

# Excellence in Diversity

A report celebrating the diversity  
of UK Higher Education



**GuildHE**

Paul Kleiman



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**List of abbreviations**

BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (Survey)
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEI	higher education institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
NUS	National Union of Students
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RCUK	Research Councils UK
SMGI	Social Mobility Graduation Index
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Frameworks
UUK	Universities UK

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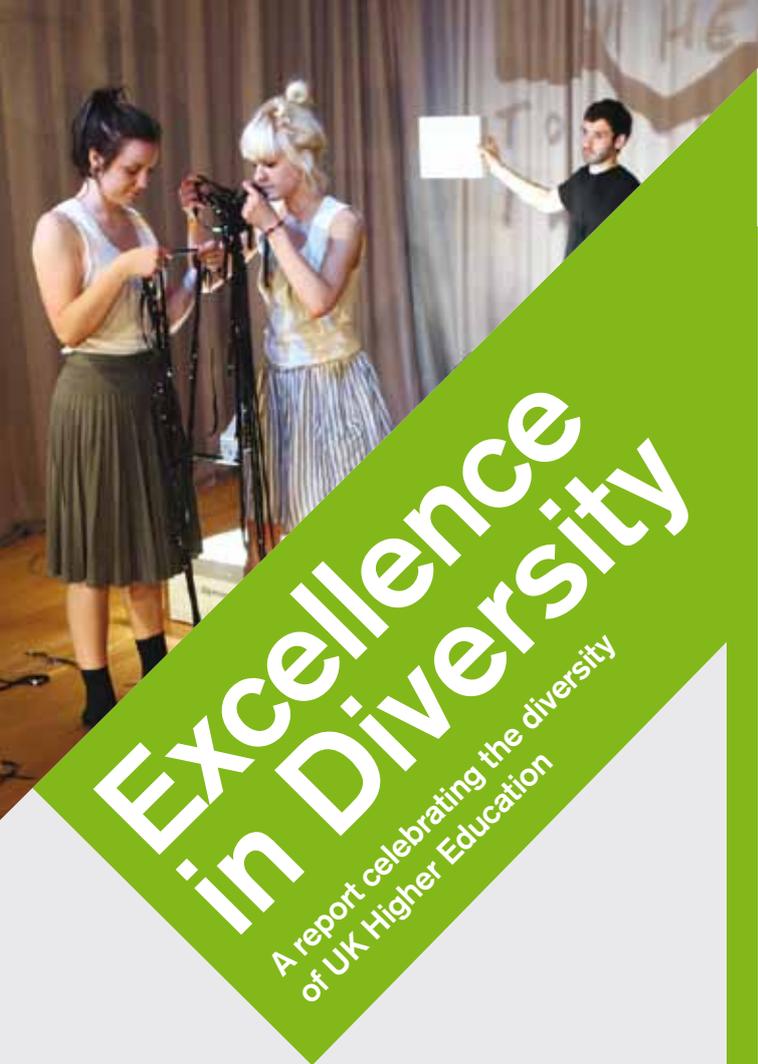
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**About GuildHE**

- GuildHE is one of two formal representative bodies for UK higher education.
- It is consulted on all major reforms in higher education.
- GuildHE meets regularly with government, civil servants, funding councils and other stakeholders to discuss policy and current issues, and to exchange information.
- It is a company member of a wide range of higher education sector agencies and is represented on their boards.
- Its 37 member institutions include:
  - multi-faculty universities, offering a wide range of subject disciplines
  - leading providers in professional subject areas including art & design, music & the performing arts; agriculture; education, health and sports
  - several GuildHE institutions have their roots in Victorian philanthropy and interest in education and crafts, including specialist institutions and those with church foundations
  - high-quality private institutions from both not-for-profit and for-profit sectors
  - further education colleges delivering higher education.
- GuildHE is highly committed to social mobility, inclusion and the promotion of diversity.
- GuildHE places a strong emphasis on student partnership.



# Foreword

Professor Joy Carter

Chair, GuildHE and Vice Chancellor,  
University of Winchester

There is no one in the UK whose life isn't touched every day by the teaching, learning and research that happens in universities and colleges across the UK. The achievements of the UK's higher education sector are justly admired around the globe for their excellence. The fact that the diversity of the sector is key to that excellence is less well rehearsed. This report aims to correct that and celebrate the diversity of the UK's higher education sector.

Higher education in the UK in the 21st century consists of a variety of institutions with a variety of strengths, but sharing a single fundamental purpose: to deliver high-quality, world-leading higher education. That diversity brings greater opportunities for innovation, to spread new good practice, to be more creative.

Diversity encourages healthy competition, drives efforts to reach new learners and inspires fresh approaches to research. It means improving choice for students and graduate employers, and encourages different ways of engaging with businesses and industries and new ways of enriching the social and economic prosperity and cultural life of the UK's communities and regions.

Regionally focused, smaller or specialist institutions have expertise in particular disciplines, areas of research and teaching or in specialised areas of economic or cultural activity that can make them shining beacons of excellence amongst our colleges and universities. Some, not all, of these institutions are smaller in size and demonstrate an agility and adaptability to change, together with a student experience to inspire the wider sector.





The UK is facing many long-term, difficult challenges. They include the need to improve economic productivity; to enhance, broaden and deliver a highly skilled workforce; and to ensure public money is spent effectively and efficiently.

This report sets out the contribution smaller universities as well as regionally focused and specialist institutions make to a diverse higher education sector that is fit to help address those challenges. It also makes the case for ensuring that diversity is not put at risk, but is protected and promoted.

Higher education ministers and other senior figures have endorsed the value of small and specialist universities. In March 2015, announcing the next year's allocation to English universities and colleges, the Chief Executive of HEFCE, Professor Madeleine Atkins, referred to "small and specialist institutions", acknowledging "their economic and cultural importance to the country".

High-level recognition of the value of small and specialist institutions demonstrates a growing appreciation that in the 21st century, a thriving, globally successful higher education system is strong partly because it is diverse.

This report is a timely contribution to inform government policy and spending commitments over the next parliament. This report is grounded in real examples of excellent practice, demonstrating how the diversity of the higher education sector contributes to the educational, economic and social well-being of the UK.

# Executive Summary

**Today's modern higher education system has achieved a rich diversity – unprecedented in the history of UK universities. The UK is justly proud of its world-leading higher education system. As in other areas of life, diversity is key to that success: our higher education sector is so strong partly because it is so diverse.**

This report serves both as a celebration and a caution. It sets out how diversity in higher education also means a diversity of highly valued contributions to economic, social and cultural life in the UK.

It demonstrates how regionally focused, specialist and smaller institutions, in particular, are well placed to help the UK tackle some of the key economic and social challenges facing the nation over the next decades. Our institutions make a massive contribution in many areas including enhancing skills, productivity and social mobility.

But as well, the report highlights the need for policymakers to protect and preserve the diversity of our sector, and to recognise the needs of different types of institution in order to maximise the significant benefits to be gained.

## **The strengths of diversity**

UK higher education, in the 21st century, occurs in many different shapes and sizes. The diversity of UK higher education nurtures innovation and creativity. It means more choice for students and for graduate employers, and more opportunities to reach out to new learners. It encourages healthy competition, fresh approaches to research, different ways of engaging with business and industries and new ways of enriching the social, economic and cultural prosperity of life in the UK's communities and regions.

## **Extending opportunity and unlocking talent for national prosperity**

An important challenge for the UK over the coming decade is to improve economic productivity. A key element in that is to develop a highly skilled workforce in which more people, wherever they are in their careers, have had the opportunity to acquire and apply the necessary skills.

A thriving diversity in the UK higher education system which includes institutions with a deeply founded ethos of widening opportunities, nurturing individual aspirations and unlocking talent is not only desirable in a modern, fair society; it is also essential to achieving the economic productivity and prosperity we need.

Strong links and expertise in their regional and international industries and professions, combined with a profound determination to widen the reach of higher education, mean that many specialist, regionally focused and smaller higher education institutions excel in recruiting and nurturing a broad range of talent. Their students come, through a variety of routes, from a wide range of academic and social backgrounds, including those who leave school or college with high previous attainment, those entering higher education later in life, or those re-entering while pursuing a career to enhance their skills.

Many of these institutions offer technical and professional qualifications and apprenticeships, which are shaped with employers in areas of high economic demand.



### **Understanding employers and graduate careers**

Graduates of specialist, regionally focused and smaller universities have an outstanding record for being able to launch their careers.

HESA figures for 2012/13 show that small and/or specialist institutions make up half of the top 30 UK institutions for graduate employment.

This is a reflection of successful working partnerships with specific professions, businesses and industry sectors, and the ability of these institutions to understand and adapt successfully to often significant changes in industry practice and patterns of employment and deliver highly skilled graduates ready for the workplace. These institutions frequently engage employers themselves in the design of courses, to ensure provision remains on top of current industry trends.

One of the key features often cited by employers is that graduates from these institutions are job-ready, in part because lecturers are often current practitioners and industry experts with many years of experience within their sectors.

### **Research**

Research excellence is not the preserve of any one part of the sector, and world-leading and outstanding research is found and recognised throughout higher education.

Specialist institutions, regionally focused and smaller universities, produce academic research of world-leading and excellent quality, according to official judgements of quality.

In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise and the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, research carried out in smaller universities, regionally focused and specialist institutions was judged as world leading or excellent in areas including agricultural sciences, creative, performing and visual arts, education, humanities, health and ageing, sport, technology, and theology.

This was achieved without the more generous research funding afforded to other parts of higher education.

Specialist, regionally focused and smaller universities have a particularly proud record of generating research that has high economic,

industrial and social impact. In important areas, including food security, the creative industries, and health, the hallmarks of this research include stimulating enterprise and innovation; contributing to regional and national growth; and developing smart, creative and sustainable businesses.

One of the key characteristics of institutions in this part of the sector is that the roles of researcher/teacher and, frequently, professional practitioner are inextricably linked. This is not just an efficiency driven by necessity – these institutions, unlike others, do not have the resources to separate research from teaching by employing staff on research-only contracts – it is an inspirational model that ensures research, teaching and learning combine to draw on expertise outside higher education as well.

These close links to local, regional, national and international industries, reliant on a highly skilled workforce, mean that the research activities of specialist and smaller universities feed naturally into their teaching and learning strategies. This ensures that curricula are up to date, fitting the needs of both higher education and industry; a real win-win.

### **Internationally popular**

The variety and choice offered by the diversity in our system are critical factors in the UK's general popularity as a destination for international students. Many GuildHE institutions are also global organisations engaged in significant partnerships, world-leading research and other international activities. They successfully attract large numbers of talented overseas students each year.

In general, international alumni from UK institutions are overwhelmingly positive about their university experience. They appreciate the distinctive ways of teaching and learning; the safe and welcoming environments; the tradition and culture of tolerance; and the lifelong career opportunities that follow. Many of these qualities are particular characteristics of specialist, regionally focused and smaller institutions where a shared focus on a particular area of expertise or a smaller campus can cultivate a positive sense of community.

### **The student experience**

The student experience matters. Higher education is a globalised industry and 21st century students, including those based in the UK, have a global choice as to where to learn. The number of UK-based students who choose to study in Europe, North America and on other continents is growing each year.

Student expectations have been rising in recent years, not least because of the increased financial contribution that students in England are making, although the impact has been felt across the UK. Smaller, regionally focused and specialist institutions are particularly well placed to offer excellent student experiences.

Smaller institutions featured in the top 10 'Most welcoming' in The Higher Expectations Survey 2014 conducted by YouthSight. Because of their human scale, these institutions easily cultivate a real sense of belonging, community and a more personal experience.

Specialist institutions, whatever their size, also successfully nurture a strong community by sharing expertise and interest in the research, learning and teaching of a particular discipline, for example, design, agriculture, drama, music or teacher education.

The sense of community in smaller, regionally focused and more specialist institutions contributes significantly to high levels of student satisfaction and low levels of student drop-out. The latest data from HESA shows a mix of institutions in the top 20 for lowest levels of non-continuation – nine of those are small and/or specialist institutions.

### **Building quality**

The expectations of students for high-quality environments, and the aspirations of institutions to provide them, have meant that many universities across the UK are engaging in expensive infrastructure developments.

When money is tight, the provision of high-quality facilities places particular pressure on the smaller universities and more specialist institutions, which frequently have additional building and equipment costs associated with their specialisms and the need to stay industry-relevant.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1 The diversity and dynamism amongst our universities and colleges are key to the outstanding strength, reputation and international competitiveness of the entire UK higher education system.
- 2 A strategy of making higher education policy that avoids 'one size fits all', but takes account of and reflects the diversity of the sector, will maximise the benefits of our higher education system to the UK economy and society.
- 3 With a proven track record in widening participation and graduate employability, and successful close working links with specific industries and professions, specialist universities, regionally focused and smaller institutions are well placed to address important challenges facing 21st century Britain, including improvements to national economic productivity and enhancing and enlarging a highly skilled workforce.
- 4 Smaller, regionally focused and specialist universities can face particular costs associated with their size or specialist disciplines, or both. They can only rise to national economic and social challenges if these costs are well understood and recognised in policy and funding decisions. Previous public ministerial acknowledgements of the importance of protecting 'small and specialist institutions' have been most welcome.
- 5 Funding streams, designed to match the range of outstanding strengths in different HE institutions, maximise the gains to the UK of a diverse higher education sector: as examples: recognising the extra costs of widening participation of mature or part-time students and those from non-traditional backgrounds; the additional expense of small-group teaching and the cost of delivering specialist courses or those with expensive infrastructure and equipment.
- 6 As a rule, funding allocations should be based on the excellence of the bid and the potential impact of the funding rather than limiting access through arbitrary thresholds, as in the Research Partnership Investment Fund and HE Innovation Fund in recent years.
- 7 World-leading and excellent research takes place in a wide range of UK universities, and it is important that outstanding research continues to be funded wherever it is found. The dual support system of funding UK research is essential to support the full diversity of UK HE institutions, some of which are locked out of funding from research councils due to scale or the resource implications of multiple bidding rounds.
- 8 All institutions are seeking and developing different ways to engage with their students as customers, partners and producers. Smaller, regionally focused and specialist institutions score highly in satisfaction surveys for welcoming students and are popular amongst international students. The opportunities offered to students by the diversity across the sector are highly valued; sustaining and supporting that diversity will protect and enhance student choice.
- 9 The higher education sector must be regulated in a way that protects the student interest and promotes high-quality education at its core. New providers should be able to enter the market if they demonstrate high-quality provision, and institutions with a strong track record for good student outcomes should be freed up to continue to do this.

# Introduction

“We have almost 4,000 higher education institutions in Europe, of all shapes and sizes, from new universities of technology and arts colleges to ancient seats of learning and research; from metropolitan universities to small institutions in far-flung parts catering for specific local needs. These institutions, for all their differences, share a crucial task and a crucial responsibility – to teach our young (and also our not so young) people, and to teach them to the best level possible.”

Mary McAleese, Chair, EU High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, 2014

The UK's higher education system is often cited as one of the nation's great assets. It makes an important and powerful contribution to the UK's society and economy, and the UK's higher education institutions (HEIs) are acknowledged universally for their creativity and as positive forces for human development and social cohesion.

One of the great strengths of the system is its diversity and dynamism: it includes – in what is usually termed the ‘public sector’ - large, multi-faculty universities with tens of thousands of students; smaller, multi-faculty institutions with just a few thousand students, often with particular specialisms; higher education in further education colleges; small, highly specialised, subject-specific institutions; and institutions with

a particular ethos and focus, whether delivering part-time courses or celebrating their religious roots. To these can be added the growing number of private (‘for-profit’ and ‘non-profit’) universities, colleges and specialist institutions.

Amongst the smaller universities<sup>1</sup>, regionally focused institutions and specialist institutions in the public sector there are world-leading providers in professional subject areas including agriculture, art and design, business, dance, drama, education, health and sports, music and performing arts. Some institutions have their roots in Victorian philanthropy and an interest in education and crafts. These include specialist institutions and those founded by the churches, and these sources of inspiration have a significant impact on the interest in values and social justice, for example policies on inclusion and support for difference, an ethos firmly supported by government and the funding councils.

As the policy and funding arrangements that underpin higher education continue to shift, sometimes quite dramatically, it is only by understanding and valuing the full diversity of the UK's higher education providers that we will continue to develop and maintain a truly world-leading higher education system.

While no one can deny the increasing pace and significant nature of the changes in higher education, there are, as one might expect, differing and often strongly expressed views about the changes themselves and their likely consequences. But there is even less agreement on how we might or should organise or govern the HE system that it supports.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, ‘smaller universities’ are, generally, those institutions with fewer than 10,000 students, though in a few cases the number of students exceeds that.



At a time when learning models across the world are meant to be diversifying and changing rapidly according to demand, and despite the diversity of providers in the sector, both old and new, the traditional model built around the three-year, full-time Honours degree appears to be becoming much more dominant at the expense of all other forms (Westwood, 2014). Giuseppe di Lampedusa's memorable "things must change so that things can stay the same" has appeared in several articles and documents commenting on the perceived homogenisation.

However, there is a strong sense that when politicians, policymakers and commentators focus their critical gaze on higher education, their field of vision contains only the large, 'traditional' universities, whether pre- or post-1992. They fail to recognise the full diversity of both the providers and the provision in the sector, and the unique benefits that this variety brings to the UK HE sector as a whole. Despite some legitimate concerns about the 'homogenisation' of the sector, it is still an extraordinarily rich and diverse higher education landscape, certainly in the types and range of institutions that are located within that landscape.

"There is a compelling message to be delivered when meeting with Government Ministers and Senior Aides within Government Agencies to raise points of concern regarding the unintended consequences of policy and the specialist nature of our sector."

Tim Jackson, Chair, Landex<sup>2</sup>

However, defining and listing those institutions that are included in those categories and those that may fall outside it is not unproblematic. HESA lists 164 HE providers in the 'public' sector in the UK, with the vast majority (c. 130) located in England. But those general figures conceal an enormous range of type, size, mission, etc. For example, HEFCE's Register of Higher Education Providers (England only) lists the following:

- 132 providers that can award UK degrees
- 337 providers who receive government grants for higher education
- 103 providers with official UK university status
- 121 higher education institutions
- 207 further education colleges
- 104 providers that have specific courses in 2014-15 that are eligible under student support regulations (i.e. the private 'for-profit' and 'non-profit' institutions).

<sup>2</sup> Landex – 'Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence' – is a subscriber organisation with 36 member colleges and universities in England and five members in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

HEFCE, for funding purposes, groups institutions into seven categories in its TRAC<sup>3</sup> Benchmarking Peer Groups, based upon similar factors including: cost of subject provision, specialism, size, teaching income, research income and quality of research.

- Peer Group A: Russell Group (all have medical schools) excluding LSE plus specialist medical schools
- Peer Group B: All other institutions with research income of 22% or more of total income
- Peer Group C: Institutions with a research income of 8%–21% of total income
- Peer Group D: Institutions with a research income of between 5% and 8% of total income and those with a total income > £120m
- Peer group E: Teaching institutions with a turnover of between £40m and £119m
- Peer group F: Smaller teaching institutions
- Peer group G: Specialist music/arts teaching institutions

The institutions, across the whole of the UK, that are the particular focus of this report, fall for the most part into HEFCE's F and G categories, with some in the D and E categories.

The ecology of the UK higher education landscape is therefore particularly diverse and rich. Part of that landscape is inhabited by the smaller universities, regionally focused institutions and specialist institutions that display not only a distinct heterogeneity but also – over the last 10 years – have undergone significant development and change. Some small colleges and specialist institutions have metamorphosed into universities and others have become part of much larger universities. Successful and renowned professional/vocational training institutions, for example the conservatoires, have had to find ways successfully to combine academic rigour and standards with professional training and the standards of the industry.



As an integral part of the UK's higher education provider community, all those institutions subscribe to that community's core academic values in teaching, research, subject development, knowledge transfer and in the good order of their infrastructure. In addition there are particular and significant features, values and aspirations that characterise the distinct qualities and attributes of these institutions.

A number of institutions, for example Southampton Solent University, have a particularly strong local and regional focus. These institutions have significant links in and across their localities – whether urban or rural – and they make valuable contributions to the economic, social and cultural development of their regions. The notion of community is very important to these institutions, and this is reflected in their missions and objectives. There is normally a focus on activities, for example working closely with local and regional schools and colleges that aim to increase the number of people from under-represented groups attending and succeeding at university. There is also a focus on ensuring that local businesses and services benefit from training, consultancy and research.

The smaller universities and specialist institutions, in particular, are specialist in numerous ways: their discipline, ethos, mode of study and qualifications constitute both a highly diverse system and also a world-leading sector. There are high

<sup>3</sup> TRAC is 'Transparent Approach to Costing', which is HEFCE's process for tracking the costs of delivering different subject areas.



numbers of creative arts, education and land-based courses in that sector, which expand the choice and opportunities for students and which attract students – both UK and international – who want to study towards a specific vocation in an environment focused on that field. Those institutions also provide a pedagogic ethos and learning environment to cater for particular student needs. For example, for some students religion is a significant factor in their education experience, and an institution such as Newman University provides an educational environment that, though catering primarily for Catholic values, actively welcomes all faiths.

In regard to entry qualifications, many smaller, regionally focused and specialist institutions recruit from a wide range of different entry routes, and they are not entirely reliant on A levels/ students from traditional backgrounds. Compared with the sector overall, these institutions tend to admit greater proportions of students with BTECs who are seeking more vocationally oriented HE courses. Also, some specialists recruit high numbers of part-time and postgraduate students, allowing for further acquisition of specialist skills within their discipline in a focused environment. Thus there is a high diversity of students leading to a more diverse HE landscape.

The sometimes atypical qualities and attributes that feature in smaller universities, regionally focused institutions and specialist providers include:

- **a strong educational philosophy:** high-quality pedagogy is valued and recognised, and there is a passion for high-quality teaching and support for professionals and practitioners in their learning
- **an institutional dexterity:** the ability, in a complex and fast-changing landscape, to move fast and to exploit opportunities when they arise
- **an interest in providing a ladder of progression from FE into HE** accompanied by a commitment to lifelong learning networks, foundation degrees and perhaps including some FE work in their range
- **a distinctive ethos or set of values:** a set of institutional characteristics which they could argue makes them unique
- **a genuine interest in work–life balance for their staff:** institutions have staff who express pride in their institution, and they are able to elicit a strong allegiance from their workforce
- **a commitment to serving the educational needs of particular professions:** these include, for example, teaching, the arts, land-based and health professions, and those of newly developing professions and service sectors such as new media and web-creative industries



- **a strong sense of community and place:** a deliberate choice to remain at a scale where they can retain their reputation for providing education on a human scale with greater personal interaction
- **a student-centred approach to learning:** where teaching, learning and pedagogy are highly valued within the institutional culture and reward structures
- **a strong commitment to a specific local and regional development perspective:** institutions are embedded in their local community with strong regional links
- **a diverse and vibrant academic and student community:** accompanied by a commitment to flexible learning, probably with high widening participation numbers, mature students, and part-time and non-traditional learning modes
- **a rigorous and effective engagement with applied research:** frequently business- or profession led and funded, and with a number of highly distinctive foci of research excellence; a commitment to skills-based development and working with small- and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and emerging commercial sectors.

