research activity was judged world-leading, with 100% of its impact rated at the highest level.



GUILD
HALL
SCHOOL

KING’S COLLEGE LONDON

Where King’s College London ends and London begins may blur, as the university is so enshrined in the capital. Four of its five campuses are within a square mile of each other, close to the banks of the Thames. Research innovations come thick and fast, with the university’s credits including the discovery of the structure of DNA, and it is collaborating with UCL and Imperial in the newly launched London Quantum Technology cluster. King’s was founded in 1829 and has more than 30,000 students with about 39% from outside the UK; a member of the Russell Group since 1998, it counts 14 staff and alumni who have been awarded the Nobel prize. The university ranks 8th in The Sunday Times’ research quality index after 55.1% of the work submitted to the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021) was judged to be world-leading.¹¹⁹



¹¹⁸ <https://www.thetimes.com/uk-university-rankings/goldsmiths-university-of-london> (accessed May 2026)
¹¹⁹ <https://www.thetimes.com/uk-university-rankings/kings-college-london> (accessed May 2026)



LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL

Established in 1964, London Business School, part of the University of London, offers masters, executive education and PhD degrees in various streams of management science ranging from finance to digital transformation and innovation. Its masters programmes consistently rank among the best in the world, with its Executive Education Open programme scoring top globally in the Financial Times business school rankings for a second consecutive year.

LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

London Metropolitan University is a diverse, access-focused institution based primarily at its Holloway Road campus in north London, with a strong mission centred on widening participation in higher education. Mature students make up a significant proportion of its intake, and it ranks highly for social inclusion, reflecting its commitment to supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds. Formed through a merger in 2002, London Met offers a broad academic portfolio with a strong emphasis on practical skills and employability. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), 60% of its research was rated world-leading or internationally excellent, while it was awarded an overall silver rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023), including gold for student experience.



LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is a specialist postgraduate institution within the University of London, dedicated to public and global health. Founded in 1899, it is widely regarded as one of the world's leading centres for epidemiology, infectious disease research and health policy. With around 4,000 students and a global research presence spanning more than 100 countries, it combines high-impact research with professional training, and consistently ranks among the top institutions worldwide in its field.



LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY

Since 1892, London South Bank University (LSBU) has been providing vocationally-relevant, accredited and professionally recognised education in the capital. It retains a strong civic mission focused on delivering practical, career-focused education linked to the needs of local communities and employers. LSBU is also part of a wider education group including further and technical colleges, and has developed one of the largest degree apprenticeship programmes in the UK across sectors such as healthcare, engineering and business. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), 68% of its research was rated world-leading or internationally excellent, supporting its position within the UK's top 100 for research, while it retained a silver rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023), reflecting strong student outcomes alongside a continued focus on improving the wider student experience.



LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is a specialist social science university based in central London, founded in 1895 and ranked 1st in the UK in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026. Renowned for its focus on subjects including economics, politics, law and sociology, the School attracts a highly international student body and has one of the most global outlooks of any UK university. Its compact campus near Aldwych places it at the heart of London's political and financial districts, supporting close links with policymakers, businesses and international organisations. LSE is particularly recognised for its strong academic performance, graduate prospects and influential research.



MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY LONDON

Middlesex University is a career-focused institution based primarily at its Hendon campus in north-west London, with origins dating back to 1878 and a strong emphasis on practice-based learning. The university offers flexible study options designed to support a diverse student body, including a high proportion of mature students, and continues to expand internationally through campuses in Dubai and Mauritius. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), its strongest performance was in business and management, contributing to an overall improvement in research output.



QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Queen Mary University of London is a Russell Group university based in East London, combining a strong academic reputation with an over 240-year commitment to social mobility and inclusion. It is ranked 103rd globally in the 2027 QS World University Rankings, a rise of 42 places over the last three years. For the quality of its research, it is ranked 31st in the world in the current Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

The University has produced nine Nobel laureates and continues to demonstrate research strength across a wide range of disciplines, with its research being ranked as joint 7th in the UK according to the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021). It has also been recognised for its innovation in teaching, including being the first Russell Group institution to offer degree apprenticeships, for which it was recently rated as 'Outstanding' by OFSTED.



RAVENSBORNE UNIVERSITY LONDON

Ravensbourne University London is a specialist institution based on the Greenwich Peninsula, focusing on creative, business and digital technology disciplines. Founded in 1962 and granted university status in 2018, it has built a reputation for industry-aligned, practice-based teaching. Its courses are developed in partnership with employers and emphasise real-world projects, helping students build professional skills and connections in sectors such as design, media, fashion and digital production.



ROSE BRUFORD COLLEGE OF THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE

Rose Bruford College is a specialist institution for theatre and performance based in southeast London. Founded in 1950, it was one of the first drama schools in the UK to introduce degree-level training in acting and theatre production. It offers a broad range of practice-based courses across performance, design and technical theatre, with a strong emphasis on industry readiness and creative collaboration.



