

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2423

Title: Higher Education Research

Executive Summary:

The GLA has commissioned research under DD2294 *Evidence base for higher-level skills progression in London*. The work authorised related to higher level skills (non-degree) provision in London with a budget of £145,000 (2018/19-2020/21). The research already commissioned under this budget will be completed in 2020/21 and has a value of up to £85,000. This aligns with the objectives set out in DD2294.

This decision form seeks approval to reprofile and repurpose the remaining budget for 2019/20 and 20/21 of £55,000 to support activity relating to broader higher education policies, which were not set out in DD2294. This reflects emerging policy priorities relating to access and outcomes in degree level study for Londoners, and a changing national policy context around higher level skills. This new activity will complement existing GLA research and help to develop the GLA's wider higher level skills evidence base.

This will support commitments made in the Skills for Londoners Strategy, and will bolster the case for devolution made in the Mayor's *Skills for Londoners: A Call for Action*.

Decision:

That the Interim Executive Director of Development, Enterprise and Environment approves:

To reprofile £55,000 of remaining unspent budget from DD2294 to fund research consultancy services to identify good practice:

- in widening access and participation of Londoners, including through contextual admissions;
- in gaining labour market experience and skills to strengthen the future employability of London higher education students, including those from lower socio-economic and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups; and
- of related areas to support student outcomes for Londoners in higher education, including those from lower socio-economic and BAME groups.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

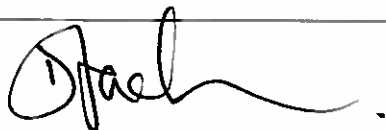
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Debbie Jackson

Position: Interim Executive Director for Development, Enterprise & Environment

Signature:



Date:

27/11/19

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. In November 2018, the Interim Executive Director, Development, Enterprise and Environment (DEE) signed DD2294 authorising expenditure of £145,000 to develop an evidence base for higher level skills progression in London over 2018/19 – 2020/21. The DD approved the procurement of research to deliver on the Mayor's manifesto to promote Advanced Learner Loans (ALL) in London and establish a stronger evidence-base on current Level 4+ provision to ensure that London's need for a higher skilled economy is met.
- 1.2. The objectives and expected outcomes listed in DD2294 relate to level 4-5 qualifications and higher skilled occupations. Level 6 (equivalent to degree level) is included as part of producing a series of higher level progression pathways, but the focus of the listed objectives is on levels 4-5.
- 1.3. £5,000 allocated in 2018/19 was not spent as a result of slippage in the commissioning timetable, and was returned to corporate budgets as part of the year end process, leaving £140,000 covering 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- 1.4. In July 2019, following consultation with the Higher Level Skills Advisory Group (a subordinate body of the Mayor's Skills for Londoners Board), a specification was developed for this work set out in DD2294. A decision was taken not to cover all of the objectives listed in DD2294 at this time, including a review of the ALL catalogue and developing a skills ecosystem. This was due to reviews of the national framework for higher level qualifications and funding. These include the Post-18 Education and Funding review which reported in May 2019 and the ongoing Department for Education assessment of 'Higher Technical Education', which includes technical qualifications at levels 4 and 5. This consultation proposes that the Office for Students (the official university regulator since April 2018) would become the regulator of Level 4+ qualifications, except higher level apprenticeships. It is also considering the different packages of financial support available to students at this level (informed by the Post-18 Review of Education and Funding). If adopted, these proposals would significantly restrict the use of ALL at higher levels.
- 1.5. As a result of this and following the advice of the Higher Level Skills Advisory Group, in September 2019 the GLA appointed researchers to undertake a broader study of provision, participation and demand for education and skills at Levels 4 and 5 in London to meet the remaining objectives. This research will include an analysis of five Mayoral priority sectors identified in the Economic Development Strategy (technology and digital, culture and creative industries, Advanced Urban Services, low-carbon and environmental goods and services and health and social care). It will also assess the role and future demand for non-accredited courses.
- 1.6. The GLA awarded a contract of up to £85,000 for this work under DD2294 – this included the option to pay for a set of learner case studies (around £14,000) which will be decided on once interim findings have been received and reviewed.
- 1.7. The remaining budget of up to £55,000 is uncommitted. Officers recommend this budget is reprofiled and repurposed to further the Mayor's higher level progression work in higher education (Level 6+), relating to widening access and participation and student outcomes, including graduate employment. The Skills & Employment Unit will steer this work with input from GLA Economics and the GLA Intelligence team.
- 1.8. GLA officers will liaise with TfL Procurement to procure from multiple suppliers the following services, in line with the Contracts and Funding Code:

- Qualitative analysis of the use of contextual admissions by London's higher education institutions (HEIs) to support widening participation of Londoners accessing higher education. The research would provide evidence on best practice around the use of different criteria used in admissions.
- Qualitative analysis of the provision of work experience and employability support across London's HEIs. This research would help to identify good practice, particularly how learners of all backgrounds are encouraged to make use of the many work experience opportunities across the capital. This piece of work will also provide an assessment on the extent to which London HEIs are currently utilising their access to industry and work experience opportunities across the capital.