This list of 'value-added' qualities and attributes is a reflection, at least in part, of the fact that one of consequences of the various shifts and changes in higher education policy has been that who studies, where they study and how they study has changed and is changing significantly. Linked to that has been the mounting pressure on universities to measure, articulate and disseminate the actual value that they are adding to their students. While the sector is built on the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, there are accountability and regulatory requirements that protect the student interest and public investment. There is an underpinning assumption that institutions must have a causal influence on their students' development. Indeed, where taxpayers' money and/or public accountability plays a significant role, the need to measure and account for that activity is accepted as a *sine qua non*.

A vast industry has grown around the development, application and analysis of performance indicators in higher education and the now ubiquitous league tables that derive from them. But there are serious questions about whether these measures alone can capture the diversity of the sector and the richness of the contribution an institution makes to, say, a student's experience or long-term career prospects, or the contribution of applied research to local businesses, or of the flow of highly specialised graduates into particular industries.

There are, of course, many activities that can be measured reasonably accurately and universally, especially in those cases where there exists a relatively straightforward correlation between an activity and an outcome. But given the diversity of the HE sector, policymakers also need to consider, as Pollard et al. (2013) do:



Therefore, any system of measurement must somehow take into account the fact that students enter higher education with very different backgrounds, that institutions vary enormously, and that the 'world of work' consists of an almost infinite number of career paths, destinations, employers, etc. If policymakers are going to emphasise the 'value-added' by HEIs to graduates' lives or to the national economy, there are certainly ways in which institutional diversity needs careful consideration.

The diversity of the UK's higher education system is admired and respected, and indeed envied by many outside the UK. This report is a celebration of and showcase for a dynamic and influential part of that diverse system, which makes a significant contribution to a number of the UK's key economic sectors, to the well-being of our society, and to the UK's global reputation and influence.

“... whether indicators are indeed comparable across institutions, especially considering the variety of HEI types in the UK, the values they represent and the missions they follow. This variety then also leads to a different conundrum: is it possible to fairly compare a small university with a big university, a rural one with an inner city one, an ancient one with a new one?”

Pollard et al., 2013, p.6

# Employability and Enterprise

## Key Points

- The top three HEIs and 15 of the top 30 HEIs in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) survey category of 'employed and/or further study' are smaller and/or specialist institutions.
- It is important, particularly in regard to policy, to look beyond the often negative media headlines about graduate employment. The data does not support a pessimistic employability narrative.
- The subjects that are frequently the focus of the smaller universities, regional institutions and specialist institutions are amongst the subjects with the highest employment rates. The success of these subjects reflects the success of the diversity and of specialism in our higher education sector.
- That success also reflects the close strategic and operational links to the relevant professions and industry sectors, and the ability of these institutions to adapt quickly and effectively to structural changes in employment.
- The arts-based specialist institutions and their staff and graduates are vital contributors to the economically important creative industries and creative economy sectors.
- One of the key features often cited by employers in regard to these more specialist institutions is that graduates are job-ready, in part because lecturers are often current practitioners and industry experts with many years of experience within their sectors.

# Employability and Enterprise

“Labour market conditions have been extremely fragile... But a number of institutions impressively outperform these conditions and the sector average by some way... their performance is particularly impressive given that these are all smaller specialist institutions. On any measure, these institutions are performing extremely well and they deserve credit especially when operating in sectors such as the creative industries where employment is traditionally harder to secure and more fragile.”

Westwood, 2012

Each year the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) releases the latest statistics from the DLHE survey. The many figures and tables are based on information that all HEIs have to provide on the destinations of their graduates six months after obtaining their degrees. The importance of the DHLE statistics has grown significantly as employability has risen to the top of both the political and educational agendas.

The publication of the DHLE inevitably attracts attention from the government and the media. The latter, perhaps predictably, tend to focus on what appear to be the negative aspects of the statistics: for example highlighting that one in five graduates are unemployed after six months rather than highlighting the ‘good news’ that four in five graduates are employed or in further study.

Students themselves have also become more focused on the employment opportunities that their course will open up. Students look not just at the employability data but at the overall content of the course, how it is delivered, and how it will prepare them for the world of work. This includes the industry links that a university has and the ‘real-world’ experiences that are integrated into the programmes of study. Universities that are able to provide useful and valuable practical experiences will become increasingly popular.

With the expected introduction of the Future Earnings and Employment Record (FEER), as recommended in *Enterprise for All* (Young, 2014), the emphasis on graduate destinations and employability, and the importance for HEIs to measure, report and demonstrate that they are meeting student demand in this area, are likely only to increase. For smaller, specialist and regionally focused institutions, their close-to-market position, intimate connections to specialist sectors and focus on widening participation may stand them in especially good stead.

## Beyond the headlines

“It is clear that these facilities, in conjunction with the excellent teaching are providing your students with exactly the sort of skills which employers are looking for and enabling them to pursue a successful career of their choosing. The wide range of courses on offer at the College demonstrates the vitality of the rural economy, something you and your students are doing a great deal to support.”

Secretary of State, Defra, in letter following visit to Landex institution

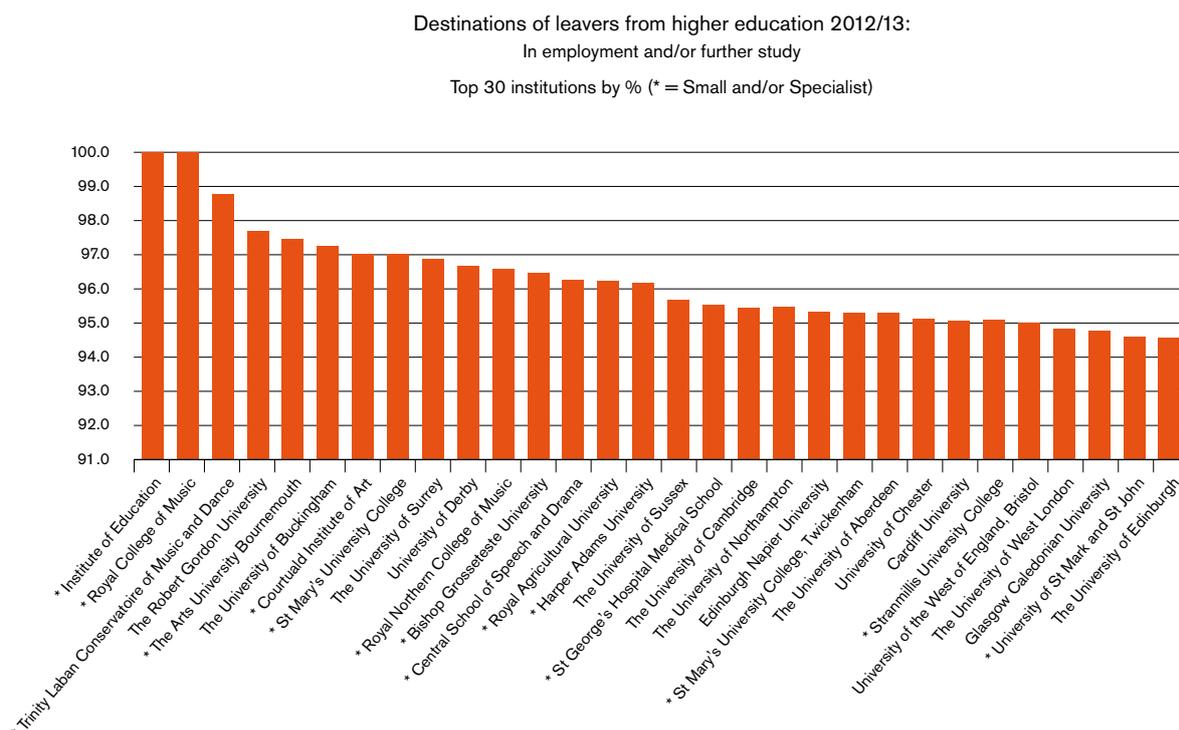


The frequently negative coverage engendered by the publications of the annual graduate employment statistics tends to feed the discussions and debates about the value of universities, whether there are too few jobs for too many graduates, or even too many universities. However, if one looks beyond the headlines and sound-bites, the pessimistic employability narrative does not stand up to close scrutiny. Westwood (2012) points out that a closer look at the data reveals that an average of 90% of those graduates looking to do so are in work or further study after six months, and that this figure is both very similar to the proportion (c. 87%) of all people of working age who have a degree and are in employment. That figure is also significantly higher than the current employment rate (c. 70%) for all people of working age. Westwood also makes the important point that the remainder in both the latter cases are not all unemployed; the unemployment rate is much smaller because large numbers of people are voluntarily outside of the labour market because, currently, they are unable or might not want to work, for example because they are raising families (Westwood, *Employability: Congratulations to the best and 'worst' performers...*, 2012).



The DHLE data is not without its limitations, particularly for those industry sectors (for example, the creative industries) which often involve longer term trajectories for establishing a recognisably 'graduate' career path, which may encompass internships, volunteering and non-graduate work before employment in the desired role; as such the baseline statistics are best viewed alongside longitudinal studies of graduate destinations, such as *Creative Futures* (Hunt et al., 2010). That notwithstanding, it is worth noting that of the 160 institutions included in the DLHE data on graduate employability six months after graduation, the top three HEIs, and 15 of the top 30 HEIs, in the 'employed and/or further study' category are small and/or specialist institutions (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Destinations of leavers from higher education 2012/13: employment or further study**



Source: HESA, 2013

Alongside institutions that are the 'usual suspects' in this list, such as those delivering specific professional education that is pursued primarily for employment, there is a significant proportion of highly specialised and smaller institutions focusing on subject disciplines as diverse as art, performing arts, agriculture, medicine and music.

As Littlemore (2013) points out, subjects such as nursing, midwifery, technology and agricultural sciences are all amongst the subjects with the highest employment rates, and that "the success of these subjects reflects the success of the diversity and of specialism in our higher education sector – a message which bears more repetition".

The statistics suggest that employers within specialist sectors and professions value the graduates that smaller and specialist institutions train, and this is reinforced by the fact that graduates from specialist institutions often go on to work within the same sector in which they have been trained. The data also suggests that graduates from these smaller and specialist institutions possess skills and attributes that are valued by employers whatever sector they are in.

The diversity of destinations, and therefore the transferability of the skills developed by students of such institutions, is well illustrated by those achieved by graduates of dance, drama and music.

### **A specialist portfolio**

"The quality of teaching is exceptional. Teachers and lecturers are experienced performers and practitioners that care about each individual dancer. They are committed to getting the best out of us and providing us with the tools to sustain a fulfilling career. In addition to the excellent internal support and training, we are given a wide range of master classes from current industry professionals of a high calibre."

Rebecca Whaley, third year BA Hons in Dance, LIPA

A key feature often cited by employers in regard to these more specialist institutions is that their graduates are job-ready, in part because lecturers and technical staff are often current practitioners and industry experts with many years of experience within their sectors, whether in agriculture or in art and design. Practitioners can provide a mix of both practical knowledge but also a ready-made set of contacts from within industry which is leveraged to the benefit of students' enterprise education.

Many newer universities are also looking to build longer term strategic links with alumni. The benefits of engaging with alumni are wide-ranging and include graduates returning to their alma mater either as client, teacher, mentor or supporter offering key opportunities for growth and development to current students, and advocating for the specific range of skills and aptitudes that resulted from their experience at the institution.

An interesting feature of this work with alumni is that while those 'old' alumni who have become successful and well-established in their careers or professions can bring a wealth of insight and experience, there can be a large experiential gap between them and the students they are talking to. However, when students meet recent alumni who perhaps have set up a new enterprise, or are at the beginning of what may be very successful careers, then there is a useful recognition that 'that could be me in a year or two'. Industry contacts, via alumni and current teacher / researcher practitioners, contribute to a variety of activities that enhance courses and learning opportunities, imbuing them with a tangible 'real-world' experience. Live projects are used routinely in creative courses to afford students with opportunities to respond to design and business problems faced by small businesses; mentoring programmes, such as the SEEDs initiative at Ravensbourne, enable students to meet and learn with professionals from industry who may have overcome creative and personal challenges to meet their professional goals; and student enterprise initiatives, such as Royal Agricultural Entrepreneurs, are not only supported and recognised by important networks in the sector, but are encouraged by industry as a useful insight into the enterprising minds of the future.

It is an incontrovertible fact that today's graduates will enter a vastly different economy and labour market than previous generations. The days when graduates were virtually assured of lifelong careers in an environment dominated by large employers are long gone. As Young (2014) reports, 95.5% of firms in the UK today employ fewer than 10 people, and an individual's working life will most likely consist of a serial or even parallel portfolio of jobs and careers, ranging from global multinationals to small and micro-employers. Young also highlights what are probably the most remarkable and interconnected changes: the remarkable growth in micro-businesses and the "staggering" rise in self-employment which is now at an all-time high of 4.6m (ONS, 2014).

"To put this into context, self-employment has contributed nearly half of the 780,000 new jobs created in our economy over the last year. The rise in entrepreneurial activity has amounted to 600,000 more microbusinesses (firms with 0–9 employees) in existence than there were when the recession first began in 2008, and 40% more than at the turn of the century. When we look into the individuals involved, and the reasons for turning to self-employment and small firms, we are seeing a growing positive attitude and motivation to start up a business."

Young, 2014, p. 7



The responsibilities and obligations of the employability agenda are now taken seriously by all HEIs, but the structural changes in the economy, labour markets and patterns of work pose considerable challenges to institutions and policy-bodies whose discourses, practices and expectations are predicated on outmoded models of employability. The significant success of small and specialist institutions in terms of graduate employment in recent DHLE statistics can be explained – at least in part – by both their close strategic and operational links to the relevant professions and industry sectors and their ability to adapt quickly and effectively to the structural changes in employment.

### **An enterprising diversity**

The emphasis on employment and employability in higher education has been accompanied by an increasing focus on enterprise and entrepreneurship, both of which are recognised as important strategic drivers of economic growth. **Enterprise education** is the process of equipping students (or graduates) with an enhanced capacity to generate ideas and the skills to make them happen. **Entrepreneurship education** equips students with the additional knowledge, attributes and capabilities required to apply these abilities in the context of setting up a new venture or business (QAA, 2012).

The need for a greater emphasis on enterprise and entrepreneurship education is obvious and compelling. Teichler in his report for UNESCO, *Requirements for the World of Work* (Teichler, 1998), while pointing out the disparities between what employers stated to be the case about skills and their recruitment and selection policies, did find an “amazing consensus” among employers on the attributes they expected graduate recruits to possess. The labour market requires graduates with enhanced skills who are flexible; able to contribute to innovation and creativity in a global economic environment; able to cope with uncertainty; have interest in lifelong learning; are socially sensitive and have good communication skills; are able to work in teams; are able to take on responsibilities... are enterprising and entrepreneurial.

The QAA's guidance on enterprise and entrepreneurship education actively seeks to promote teaching and learning strategies that will:

- foster enterprising and entrepreneurial mindsets
- develop enterprising and entrepreneurial graduates
- help students develop enterprising and entrepreneurial capabilities that can be applied in a range of contexts
- encourage students to consider new venture creation and self-employment as valid graduate career options
- help students develop an awareness of intellectual assets and enhance their capacity to manage and exploit them
- enhance graduates' lifelong learning skills, personal development and self-efficacy, allowing them to contribute to economic growth and to society more generally.

QAA, 2012, p. 3



## Case Study 1:

### School Direct Initial Teacher Training Scheme, University of St Mark and St John

The University, in partnership with the Diocese of Truro, is developing a School Direct Initial Teacher Training Scheme. Led by senior headteachers, the scheme will be the first of its kind in the country. The first cohort of students starts in September 2015 and will undertake training places in schools and academies across the diocese.

There are 44 church schools and academies in the diocese, ranging from very small village schools to larger town-based schools, and a range of school-to-school partnerships including several large multi-academy trusts. Trainees will be based at one lead school and will have the opportunity to work and train in different settings so that they gain a varied experience. As well as receiving outstanding general training to become a primary teacher, the trainees will gain specific insight into teaching in schools whose values-base is founded on their Christian ethos and distinctiveness.

Truro is the first diocese in the country to develop a School Direct partnership in this way with the local church-foundation university. Schools require a healthy flow of new entrants to the teaching profession, and those who vocational preference is towards teaching in a church-school environment need ways in which this can be expressed and developed.

Diocese of Truro, 2014

## Case Study 2:

Hannah Dolan, BA (Hons) Culinary Arts Management, University College Birmingham (UCB)

I always knew I wanted to become a chef and so I came to an Open Day at UCB and met lecturers and thought it was fantastic. I loved the atmosphere and the facilities; the CAM course at UCB was exactly what I was looking for.

For me, the most enjoyable module was Small Restaurant Management. Unlike a lot of other universities my friends have gone to, the lecturers and staff were really supportive and the small class sizes meant that lecturers knew you and the atmosphere felt like that of a large family. For my placement I travelled to Vermont, USA and I believe it was the most valuable part of my course. The independence and experience it provided me with were invaluable. It was not easy and I had to work extremely hard but I would definitely recommend every student to do a placement. I have been working as a Senior Development Chef for Bakkavor for two years now and my role entails managing five other chefs. A typical day would be making up new products, carrying out trials in factories and meeting with large supermarkets to create new products and gain feedback.

Studying at UCB created my interest in the industry and before studying here I wasn't aware of the food development sector. Therefore I believe UCB had a major influence on where I am today and where I want to be in the future.



Higher education institutions are responding to the genuine need for provision in this area as well as the political imperative to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship by developing infrastructures – people, systems and environments – that support and enhance enterprise and entrepreneurship education across the curriculum. Importantly, as in other areas, the diversity of the sector means that the provision is structured differently across different providers. Some institutions offer standalone degree programmes in the subject area, while others offer parts of awards. Most institutions offer some form of experiential learning, training and development as part of the curriculum and/or careers education and/or preparation for employment. HEIs also are increasingly interacting with businesses, the local community and the wider community through incubators, innovation exchanges, knowledge-transfer hubs, spin-offs, relationships with science or business hubs, and consultancy services. In addition to all this 'official' activity, many students gain practical skills and experience through participation in extra-curricular schemes, such as volunteering, membership of student societies or participation in start-up schemes.

The smaller universities, regional and specialist institutions were early adopters of the enterprise and entrepreneurship agenda. In the case of the smaller universities and regional institutions, their close proximity to and understanding of particular sectors or local/regional economies meant that they felt keenly the obligation to ensure that not only did their graduates have the skills and

attributes successfully to enter the labour market and forge careers, but also that employers were confident in institutions' ability to deliver those skills and attributes.

#### Employability and Enterprise

### Case Study 3:

#### A world first in specialist higher education, University College of Football Business (UCFB)

UCFB, with campuses at Wembley Stadium and Turf Moor, Burnley, is the world's first HEI dedicated to the delivery of undergraduate degrees in the operational and business facets of the football, sports and leisure industries; global multi-billion-pound market sectors that require high-calibre professionals with specialised administrative, creative, management and operational capabilities.

For the ball to roll off the centre spot, it requires co-ordination from many market sectors such as finance, law, media, marketing, human resources, supply chain management and logistics. There are well over 100,000 jobs in the UK today that depend on football. UCFB knows these industries well. Senior, respected figures from the football business and wider sports industries are on its Advisory Board and develop the curriculum and teach in the lecture theatres. Partner organisations,

many of them global companies, provide not only unrivalled insights in seminars but also access to work placements that give practical experience to students as they develop their CVs. New opportunities consistently present themselves in these expanding global industries. The football and sports industries have proved robust regardless of the economic climate over the last 100 years. This stability is embraced by UCFB bringing clubs, sponsors, established elements of the industries and new initiatives in higher education together to develop and promote graduate employability.

Adapted from UCFB prospectus 2015–16

### Employability and Enterprise

#### Case Study 4:

##### **Student entrepreneurship, start-ups, and Solent Creatives, Southampton Solent University**

The University is in the top 20 for both numbers of starts formed in the previous year and longevity (HEBCI, 2014). Considerable effort and investment have enabled the University to substantially enhance what was originally an extra-curricular programme by bringing it into the curriculum and focusing it on creative industries where student need and demand are highest. Around 50% of students at Solent University study creative subjects, with large cohorts in fashion, journalism, media and music, where freelancing and self-employment are well established, normal career routes.

By setting aside seed-corn funding, adding pre-incubation and incubation space, enhancing existing mentor support and introducing new networking and training opportunities, we have created an analogue for the 'innovation pipeline' sometimes advocated for formal university (staff) spin-outs and science parks in more research-intensive environments but in this case focused on students and graduates. We have ensured these innovations are integrated with organic change emerging 'bottom up' and

'middle out' from schools, through Solent Creatives. This agency was developed to match student talent with the needs of micro-businesses and SMEs for creative input, and thereby enhance both student employability and business sustainability. It now works with Hampshire Chamber of Commerce on knowledge-transfer projects to enhance wider business productivity and runs popular units on freelancing and business planning in the curriculum.

### Employability and Enterprise

#### Case Study 5:

##### **Consultancy projects as an alternative to dissertation, Regent's University London**

The MA Luxury Brand Management programme at Regent's University London was validated in 2010 with the choice of a dissertation or a 'real-world' consultancy project as the final 60-credit module.

As an alternative to a dissertation, the consultancy project is typically undertaken by a small team of two to three students (although it can be undertaken by an individual student) who resolve a real luxury brand or management issue for an actual client. The output has three parts, a client report (10,000 words), a reflective report (2,000 words) and a 30-minute presentation.

Students' reflective reports have highlighted employability-related issues as key reasons for their choosing the consultancy project option. When considering feedback from consultancy project participants, of particular note is the enhanced confidence they express. It is also interesting to see that, in addition to the perceived benefits of direct client interactions, many of their comments reflect on team working and how they learned from each other as well as from their clients and academic supervisors.

## Creative employment

“The UK’s creative economy is one of its great national strengths, historically deeply rooted and accounting for around one-tenth of the whole economy. It provides jobs for 2.5 million people – more than in financial services, advanced manufacturing or construction – and in recent years, this creative workforce has grown four times faster than the workforce as a whole.”