RADA

ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

The Royal Academy of Music, founded in 1822, is one of the world's leading conservatoires for classical music training and a member of the University of London. Located in Marylebone, it offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in performance, composition and musicology. Renowned for its high-level professional training and strong links with the music industry, it consistently ranks among the top institutions globally for performing arts.

ROYAL ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ART (RADA)

RADA is one of the UK's most prestigious drama schools, founded in 1904 and based in Bloomsbury. It provides highly selective conservatoire training for theatre, film, television and radio, with a strong emphasis on practical performance. With small cohort sizes and industry-focused teaching, it has built a global reputation for excellence in acting and theatre production, supported by extensive professional links and a distinguished alumni network.



ROYAL CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama is a specialist drama school and member of the University of London, based in north London. It offers professional training across acting, theatre production, performance and applied theatre. Known for combining practical training with academic study, it has developed a strong reputation in theatre, film and performance education, with graduates working widely across the creative industries.





ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

The Royal College of Art is a postgraduate-only university specialising in art, design and creative disciplines, based across campuses in London. It is widely recognised as a global leader in creative education and innovation. In the QS World University Rankings by subject 2026, it is ranked the number one institution in the world for art and design, a position it has held for eight consecutive years.



Royal College of Art

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC

The Royal College of Music is a leading specialist conservatoire in South Kensington, founded in 1882 and recognised as one of the world's great centres for training musicians as performers, conductors and composers. With 750 students from more than 60 countries studying at undergraduate, masters and doctoral level, it offers high-level professional training taught by professors of worldwide reputation. It ranked second globally and first in Europe for performing arts in the 2026 QS World subject rankings.



ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC
London



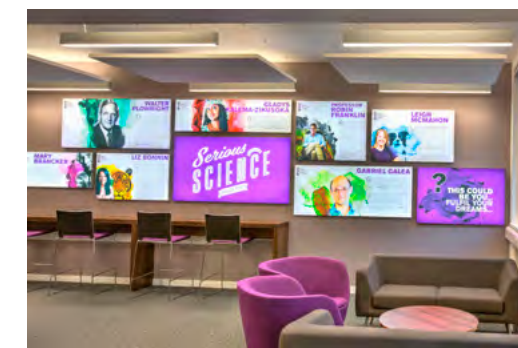
ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Royal Holloway, University of London is a campus-based institution located in Egham on the edge of the capital, known for its striking Founder's Building, with a growing central London presence in Bloomsbury where it also delivers degree teaching. It has particular strengths in the creative industries, where it leads the CoSTAR national lab for screen technologies, as well as in cybersecurity, where it is recognised as a centre of excellence. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), 88% of its research was rated world-leading or internationally excellent.



ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE

The Royal Veterinary College is the UK's oldest and largest veterinary school, founded in 1791 and a member of the University of London. It offers specialised training in veterinary medicine, nursing and biosciences across campuses in London and Hertfordshire. With strong clinical facilities, including Europe's largest hospital for small animals, and a leading global reputation, it has ranked first in the world for Veterinary Science in the QS World University Rankings for several years.



SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

SOAS, University of London is a specialist institution based in Bloomsbury, with fewer than 6,000 students and a distinctive academic focus on Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Founded in 1916, it has evolved from its origins in training colonial administrators into a globally recognised centre for critical scholarship, known for challenging Eurocentric perspectives and promoting the decolonisation of the curriculum. Its Russell Square campus is home to one of only five national research libraries in the UK, housing extensive collections in hundreds of languages. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), 87% of its research was rated world-leading or internationally excellent, with particular strengths in areas such as law, anthropology and music.



SOAS
University of London

COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART

Courtauld Institute of Art is a specialist college of the University of London dedicated to the study of art history, conservation and curating. Founded in 1932 and based at Somerset House, it combines teaching and research with one of the world's most renowned art collections. With a small, highly focused student body, it is currently ranked top in the world for Art History in the QS subject rankings, and is renowned for producing influential figures in the arts and cultural sectors.



**COURTAULD
INSTITUTE**

ST MARY’S UNIVERSITY,
TWICKENHAM, LONDON

St Mary’s University, Twickenham is a campus-based institution located in a 35-acre riverside setting in south-west London, with a longstanding reputation for sport, education and student experience. Founded in 1850 as a teacher training college, it retains a strong focus on education, with its School of Education consistently rated highly, including securing Ofsted’s top rating for over a decade. The university is particularly known for its sporting heritage, with facilities including the Sir Mo Farah Athletics Track and the St Mary’s Endurance and Performance Centre, which supports elite athletes. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), the university’s research strengths were demonstrated across areas including sport and theology, while it was awarded an overall silver rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023), including gold for student experience.



THE INSTITUTE OF CANCER RESEARCH

The Institute of Cancer Research is a specialist postgraduate institution and member of the University of London, focusing exclusively on cancer research and education. Founded in 1909, it operates alongside the Royal Marsden Hospital to form one of Europe’s largest cancer research centres. It is widely regarded as one of the world’s leading oncology institutions, with exceptionally strong research performance — including near-universal world-leading or internationally excellent ratings in clinical medicine and biological sciences — and a track record of major discoveries in cancer genetics and drug development.



TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE
OF MUSIC & DANCE

Trinity Laban is a specialist conservatoire for music, dance and musical theatre, formed in 2005 through the merger of Trinity College of Music and Laban Dance Centre. Based in Greenwich and southeast London, it trains just over 1,000 students in a highly focused, performance-led environment. The only UK conservatoire to combine music and contemporary dance at this scale, it has built an international reputation for creative collaboration and professional training, supported by partnerships with leading arts organisations and global institutions

THE PLACE

London Contemporary Dance School, based at The Place near King’s Cross, is one of Europe’s leading centres for contemporary dance training. Established in 1969, it combines intensive studio-based teaching with performance opportunities at its in-house theatre venue. With a strong emphasis on creativity, choreography and professional practice, it plays a central role in the UK dance sector, producing graduates who work across performance, choreography and the wider creative industries.



UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

University of the Arts London is a specialist creative institution and the largest university in Europe dedicated to art, design, fashion and the performing arts, gaining university status in 2003. It is consistently recognised globally for its strength in art and design, ranking second in the world in QS subject rankings for several consecutive years. The university is made up of six colleges, with recent expansion at East Bank in Stratford strengthening its presence within London’s cultural quarter.

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University College London (UCL) is a leading research university based in central London, founded in 1826 and ranked 9th in the UK in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026. Established as London's first university, UCL has a long-standing reputation for innovation, including being among the first in the UK to admit students regardless of religion or gender. With around 40,000 students, it is one of the largest institutions within the University of London and is recognised as a global research leader, with strengths across disciplines including law, medicine and the social sciences.



UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

The University of East London is a careers-focused institution with origins in the West Ham Technical Institute, founded in 1898, and now based across campuses in Stratford and Docklands at the heart of east London's regeneration. With a strong emphasis on social mobility and employability, it delivers a practice-based approach to learning, including clinical simulation spaces that replicate NHS environments with wards, consultation rooms and operating theatres. The university is further expanding its healthcare provision with plans for a new medical campus in Stratford.



UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The University of London is a federal institution founded in 1836 and made up of 17 independent member universities and specialist institutes, alongside central academic bodies. It has one of the largest student populations in the UK, with more than 200,000 campus-based students and tens of thousands studying worldwide through its pioneering distance-learning programmes. Rather than operating as a single campus university, it functions as a collaborative network of globally respected institutions, with central services including Senate House and its major research libraries supporting advanced study particularly in the humanities and social sciences.



UNIVERSITY OF READING

The University of Reading is a campus-based institution set within 300 acres of parkland at Whiteknights, offering a green, self-contained environment that combines academic facilities with lakes, meadows and woodland. Founded in 1926, it has developed a broad academic portfolio with particular strengths in environmental science, agriculture and sustainability, supported by access to extensive farmland and specialist facilities. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), the university delivered strong results across a number of subject areas, while it was awarded a silver rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023).



UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

The University of Greenwich is a multi-campus institution based across a UNESCO World Heritage site in Greenwich, Avery Hill in southeast London and Medway in Kent. Originally founded as Woolwich Polytechnic in 1890, it became a university in 1992 and has since developed a broad academic offering alongside a growing and increasingly international student population. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), its research performance improved, with particular strengths in agriculture, construction and food science, while it was awarded a gold rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023).



UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

The University of Roehampton is a campus-based institution set across 54 acres in southwest London, between Putney and Richmond, combining a collegiate structure with a growing focus on modern, career-led education. Originally founded through a group of teacher training colleges and gaining university status in 2004, it retains a strong emphasis on education, alongside expanding provision in newer fields such as engineering, technology and esports. Students belong to one of four historic colleges, which continue to shape campus life through social and academic activities.





UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

The University of Westminster is a diverse, careers-focused institution based primarily in London's West End, with roots dating back to 1838 as the UK's first polytechnic. Its central London campuses place students at the heart of the capital, supported by specialist facilities including its historic Regent Street headquarters, home to one of the UK's earliest public film screenings. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), its strongest results were in art and design, while it achieved a triple silver rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023).

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER 卐

THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON

The University of West London (UWL) is a career-focused institution with campuses in Ealing and Brentford, alongside a specialist health centre in Reading, and has undergone a significant transformation over the past two decades from its former identity as Thames Valley University into a modern, top-70 institution. Known for its supportive environment and strong emphasis on employability, UWL delivers a curriculum closely aligned with industry and professional practice. In the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021), nearly 80% of its research was rated world-leading or internationally excellent, while it received an overall silver rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023), including gold for student experience.

CITY ST GEORGE'S, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
 UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
 MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY LONDON
 ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ART (RADA)
 LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL
 THE COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART
 ARTS LONDON
 UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH
 UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON
 ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC
 ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
 ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY
 ROSE LONDON UNIVERSITY
 LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
 MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
 UNIVERSITY OF READING
 UNIVERSITY OF DANCE
 ROYAL COLLEGE OF THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE
 LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY
 LONDON CENTRAL SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE
 TWICKENHAM, LONDON
 ROYAL BRUFORD SCHOOL
 UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC & DANCE
 UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