1.9. The GLA will obtain value for money by combining the two areas into a single specification as it expects some overlap in the institutions and learners interviewed. However, the GLA will expect potential suppliers to demonstrate how they will ensure good practice is identified in each part of the research.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The research will inform the Mayor's work to increase the opportunities for Londoners to access and benefit from higher education. It will also inform dialogue with the Office for Students, the Department for Education and other stakeholders to influence national policy.

2.2. This will build on GLA-commissioned analysis published in April 2019, *Building on Success: Increasing higher education retention in London*. This research identified students who had taken non-A level qualifications and lived at home as being more at risk of non-continuation of their studies at lower tariff Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Ethnicity is significant in that BAME students, in particular Black students, are more likely to have these characteristics in lower tariff HEIs compared with White students. At medium and higher tariff HEIs in London, it found that socio-economic status was relevant in predicting the likelihood of non-continuation. However, ethnicity was not significant.

2.3. In addition, the GLA Intelligence Unit has commissioned a separate quantitative research piece to understand the relative importance of student demographics, their entry qualifications, institution and subject of study, work experience to degree and initial labour market outcomes. The areas of further research identified in 2.4 will complement this quantitative analysis.

2.4. The proposed research will include qualitative techniques to identify:

- evidence of good practice in widening access and participation of Londoners, including through contextual admissions, to be shared amongst London's HEIs;
- evidence of good practice in the provision of work experience and employability support across London's HEIs. Particularly ways in which HEIs strengthen the future employability of their students, including those from lower socio-economic and BAME groups; and
- evidence of related areas to support student outcomes for Londoners in higher education, including those from lower socio-economic and BAME groups.

3. Equality comments

3.1. Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 provides that, in the exercise of their functions, public authorities – of whom the Mayor is one – must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 3.2. Officers confirm that the procurement and commissioning of the activities described above will conform with requirements made under the public sector equality duty at every stage, including when planning the contract, during the tender process and throughout the life of the contract, with particular attention being given at any decision making moments. Any increased knowledge of skills and employability needs of particular learner groups will be used to inform future specifications for work.

4. Other considerations

Links to Mayoral Priorities and Strategies

- 4.1. The proposed research will support the Mayor's *Skills for Londoners: A Call for Action* in developing priorities for widening access and participation in higher education, including good practice in admissions. It will also advance a commitment made in the *Skills for Londoners Strategy*, to improve destination outcomes for Londoners in higher education, including degree and graduate employment. The work will build on City Hall's research published in April 2019 which identified reasons for the higher drop-out rate in London.

Key risks and issues

- 4.2. Access to participants including current and former students is likely to be challenging within this budget. This could cause some gaps in the evidence. Officers will assess bids and determine which will deliver the most comprehensive approach within the budget.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.3. There are no conflicts of interest to note for any of the officers involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 There are no new financial implications of this proposal as this decision seeks approval to reprofile the remaining budget allocated to the Higher Level Skills Research project.
- 5.2 Of the original budget of £145,000 which was agreed in DD2294, £5,000 remains as unspent from 2018-19 and £85,000 has already been committed. Therefore, this decision proposes to utilise the remaining £55,000 on consultancy services to deliver the Higher Education research. The £55,000 will be allocated during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years.
- 5.3 The new reprofile for the remaining years of the £140,000 will be as follows:

	Financial Year 2019/20	Financial Year 2020/21	Total
Higher Education Programme	£62,000	£78,000	£140,000

- 5.4 The funding source for this Higher Education Research will remain the same (Development, Enterprise and Environment Minor Programme budget).

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The above sections of this report indicate that:

- 6.2 The decisions requested of the Director (in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code) concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of economic development and wealth creation, social development or the promotion of the improvement of the environment in Greater London; and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the Authority's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
- consult with appropriate bodies.

- 6.3 In taking the decisions requested, the Directors must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

- 6.4 Officers should ensure that any services are procured by Transport for London Procurement who will determine the detail of the procurement strategy to be adopted in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code. Officers must ensure that appropriate contract documentation is put in place and executed by the successful bidder(s) and the GLA before the commencement of the works.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	January 2020
Delivery Start Date	January 2020
Delivery End Date	June 2020
Project Closure	Ongoing

Appendices and supporting documents:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES

If YES, for what reason: Publication should be deferred until services have been commissioned, to ensure the procurement process is fair and transparent.

Until what date: 1 February 2020 (or earlier if procurement is complete)

Part 2 - Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form -NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Beth Wheaton has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following.

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Michelle Cuomo-Boorer has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 25 November 2019.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature

M. J. Allge

Date

25.11.19