NESTA, 2013, p.7

For the small, specialist institutions – especially those (many) specialising in the creative and performing arts sector – the enterprise and entrepreneurship agenda is particularly significant in a key sector of the economy in which the dominant employment modes are self-employment, micro-businesses and SMEs, and where serial and parallel portfolio careers are the norm.

The creative industries<sup>4</sup> are one of the UK’s most important economic drivers, and as a significant proportion of the smaller universities and, particularly, the specialist institutions are arts-based institutions, it is worth taking a closer look at that sector in higher education in regard to employability. The context in which those institutions are operating is one in which, in 2013:

- the creative economy<sup>5</sup> employed 2.5m people (one in 12 of the workforce), which is greater than financial services, advanced manufacturing and construction
- employment in the sector currently is growing at almost twice the average for employment as whole in the UK
- the gross added value (GVA) of the creative industries was £76.9bn and accounted for 5% of the UK economy
- for the third year running, the creative industries’ proportion of total UK GVA was higher than the year before, and at 5% is now at an all-time high
- the GVA of the creative industries increased by 9.9% between 2012 and 2013, higher than any individual economic sector
- the GVA of the creative industries was 4% of total UK GVA in 1997, but had increased to 5% in 2013.

DCMS, 2015

<sup>4</sup> DCMS defines the following sectors as the creative industries: advertising and marketing; architecture; crafts; design (product, fashion and graphic); film, TV and video; radio; photography; IT, software and computer services; publishing; museums, galleries and libraries; music performing and visual arts.

<sup>5</sup> DCMS distinguishes between the creative industries (see footnote 4 above) and the larger creative economy, which includes the contribution of those who are in creative occupations outside the creative industries.

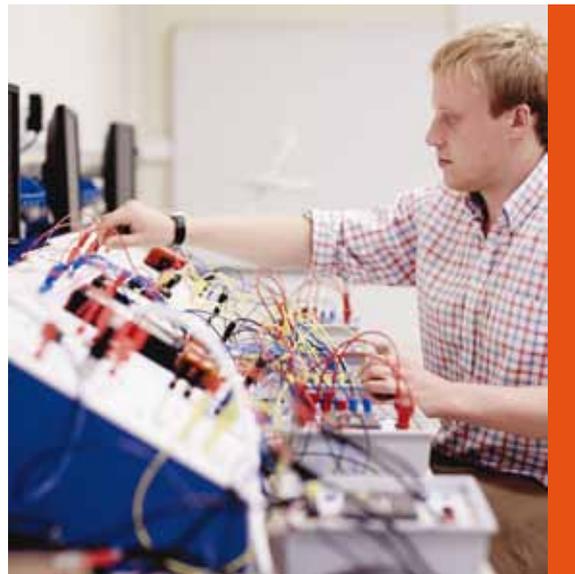
The figures and statistics above reflect a sector whose strengths include:

“a long track record of creative excellence backed by public funding, a decent tradition of technology creation, diverse and dynamic cities housing world-class cultural institutions (most obviously, but not only, London), a public that is amongst the world’s most sophisticated in its use of digital technology; strong, long-established and diverse corporate players in digital... and a start-up ecosystem ranked top in Europe.”

NESTA, 2013, p. 11

In the face of all this positivity and hard evidence, notwithstanding observations that there is no room for complacency (Bakhshi/NESTA, 2014), it is somewhat ironic that the performing and visual arts tend to be considered unsuitable as ‘sensible’ educational and career choices. The evidence points very firmly to the fact that the graduates from those arts-focused smaller universities and specialist institutions are armed with a plethora of the skills and attributes that not only make them eminently employable across a whole range of sectors, but also – in a sector where 70% are self-employed – provide them with the confidence successfully to set out and set up on their own (Kleiman, 2003).

One of the constant tropes in the discussions and debates about the relationship between higher education and the world of work is the concern, voiced by employers, that too many graduates are leaving higher education lacking a number of the essential skills required by the market-driven, consumer-led, image-focused, technology-intensive, rapidly changing world of employment in the 21st century. While there are genuine concerns about skills, some caution is required, and a number of labour market researchers have pointed out the disparities between what employers state to be the case about skills and their actual recruitment and selection policies.



Arts-focused smaller universities and specialist institutions provide students with precisely the types of experiences and skills that are valued by employers. Through the arts, students learn to innovate and think creatively; qualities that are valued by many new and expanding industries. Arts programmes provide opportunities for the exploration and formation of values, the development of feeling and sensitivity and an opportunity to develop social skills that do not occur as naturally in other disciplines. Arts and performance practices, especially when they are public facing, develop self-confidence, time-management and decision-making skills, problem-solving and negotiation skills, and the ability to come up with creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

Examples of embedding enterprise skills in a creative education can be identified throughout the UK’s internationally renowned specialist creative institutions: LIPA, which established and integrated a successful enterprise and entrepreneurship strand into and across all its curriculum areas from the start of its operation as an HEI in 1995; Falmouth University’s Academy for Innovation and Research, which facilitates collaboration with a range of partners including businesses, charities and public sector organisations; and the new degree course in Performance and Creative Enterprise at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.



There is an increasing recognition that training to be an artist is not incompatible with training to be employable, and that art-making and performance-making are skills-rich areas of enterprise. Of particular interest and challenge is that two contradictory trends have emerged: a demand for specialisation will increase within many sub-sectors, and an increasing shift towards multi-skilling, flexibility and adaptability. As Metier, the national training organisation for the arts and entertainment sector noted, “what are needed are magnificent generalists” people with high-level skills and experience that cross boundaries (Metier, 2001, p. 5). An example of that ‘magnificent generalist’ attribute can be seen in the list of recent graduate destinations compiled from information provided by some dance, drama and music HEIs (Case Study 6). They were asked to provide examples of where their graduates had moved into employment outside the dance, drama and music professions.

The smaller universities and specialist institutions are particularly adept, though a lot more could be done, at promoting and enabling ‘crossing boundaries’. Their environments, and the people and systems that operate within them, enable them to exploit the many and rich opportunities for skills development that the creative and performing arts have to offer thus enhancing and broadening the skills of their students.

## Employability and Enterprise

### Case Study 6:

#### ‘Magnificent generalists’: performing arts graduate destinations, several institutions

Some recent dance/drama/music graduate destinations (outside professional performing arts)

- **Regional Manager, Haulage Company**
- **Assistant Director, Culture Lab, University of Newcastle**
- **Police Officer, London**
- **Project Manager, Linn Records, Research & Development**
- **Graduate Management, Diageo (multinational beverages conglomerate)**  
**Theatre & Performance student appointed to a lucrative three-year graduate management post** *“She was in competition with 100 or so other graduates especially from Business due to her particular skillset, and as a result of psychometric testing/ extensive series of interviews etc... having studied theatre gave her a distinct advantage in the process.”*

- Head of Woodwind, Brass & Percussion, Ampleforth College
- Artist Manager, Hazard Chase Artist Management
- Education Assistant, BBC
- Festival Design & Management
- Company Director: started an ecologically based cosmetics company
- Administrator, Sound and Music
- Applications Co-ordinator, Performing Rights Society Foundation
- Communications Officer, Scottish Music Centre,
- Marketing Manager, Hip Hop Label
- Director, Internet radio & media company
- Corporate Data Management, Santander Group
- Designer, Theme Parks
- Curator, Museum
- Team Leader/Duty Manager, Titanic Belfast
- Games Software Developer
- Project Manager/Media Strategist, Price Waterhouse Cooper *"apparently they wanted someone who thinks differently and had street cred"*
- Project Manager, Trocaire, Catholic charity for global poverty
- Head of Sales, INVMA
- Social Media Strategist
- Developer, Computer Games
- Journalist
- Supply Chain Management, Bombardier Aerospace
- Administrator, Art in Hospital

- Co-ordinator, Sri Lanka music school charity
- Duty Manager, Battersea Arts Centre
- Learning Officer, London Transport Museum
- Fundraising Manager, Macmillan Cancer Support
- Large-scale Events Manager, Canadian Government *"I've organised royal visits, state funerals, etc... It's always been on the merits of the incredibly valuable skills I learnt studying drama."*
- Assistant Producer, Seabright Productions
- Music Teacher in four educational establishments
- Teach English as a Foreign Language, Thailand
- Listings Producer, The Press Association
- Associate Producer, Lyric Hammersmith
- Producer, Roundhouse Social Media
- Community Executive for BBC3
- Assistant to MP, Houses of Parliament
- Intern at BAFTA
- Corporate Fundraiser, Cancer Fund for Children *"I use relationship-building skills, collaborative working skills and creative skills every day. Lots of presentations and cold calling too, so the skills I developed at uni come in handy!"*
- Visitor and Audience Developer, PEEL Heritage
- Recruitment Consultant in three recruitment companies
- Press O, Department of Health and Social Care
- Health and Fitness Consultant, National Skills Academy



- Creative Learning Facilitator, Hull Truck Theatre
- Digital Music Marketing Intern, Nostalgia Music Catalogue
- Programme Co-ordinator, Best Practice Network
- Practical Arts Technician, local authority
- Costume and Dressmaker, BBC Productions
- Healthcare Co-ordinator
- Travel Agent
- Voiceover Artist

# Research and Innovation

## Key Points

- Institutions across the entire sector continue to demonstrate their ability and capacity to address successfully some of the most pertinent and challenging questions facing society in the 21st century.
- The diversity of research increasingly reflects the diversity of the UK innovation chain that looks to higher education to enrich international, national, regional and local research and innovation cultures.
- The nation's ability to compete globally with respect to new ideas, models and products is increasingly dependent on the growth and activities of SMEs and micro-businesses and the strength of the links in that innovation chain.
- The smaller universities and specialist institutions possess a strong (and strengthening) track record of generating successful translational research, with benefits to the complex UK research and innovation supply chain.
- Strong evidence (see for example the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014) points to the fact that the smaller and specialist institutions – embedded in international research and innovation systems, and working with public and private partners in specialist sectors including food security, the creative industries, heritage sectors, health, and social innovation – are increasing and sustaining their contributions to regional and sectorial economic growth.
- The creativity, diversity and impact of the research across the sector demonstrate the importance of funding excellence wherever it is found.
- All institutions now realise, perhaps more than ever, that the best teaching and learning are always informed and improved by excellent research.
- In the smaller universities and specialist institutions, research and teaching are inextricably linked, and that link forms part of the DNA of the institutions in this sector. As a consequence, a research–teaching nexus is created that is diverse, eclectic and ultimately collaborative. It is an environment in which creativity and entrepreneurship combine with rigorous and innovative methods of enquiry to produce not only excellent research but also excellent teaching.

# Research and Innovation

“A modern higher education system must be built on research but there is an agenda beyond that.”

Estelle Morris, 2015

In September 2014, 27 PhD candidates and early career researchers from 17 HEIs met for two intensive days in London to explore how and why researchers engage with audiences beyond the academy. They met and talked with experienced researchers, discussed research projects with potential collaborators, reflected on their research skills, and considered how they might better disseminate research. They also visited the British Library to talk about their current HE initiatives and collections, and spent an afternoon at the Wellcome Trust and Collections, where they designed potential cross- and interdisciplinary collaborative projects that were then pitched to, and critiqued by, the Trust’s staff.

There is, of course, nothing particularly special about researchers meeting to discuss research. However, what made this particular meeting of research-focused minds noteworthy was that it was the first summer school organised by CREST (the Consortium for Research Excellence, Support and Training<sup>6</sup>), and the event was co-designed by the heads of research from 21 institutions. CREST was established in 2009 as a sub-association of the representative body GuildHE with initial seed-funding from HEFCE matched by institutional subscriptions (it is now self-sustaining), and developed with the aim of linking the ‘islands of research excellence’ identified in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) of 2008. CREST’s main purpose is to draw together researchers working in clusters located in the smaller universities and specialist institutions across the UK. Taking as its premise

the principle that high-quality research should be recognised and funded wherever it is found, regardless of the size of the institution, the Consortium provides an innovative model for furthering research excellence, developing joint infrastructure and promoting institutional and disciplinary collaborations. Crucially, it achieves this by engaging a cross-section of the research community – vice chancellors and principals, heads of research, academics, students and support staff – at each of its member institutions in strategic discussions about the potential for research to have a positive benefit for society.

“Through its collaborative projects, symposia, skills and subject-based seminars and Virtual Research Environment, the Consortium works to enhance the research cultures of its member institutions, and to communicate their ongoing achievements to stakeholders, the wider Higher Education community and the general public. This activity is particularly important given the key role played by the specialised, translational, entrepreneurial and socially innovative research undertaken at CREST Member institutions, which is central to ensuring local, regional and national growth in the UK.”

CREST, 2015

<sup>6</sup> [www.crest.ac.uk](http://www.crest.ac.uk)

Research and innovation are the beating heart of higher education. They ensure the generation of new knowledge on which the UK's international reputation for excellence rests. Continuous creation and dissemination of this knowledge, as well as the high-level skills that research engenders in academics, students and private sector collaborators, also underpin current – and future – economic growth.

According to Research Councils UK, the creation of new knowledge that combines excellence with impact is “the life-blood of economic growth and societal progress” (RCUK Strategic Vision, 2011-15, p.2). These institutions have been particularly adept at leveraging the relatively small pots of research funding (e.g. quality-related research (QR) funding<sup>7</sup>) that enable them, often in innovative ways, to integrate research into the academic, civic and enterprise-informed culture of the university or college. Through translational downstream research, the smaller, specialist and regional HEIs are also especially well positioned to take advantage of a significant ‘missing link’ between blue-skies research and innovative applications in local and national industry, to which they often have longstanding links. Their strategic compatibilities and shared goals with sectors reliant on highly skilled graduates mean that the collaborations and partnerships that they engage in can be particularly fruitful not only in terms of research, innovation and knowledge exchange but also by generating new knowledge, discourses and practices in the curriculum.

In a period when government support for the innovation and research potential of micro-businesses and SMEs is undergoing a substantial recalibration towards a more ‘activist’ or ‘interventionist’ approach, a major GuildHE-led project – *Innovation systems and the role of small and specialist institutions*<sup>8</sup> – explored and demonstrated the ways in which specialist and locally facing HEIs embedded in international



research and innovation systems can increase and sustain their contributions to regional and sectoral economic growth. The project, undertaken in partnership with the OECD, demonstrated how – through working with public and private partners in specialist sectors, including food security, the creative industries, health, and social innovation – these diverse institutions possess a unique potential, enabled in part by new technologies, to collaborate with diverse bodies of users: students, graduates, emerging and established businesses, and providers of public services.

Through a selection of case studies drawn from smaller universities and specialist institutions in the UK and in the OECD nations, the project identified best practice in engagements with micro-business, SMEs, and the public sector, working in particular localities and regions, to drive innovation and increase impact through direct collaboration in: teaching, learning and research; expertise and consultancy; curriculum and skills development; graduate talent; networks; and facilities.

<sup>7</sup> Research in UK higher education is funded via a ‘dual support’ system. Under this system (which varies slightly between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), the funding councils provide annual funding for institutions in the form of a ‘block grant’, known as the quality-related (QR) research grant. This is based largely on performance in the various periodic research assessment exercises, most recently REF 2014. This supports their research infrastructure and enables ground-breaking research in keeping with their mission. In the other part of the ‘dual’ system, the various research councils, charities, the European Union and government departments provide grants for specific research projects and programmes. The smaller universities and regional/specialist institutions tend to rely mainly on the QR grant.

<sup>8</sup> Brockhurst, Miller and Westwood (2014). The full report is available at [www.guildhe.ac.uk/blog/innovation-systems-and-the-role-of-small-and-specialist-higher-education-institutions/](http://www.guildhe.ac.uk/blog/innovation-systems-and-the-role-of-small-and-specialist-higher-education-institutions/)

## Research and Innovation

**Case Study 7:****Picasso Peace and Freedom: the impact of a curated exhibition, Norwich University of the Arts**

Picasso Peace and Freedom was presented at Tate Liverpool, the Albertina Museum in Vienna, and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in 2010-11. This AHRC-supported research project and subsequent major exhibitions and seminars presented a significant and controversial reassessment of the impact of Picasso's politics on his artistic output. The curators successfully negotiated the loan of significant Picasso works including 50 oil paintings, 10 sculptures, 70 drawings and prints, and 150 archival documents, photographs and posters. A total of 711,905 people visited the three exhibitions, gaining a new understanding of the artist's engagements with major political developments of the 20th century, and with artists, activists and leaders of countries that remain centres of tension today. As an example of the economic impact of the research, the exhibition brought direct visitor spend of almost £5m to the city of Liverpool, in which it was initially presented.

The three exhibitions attracted additional investment from the European Regional Development Fund, the Spanish Embassy Cultural Office, the Spanish and Andalucian Tourist Offices, Fundación Almine Y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso Para El Arte, Dumont Publishing House Köln, Superfund, Signa Holdings, Agrana, Cerha Hempel Spiegelfeld Hlawati, Deloitte, and Bodum. The exhibition aroused worldwide interest, discussion and controversy. UK media coverage included Night Waves on BBC Radio 3, Front Row and Today on Radio 4, and The Art Show on BBC2. The project was featured as a case study, 'Supporting the cultural sector', in the AHRC's Annual Report 2010-11 and is one of Research Council UK's 'Productive Economy' case studies.

Adapted, with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

## Research and Innovation

**Case Study 8:****Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE), Harper Adams University (HAU)**

WiRE is the only national UK membership organisation to promote, support and develop rural business women. Research conducted at HAU during the late 1990s identified that a significant number of farm diversifications were being established by women, but they were coming up against a number of barriers, including lack of access to finance and appropriate business support.

WiRE aims to help female entrepreneurs network, share best practice and take part in higher level skills programmes of direct relevance to the rural context of their business. Through a range of services, including training, workshops and conferences, WiRE helps rural women start, develop and grow their businesses and aims to aid innovation and growth through enabling these tiny businesses to associate with each other.

WiRE has been cited in best practice case studies including the UK government's Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise and Stairways to Growth, and an OECD regional study. The WiRE approach has featured in international work in South Africa, China and the Middle East and as an exemplar of 'socially innovative women entrepreneurship' in an OECD/CEI joint international conference in Slovenia. In January 2013, WiRE's Director Polly Gibb was awarded the OBE for services to rural enterprise.

[www.wireuk.org](http://www.wireuk.org)

The 18 projects highlighted in the project report demonstrate clearly that the institutions involved are very much focused on real-world applications and challenges that are relevant to current political, social and economic concerns such as:

- stimulating enterprise and innovation in HEI strategies
- contributing to regional agendas for growth
- linking globally as a result of smart specialisation
- developing smart, creative and sustainable businesses
- meeting the challenges and priorities in the health and well-being agendas
- cultivating entrepreneurship.

### Research networks

CREST is just one example of universities working together to develop strategic research partnerships. Others networks include N8 (eight research-intensive (RI) universities in the North of England), M5 (five RI universities in the Midlands), GW4 (four RI universities in the South West) and Eastern Arc (three RI universities in the South East). These networks enable the universities involved to play to their respective strengths with the aim of maximising their important role in the research and innovation ecosystem.

CREST facilitates the sharing of best practice with respect to support for and management of research, thus enabling research students and staff to create new networks<sup>9</sup> built on discreet specialisms and shared expertise. CREST also allows for joint investments in infrastructure, for example through CREST Collections<sup>10</sup> (the network's open access repository), which makes it possible for the public to gain direct access to emerging 'pure' and translational research.

The CREST/GuildHE case studies in *What is research-led teaching?* (Miller et al., 2012), as well as the significant evidence of research impact amassed by UK institutions and HEFCE through REF 2014, demonstrate clearly that the

smaller, specialist and regional institutions are particularly adept at creating dynamic networks and ecosystems that enable different communities of practice – in business and academia – to engage in mutually beneficial research and knowledge transfer. They illustrate the keen desire to bring universities and businesses and, importantly, the thinkers, the makers and doers in those enterprises, closer together. Furthermore, projects and strategic partnerships seek to “stir institutions, businesses, and students out of status quo bias – either by providing them with examples that make it easier for them to move beyond the status quo or by growing their organisational capital” (Todd, 2014, p. 286).

The networks – orientated towards key social and sectoral challenges – generate positive externalities in terms of business appreciation of the skills that university students and staff hold and academic and student understanding of the needs and aspirations of these businesses, in particular SME and microenterprises, which might otherwise be harder to understand.

These research networks contribute to the development a dynamic ecosystem in which all the different participants mutually benefit from their shared participation. The smaller universities and the specialist institutions, because of their strong local and regional links, have been particularly effective in developing successful and sustainable projects that derive tremendous benefit from and contribute greatly to these emerging and established ecosystems.

“What all of these ecosystems have in common is that they bring together practitioners and academic experts. This acts both to ground research in the latest experiences in ‘the real world’ and makes it easier for business to draw upon this research.”

Todd, 2014, p. 287

<sup>9</sup> For example, the Countryside and Agricultural Interdisciplinary Research Network (CAIRN), and networks examining links between religion and social media, and collaborations between clinicians and artists that produce research outputs that help patients to understand the effects of illnesses on their bodies.

<sup>10</sup> <http://collections.crest.ac.uk/>

## Research and Innovation

**Case Study 9:****Breaking the silence, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama**

This research project explored the challenge of how to deal theatrically with trauma. It involved a series of research enquiries into whether theatre can enable individuals to 'work through' traumatic events of the past. These insights were tested in the production of a verbatim theatre play - *From the mouths of mothers* – about child sexual abuse, which in turn became a vehicle for significant impact. The play offered an exemplary model for focusing on the family, enabling both families and carers to gain greater understanding of sexual abuse trauma. New ways of training carers emerged. In collaboration with the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing at King's College London, the research insights were used to develop, test and implement a new form of nurse and social worker training, involving both trainees and their tutors. A subsequent workshop in January 2012 assembled specialists from Barnardo's, Camden Carers, Mosac, Royal Holloway, University of London, University of East London, Queen Mary University of London, and the Nightingale School. For over 60% of participants, this training changed their thinking about and approach to the practice of care. The impact of this research and work has been, and remains, significant for families affected by child sexual abuse, informing as it does the training of social workers and nurses.

## Research and Innovation

**Case Study 10:****High-intensity training, Abertay University**

Research at Abertay University into sport and exercise has explored novel training strategies. High-intensity training involves bouts of exercise that last for no more than 30 seconds. This makes it an exceptionally time-efficient training paradigm with sessions lasting no more than 15 minutes (of which only 1–3 minutes is exercise).

This research has added to the public debate on exercise duration and provided significant data and information to the sports industry. This includes publication of the findings and recommendations in magazines (e.g. *Men's Health*), books (e.g. *The High Intensity Workout*, published by Dundee University Press 2012) and television shows (e.g. *Horizon*). In addition, the research has informed coaches (ice hockey and rugby union) and people working in the fitness industry (personal trainers), and has contributed to the wider debate on exercise for health.

Adapted, with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

**Research excellence**

Excellence in research is not determined by the scale but by achieving a deep understanding – and ultimately a direct insight – into a difficult question. While the large research-intensive universities tend to dominate discussions about research policy, league tables and funding, they by no means hold a monopoly on excellence and innovation. A diverse range of institutions have shown that they are particularly agile when it comes to matching their expert knowledge, gleaned in their laboratories, clinics, studios, classrooms, farms and libraries, to real-world situations with the aim of designing practical solutions for public and private sector partners locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Often they are able to achieve meaningful collaborations because staff and students – from undergraduates to postgraduates – bring their own experience of work and industry to bear on their research. Mature research students and staff brought in from industry possess both passion and perspective, enriching the academic culture for colleagues and potential partners. The diversity and engagement of the student and staff cohorts ensure that researchers understand the context for their research, and so can anticipate its potential applications.

While the excellent research undertaken at these institutions rarely secures national recognition from policymakers, there is clear evidence that such institutions are in high demand as partners in international projects. Colleagues in emerging economies in South America, Asia and Africa not only recognise the importance of the research undertaken in specialist institutions, but also know and welcome the fact that important factors such as communication and collaboration are usually more straightforward and uncomplicated when dealing with smaller, specialist institutions. Governments from around the world send experienced professionals to the agricultural specialists to study and work as partners on projects focusing on food security. Large, established businesses and emerging SMEs send their staff to train with specialist researchers. Established research teams at well-funded, research-intensive universities seek out the expert advice of colleagues in these more focused institutions. The important findings and outcomes of these many and diverse research projects and collaborations enhance and in some cases save lives in the UK and around the world.

### **Research impact**

A significant and relatively recent factor in the way research is both regarded and undertaken in the UK is the emphasis on 'research impact'. While impact always been assumed or implied in relation to research, the REF of 2014 made impact an explicit and important criterion for the demonstration of research excellence.



This emphasis on impact was welcomed by the research centres in the smaller universities and specialist institutions as an opportunity to demonstrate and showcase their models of collaborative and engaged research.

These institutions were particularly pleased that the 2014 REF allowed institutions to articulate their various pathways to impact with respect to HE-derived research, and to benchmark their activity with colleagues across the sector. Their success in leveraging embedded relationships with businesses and organisations in key sectors – from public health, food security and education to heritage and the creative industries – was confirmed by their impact ratings<sup>11</sup>.

The inclusion of a measure of research and innovation impact in the exercise allowed the sector, institutions and individuals to determine and discuss how a more joined-up research and innovation system facilitates the constant exchange of new knowledge between higher education and existing and emerging industry. Many would welcome an increase in the percentage that impact contributes to their overall score in future REFs, because this important funding stream allows them to support direct interactions between themselves, and collaborations that benefit businesses, students and ultimately the UK as a competitive global innovation player.

<sup>11</sup> [www.guildhe.ac.uk/blog/small-and-specialist-universities-among-world-leaders-in-university-research/](http://www.guildhe.ac.uk/blog/small-and-specialist-universities-among-world-leaders-in-university-research/)

## Research outcomes

The diversity of research in higher education mirrors not only the diversity of UK higher education as a whole but also, importantly, the diversity of the UK innovation chain that looks to higher education to enrich national, regional and local research and innovation cultures. The strength of the links in that innovation chain determines the nation's ability to grow new ideas and new business.

All HEIs are attempting to maximise partnerships and the transferable value of knowledge and resources. Crucially, there is no standard model, and – faced with a rapidly changing economic and industrial landscape inflected by local, regional, national and international developments – institutions across the sector are constantly developing new models to sustain interactions and collaborations, benefit localities, and find ways in which existing resources might be joined up to the benefit of diverse stakeholders.

The smaller universities and specialist institutions possess a strong and strengthening track record of generating research, with benefits to the complex UK research and innovation supply chain. This is particularly the case with respect to collaboration between higher education and SMEs/micro-businesses where the similarities and synergies between smaller and specialist HEIs and this vital element of the business-innovation sector make them natural partners and create the potential for research and skills collaborations.

There is ample evidence that the research undertaken by the smaller universities and the specialist institutions, working with public and private partners, is increasing and sustaining their contribution to economic growth. This is particularly the case in important specialist sectors such as the creative industries, food security, health and social innovation. It is in sectors such as these that institutions demonstrate their unique potential – enabled in part by new technologies – to collaborate with diverse bodies of users: students and graduates, business and providers of public services.

## Research and Innovation

### Case Study 11:

#### Food safety, quality and sustainability, Royal Agricultural University (RAU)

Food safety and quality management developments have resulted from a combination of major food incidents, government regulations and industry initiatives. This has led to the development of private standards that have become quasi-regulatory on industry. The body of evidence aggregated from the RAU's research and consultancy activities has provided a unique global perspective on food safety regulation and management. Governments, NGOs and industry have used this evidence to further national and global strategies for food safety management including primary production. Current research is now centering on two key areas: strategic management of risks in primary production and public-private partnerships supporting agriculture. The research into food safety, quality and sustainability focused on understanding the mechanisms, opportunities and constraints of private standards and strategies to identify, measure, manage and communicate risks (hygiene, quality, environmental, social, economic or reputational) when encountered. This has helped governments (e.g. in Australia and Canada) and industry to develop their own strategies to manage such risks and has led to further research and impacts in the following areas:

- government and industry guidance on global environmental, social and market standards for agriculture and food industries
- farmer engagement linked to risk perceptions and management
- emerging policy on sustainable livestock in the UK.

Adapted, with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

## Case Study 12:

### High-speed marine craft – benefits to users and industry, University of Chichester

Government-funded research into the design of high-speed marine craft from a human-factors perspective has achieved significant international impact for organisations and personnel including the UK MoD, US Department of Defense, Canadian, Dutch, and Australian Defence Forces, US Coastguard and the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI). The research was instrumental in the launch of a marine consultancy and a commercial training organisation, with the latter delivering research-led training courses worldwide. Moreover, the research contributed to improved working conditions for military and RNLI personnel through changes in work practices, equipment design and procurement and the revising of an international whole-body vibration standard.

The research led directly to the creation of two commercial ventures, STRResearch (STR) and FRC International. Both companies make direct use of the findings of the University's research in this area, and Dr Myers continues to contribute to STR's consultancy activity and the training given by FRC. In addition, QinetiQ Ltd, a world-leading defence technology and security company (with 9,000 employees worldwide) and partner on the EPSRC-funded project have directly benefited through first-hand access to data and analysis from the human-factors research, which they have subsequently utilised in their operations, for example in the demonstrator PASCAT landing craft developed for the MoD in 2010.

Adapted with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

## Linking research and teaching

“Debates about Higher Education reform have often concentrated on teaching quality and incentives to improve it. At other times we have talked about world-class research and how it will drive economic performance and the global reputation of our universities. Ministers regularly talk about teaching institutions and research-intensive universities, but less often about how the two important agendas come together.”

Gaskell et al., 2012, p.4

“If you don't teach, what's the point? And if you don't do research, what do you know?”

Ishiyama, 2013

In June 2014, two students stood at the front of the Roof Gardens in London's Kensington and received their first prize award in the Creative Challenge<sup>12</sup> competition. Inspired by the decline of the fishing industry in the Kent town of Deal, Loren Beven and Katryn Saqui, both fine-art students at the University of the Creative Arts (UCA), picked up the £1,000 top prize for their project to transform a fishing boat into a cinema for showcasing creative films. Katryn and Loren now hope to continue their project, creating unique cinema experiences in unusual surroundings.

UCA's Creative Challenge, which is run in partnership with the École Supérieure d'Art et Design Le Havre-Rouen (ESADHaR) – an art and design institute in Le Havre, France – is now in its ninth year. It aims to prepare students for their own ventures and make a positive difference to the world of enterprise. Explaining why the Creative Challenge was an important project

<sup>12</sup> <http://creativechallenge.info/new-home-page/>

for UCA students to be involved with, Head of Creative Challenge Uwe Derksen said:

“Within a creative arts institution you can utilize a very innovative tool – which is arts practice – to enquire about problem and find solutions, it’s a different way of approaching problems to typical business approaches. [It creates] an understanding of what mistakes we are making through our actions, the business models we introduce, the technology we want to introduce and the needs we might introduce. Through the Creative Challenge we’re raising that awareness.”

Derksen, 2014 [online]

Many HEIs and academics characterise their pedagogic practices (learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum) in a symbiotic relationship with research. But the link is not automatic, nor is it always explicit, and it has to be built systematically into the discourses, practices and cultures of the institution. What is clear is that institutions now realise, perhaps more than ever, that the best teaching and learning are always informed and improved by research and that they contribute to shaping research issues and agendas.

### Enhancing research and teaching

Evidence for the increasing desire to ensure there is that symbiotic, dynamic link between teaching and research can be seen in the strategic plans of a number of those institutions in which, often for historical reasons, the research focus and intensity (though not, necessarily, quality) have not matched the level and quality of teaching.

For example, Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln started life in 1862 as an Anglican teacher-training institution for women. It now has 2,000 students, and a portfolio of c. 15 subject areas from archaeology, drama and childhood

studies to sport, theology and visual arts. Its strategic plan for 2014–19 provides the rationale for significantly enhancing its research profile (Case Study 13).

## Research and Innovation

### Case Study 13:

#### Research in the strategic plan, Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU)

Our main aim is to:

Transform BGU to a ‘research informed’ university with a demonstrable increase in research outputs of improved quality.

In order to achieve this aim we will:

- establish a research centre and offer a full programme of research education resulting in measurable change in research identity, culture and environment
- create cross-disciplinary research units with a focus and growth of expertise established in key areas aligned to our academic portfolio, business and enterprise development and external research networks
- support staff and students to engage with research in all areas of institutional activity and embed research leadership within management roles
- increase BGU’s contribution to local, regional, national and international research partnerships
- grow the proportion of research income generation and grant capture
- work towards achievement of Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) and for enhanced submission to Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2020 with a critical and sustainable mass of active researchers, research outputs and outcomes.

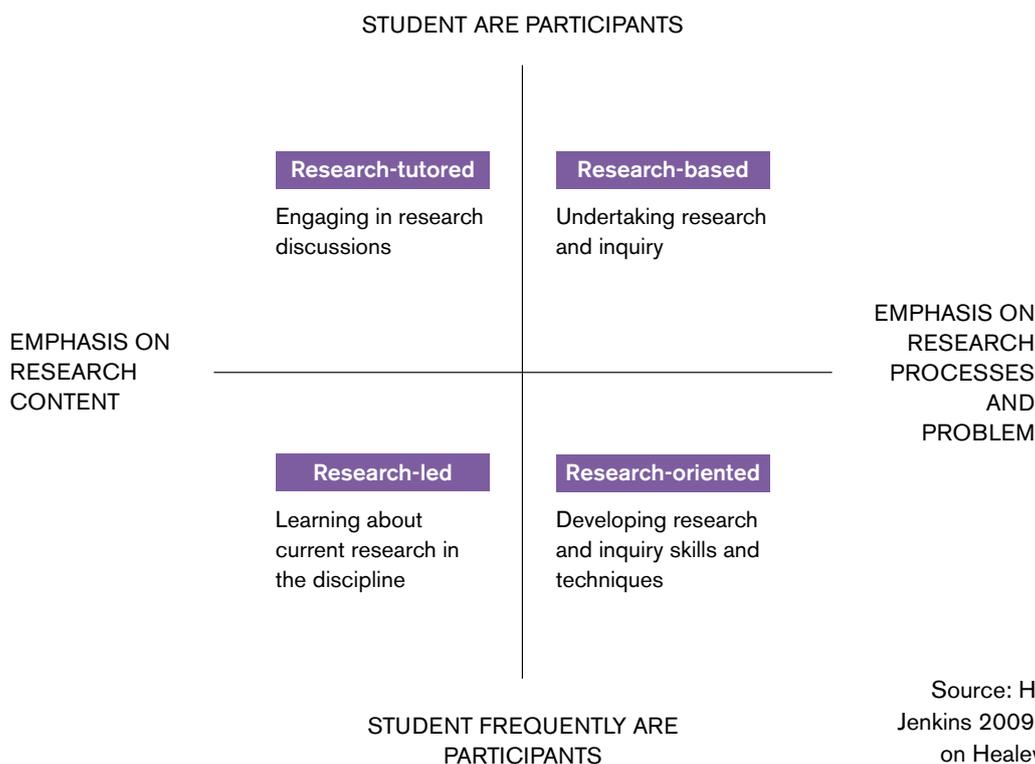
Adapted from BGU Strategic Plan 2014–19

Also in 2014, the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD), a consortium of eight of the leading performing arts conservatoires<sup>13</sup>, took a strategic decision to raise its research profile and to place research firmly alongside teaching as a core activity. While there has always been a pool of staff that are engaged in their own disciplinary research and who have presented or published their findings, the focus – for obvious reasons – has normally been on practice-based research rather than theoretical or historical research. CDD's research strategy reflects its commitment to the view that research and knowledge exchange are, and need to be, inextricably linked with learning and teaching, and that these activities complement one another. CDD's primary goal is to move its research practice to a level where it can be measured against sector standards, for example using the 'units of assessment' from the recent REF, or future equivalent. It is particularly keen that its research activities, often in partnership with major industry 'players', feed into the courses of each of its eight schools by enhancing delivery and enriching the educational experience of its students.

The relationship between research and teaching takes various forms, and Healey and Jenkins (2009) provide a useful diagram (Figure 2) to illustrate the ways the research–teaching relationship is conceptualised. There are four categories: research-led, research-tutored, research-oriented and research-based. The latter two represent the best integration of research and teaching, as they encourage students to become active agents and partners in research rather than passive recipients. However, Healey and Jenkins (2009, p. 7) stress that “all four ways of engaging students with research and inquiry are valid and valuable, and we think curricula should contain elements of all of them”. They recommend that more time and effort should be focused on the top half, but not to the exclusion of the other two forms.

While policy and practice in each of the four areas are by no means uniform, it is important to avoid classifying institutions as either teaching-focused or research-focused. Such a view is “to the detriment of our universities and our students. It will also hold back the development of local economies and key sectors where understanding and applying new knowledge is crucial” (Gaskell et al., 2012, p. 5).

**Figure 2: Concepts of the relationship between research and teaching**



Source: Healey & Jenkins 2009, based on Healey, 2005

<sup>13</sup> Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Central School of Ballet, LAMDA, London Contemporary Dance School, National Centre for Circus Arts, Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

## Impact through creativity, critique and application

The debates surrounding how research, teaching and learning interact within the academy and the wider cultural landscape resonated with the many and varied communities of academic practice located in the small, specialist and regional HEIs across the UK. The 2008 RAE and the 2014 REF demonstrated that researchers in this sector were producing work of excellent quality in subject areas including agricultural sciences, creative and performing arts, education, humanities, health and ageing, sport, technology and theology, while also working within institutions where teaching and learning remained paramount.

“In these institutions, and for this group of individuals, research had never been treated as something apart from or above their work with students. Indeed it informed their teaching and practice, often leading to new and exciting approaches to how students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and their lecturers go about knowledge and skills creation.”

Miller et al., 2012, pp. 6–7

In the smaller universities, regionally focused and specialist institutions, research and teaching are inextricably linked, and that link forms part of the DNA of the institutions in this sector. Similarly, it is impossible to disaggregate the roles of teacher, researcher and practitioner. This is not just a matter of inclination or choice: it is also one of necessity. These institutions do not have the capacity, unlike some of their larger research-intensive counterparts, to separate research from teaching by, for example, employing staff on research-only contracts. As a consequence, a research–teaching nexus is created that is diverse, eclectic and ultimately collaborative, and one in which the need for the academy, students and wider society to inform each other and work together is a potent driver. It is an environment in which creativity and entrepreneurship combine with rigorous and innovative methods of enquiry to produce not only excellent research but also excellent teaching.

## Research and Innovation

### Case Study 14:

#### Immersed in teaching and research: Dr Colin B. Price, National Teaching Fellow, University of Worcester

Colin is Head of Computing at Worcester University. His entire career has been in teaching and research, spanning physics, mathematics and biosciences at HE and initially in schools. Driven by a passion for research and teaching as well as historical work, Colin first worked on “how best to teach our ‘digital generation’ to learn to program, to code”. He also continued his previous work on creating immersive environments using computer game technology to support novel ways of learning across the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects. Thanks to two significant grants from Google, Colin mounted two Google symposia, and was able to train some 40 or more regional teachers. He also worked with colleagues in the Institute of Education to establish a subject enhancement course for training prospective teachers of computer science.

The NTFS award has enabled to Colin to engage creatively and to great effect in innovative and original new work. His work has had a definite impact on the University. It led directly to the University becoming a member of the BCS Network of Excellence, working to support school teachers. His work has also had a definite impact on his department. There is now a significant special interest group considering how to introduce more computer science and mathematics into the curriculum.

Adapted with kind permission of the HEA

# Local and Global Impact

## Key Points

- Higher education institutions, no matter what their size and where they are located, act as centres and disseminators of knowledge capital. That knowledge capital is usually focused on particular areas of expertise, and tends to cluster in particular locations.
- All institutions across the HE sector are now – to a greater or lesser extent – part of a global community of research, teaching and professional practice with many and varied relationships and networks with global partners and clients.
- There are many examples of research and innovation in the smaller universities and regional and specialist institutions having a significant local and global impact. The work these institutions engage in – across many spheres of activity – demonstrates that the range and quality of that work are informed and enhanced by the quality and connectivity of the various local and global relationships and connections.
- The worldwide reputation of the UK's higher education system makes it a premier destination for internationally mobile students. There are many reasons, including reputational and educational, but what is clear is that not only do international students attend HEIs right across the type and range available, but that diversity, and therefore choice, is a critical factor in their choosing a UK institution for their studies.

# Local and Global Impact

“HEIs... have a very important role to play in making places attractive to investors, businesses and talent. They also have very strong economic footprints – the institutions, their staff and students spend a great deal of money locally – from transport infrastructure to the evening economy.”

Dandridge and Box, 2013, p.3

## Local values, local connections

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) in Cirencester is just one of the many specialist institutions that, due to their location, have a particular and close affinity to and relationship with the economic and social fabric of their local community. RAU is a large local employer, and the vast majority of its 850 students move into the area, supporting the local economy both in the short- and long term. RAU's students regularly volunteer in local community projects, organise events in and for the community, work with local councils and businesses on community-oriented schemes, and regularly undertake a 'big' project, such as the revamp of the walled garden at Kemble railway station in 2013.

While all HEIs could claim something similar, the local economic, social and cultural impact of those institutions such as RAU is particularly significant. There is a growing recognition of, and interest in, the role of HEIs as local and regional 'anchors'. Evidence of this can be found in the call that HEFCE issued in September 2014 for bids to its Catalyst Fund “in line with its own and government priorities”. One of the three specific areas the Catalyst Fund was focusing on was 'Institutions as anchors', and HEFCE was seeking

projects that:

“enhance the nature, range and value of this important role to institutions and deepen our understanding and available evidence. This includes institutions' part in securing investment and talent for their localities, and positioning themselves in local economic growth plans.”

HEFCE, 2014

The BG Futures project at Bishop Grosseteste University (see Case Study 15) is an example of the innovative role and impact that a 'local-facing' institution can have.

According to the Local Government Association and Universities UK report (Dandridge and Box, 2013, p. 5) on the local impact of higher education, HEIs:

- attract people and businesses to an area
- develop knowledge bases
- create local demand for housing, services, transport and amenities
- are major consumers of skills as well as producers
- are internationally wired – academics have global connections which can be harnessed for wider civic benefit
- are part of the 'civic brand' – globally recognised and major hooks for inward investors.

**Case Study 15:****Lincolnshire and BG Futures, Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU)**

The work of BG Futures (the Careers, Employability and Enterprise Department of BGU) highlights the innovative role and impact of a specialist institution in its locality. The BG Futures Business and Enterprise Centre offers 15 incubation start-up units, virtual tenancies, three conference rooms, and business start-up and exhibition space. BG Futures is working closely on phase 2 with the local enterprise partnership and responding to new policy priorities for HEIs such as those outlined in the Witty Review and HEFCE's HE Cold Spots agenda.

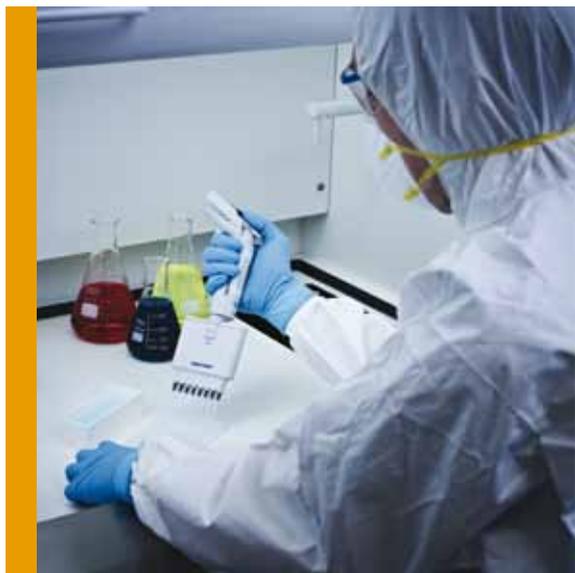
This project, which has gained approval from the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP), is an important strategic activity. The emphasis on work with local communities and the development of social enterprises and community interest companies is aligned with the institution's ethos and values as a member of the Cathedrals Group of universities. The project will help address the significant HE Cold Spots in Lincoln and Lincolnshire by adding distinctive HE provision in the area. The impact of SMEs on Lincolnshire's local economy is great. A specific goal in the LEP strategic plan is to increase support for SMEs to collaborate with larger organisations, HEIs and each other to take advantage of funding opportunities for skills, innovation and technology they cannot access alone.

**Case Study 16:****Clinics for people with HIV/AIDS, British School of Osteopathy (BSO)**

As part of its award-winning portfolio of community clinics, the BSO provides two clinics dedicated to providing osteopathic treatment free for people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. The Chapman Clinic runs from its clinical centre near London Bridge, and BSO also runs a weekly osteopathy clinic at The Royal Free Hospital in North West London. Osteopathic treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS can bring improvements to quality of life by addressing the particular musculo-skeletal symptoms of the illness and complementing the drug therapies used to manage HIV/AIDS, and may also help in coping with the side effects they can bring. Treatment in both clinics is provided by osteopathic students supervised and supported by tutors who are qualified osteopaths, and who have specialist interest and experience in HIV/AIDS, drug therapies, associated pathologies and the musculo-skeletal presentation of HIV/AIDS.

"There can still be lots of problems in dealing with HIV. The osteopathy I get is helping to keep things under control. I don't know what I would have done if this clinic had not been started: it is fantastic that my doctor steered me here," said Sally, a patient at the BSO's clinic at The Royal Free Hospital.

Adapted, with permission, from the BSO website, 2015



HEIs, no matter what their size and where they are located, act as centres and disseminators of knowledge capital. That knowledge capital is usually focused on particular areas of expertise, and tends to cluster in particular locations. The reason for this is that “knowledge capital is at least partly embodied in people and their networks of relationships and contacts, which provide them with capacities to solve problems and create new kinds of knowledge” (Conway et al., 2009, p.24). Conway and colleagues observe that there are two different but linked consequences to this. One is the phenomenon of clusters – for example, creative, medical, scientific and technological – in increasingly large world ‘capital cities’.

The other consequence, which has particular relevance to the smaller, specialist, local institutions that are the subject of this report, is the realisation that there is a regional dimension to innovation, and that constructive and dynamic knowledge-exchange relationships can be easier to develop locally than globally. For many of those institutions, there is an interesting and challenging local–global tension.

‘Those relationships and connections tend to involve one or more of the four types of active engagement identified by Benneworth et al. (Benneworth, 2009):

- Research: which involves engagement with external stakeholders as a core element of the knowledge-generation process
- Knowledge exchange: exchanging existing knowledge between the university and external stakeholders
- Services: delivering services to external groups that they find useful and/or demand
- Teaching: involving external stakeholders (small business and community) in teaching activities that meet their needs and improve teaching quality.

While the four categories are a useful conceptual and typological distinction, for many institutions, particularly the small, specialist, regional institutions, the likelihood of any particular activity falling easily into just one of those categories is extremely unlikely. The reality is that active local/global engagements are normally “delivered through ‘bundles’ of activities in which the different kinds of activity are not easily distinguished” (Conway et al., 2009, p. 72).

### **Global values, connections and impact**

The local and global work and research of Norwich University of the Arts and the Royal Agricultural University are just two of many examples of small and specialist institutions not only having a significant local impact but also a global one. While the international dimensions of research have been accepted and expected for decades, more recently HEIs in the UK (as with those in many other countries) have sought to ‘internationalise’, responding to the pressures of globalisation, the need to achieve competitive advantage in the international knowledge economy and to enhance international strategic positioning. Internationalisation has many facets that include international student and staff mobility, partnerships and collaboration in research and teaching, and the internationalisation of curricula.

Given that technology now makes it as easy to communicate with someone on the other side of the world as with a colleague down the corridor (sometimes easier), opportunities for international collaboration have expanded exponentially. While transnational research, and the work and links that flow from it, has for a long while been regarded as integral to the work and success of the large, research-intensive universities, all institutions across the HE sector now regard themselves – to a greater or lesser extent – as part of a global community of research, teaching and professional practice.

#### Local and Global Impact

### Case Study 17:

#### The Boat Project at the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, Falmouth University

A participatory public artwork commissioned as a part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad, the Boat Project's impact reaches a national audience of 440,698 while a global audience of many millions encountered the work via print and broadcast media. Outreach activity engaged over 100 schools while some 30 public artworks were commissioned in response to the project, underlining its impact on local authority cultural provision and the professional fields of contemporary performance, theatre and public art. The project created 22 paid positions, 80 volunteer positions and an ongoing commercial venture.

Adapted, with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

#### Local and Global Impact

### Case Study 18:

#### Ben Brown and the Balloons project, Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA)

In 2010, while a music student at LIPA, Ben and a small team of LIPA volunteers worked with over 50 young people in Merseyside to create a new song version of Balloons and connected this with the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and particularly with the

seven values underpinning the Games. After the resounding success and response from the first project, Ben started writing more songs addressing the values of the games. Many LIPA students joined in and the project expanded across North West England. In 2011, Balloons was selected, out of over 2,000 Inspire projects, to perform for the Nations and Regions Group for London 2012. It then won a Gold Medal in London 2012's National Podium Awards, and was officially recognised as the UK's most successful student-led project inspired by London 2012, beating over 230 other nominated projects in the UK.

In July 2012, Ben graduated from LIPA with a First Class Honours degree and received, from Sir Paul McCartney, The Beatles Story Prize and The Human Spirit Award. Over its three-year period, the project has seen more than 100 volunteers from LIPA involved, alongside students from Liverpool Hope University. In 2013, Ben went to Buckingham Palace to collect a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Volunteering Award from the monarch in recognition of his work with the Balloons Project.

#### Local and Global Impact

### Case Study 19:

#### Christian pneumatology in global perspective: mission as joining in with the spirit, Leeds Trinity University

Professor Kirsteen Kim's research has had significant impact on global discourse on theology of mission across the world's churches mainly through the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Edinburgh 2010 project. In particular, her research helped to establish the pneumatological framework for mission theology evident in the Common Call of Edinburgh 2010 (6 June 2010) and the new World Council of Churches' statement on mission and evangelism, *Together Towards Life* (5 September 2012), which may be summarised as "finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in".

Adapted, with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

### International students: global attraction, global benefits

The worldwide reputation of the UK's higher education system makes it a premier destination for internationally mobile students. In 2013/14 there were 435,500 (19%) international HE students (other European and from outside Europe) in the UK's public HE sector; and 48,000 students (51%) in the private sector. They comprise a major part of UK HE provision with potentially large-scale impacts on the HE sector and the UK itself.

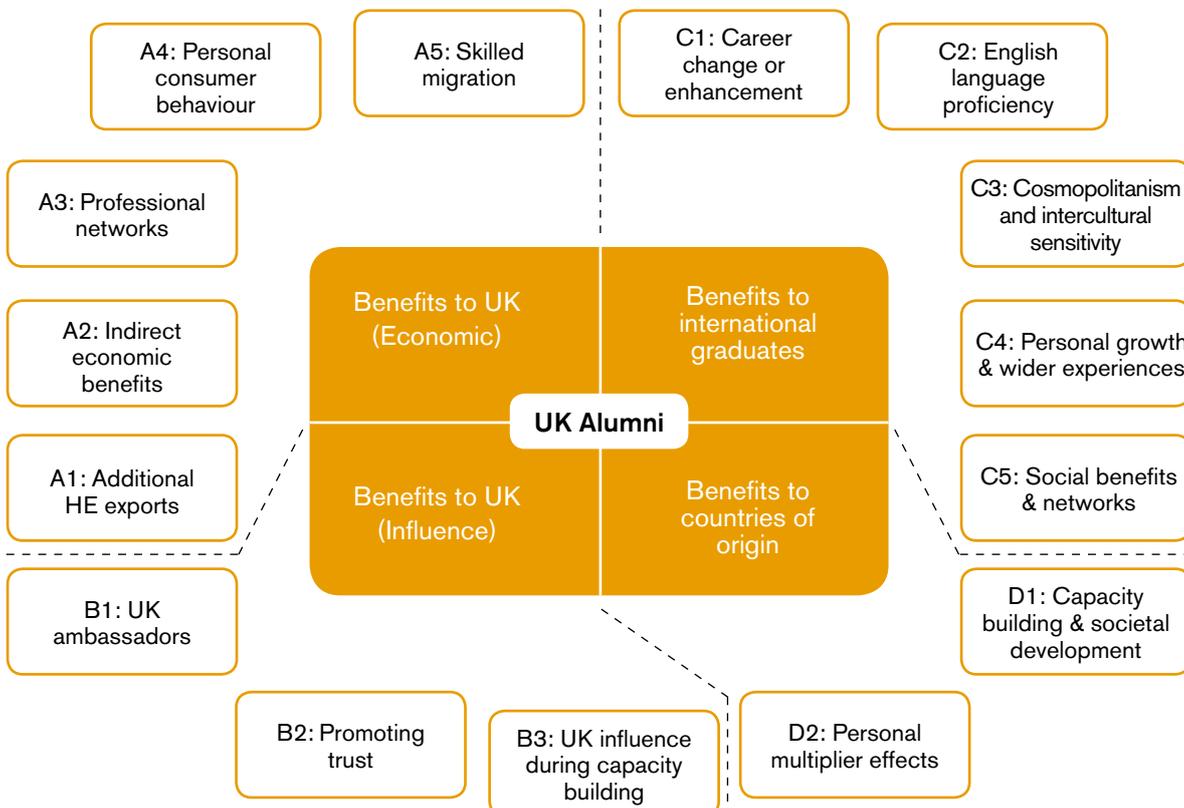
International students are hugely valuable to the UK. In purely economic terms, they brought an estimated annual income of £14bn in 2008/09, £8bn of which went directly into the higher education sector (Conlon, 2011). However, the real value to the UK is so much greater than a cash injection to the economy; there are also numerous and wider 'soft power' benefits, such as the cultural, social political capital that flows from the relationship of international students and UK higher education. The value of that capital



continues and multiplies as these students graduate, enter employment and develop a wide range of career paths. As alumni, the ways in which they benefit the UK and UK higher education institutions are as varied and diverse as the alumni themselves and the institutions they attended.

The report *The Wider Benefits of International Higher Education in the UK* (BIS, 2013) details many of these benefits (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Benefits of international higher education in the UK**



Source: BIS, 2013, p. x



There are many reasons, including reputational and educational, that explain the appeal of the UK for international students. What is clear is that not only do they attend HEIs right across the type and range available, but that diversity, and therefore choice, is a critical factor in their choosing a UK institution for their studies.

International alumni from UK institutions are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences no matter what type of institution they attended or what programme of study they followed:

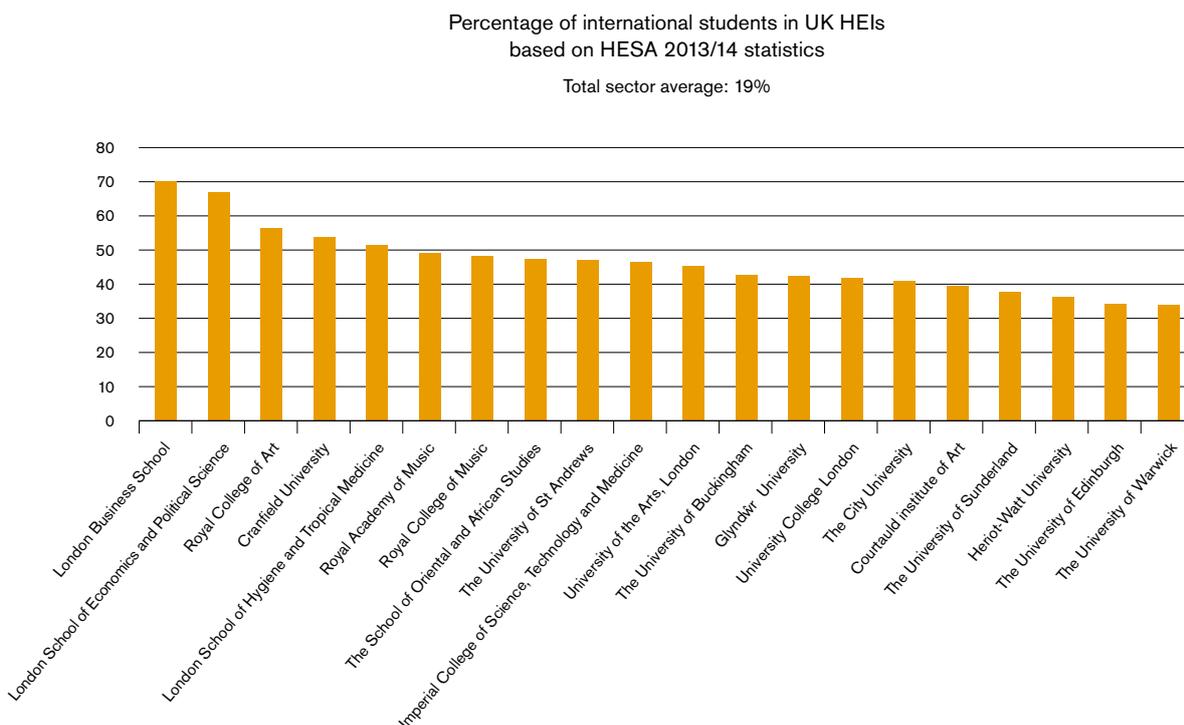
“Their positive views were based partly on perceptions that their own motivations had been reasonably well founded: a distinctive pedagogy in which challenge, independent thought and critical thinking were invited; a safe and welcoming environment; and subsequent career enhancement impact for most. Many expressed

admiration for the tolerance they witnessed in UK society, including the cosmopolitan nature of their HE student body. Collectively these factors instilled in the alumni strong bonds to the UK.”

BIS, 2013, p. xiv

The success and reputation of the UK’s world-leading research-intensive universities continue to attract international students in significant numbers. However, it is worth noting in respect of the attractive diversity of the UK’s HE sector that in relation to their relative size, it is the smaller and specialist institutions, that also include world-leading institutions amongst their number, where one can find the largest percentage of international students (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Percentage of international students in UK HEIs, 2013/14**



Source: HESA, 2014

## Local and Global Impact

**Case Study 20:****Centre for Economics and Ecosystem Management, Writtle College**

The Centre is the product of six years of international collaborative research and sector-based consultancy between Dr Peter Hobson from Writtle College and Professor Pierre Ibisch of Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (Germany). Activities include developing a core body of internationally recognised research in the fields of non-equilibrium thermodynamics, complex systems science and adaptive management, and using the research to work with conservation organisations around the world to resolve significant environmental problems. The sponsors include GIZ, Germany and WWF Germany, and operations extend from Central America to Ukraine, Russia, South Eastern Europe, China and Korea.

Two main projects were launched in 2012. The first relates to the Centre's research expertise in forest ecosystem function and is a contract to co-ordinate a UNESCO World Heritage European Beech Project. The goal is to establish World Heritage status for a network of prime sites for European beech across its entire range of the continent. The second contract is to apply MARISCO to the process of planning for a UNESCO transboundary biosphere reserve in the Altai Mountains across the Russian and Kazakhstan border.

Adapted, with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

## Local and Global Impact

**Case Study 21:****The Stanislavski Centre, Rose Bruford College**

The Centre, founded 2007, responds to the Stanislavski legacy and post-Stanislavski approaches to acting and provides a research-driven facility promoting and developing a new field of Stanislavski Studies in an international context.

The Centre acts as a conduit, enabling professional practice and scholarly research to interact, enrich and inform each other. The Centre, guided by a distinguished advisory board, includes an archive of photographic, printed and audio-visual materials and hosts an annual programme of events open to the public. In 2012, the centre launched an e-journal, *Stanislavski Studies*.

The Stanislavski On Stage Exhibitions at the National Theatre and Pushkin House were all open to the general public and accompanied by a series of contextual lectures from academic colleagues from the UK, USA and Russia, and were available to a public audience. At the National Theatre the exhibition was located in the foyer of the Olivier Theatre, exposing it to some 15,000 members of the public. The exhibition at Pushkin House expanded its reach to a Russian-speaking audience, and provided access to approximately 1,440 day-time visitors and 200 evening guests across the four lecture presentations. The addition of the image archive to ArenaPal has generated web-traffic amounting to more than 500 visits a month.

Adapted, with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

**Case Study 22:****Daphne Project: violence, exploitation and trafficking: service user perspectives, Newman University**

In March 2009, the Children, Young People and Family Research Centre at Newman University began a comparative study of community-focused initiatives aimed at supporting women, children and young people who have been the victims of violence, exploitation or trafficking in three regions of the UK, Germany and Romania. This research was led by Newman University using a collaborative research framework in partnership with Alice Salomon University, Germany and Lucian Blaga University, Romania. The study was funded by the European Commission's Daphne III Programme 2007–13 and was completed in February 2011.

The Centre is committed to the highest standards in scholarship, research-informed empirical work, a methodologically-based collaborative perspective with diverse communities, and academic, professional and practitioner publications. Other innovative research work being carried out includes:

- an EU-funded research project involving partners from Italy, Germany, Portugal and Austria to develop a methodology for using social documentary video as a tool for reflexively negotiating European identity
- partner involvement in the Crossing Borders international research project exploring children's play.

**Case Study 23:****Communities of practice in contemporary craft, University for the Creative Arts (UCA)**

UCA has a longstanding commitment to the history, practice and theory of craft. The research of UCA's Crafts Study Centre and International Textile Research Centre has long championed the work of craft practitioners in order to find new ways of thinking through the creative practices of making.

The Crafts Study Centre (CSC) offers a unique focus for craft research and operates as a strategic institutional and sector hub for craft-based enquiry at the interface of history, practice and theory. The numerous curated solo and group shows include CSC touring shows *Matthew Burt: Idea to Object* (2008) and *Alice Kettle: Allegory* (2010), as well as collaborative partnership exhibitions with the Ruthin Craft Centre, Wales, and the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design, North Carolina, USA. The International Textile Research Centre similarly places the practice of making at the heart of its enquiry. Its research explores continuity and innovation in contemporary textiles and has pioneered and influenced modes of cross-cultural and cross-generational exchange and collaboration for over a decade, as evident in the range and scope of its collaborative projects which include *Textural Space* (2001), *Through the Surface* (2003–05), *Cloth and Culture Now* (2008), *Cultex* (2009–11), *Transparent Boundaries* (2012–14) and *Cloth & Memory* (2012–13).

UCA research into contemporary craft is collaborative, curatorial and public-facing in nature, and as such has extended public engagement with craft through partnership with sector organisations such as the Crafts Council, and general and specialist galleries and museums such as the Sainsbury Centre and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Importantly, the research



contributes to the personal, professional and creative development of a range of craft practitioners by offering a critical platform for the professional exploration and public exhibition of their work. This work formed the core of UCA's recent presentation of impact to REF 2014, 90% of which was judged to demonstrate outstanding and very considerable impact. The EU-funded collaborative project Transparent Boundaries, led by the International Textile Research Centre, has recently been shortlisted for the Knowledge Exchange / Transfer Initiative of the Year at the Times Higher Leadership & Management Awards 2015.

Adapted, with permission, from the REF 2014 Impact Case Study

# Social Mobility and Educational Diversity

## Key Points

- Social mobility is a national priority. While all the UK's HEIs play a significant role in enabling and delivering educational and economic mobility, there is strong evidence that the smaller universities, regionally focused and specialist institutions do particularly well in adding value – in a variety of ways – to the life chances of individuals from less advantaged backgrounds.
- The Social Mobility Graduate Index 'league table' reveals that the top four institutions are smaller and/or specialist institutions, six are in the top 10 and 17 are in the top 40 places (of 153).
- Many of these institutions offer technical and professional educational opportunities for people who have not been well served by secondary education. They also offer opportunities to enter through different pathways.
- Despite the longstanding widening participation agenda, the social spread in a number of the most selective universities has actually narrowed in recent years.
- The increasing diversity of the student population and of HEIs means that transitions to and experiences of higher education are becoming more varied. Yet little attention is paid to the choices that non-traditional students make about smaller, less research-intensive institutions.

# Social Mobility and Educational Diversity

“If we want to see social progress and economic prosperity in an increasingly competitive global market, the principle we should, as a country, aim for is to ensure that all those who have the ability, aptitude and potential to benefit from a university education have a fair chance to do so.”

Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013, p.2

“All universities have a role to play in making sure that equity and excellence are friends, not enemies.”

Milburn, 2012

Social mobility in the UK is regarded as a national priority but improving it is a challenging and complex process. Education and employment are regarded as being central to our future social and economic well-being, and policymakers in particular have placed an important emphasis on higher education institutions and graduate employability. Who gains a place at university (the widening participation agenda) and how they succeed once they have left (the social mobility agenda) are critical factors in determining equal access to opportunities and a fairer society.



Fortunately, the UK has a world-leading higher education system and our universities are an excellent asset to the country and play a significant role in facilitating social mobility. The UK system also has a highly diverse array of higher education providers across the sector; in order to serve the needs of a democratic society and successfully deliver social and economic mobility, it is essential to retain and sustain that dynamic diversity. It is clear from the evidence that the smaller universities, regionally focused and specialist institutions play a key role in this national priority as they do particularly well in adding value – in a variety of ways – to the life chances of individuals from less advantaged backgrounds. Many of these institutions offer technical and professional educational opportunities for people who have not been well served by secondary education. They also offer opportunities to enter through different pathways.

It is important to consider the educational value added to these student experiences as well as the social and economic benefits. Courses such as those provided by the Open University or Birkbeck, University of London provide students with a myriad of additional prospects, and aid in the effort to assure that all groups in society have an equal opportunity of access into higher education. These additional pathways into higher education are vital to enriching the higher education system in the UK and increasing upward mobility, for without them students face a more limited and restricted outlook.

#### Social Mobility and Educational Diversity

### Case Study 24:

#### Outreach measures, St Mary's University College, Belfast

St Mary's is committed to tackling educational disadvantage and to promoting aspirations for study at higher education level for those groups who are under-represented in the third-level sector. To achieve its objectives, the College has a student support officer who works in collegiate partnership with area learning partnership programmes aimed at raising aspirations. St Mary's also works in close co-operation with schools and, where appropriate, state agencies and a range of community groups to organise the following outreach activities:

- **Taster experience:** aimed specifically at under-represented groups
- **IME Early Reading Programme:** assists nine primary schools in developing capacity-building with an objective of raising attainment in literacy
- **Higher education student links:** develops specific links between HE students and schoolchildren from non-traditional backgrounds to develop an awareness of HE and to address challenges and issues that create barriers to tertiary education
- **SciArt programme:** SciArt works with three post-primary schools and involves implementation of research findings to engage the disengaged

- **STEM primary school programme:** The six-week STEM primary programme in collaboration with Stranmillis and other ITE providers involves student teachers and approximately 90 primary schools.

#### Social Mobility and Educational Diversity

### Case Study 25:

#### Open Book project, Goldsmiths, University of London

Goldsmiths Open Book Project aims to improve equality in higher education and access for the broad population who perhaps for institutional, structural and cultural reasons would not consider higher education or would find barriers to their aspirations in approaching the higher education sector. The project works with people from offending and addiction backgrounds and those with a history of mental health problems to encourage academic ambition and for them to take up appropriate further and higher education study.

It offers them ongoing emotional and practical support throughout their course and thereafter. By doing so, it transforms their lives and those of their families. The project has enabled more than 60 adults from socially excluded groups find places on undergraduate courses at Goldsmiths and other institutions including Greenwich University; Birkbeck, University of London; and London South Bank University.

#### Access all areas

“For any given level of skill and ambition, regardless of an individual's background, everyone should have an equal chance of getting the job they want or reaching a higher income bracket.”

HM Government, 2011, p. 15

In 2013, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission published *Higher Education: the Fair Access Challenge*. The report summarised how universities had responded to the important and wide-ranging recommendations in *University Challenge: How Higher Education Can Advance Social Mobility* (Milburn, 2012) which had been published the previous year, and which found that there is a strong correlation between someone's social class and their likelihood of going to university, particularly the most selective universities. One of the key findings, and one that provoked particularly vigorous debate, concerned the most selective universities. Despite the longstanding widening participation agenda, the social spread in a number of the most selective universities had actually narrowed in recent years. The increasing diversity of the student population and of higher education institutions means that transitions to and experiences of higher education are becoming more varied. Yet educational discourses continue to privilege a middle-class way of being a student in which an 18 year-old, gaining A-level qualifications and studying a three-year full-time undergraduate degree at a Russell Group university is normalised, with a funding model to support it. Little attention is paid to the choices that non-traditional students make about smaller, less research-intensive institutions. This has a complex impact on the inter-relationship between policy and funding frameworks and institutional admissions that manifests itself in a Darwinist pressure to conform to a Russell Group-style institution to recruit these types of students.

The recommendations in *University Challenge* focused on how government and the higher education sector could make access fairer and participation wider. By focusing their attention on the relatively few highly selective universities where the most work needed to be undertaken on widening access, the reports failed to acknowledge the far larger number of HEIs where widening access and participation lay at the heart of the institution's mission, and who were succeeding in that mission. They also confirmed, no doubt unintentionally, the political

and public perception that the only universities that matter are those highly selective, research-intensive, relatively socially narrow institutions. Also, as Brown (2014, p. 4) points out, "despite the political focus on access to Russell Group universities, the most selective institutions do not necessarily deliver the best professional graduate outcomes for disadvantaged students either".

If one shifts the widening participation focus away from those highly selective institutions, then a rather different and far more positive picture emerges. As Brown states: "there are many 'less-selective' universities with wider ranges of student backgrounds that are doing a remarkable and better job of developing their graduates into professional employment" (Brown 2014, p. 32).

The Social Mobility Graduate Index (SMGI), proposed and produced by Professor Roger Brown and the CentreForum, uses existing data sources (e.g. HESA, POLAR3<sup>14</sup>) and applies a formula that seeks to give a positive weighting to those students from more disadvantaged social groups who enter, progress through, graduate and move into professional employment. The extra weighting recognises that such a journey into, through and out of higher education is generally much harder, for a whole set of reasons – some straightforward and some complex – for students from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

"The Social Mobility Graduate Index simultaneously rewards the professional success of all graduates, and recognises that this achievement is greater for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds."

Brown, 2014, p.27

Using hypothetical 'extreme cases' as illustrations of how the formula operates, an institution where all students graduating and moving into professional employment were from the most advantaged social

<sup>14</sup> POLAR3 is an area-based measure of young participation rates in HE. Classifications are formed by ranking 2001 Census Area Statistics wards by their young participation rates for the combined 2000–04 cohorts. This gives five young participation quintile groups of areas ordered from '1' (lowest participation) to '5' (highest participation), each representing 20% of the UK young cohort. Graduates are allocated to neighbourhoods on the basis of their postcode prior to entry. More information is available in HEFCE (2012).

group would score 1.5 on the SMGI scale. An institution where all the students were from the most disadvantaged group would score 3.0. An institution where there was an even distribution across the five POLAR3 quintiles (the five groupings from 'least

disadvantaged' to 'most disadvantaged') would produce a figure of 2.25. Using the formula on the actual data from the sector produces a sector average of 1.48 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Social Mobility Graduate Index with small/specialists highlighted in green**

Social Mobility Graduate Index		
1	The School of Pharmacy	1.81
2	University College Plymouth St Mark and St John	1.80
3	Ravensbourne	1.79
4	University Campus Suffolk	1.74
5	Edge Hill University	1.73
6	University of Huddersfield	1.72
7	Glyndwr University	1.71
7	The Arts University College at Bournemouth	1.71
9	University of Lincoln	1.69
9	University of Wales, Newport	1.69
11	University of Northampton	1.68
11	Leeds College of Art	1.68
11	Leeds Trinity University College	1.68
14	Coventry University	1.68
14	Norwich University College of the Arts	1.67
16	Canterbury Christ Church University	1.66
16	University of Derby	1.66
16	Institute of Education	1.66
19	Aston University	1.64
19	University of Chester	1.64
19	University of the West of England, Bristol	1.64
22	University of Chichester	1.63
22	University of Worcester	1.63
24	Falmouth University	1.62
24	University of Glamorgan	1.62
24	Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	1.62
27	Anglia Ruskin University	1.61
27	Birmingham City University	1.61
27	Bournemouth University	1.61
27	University of Cumbria	1.61
27	Harper Adams University College	1.61
27	Newman University College	1.61
27	University of Northumbria at Newcastle	1.61
27	York St John University	1.61
35	Rose Bruford College	1.60

Source: Brown, 2014

The 'league table' produced by the SMGI (see Figure 5) reveals that the top four institutions are smaller and/or specialist institutions, six are in the top 10, and 17 are in the top 40 places (153 total).

Some of the high-scoring institutions in that list do not, as Brown points out, come as a surprise. He cites The School of Pharmacy (in London), and Edge Hill University (Merseyside) with its focus – but by no means sole focus – on nursing and teaching training, as examples of institutions that are preparing their students for all-graduate sectors that are still recruiting well. Brown suggests that there might usefully be a further refinement to the SMGI that takes subject mix into account.

In the light of the political and policy focus on the highly selective institutions, an important point emerges from the SMGI. If one examines the detailed data of professional employment success by university and removes any weighting for different POLAR3 backgrounds, "it is immediately evident that professional employment success does not correlate with notions of university 'brand value'" (Brown, 2014, p. 29).

The benefits of diversity in increasing student choice and responding to student demand, widening access and raising the educational attainment of society leads to a diverse sector. A diverse sector offers a range of courses to suit a vast range of students from different ages, backgrounds, financial situations and learning styles, leading to a broader HE provision. Specialist institutions are paramount in increasing this diversity, thus cuts to specific funding streams may have unintended consequences for both student diversity and social mobility.

#### Social Mobility and Educational Diversity

### Case Study 26:

**Plymouth School of Creative Arts (4–16 free school), Plymouth College of Art (PCA)**

PCA has a long history as an independent specialist in arts, craft, design and media education in Plymouth and the South West. In 2012, PCA founded the Plymouth School of Creative Arts, a 4–16 mainstream, all-

through city centre school, which opened its primary phase in September 2013 and its secondary phase in 2014, encouraging progression for children all the way through into higher education.

The vision for the school is very much intertwined with that of PCA's ethos in response to the serious erosion of the arts and creativity in schools. The school aims to secure academic excellence through developing within pupils a sense of individual creativity and purpose in their approach to learning – opening up the practice of learning through making. As such the curriculum has a strong focus on bringing creativity into all subject areas from science through to PE, helping students work with their imagination and an open mind to achieve a foundation for later life. The school has its own guide – Creating Individuals, Making Futures – which details how it is going to achieve its unique vision. Critically, the school is a physical and cultural resource situated within the heart of the community and this in turn will provide a transformational opportunity for change in the lives of residents and children alike.

### Widening participation and access

"Widening participation to higher education is about ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can access higher education, get the support they need to succeed in their studies, and progress to further study and/or employment suited to their qualifications and potential."

BIS, 2014, p.6

The benefits of widening participation and access to higher education are largely associated with helping to increase social mobility. However, as the National Strategy for Access and Student Success notes, higher education does not achieve this on its own. A number of other institutions also have

roles to play in aiding social mobility, including schools, colleges, employers, communities and the government. There is a significant and increasing 'inequality gap' across the UK. Despite every child under the age of 18 having access to a free education in the UK, the educational sector remains decidedly unequal. In the second annual *State of the Nation Report* published by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, it is claimed that Britain is on the brink of becoming a permanently divided nation (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013).

A key solution advised is for the government, universities and employers to commit to widening participation within higher education by recruiting from a broader range of talent, which is what the smaller universities and specialist institutions do very well. According to HEFCE, institution type (e.g. inclusive, small, specialist or selective) has an important influence on the strategy and approach to widening participation, and the small and specialist institutions recruit a particularly wide range of students from different academic and social backgrounds, including disadvantaged groups. They also place a strong emphasis on supporting schools and colleges to improve the attainment levels of disadvantaged students in order to ensure they are able to meet entry requirements. In turn, this leads to distinct benefits such as a more diverse sector, which is important in meeting wider policy goals.

Many specialist institutions, particularly those in the creative arts sector, have a particular commitment to widening participation. They perform well in terms of recruitment from state school entrants (probably because of their foundation course links with FE colleges) and the recruitment of disabled students. For example, LIPA was identified as having, amongst other specialist performing arts HEIs, the highest percentage (87.4%) of students from state schools.

However, specialist institutions tend to receive limited funding from HEFCE due to their size, thus targeting widening participation groups as part of their standard recruitment activities is a comparatively significant financial commitment for them and represents a firm commitment to widening participation, sometimes stretching resources.

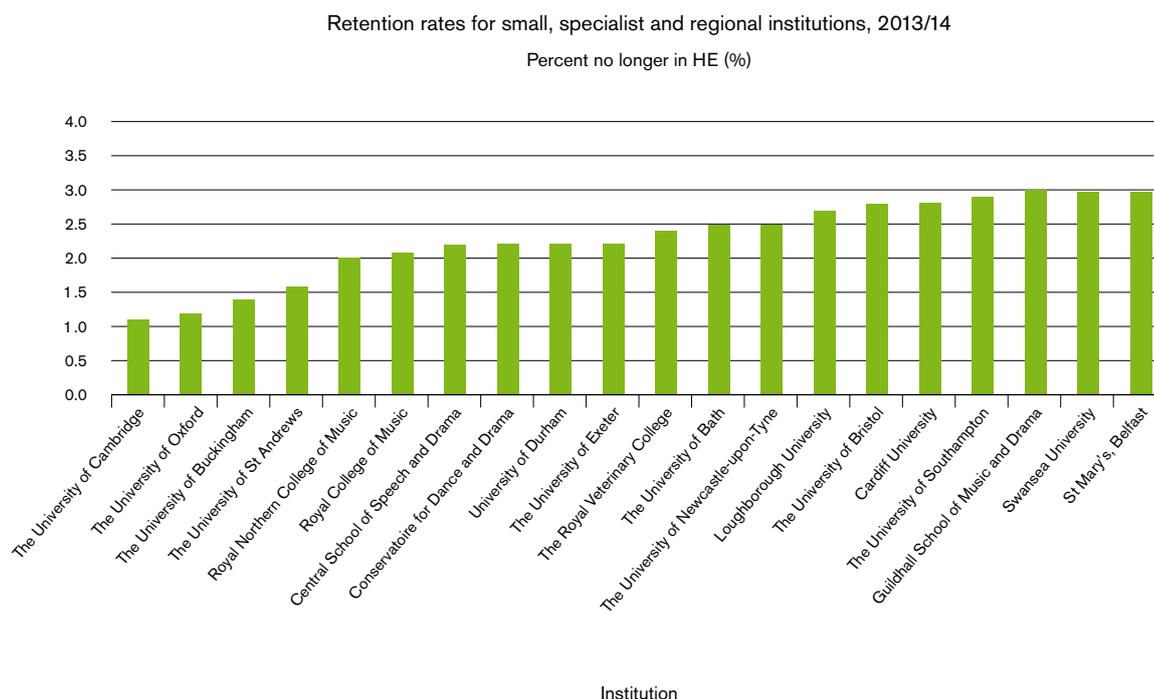
## Student retention

International evidence highlights that student retention rates in the UK are amongst the best in the world. However, as the government report, *University Challenge: How Higher Education Can Advance Social Mobility* (Milburn, 2012) highlights, there are some important issues. In particular, improvement in retention within institutions has been too slow, there are large inconsistencies between universities and the drop-out rate for students from disadvantaged backgrounds is comparatively greater than those from moderately wealthy backgrounds. Yet, small and specialist institutions are clearly making progress in addressing and enhancing retention, as Figure 6 illustrates.

Many of the more selective specialist institutions such as the dance, drama and music conservatoires and Royal Veterinary College tend to perform well in student retention (as do many of the Russell Group institutions). The non-continuation data also reveals that many highly specialised institutions have the highest retention rates in the sector and that those institutions whose rates are above benchmark were all small and/or specialised institutions.

Another important issue to consider in terms of student retention is the proposed reforms to the funding of Disabled Student Allowance (DSA). Given that there is ample evidence to suggest that DSA supports student access and retention and given the high concentration of disabled students in specialist HEIs, the reforms pose a risk both to the institutions that provide support to disabled students and to the students who want to study at such a place. Higher education institutions with the highest proportions of DSA recipients are almost all small and specialist HEIs, not only in the creative sectors but also in the land-based subjects and veterinary science. Many such institutions have DSA numbers far in excess of the sector average. As reforms are introduced, such institutions will have to take particularly difficult decisions about how to support their students in the years ahead.

**Figure 6: Retention rates for small, specialist and regional institutions, 2013/14**



Source: HESA, 2014

Social Mobility and Educational Diversity

**Case Study 27:**

**Claire Morrison, Buckinghamshire New University (BNU)**

When Claire Morrison left The Grange School in Aylesbury at the age of 16 with nine GCSEs, she didn't know what she wanted to do with her life. She didn't have her heart set on a particular career so chose not to study for A-levels at that point, or go on to university. She wanted a job, to earn money to enable her to enjoy life and travel. Fast forward 13 years and Claire is in the final stages of a degree in Criminological Psychology at Buckinghamshire New University, is a mentor to young offenders in prison, and looking for her first assistant psychologist role in a prison, secure unit or the probation service.

After leaving school, Claire had worked as a waitress, in office administration roles, and in call centres for several years before going abroad. She spent two years travelling across Thailand, Australia and Indonesia, only returning home when her visa ran out.

Claire secured further administrative roles before deciding to improve her qualifications with a Key Skills City and Guilds course in maths and then applying to the full-time Access to Higher Education Course at Aylesbury College. As well as core courses, Claire chose options in law, psychology and sociology – the springboard for her degree at Bucks New University.

"I love my course and am very excited about the future. I didn't go to university when I was younger because I didn't know what I wanted to do but now I am developing a career. Other people can do the same, whether they choose to go to university immediately after school, like me after a few years' working, or combining the two with a part-time programme."

Adapted with kind permission of BNU



# Student Experience and Engagement

## Key Points

- Students are now at the heart of the system. It is an agenda driven, at least in part, by the changes in student fees, the need to demonstrate value for money, and the not uncontroversial re-framing of the student as customer or client.
- Student engagement is a complex, multi-faceted and evolving term. At its core are notions of involvement and empowerment, with a focus on giving students an active role in the development, management and governance of their institution, its academic programmes and their own learning experience.
- There is no single student experience, and the stereotypical view of a student as an 18 year-old embarking on a three- or four- year full-time degree course at a campus-based university is limited and limiting.
- The sheer diversity of the student body generates a multiplicity of different attitudes, expectations and aspirations in regard to each individual's higher education experience.
- The diversity of providers offers students not only a profuse choice of entry points, pathways and destinations, but also a varied and extensive range of positive experiences.
- Many smaller and specialist institutions are able to deliver highly individualised learning and teaching in small-group settings. This is a key factor in positive student experiences and successful graduate outcomes.
- Smaller institutions are able to create a strong sense of community and belonging which can lead to higher levels of student retention.
- All institutions are seeking and developing different ways to engage with their students, whether as customers and clients or, preferably, as genuine partners and producers. If the opportunities offered to students by the diversity and choice across the sector are to be valued, then it is imperative that these factors are sustained and supported.

# Student Experience and Engagement

“Student engagement has never been more important. Students will invest substantial commitment and time into getting the right qualifications and building their life pathway so it’s critical they are able to make informed choices before and during their study programmes. It’s essential that their voices are heard and not just by means of a survey at the end of their course. Education is personal and the university experience should be enhanced through radical, inclusive and transformative learning experiences.”

Megan Dunn, Vice President, Higher Education, NUS

“Is there a persuasive argument for student DIS-engagement?”

Kleiman, 2010

## What is student engagement?

The concept of student engagement (and some recent variations and developments such as ‘students as partners’ and ‘students as producers’) has been around for several decades, and its meaning and manifestations have been heavily debated. It certainly has been high on the political agenda in recent years, with much talk of students being at the ‘heart of the system’. It is an agenda that is driven, at least in part, by the significant changes in student fees, the need to demonstrate value for money, and the not uncontroversial re-framing of the student as customer or client. The adoption of student engagement into

the QAA’s *Quality Code* (QAA, 2012) has resulted in the mass creation of innovative forms of student participation across the UK.

The National Union of Student (NUS) was a natural champion and driver of the student engagement agenda, and its *Manifesto for Partnership* (NUS, 2012) was a powerful agent of development and change. Students’ unions everywhere seized on the opportunity to empower the student voice through participation to create change in the student interest, and the focus on student engagement acted as a catalyst to break down barriers in higher education.

Student engagement is a complex term, whose meaning has evolved over time. The term covers two separate but linked domains:

- improving the motivation of students to engage in learning and to learn independently
- the participation of students in quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, resulting in the improvement of their educational experience.

HEFCE describes student engagement as “giving students an active role in the development, management and governance of their institution, its academic programmes and their own learning experience” (HEFCE), and the QAA defines it as being “all about involving and empowering students in the process of shaping the student learning experience”. It has, and can be, applied to any of the following:

- time spent on a task
- quality of effort
- student involvement
- social and academic integration
- good practices in education
- learning outcomes.

The QAA's list in many respects reflects many of the engagement 'enablers' that Alexander Astin identified several decades ago (Astin, 1999) and which have gained general acceptance, including enablers such as close contact with teachers, prompt feedback, clear and high expectations, collaborative learning and time on task. In 2013, HEFCE, NUS, the Association of Colleges and GuildHE jointly funded and supported the establishment of The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) to provide a unique partnership between students, NUS, students' unions, universities and colleges, sector bodies and higher education funders. TSEP developed and published *10 Principles of Student Engagement* (Webb et al., 2014):

#### **Learning and teaching**

1. Students are active members of a learning community
2. Students engage in setting the direction of their learning
3. Students engage in curricula content, design, delivery & organisation
4. Students engage in the enhancement of teaching, feedback and assessment practices
5. Students engage in and with their learning

#### **Quality assurance & enhancement processes**

6. Students are supported to fully engage in internal quality processes
7. Students effect change in a continual process of enhancement

#### **Decision-making, governance & strategy**

8. Students engage in the process of making decisions that affect them
9. Students engagement is given strategic leadership
10. Students engage through effective student leaders and governors

### **Beyond customer satisfaction: community and intimacy**

“There is a broad emerging consensus that issues of engagement and developing a sense of belonging lie at the heart of both retention and success.”

BIS, 2014, p. 56

Just over 20 years ago, Peter Scott, in his influential article 'The idea of the university in the 21st century' (Scott, 1993) wrote that the abiding quality, special strength and indeed “charm” of the British higher education system was its academic and pedagogical “intimacy”. That intimacy was “subtly but powerfully” related to institutional scale. Scott was concerned that the massification of higher education was leading to the creation of mass institutions, i.e. rather than creating new institutions to meet the growth and demand for higher education – which had been the model in the 20th century – existing institutions would just increase in size, with a consequent and detrimental impact on that longstanding intimacy.

“Whatever the costs and benefits, academic intimacy, it seems, will be more difficult to maintain within the much larger institutions likely to emerge in Britain over the next decade.”

Scott, 1993, p. 20

Though 'intimacy' is not a word that normally appears in any institutional mission statement or strategic objectives, in 2010 – and appearing in a completely different context – IBM's annual survey of CEOs from a wide range of companies, organisations and institutions from around the world identified 'developing genuine customer integration and intimacy' as one of the three key characteristics of what they termed 'stand-out companies or organisations' (the other two were creative leadership and operational



dexterity). ‘Customer intimacy’ is very different from ‘customer satisfaction’, as it marks a fundamental shift in the institution–student relationship. It moves away from the longstanding, standard, post-hoc question of ‘to what extent are you satisfied or not with ‘x’?’ and becomes a relationship based on partnership – a mutually beneficial, continuous feedback loop in which the institution leverages the insights gained from students to innovate, and in which students become active participants instead of passive ‘consumers’. Increased intimacy results in increased gains all round.

For the recent school-leaver or the mature adult returning to education after many years, going to university can be a very daunting experience. Different students will want different things from their experience. But students attending a smaller institution often talk about the strong sense of community and belonging that exists. In such an environment it is easier to get to know everybody by name and to feel that you are known by the institution and are a member of the institutional community. There is no doubt that the smaller the institution, the more likely it is that the student will perceive her or his experience as a more personalised one.

“The community at Leeds Trinity is so close-knit, you get to know all the staff and students really well. We actually had a day in which the Vice-Chancellor of Leeds Trinity and I actually went round and met every single student who attends the university.”

Miki Vyse, SU President, Leeds Trinity University

#### Student Experience and Engagement

### Case Study 28: Student academic representatives (StARS), University of Winchester

Student academic representatives (StARs) are student volunteers who are elected by their classmates to represent their programme and year. A StAR’s role is to give feedback to the University about how their courses are running for their peers, to ensure the quality of their education. They feedback to programme and faculty committee meetings organised by the University. In these meetings, StARs have their own agenda item to feed back to lecturers and University staff about how their course is performing and what their fellow students think about it – through recommendations and commendations.

StARs are trained, administrated and motivated by Winchester Student Union, whilst their actual meetings are co-ordinated by the University. Recently, StARs activity has gone beyond course-level feedback, with feedback forums for IT services, the library and further campus departments have been organised to spread the student voice. Also, being a StAR is often the first step taken by engaged students who go on to become student fellows/revalidators or even members of the Student Union Executive Committee.

## Student Experience and Engagement

### Case Study 29:

#### Visualising the student journey, St Mary's University, Twickenham, London

St Mary's University sought to improve the student experience by exploring and improving its engagement and interaction with students, using information at key points on their journey through their chosen course and university life. This was seen as part of a holistic approach to using technology to enhance learning in the broadest sense. 'Visualising the student journey' also linked directly to student involvement with the HEA/Paul Hamlyn 'What Works?' Student Engagement, Retention and Success change project. The intention was to collect and analyse data to use in a collaborative process, mapping activity to identify problem areas and develop plans to address these to improve the student journey, student retention and overall experience. This would in turn influence the academic strategy.

St Mary's student journey model is being used as a template for discussions held at various institutional-level committees and project groups, including the Student Experience Committee (a sub-committee of the Governing Body). What has been achieved so far is the development of a more holistic view of what it means to be a student at St Mary's, providing a firm foundation for future work and an evidence-base on which to base strategic planning for 2015 onwards.

(adapted, with permission, from The Leadership Foundation)

"... the main thing that sets the RVC apart... is the real community feel. There are very few places where the bond between students is greater. There is a real community spirit which extends from students to staff and even alumni of the college... There are not many universities where you can walk around campus and be greeted with smiles from so many familiar faces."

Charlie Mays, SU President, Royal Veterinary College

Student unions, of course, play a key role in the communal life of any institution, and they are as diverse as the institutions they operate in. They vary tremendously in the resources they have, the level of official engagement with the institution, and the range and type of activities that they run. However, it is worth highlighting that even though student unions in smaller institutions don't necessarily have the same resources as some larger unions, they also have many advantages.

The sense of community within smaller institutions, highlighted above, can impact on student representation with many opportunities for informal engagement. Students know senior members of university staff and so can approach them about specific issues and there are often open-door policies in these institutions. This can also mean that student union officers often know most students across the institution and so can get high election turnouts and easily find out what large numbers of students think.

Collectively, these factors create a scenario in which the students in smaller institutions often have good student representation and a louder voice than they might in a much larger organisation.

It is perhaps this sense of community in smaller and more specialist institutions that feeds into generally high levels of student satisfaction and low levels of non-continuation. This sense of community is likely to contribute to the feeling of being welcomed, with many smaller institutions featured in the top 10 'Most welcoming' universities<sup>15</sup>. For example, Harper Adams University lies in fourth place, Norwich University of the Arts in eighth and Falmouth University in ninth. Students, particularly international students, also refer to feeling safe on smaller campuses, or consciously choosing rural campuses.

Furthermore, the latest data from HESA (Figure 7) not only shows the interesting mix of institutions that comprise the top 20 for lowest levels of non-continuation, but also that nine of those institutions are small and/or specialist institutions (highlighted in blue in Figure 7). It is also worth noting that of the other institutions at the top of the table, Cambridge, Oxford, St Andrews and Durham are all organised along the college system, which also provides a strong sense of community.

**Figure 7: Non-continuation following year of entry with small/specialists highlighted in blue**

<b>Non-continuation following year of entry: UK-domiciled full-time first degree entrants 2011/12 (HESA)</b>			
	Percent no longer in HE (%)	Bench-mark (%)	Standard deviation (%)
University of Cambridge	1.1	2.1	0.35
University of Oxford	1.2	2.0	0.35
University of Buckingham	1.4	7.6	1.16
University of St Andrews	1.6	2.3	0.65
Royal Northern College of Music	2.0	5.6	1.99
Royal College of Music	2.1	5.0	2.77
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	2.2	7.6	1.53
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama	2.2	11.7	1.51
University of Durham	2.2	3.0	0.35
University of Exeter	2.2	3.4	0.33
Royal Veterinary College	2.4	3.1	1.18
University of Bath	2.5	3.7	0.44
University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	2.5	3.4	0.33
Loughborough University	2.7	4.1	0.37
University of Bristol	2.8	2.8	0.37
Cardiff University	2.8	4.1	0.31
University of Southampton	2.9	4.2	0.32
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	3.0	5.9	2.12
Swansea University	3.0	5.5	0.39
St Mary's University College	3.0	4.3	1.30
Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	3.1	6.7	1.53

Source: HESA, 2013

<sup>15</sup> As measured by the The Higher Expectations Survey conducted by YouthSight

## Engaging students

“Students want to be active participants in the creation of their education and should not be relegated to passive consumers of education.”

Toni Pearce, NUS President, 2013

While being part of a social community is clearly an important factor in creating a positive student experience, perhaps of even greater significance is the development of and participation in what Ramsden (2008) describes as building a learning community.

There are, of course, many aspects to building such a learning community, but one of the key elements, as Graham Gibbs' work demonstrates, is that class size is one of the most significant predictors of both student performance and learning gains (Gibbs, 2012). Class size was also seen as a much more significant indicator than purely the number of 'contact hours' that students receives.

Many smaller institutions, or more specialist providers with highly specialised courses, are able to deliver highly individualised learning and teaching in a small-group setting due to the number of students on each course. This gives students the opportunity to develop close and productive teaching and learning relationships that simply would not be possible in larger institutions or on larger courses. This smaller student cohort can also lead to informal teaching environments.

“One of the advantages of being a smaller university is that lecturers and other teaching staff can spend more time working with smaller groups and can get to know you as an individual, helping you learn, develop and achieve your goals.”

Jessica Clarke, FdSc Veterinary Nursing, Harper Adams University

## Specialist and flexible provision

There are many universities and institutions that are specialist in a particular subject area. These institutions are able to bring together a large critical mass of experts who are specialised in specific areas. For example, in many history departments across the country there may be, at most, one specialist in, say, Japanese history, whereas at SOAS, University of London – which specialises in the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East – there is an entire Japanese history department. This means that students are able to focus their studies on particular areas of interest.

This kind of environment, where there is a high concentration of specialist knowledge bringing together not only a group of experts in the field but also complementary and significant library and other resources to support the further exploration of the field, is something that is likely to be rare in less specialised institutions, especially at an undergraduate level.

There is also an expectation within specialist institutions that there will be current, industry-relevant equipment. For example, in creative and performing arts institutions, it is expected that cutting-edge, industry-standard equipment is available to use, ensuring industry-ready graduates; and this is integral to teachers being experts in their chosen industry.

Engagement is also facilitated in a number of institutions by the type of course that they offer or the way in which they deliver the course. This can be a diverse range of qualifications beyond the more traditional Bachelors, Masters and Doctorates, including many short courses for continuing professional development to Higher National Certificates or Diplomas and Foundation Degrees. Providers also vary the way in which these are delivered – whether full time, part time or even on an accelerated timescale.

This diversity of delivery enables institutions to provide more tailored approaches that are flexible to the needs of the student. A good example of this flexibility is Birkbeck, University of London, which specialises in part-time and evening higher education aimed at meeting the changing educational, cultural, personal and career needs of adults. By comparison, SAE Institute offers

fast-track degrees, with students studying for two years rather than three, achieved by having a third semester in the summer and shorter holiday periods. The Open University is perhaps the most well-known for delivering high-quality distance learning but this is increasingly becoming the norm, with many universities now offering online provision, with, for example, Rose Bruford College delivering an online BA (Hons) in Opera Studies.

### An engaging diversity

“The provision of a positive student experience is not the domain of just one type of institution.”

John Newton, Research Manager at YouthSight

The phrases ‘student experience’ and ‘student engagement’ imply, in their singularity, that there is a single way to experience and engage with higher education. What is very clear is that, currently, there are c. 2.5m individual student experiences and forms of engagement in the UK higher education system. While no one system is able to provide a fully personalised and customised educational journey, one of the great strengths of the UK HE landscape is that its diversity offers students not only a profuse choice of entry points, pathways and destinations, but also a varied and extensive range of positive experiences. It is important to remember that although there is always room for improvement, the vast majority of students are generally satisfied with their higher education experience across that diversity.

All institutions are seeking and developing different ways to engage with their students, whether as customers and clients or, preferably, as genuine partners and co-producers. If the opportunities offered to students by the diversity and choice across the sector are to be valued, then it is imperative that these factors are sustained and supported.

## Student Experience and Engagement

### Case Study 30:

#### Empowering dyslexic learners, Leeds College of Art

Dyslexia is a significant issue in art education. A key area for learning development and for information and learning technologies (ILT) within the college was to overcome some of the challenges faced by dyslexic students. These learners find it hard to follow traditional academic routes of learning because of their reluctance to engage in activities that put them at a disadvantage. The aim was to use ILT to go some way towards overcoming these fears.

The use of assistive technologies, combined with mobile phones and similar devices, empowered the students and enabled them to take control of their learning and organisational skills, making it easier for them to work, to be more engaged with the academic/critical side of the course and giving them the confidence to ask for further academic support.

Adapted from the JISC RSC Excellence in Inclusivity case study

# Teaching and Learning

## Key Points

- The notion of 'what is quality?' in regard to teaching and learning in higher education is difficult and complex in an environment in which institutions are so varied in their sizes, budgets, missions and objectives.
- There is not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution or formula, and genuinely excellent, transformative teaching occurs right across the spectrum: institutional, disciplinary, demographic and pedagogic.
- High-quality teaching is seen as a key priority for universities and as essential to the students who are partners in the co-creation of knowledge.
- The great challenge is that the 'student learning experience' is now a complex, multi-layered, multi-faceted experience. The students are an extraordinarily heterogeneous mix of prior educational experiences and achievements, social class, cultures and ethnicities. Also, the role of the academic as the sole, authoritative transmitter of knowledge – though it still persists – now sits alongside a host of other pedagogic practices, discourses and cultures.
- The best teaching, whatever form it takes:
  - motivates students to learn by challenging and supporting them to question their preconceptions and models
  - is transformative and enables students to perceive themselves as active agents in their own learning, as the authors of creative solutions and as agents with responsibility for change
- Context is all. While the values or factors for successful teaching apply across the sector, they become particularly powerful agents for transformative teaching and learning when they are applied in and aligned with the particular mission and context of an institution.
- The pedagogic discourses and practices of our smaller, regional and specialist institutions are often very distinctive. They reflect the fact that these institutions are genuine learning and social communities, and there are strong, mutual links between the institution and its community.

# Teaching and Learning

“Our higher education system is a key building block of our democratic societies. The best teaching and learning environments encourage students to develop confidence in their own creative abilities, strong community engagement and a sense of ethical responsibility allied to the humility that comes from understanding that learning is a lifelong phenomenon that demands a lifelong curiosity and commitment.”

European Commission, 2013, p. 13

## Transformative transactions

One of the many questions posed in the ‘McAleese report’ (European Commission, 2013) asks: “What do we mean when we talk of quality teaching and learning in higher education, where... higher education institutions are so varied in their sizes, budgets, missions and objectives?”

It is not an easy question to answer, but it is clear that whatever the answer may be, there is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution or formula, and genuinely excellent, transformative teaching occurs right across the spectrum: institutional, disciplinary, demographic, pedagogic.

However, there is general agreement that the best teaching motivates students to learn by challenging and supporting them to question their preconceptions. It places them in situations where their existing model does not or may not work and in which it matters to them that it may not or does not work. The best teaching is transformative and enables students to perceive

themselves as active agents in their own learning, as the authors of creative solutions, and as agents with responsibility for change. That means that students need to be faced with problems and challenges that they know, or at least think they know; problems and challenges that are important and about which they care. The best teaching enables students to engage with new questions that are bigger than the course itself, that have relevance to their own lives and that provoke a lively participation far beyond simply getting through assessment or exams.

Teaching and learning are transactional, relational activities. Both students and university teachers have a significant vested interest in the quality of education, and the graduate who has not only received but has been actively engaged in high-quality teaching and learning is more likely to be adaptable, assured, innovative, entrepreneurial and employable in the broadest sense of the term.

The great challenge for all higher education institutions is that the ‘student learning experience’ is now a complex, multi-layered, multifaceted experience. The students themselves are an extraordinarily heterogeneous mix of prior educational experiences and achievements, social class, cultures and ethnicities, and the old, stereotypical system of lectures, seminars and tutorials no longer holds. Also, the role of the academic as the sole, authoritative transmitter of knowledge – though it still persists – now sits alongside a host of other pedagogic practices, discourses and cultures. They include:

- problem-based learning
- e-learning (synchronous and asynchronous)
- distance and off-site learning
- experiential learning
- work-based learning



- Blended learning
- the 'flipped classroom'
- studio- and practice-based learning.

Additional complexity is provided by the requirement to ensure that students not only possess sufficient knowledge and understanding of their chosen subject(s), but also that they have acquired the graduate skills and attributes that will enable them to take their place in the job market, forge successful careers and contribute to the economic prosperity of the UK.

#### Teaching and Learning

### Case Study 31:

#### Real-world experience, wisdom and impact, Ashridge Business School

Ashridge is in the 1% of the 7,000 business schools worldwide that are triple accredited. The School has contributed to the success of thousands of individuals, teams and organisations from every continent by helping to develop their leadership capabilities. Underpinned by the understanding that every customer is different, Ashridge's learning approaches are designed to help its clients address their specific challenges and to achieve tangible results. All research is focused on tackling real issues and challenges, and the School's faculty and

consultants are recruited from the business world, combining commercial experience with significant academic credentials. Ashridge has created world-class learning environments, facilities, learning resources and support services, and in 2014 Virtual Ashridge won the Learning Technologies category at the Learning Awards. Committed to rigour and relevance and to the highest standards of quality in content, delivery and evaluation, Ashridge has been commended by the QAA for:

- the 'feedback-hungry' culture and responsiveness to matters raised by students
- the contribution of the consultancy and scholarly activities of academic staff to the enrichment of the curriculum and the learning experience of students
- the quality of the virtual learning environment for the delivery of learning
- student support for the Masters in Management
- the ethos of reflective practice that characterises the Ashridge learning experience.

## Teaching strategies

All higher education institutions now have explicit teaching and learning strategies that normally reflect – to a greater or lesser extent – most, if not all, of the following principles:

- that teaching and learning are fundamental core missions of universities and colleges
- that active student involvement is essential in governance, curricular design, development and review, quality assurance and review procedures
- that the preference of research over teaching in defining academic merit needs rebalancing
- that academic staff are employed not just to teach, but to teach well, to a high professional standard
- that it is a key responsibility of institutions to ensure their academic staff are well trained and qualified as professional teachers and not just qualified in a particular academic subject
- that this responsibility extends to ensuring new staff have a teaching qualification or equivalent on entry or have access to credible teacher training courses in the early years of their career
- that this responsibility extends to providing opportunities for continuous professional development as a professional teacher and not just as a subject- or discipline-specific academic
- that it is a key responsibility of academic staff to ensure they are qualified to teach and able to teach well
- that this responsibility extends over their entire career from start to finish so that they remain up-to-date and proficient in the very best pedagogical practices and all that excellence in teaching requires.

adapted from European Commission, 2013



While institutional teaching and learning strategies vary depending on the core mission and values of a particular institution (for example, large, multi-disciplinary or small specialist, research-intensive or vocational/professional focus), there is a general understanding that high-quality teaching is of key importance and essential to the students who are partners in the co-creation of knowledge. These strategies reflect higher education's important and unique transformative role in society, and the obligations and responsibilities that accompany that role. The key learning, teaching and assessment strategic objectives of York St John University, one of the smaller, multi-faculty universities, provide a typical example:

- Continuously enhance students' engagement with their studies and extra-curricular opportunities.
- Embed employability and enterprise skills through work-based learning opportunities and employer-informed curricula.
- Make best use of technology-enhanced learning tools.
- Provide high-quality development opportunities to enable staff to deliver exceptional learning, teaching and assessment practices.

(York St. John, 2014)

## Teaching and Learning

### Case Study 32:

#### Teaching Strategies, York St John University

Strategic objective:

To develop innovative, inclusive and high-quality teaching, learning and assessment practices that actively engage students and lead to an exceptional learning experience for students and staff.

Key objectives for 2012–15:

- Provide high-quality, research-informed teaching.
- Provide an academic portfolio that is challenging, exciting and attractive to students.
- Provide an innovative curriculum that is inclusive and supportive of diversity.
- Ensure students have successful academic transitions into, across and out of higher education.
- Promote a collaborative learning environment that encourages staff and students to engage in dialogue.
- Promote an emphasis on assessment for learning whilst maintaining the quality of assessment of learning.

Writing from the perspective of a highly specialised institution, Professor David Llewellyn's 'six factors for a successful university teacher' in his own specialist institution (see Case Study 33) could and should apply to any lecturer, no matter what their discipline or institution. But context is all, and while the values or factors for successful teaching may well apply across the pedagogic board, they become particularly powerful agents for transformative teaching and learning when they are applied in and aligned with the particular context of a discipline, faculty or institution.

The language and tone of Llewellyn's six factors – informal, personal and passionate - reveal something very particular and distinct about our smaller institutions. It is a language and tone far removed from the 'corporate' or 'management-speak' that has come to dominate the strategic and operational discourses of higher education. They reflect the fact that these institutions are genuine communities in which most, if not all, individuals know everyone else. In these institutions the students and staff constitute both a learning and social community, and there are strong, mutual links between the institution and its community.

“We are engaged with each other, we celebrate with each other, we eat with each other (no staff rooms), we drink with each other; there isn’t an institutional facility we don’t communally share.”

Mark Featherstone-Witty, CEO, LIPA

### A diverse fellowship of diverse excellence

In June 2014, Dr Anya Perera was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship (NTF). Now in its 15th year, the NTF Scheme “celebrates outstanding achievement in learning and teaching in higher education” (HEA, 2015). Dr Perera was the third member of staff of Writtle College to receive the prestigious award, which is awarded to just 55 individuals every year from across the entire HE sector<sup>16</sup>. It marked a remarkable achievement for a small institution of c. 1,000 students, specialising in land-based, design and sport courses at various levels including postgraduate. Dr Perera was recognised for her passion for enhancing student learning in a way that inspires and facilitates adjustment to higher education study, and she said: “This award is a reflection of the importance that Writtle College places on providing inspiring educational opportunities of the highest quality, as well as the supportive community we have on campus”.

The success of Dr Perera and her Writtle College colleagues in the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme is not an isolated example of national recognition for teaching excellence in a small institution. There are currently 649 NTFs representing more than 40 disciplines, and they represent an extraordinarily rich and diverse set of institutions, disciplines and, significantly, innovative and successful pedagogic practices. But there is a unity in that diversity, in that all National Teaching Fellows – no matter how, what and where they teach – meet three criteria:

### Teaching and Learning

#### Case Study 33:

**Teaching: making a difference, David Llewellyn, Vice Chancellor, Harper Adams University**

As a university specialising in agri-food and rural subjects, we have strong connections with the wide range of businesses in the agri-food and rural sectors. We provide a practical and theoretical education, offer sandwich degrees across our course portfolio; conduct applied research that feeds back into our curriculum; and, as a smaller scale academic community, try to provide a supportive learning environment for our students, many of whom come from a rural background and want to study in that setting rather than in a large city. So, what makes a successful university lecturer in this sort of institution? I believe there are six factors, each of which is essential, but which, in combination, can make a lecturer really stand out.

1. Show passion for the subject, consistently, but with the sensitivity to know that not everyone feels the way you do about your chosen field. Find ways to bring reluctant learners on board – they could react positively to the attention, and you could be surprised by the results.
2. Remain connected to the ‘real world’ through research, collaboration with industry, the professions or the wider community, depending on the subject area. Students appreciate a lecturer who is able to translate practice into theory, and vice versa, as long as their ‘real-world’ experience is up to date. This is particularly important when courses involve an industry placement because students may be quick to tell you that the experience ‘out there’ was different.

<sup>16</sup> There are a number of award schemes that reward and recognise excellent teachers. As well as the prestigious National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) there are numerous institutional ‘in-house’ Teaching Fellow schemes and the Student-Led Teaching Award scheme run by the NUS and the HEA.

3. Be available to students, not just immediately after lectures, but at other times when they need advice or support. We are all busy, but the ability to spend a few moments really finding out how a student is doing will reap rewards for you and for them.
4. Show willingness to keep learning about the practice of teaching, not just in relation to new technology, but also in trying out new methods to interact with students in the classroom or in approaches to assessment. Making use of institutional groups, training activities or seeking opportunities to learn from colleagues in other institutions will all help.
5. Listen and respond to student feedback. You may have to learn to not fear the inevitable comment that is less than positive, but to change your approach where necessary.
6. Finally, make sure that you are equipping your students to handle change by encouraging independent learning and their inability to reason and question. The challenges they will face over their lifetime will require the skills, not just a sound base of knowledge.

To address the above points, talk to other lecturers and find out where you can access help and support. It is often available within the institution but you may simply need to be pointed in the right direction. Lecturers who work with their colleagues in this way get to know their students and investing in their practice makes a real difference to their institution. Their success may not be guaranteed, but at least they will be laying the right foundations to get themselves noticed as someone who cares about their teaching and the difference it can make to their students.

Llewellyn, 2014

- individual excellence: evidence of enhancing and transforming the student learning experience commensurate with the individual's context and the opportunities afforded by it
- raising the profile of excellence: evidence of supporting colleagues and influencing support for student learning; demonstrating impact and engagement beyond the nominee's immediate academic or professional role
- developing excellence: evidence of the nominee's commitment to her/his ongoing professional development with regard to teaching and learning and/or learning support.

An important element in the success and impact of the NTF Scheme is that, although it rewards individuals working in single institutions, it also creates a vibrant and dynamic 'community of excellence', enabling a flow and exchange of ideas, experiences and practices that inform and enhance learning and teaching not only across the sector but also place teaching firmly in the forum of policy and public debate. In the case of those NTFs working in the smaller and specialist institutions, the scheme has enabled them to share their unique expertise and experience (see Case Study 34) on the national stage but also, importantly, to bring back to their institutions the many exciting and innovative ideas and initiatives that are occurring throughout the sector.

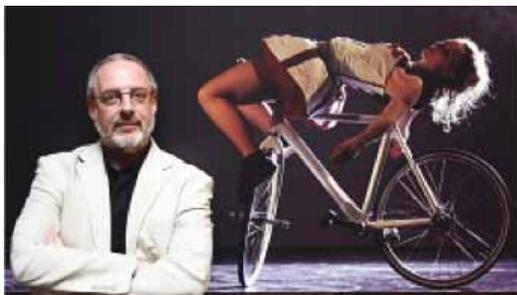
"The most important impact of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme is that it brings ideas and debates about the parameters and quality of teaching and learning in HE into the public domain. The sector's annual celebration of the 'HE Teaching Oscars' attracts public attention, demonstrating that the most imaginative and inspiring teaching is valued and encouraged in HE. A powerful and very important message!"

Professor Gweno Williams, NTF, York St John University

## Teaching and Learning

**Case Study 34:**

**Tim Roberts, National Teaching Fellow,  
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama,  
National Centre for Circus Arts**



Tim was appointed a National Teaching Fellow in 2012. He is the HE Course Director at the National Centre for

Circus Arts (part of CDD), and over the last 12 years has developed the UK's only progressive HE programme for circus arts. This consists of a Foundation degree in Circus Arts, a top-up BA (Hons) Degree in Circus Arts and a Postgraduate Certificate in Circus Arts.

Tim's interest, as well as his expertise, lies in the creation of high-quality circus arts education at HE level and the role that it can play in the development of a sector as a whole. For example, graduates from the programme have not only gone on to create innovative contemporary circus performances, but also populate every aspect of the circus sector, from teaching in youth activities to creating companies and administering other circus events. Tim's connections with the circus arts sector has also led to increased employment opportunities for circus arts graduates in the UK, several of whom are now touring across the country and in international companies. Circus arts have long been considered an art form on the margins of society but Tim firmly believes that through high-quality teaching, and the advantages that the HE sector provides, it can find a place again at the heart of the cultural landscape of the UK.

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## Teaching and Learning

**Case Study 35:**

**The Hub at the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance (ICMP): an overview**

The Hub is the Institute's interface between what happens in the classroom/studio and industry. Run by a team of music industry professionals and dedicated to providing a practical, contextual and tailored careers service, the Hub supports and enhances student learning opportunities through planned and strategic activities to which all Institute students have access. The Hub provides careers and artist development opportunities from the moment a student enrolls. All of the Hub's career support, information, advice and guidance are underpinned and informed by the Institute's curriculum and specifically tailored to students' needs.

The wealth of experience and industry connectivity complements the students' studies, offering access to a network of industry professionals. This partnership with industry enhances learning opportunities and supports students' transition into their chosen profession. Hub activities include: supporting the student-managed, in-house record label, Dyne Road Recordings; offering live performance opportunities and specialist music events; hosting artist and repertoire consultancy sessions with industry professionals; delivering Next Steps Careers Days and Next Steps Sessions; brokering music industry internship opportunities; offering corporate work opportunities; facilitating teaching and mentorship opportunities; and organising singer/songwriter feedback days.

The Hub was commended in the Institute's 2015 QAA Higher Education Review.

# Buildings and Infrastructure

## Key Points

- The quality of an institution's estate and facilities is central to enabling the delivery of its mission. There are strong links between a university's architectural environment and the appeal of the institution to prospective students and staff.
- All HEIs are investing considerable resources in providing state-of-the-art facilities and a world-class infrastructure along with cutting-edge equipment and technology. The drivers are: meeting student demand and expectations, providing high-quality teaching and learning environments, delivering excellent research, and facilitating knowledge-transfer and industry links.
- The investment challenge is particularly acute in the case of the specialist institutions, where the provision of high-quality (i.e. expensive) specialist spaces and equipment is an absolute necessity. Meeting that challenge often results in creative, innovative solutions and the creation of unique environments that contribute to and strengthen the diversity of the higher education system in the UK.
- For highly specialised institutions, the buildings and estates can act as attractive, value-added hubs for activity in that particular discipline, while being equipped with world-class, industry-standard facilities to support programmes.
- Expenditure per student is considerably more, and opportunities for cross-subsidy far fewer, in small, highly-specialised institutions that require a heavy investment in specialist teaching and course equipment. Courses that are identified as having particularly high teaching and equipment costs include specialist creative and performing arts courses, land-based courses and health-focused courses.

# Buildings and Infrastructure



“I think it is a great achievement by the entire design team to produce a building that meets a very innovative brief. The success of the building is very clearly endorsed by staff and students at the University.”

John Mann, Director of Estates, University of Winchester

In 2012, the University of Winchester was amongst the winners of that year’s Civic Trust Awards for one of its new buildings. The award recognises projects that make an outstanding contribution to the quality and appearance of the environment, and the University’s performing arts faculty studio was recognised for its contemporary architecture, which was in keeping with other recent developments to raise the environmental quality of the campus.

The success of the new studios was not, significantly, a ‘one-off’ success for the University. A number of its new buildings and major refurbishments of existing buildings have either won or been shortlisted for awards, and they signify the University’s determination to provide an architectural environment of the highest quality for its students and staff.

## Every building tells a story

“There is no mute architecture. All architects, all buildings ‘tell stories’ with varying degrees of consciousness. Architecture is permeated with narratives because it is constituted within a field of discourses and economies (formal, psychological, and ideological), to any one aspect of which it cannot be reduced, from any one of which it cannot be removed.”

Rakatansky, 1992

The quality of an institution’s estate and facilities is central to enabling the delivery of its mission, and there is a clear and strong link between a university’s architectural environment and the appeal of the institution to prospective students and staff. The higher education estate in the UK is particularly diverse, encompassing both ancient and modern institutions, and also smaller institutions with little over 4,000m<sup>2</sup> of space, and large multi-faculty universities with over 500,000m<sup>2</sup>.

The buildings and estate of an institution, from the lecture theatres and libraries, to laboratories, studios and ICT equipment, to the halls of residence, are key factors in ensuring a high-quality teaching and learning environment and a high-quality student experience. All higher education institutions, whether centuries old or recently established, are continuously striving, and investing considerable resources, to provide state-of-the-art facilities and a world-class infrastructure along with cutting-edge equipment and technology. One is unlikely to find a campus

where there is not a major build or refurbishment taking place. The drivers are clear and obvious: to meet student demand, to provide high-quality teaching and learning environments, to deliver excellent research and facilitate knowledge-transfer and industry links, and – not to be dismissed – to aid marketing and recruitment.

## Buildings and Infrastructure

### Case Study 36:

#### Performing arts faculty studios, University of Winchester



Following a reorganisation of teaching spaces, the University needed to provide its performing arts faculty with new and dedicated accommodation.

With just 14 months from conception to completion, and a budget of approximately £1.8m, a 'stripped down' aesthetic was chosen to create a robust environment and promote creative freedom for the users. The resulting building has empathy with the teaching spaces within it but is also responsive to the surrounding context and orientation. Careful thought has been given to creating a sustainable environmental solution that meets the needs of the end user, neighbours and wider community.

The studios provide a flexible teaching environment for physical theatre and human

movement as well as seminars and academic workshops. The drama studios are also used to teach stage management courses in conjunction with technical equipment for lighting and sound.

The new performing arts faculty studios were among the winners of the 2012 Civic Trust Awards in the South East region. The award recognises projects that make an outstanding contribution to the quality and appearance of the environment, and the new building was recognised for its contemporary architecture, which is in keeping with other recent developments to raise the environmental quality of the campus.

### Creative solutions

Across the entire HE sector, there are significant costs associated with maintaining, adapting and refurbishing the existing estate and facilities and investing in new buildings and equipment. Funding these essential developments is a constant challenge and not all institutions can find the necessary resources to match their vision. That challenge is particularly acute in the case of the specialist institutions, where the provision of high-quality (i.e. expensive) specialist spaces and equipment is an absolute necessity. Meeting that challenge often results in creative, innovative solutions and the creation of unique environments that contribute to and strengthen the diversity of the higher education system in the UK.

The quality of buildings, facilities and the physical environment is tremendously important in providing suitable settings for students to study and advance in their chosen specialisms, and for providing opportunities for professional practice and research. The student experience is greatly enriched when a significant part of that experience occurs in modern, fit-for-purpose and, sometimes, exceptional buildings. For highly specialised institutions, the buildings and estates can act as hubs for activity in that particular discipline, while being equipped with world-class, industry-standard facilities to support programmes. This makes them attractive in terms of the added value that they can offer to students, staff and their specialist industries.

It is also important that the higher education sector has a range of sizes of institutions. While larger institutions can create efficiencies due to economies of scale, smaller institutions are often able to be flexible and agile in terms of their estate:

- Smaller institutions can be more efficient as they have smaller bureaucracies and are thus able to adapt and innovate quickly and decisively in a changing external environment.
- Spaces can be more bespoke with purpose-built buildings which use their spaces more efficiently and are thus efficient with the capital they spend.
- Smaller institutions, and their missions, can respond in agile ways to reorganisation and reinvention.

Equipment and facilities within many institutions are often very distinctive due to their industry-standard nature, and this facilitates a highly focused, practice-based approach to teaching and learning linked to industry methods. For those courses closely aligned to specific industries, they are expected to be responsive to emerging industry practices. These environments provide unique resources to foster cohesion and collaboration whilst offering students a combination of academic knowledge and practical application. This can also lead to specific opportunities and routes through to particular related industries. Students often cite the importance of the provision of high-quality specialist facilities for their course as key to their experience of higher education.

## Buildings and Infrastructure

### Case Study 37:

#### The Hive: a first in Europe, University of Worcester

[www.thehiveworcester.org/creating-the-hive.html](http://www.thehiveworcester.org/creating-the-hive.html)



The University of Worcester worked closely with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to plan and build The Hive, Europe's first joint city centre university and public library, history and customer centre for students and the public, at a total cost of £60m. The Hive has developed into one of the most exciting libraries in Europe.

Set out over five floors, The Hive is an outstanding and eye-catching addition to the Worcester cityscape, bringing together books, documents, archives, digital technology and services from both organisations. It also houses one of the country's largest children's libraries, council customer services, meeting rooms, study areas, a history centre, a business centre and a cafe. The Hive is a regional hub for education, research, business and cultural experiences, attracting people who have not traditionally enrolled in a library: to raise aspirations, and forge links between the university, people and organisations.

"But fuelling growth is not just about clusters, it also means reviving great towns and cities... The University of Worcester has broken new ground in really bringing its community onto its campus. Its inspirational new library, the Hive, is the first joint university and public library in Europe. It is a fabulous resource for students and researchers. But it is also pulling in people – and especially disadvantaged young people – from outside in a quite remarkable way."

David Willetts MP, speech to UUK, 2014

## Specialist spaces and equipment for specialist institutions

“Diverging from the standard model is always likely to be expensive, particularly when provision is tailor-made – for instance, to meet the needs of employers – and economies of scale are difficult to achieve. Arguably, diverse provision should be seen as a premium product which attracts a higher level of funding (either from the state or from the student).”

HEFCE, 2011, p.51

“As a pianist, I feel extremely privileged to practise on Steinway pianos every day and to have the opportunity to perform on Fazioli [pianos] in the Parry Rooms.”

Georgina Sutton, BMus in Piano, Royal College of Music

There is an expectation that student fee income or funding council allocations can cover basic teaching and classroom provision, along with ensuring equipment and facilities are of the highest standard. However, institutions that require a heavy investment in specialist teaching and course equipment are often required to spend considerably more per student than other institutions. Moreover, in these highly specialised institutions with their higher staff–student ratio, there are fewer opportunities for cross-subsidy between different academic departments. Courses that have particularly high teaching and equipment costs include those in specialist creative and performing arts, land-based subjects and health subjects. The following provides some indication of where significant expenditure is incurred.

## Art and design

- Industry-standard studio workshops and photographic equipment
- Advanced IT equipment and software and 3D/digital printing services

## Film and media

- Broadcast and film studio equipment and audio and video recording studios
- Health
- Brain-imaging technology in educational neuroscience

## Land-based

- Agricultural machinery, including tractors (typically £100k each), combine harvesters (£200k) and seed drills

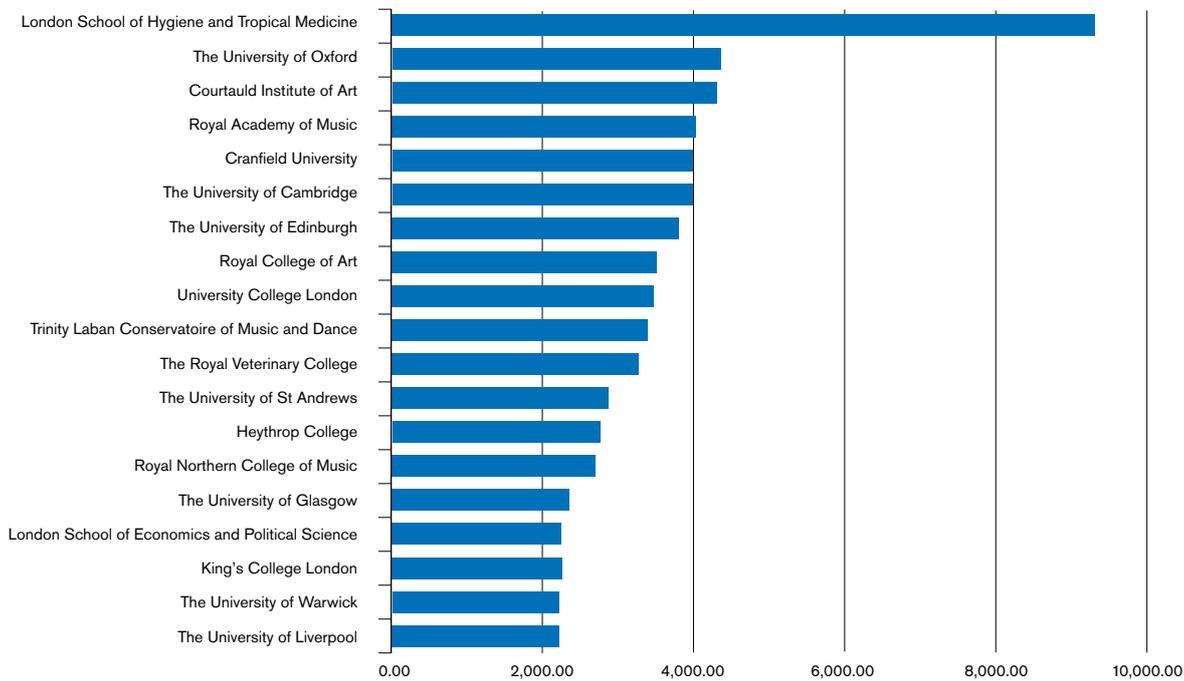
## Performing arts

- Musical instruments such as pianos (up to £100k)
- Theatre systems such as lighting stock and sound equipment
- Specialist teaching facilities, e.g. dance studios and performance venues.

Figure 8 shows the total (non-residential) property costs per student in full-time education (2012/13) by institution. The high number of specialist institutions in the list reflects, in part, the cost of specialist spaces, for example, performing arts institutions with theatre spaces. Working with other institutions in developing shared services and resources can assist institutions in making large savings. The expensive nature of equipment in some disciplines can be eased by equipment-sharing between institutions.

**Figure 8: Total property costs (non-residential) per student in full-time education, 2012/13**

Total property costs (non-residential) per student in full-time education, 2012/13



Source: based on HESA 2012/13 data

The expectations of students for high-quality environments, and the aspirations of institutions to provide them, have meant that many institutions across the UK are engaging in expensive infrastructure developments. Inevitably they are facing increasingly high capital costs at the same time as reduced funding. There are also particular implications for the smaller and more specialist institutions as the investment often represents a larger proportion of the overall budget and there is often less opportunity for them to offset parallel activities. But, as is often the case, limitations demand creative solutions, and those smaller and specialist institutions have proven particularly adept at creating some of the most innovative and inspiring buildings and spaces in the sector.

Buildings and Infrastructure

**Case Study 38:**

**The Drawing Studio: space for creativity, Arts University Bournemouth (AUB)**



AUB has completed plans that will establish a new dedicated drawing studio on its site, which is situated on the outskirts of Bournemouth and Poole. The intention at AUB is to provide students with a new space in which drawing can be taught and practised.

This project will provide a dedicated space for face-to-face teaching that is capable of embracing contemporary technologies



of digital drawing on tablets and direct to screen. The building itself is an iconic free-standing pavilion that contains a large room, supported by a service area for the model and storage territory.

The condition of the room celebrates four aspects of light – central themes in looking and drawing – including a large north-light in the studio tradition, a rear clerestory that throws a softer light back from the rear wall, a discrete and even softer light that filters from beneath the bench on the east side and, finally, a graded wash of light that comes along the curve of the entrance via the glass door.

AUB believes the simplicity of the single-shell construction will allow the act of drawing to become a calm and considered activity within the lively world of a very busy creative institution.

#### Buildings and Infrastructure

### Case Study 39:

#### A new building to catalyse change, Ravensbourne



Ravensbourne relocated and reinvented itself by moving its entire campus in a few months from the outskirts of London to the tip of the Greenwich Peninsula on the River Thames, where it now sits in a RIBA-award-winning, purpose-built building next to the O2.

The move transformed the institution, consolidating its academic specialisation in emerging trends in creative and digital technologies. The building's open and flexible interior spaces have driven efficiencies in the use of space, resources and people, and promoted interdisciplinary interaction among students and staff.

As a vocationally focused institution with strong links to the digital industries, Ravensbourne has designed its space to bring the academic and commercial worlds together, driving curricular innovation as well as commercial development. Rapid prototyping facilities and events spaces are now used by both students and companies ranging from small graduate start-ups to Mozilla.

See a short video for more information:  
<http://player.vimeo.com/video/62688386>

#### Buildings and Infrastructure

### Case Study 40:

#### Investment in specialist facilities, Anglo-European College of Chiropractic (AECC)

Supporting the programmes of study at AECC, including chiropractic (five-year BSc Human Sciences/MSc Chiropractic), necessitates the provision of a variety of high-cost specialist equipment and facilities. These include:

1. Teaching Clinic: This state-of-the-art teaching resource has over 30 consultation and treatment rooms, seminar rooms, a specialist assessment and rehabilitation centre and a computer laboratory. It was built in 2009 at a cost of £3.2m. AECC also operates a satellite clinic based on campus at Bournemouth University, extending the institution's clinical training facility.





2. Special Imaging Centre: In addition to digital plain-film X-ray the facilities contain quantitative fluoroscopy enabling Objective Spinal Motion Imaging Assessment (OSMIA) (above left) which has been the source of groundbreaking research and enhanced student experience and clinical diagnosis. In 2014, a unique open and upright MRI scanner (above right) was added at a cost of £1.3m, providing further cutting-edge clinical investigations for patients and inspiration for students and clinicians.
3. Centre for Ultrasound Studies: This separate clinical facility for postgraduate education and training has steadily built an excellent national reputation in a range of clinical applications including those in musculo-skeletal and gynaecology. It attracts a significant number of students across health disciplines and does not only support student learning opportunities, but also provides clinical services to the local community. The Centre houses diagnostic ultrasound equipment consisting of 15 separate units with a combined worth of approximately £1m.
4. Human Anatomy Facility: Students on the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes learn anatomy from embalmed human specimens in the College's prosection facility. This secure facility is regulated by the Human Tissue Authority and is probably the only such facility outside medical and dental schools within the UK.

# The Value of Diversity

## Key Points

- UK higher education institutions are able to offer an extraordinarily eclectic and rich choice of educational opportunities, locations, subjects and pathways.
- The diversity across the sector enables all higher education institutions to forge their own distinctive strategic paths, grounded in their often unique missions, visions and strengths.
- Every institution makes a distinct contribution to learning and teaching, research and knowledge exchange, and all work locally, nationally and internationally.
- The uniqueness of each institution's contribution is a product not only of its particular history and disciplinary mix, but also of its academic and student community and location.
- The sheer diversity of the UK higher education sector is compelling evidence of its ability to adapt and evolve in a rapidly changing world and in the face of an increasingly competitive global market for education.

# The Value of Diversity

“There is already a great deal of diversity within the sector. But it needs to be acknowledged and celebrated, with institutions both openly identifying and playing to their strengths.”

DfES, 2003, p.20

“There is more than one shape, size or model of delivery to a successful higher education institution.”

Universities Scotland, 2013, p.13

Amidst the all statistical uncertainties, limitations and qualifications of league tables and performance indicators the one thing that does stand out is that diversity is a ‘good thing’. At the very end of their carefully researched and detailed report, written for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, the authors from the Warwick Centre for Employment Studies write:

“It is important to reiterate the importance of heterogeneity amongst learners, employers and learning/training programmes. Heterogeneity should be considered, and an overriding aggregate estimate of the returns to learning, whilst important from a practical perspective, should not provide the final verdict on a programme’s worth or value as the returns to different groups are varied.”

Gambin et al., 2014, p.xxi



All higher education institutions have forged their own distinctive strategic paths, grounded in their often unique missions, visions and strengths. Every single institution makes a distinct contribution to learning and teaching, research and knowledge exchange, and all work locally, nationally and internationally. The uniqueness of each institution’s contribution is a product not only of its particular history and disciplinary mix, but also of its academic and student community and location.

Reichert, in her major report on institutional diversity in Europe, provides Birnbaum’s long-established and widely accepted list of the normative value of diversity within higher education systems:

- it meet students’ needs
- it provides opportunities for social mobility
- it meets the needs of different labour markets (with an increasing variety of specialisations)



- it serve the political needs of interest groups
- it permits the combination of elite and mass higher education (cf. also Trow 1979 who argues that the survival of elite HE depends on the existence of a comprehensive system of non-elite institutions)
- it increases the level of higher education institutions' effectiveness
- it offers opportunities for experimenting with innovation in a few institutions thus limiting the high risks connected to the failure of such an experiment

Birnbaum, 1983, in Reichert, 2009, p.12

The sheer diversity of the UK higher education sector is compelling evidence of its ability to adapt and evolve in a rapidly changing world and in the face of an increasingly competitive global market for education. Our institutions are able to offer an extraordinarily eclectic and rich choice of educational opportunities, locations, subjects and pathways. Returning to the ecological metaphor: the richer the diversity of educational 'life', the greater the opportunity for discoveries, economic development and adaptive responses to new challenges. An important element in that diversity and distinctiveness is that each institution brings a unique portfolio of research, teaching and knowledge transfer to a particular subject.

The diversity across the sector, particularly in regard to institutional vision and mission, enables institutions to make the most of their own unique strengths and of the opportunities that come their way. This encourages innovation, new models of working and new partnerships – locally, nationally and internationally – to the benefit of teaching, research and knowledge exchange. That diversity also applies to the academic and professional strengths across the sector, enabling institutions to develop and apply customised approaches to meet the needs and aspirations of both internal and, particularly, external stakeholders: students, graduates, staff, business and industry, and the professions.

This report celebrates the diversity of the whole UK higher education sector, and focuses on the valuable contribution and impact of the smaller universities, and regionally focused and specialist institutions. However, that diversity cannot and must not be taken for granted. There are many and complex challenges facing the UK – economic, social, cultural, political – and the tensions that derive from them impact, to a greater or lesser extent, on higher education. The unique and admired (certainly from outside the UK) institutional diversity is subject to a whole set of currents and, particularly, some strong counter-currents that serve, perhaps unintentionally, to foster homogenisation and hinder diversification. There are, of course, considerable dangers in applying mono-dimensional approaches or single measuring-rods (e.g. in research) to diverse higher education systems. If that diversity is valued, and the significant value it generates is desired and required, then it is essential that there are policies and incentives that promote diversity of mission and institutional profiles, which recognise alternative notions of excellence (Reichert, 2009).

The excellence in diversity that is the hallmark of the UK's higher education system needs to be cherished and nurtured both in word and deed.

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