

Skills for Londoners Board

AGENDA

Meeting **Higher Level Skills Advisory Group**

Date **24 February 2021**

Time **2.00pm**

Place **Remote Meeting**

*Agendas and minutes of the meetings of this Group are published at www.London.gov.uk/Skills-for-Londoners (except in those cases where information may be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act).
Meetings are not held in public and are only open to those invited to attend by the Chair.*

Members:

George Johnston (Chair)
Nichola Hay (Deputy Chair)
David Hillier
Prof. Martin Doel
Mary Vine-Morris
Simon Ashworth
Dr Graeme Atherton
Yolande Burgess

Dr Philippa Lloyd
Yvonne Kelly
Pat Carvalho
Ruben Hale
Rebecca Plant
Dr Kate Daubney

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1 Introductions and apologies

2 Declarations of Interest

Members to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests which they have in any of the items set out on the agenda and, where applicable, consider if they should withdraw from the discussion or the meeting.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 3 – 10)

4 Actions Arising (Pages 11 – 12)

To be presented by Laura Marshall, Senior Board Officer, Skills & Employment.

5 Reflections on the Skills for Jobs White Paper (Discussion)

Discussion item on the Skills for Jobs White Paper that was published on 21 January 2021 and what it means from a London perspective.

6 Adult Education Budget Roadmap (Presentation)

To be presented by Karissa Singh, Senior Policy Officer, Skills & Employment.

**7 Contextual Admissions and Work Experience Research
(Pages 13 – 94)**

To be presented by Beth Wheaton, Senior Policy Officer, Skills & Employment, GLA; Rachel Moreton, Associate Director, CFE Research; and Sophie Spong, Research Manager, CFE Research.

8 ‘No Wrong Door’ approach (Presentation)

To be presented by Atif Shafique, Senior Policy Officer, Skills & Employment.

9 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Higher Level Skills Advisory Group is to be confirmed.

10 Any Other Business the Chair Considers Urgent

MINUTES

Meeting: Higher Level Skills Advisory Group

Date: 22 October 2020

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Remote Meeting

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Members present:

Yolande Burgess, London Councils
Pat Carvalho, Harrow College Uxbridge College
Professor Martin Doel, University College London
Ruben Hale, University of Arts Awarding Body
David Hillier, Chair of Linking London Higher Education in Further Education Practitioner Group
Yvonne Kelly, Barking & Dagenham College
Mary Vine-Morris, Association of Colleges

GLA Officers:

James Lee, Principal Policy Officer – Strategy and Relationships, Skills & Employment
Laura Marshall, Senior Board Officer, Programmes and Governance, Skills & Employment (Clerk)
Forogh Rahmani, Senior Manager – Strategy and Relationships, Skills & Employment (Acting Chair)
Beth Wheaton, Senior Policy Officer – Strategy and Relationships, Skills & Employment

Others in attendance:

Dr Kate Daubney, University of London

1 Introduction and apologies

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the Chair, George Johnston and the Deputy Chair, Nichola Hay. Forogh Rahmani chaired the meeting on their behalf.
- 1.2 Forogh Rahmani welcomed members to the meeting of the Advisory Group.
- 1.3 Apologies for absence were received from Simon Ashworth, Dr Graeme Atherton, Katie Bell, Dr Philippa Lloyd and Rebecca Plant.
- 1.4 Members noted that Dr Bob Gilworth had retired from the University of London and had now stood down from the Advisory Group. Dr Kate Daubney had replaced Dr Bob Gilworth in his role at the University of London. Dr Daubney introduced herself to the Group.
- 1.5 Members heard that Dr Daubney had started in her new role on 19 October and will be made a member of the Advisory Group by the next meeting. It was noted that Dr Daubney was attending this meeting as an attendee as the Clerk was organising the relevant appointment documentation for Dr Daubney.

2 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 Professor Martin Doel highlighted that he was a member of the Board of Cambridge Regional College which had a contract with the GLA for delivery of the Adult Education Budget (AEB).
- 2.2 Forogh Rahmani noted that other colleagues in the meeting were in a similar position. Forogh Rahmani explained that the Advisory Group would not be discussing anything that would present a conflict relating to the above point.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1 RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

4 Actions Arising

4.1 RESOLVED:

The actions arising from the previous meeting were noted.

5 Higher Level Skills (Level 4/5) Research Update

- 5.1 Members received an update on the Higher Level Skills (Level 4/5) research being carried out by RCU. This research looked at the provision of, participation in and demand for education and skills at Levels 4/5 in London.
- 5.2 Members heard that RCU had submitted a draft final report to the GLA which incorporated feedback from the Advisory Group and GLA officers. Members noted that the report also incorporated updates based on the latest 2018/19 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data and conclusion of the Department for Education's (DfE's) review of Level 4 and 5 qualifications. Officers were in the process of agreeing the final version of the report with RCU, to sign off ready for publication.
- 5.3 Mary Vine-Morris questioned whether the original recommendations that had been shared with the Advisory Group had changed for final report. The Senior Project Officer explained that the recommendations had been adapted slightly as the original recommendations were directed more towards the GLA rather than the providers, employers and those with a stake in Level 4/5 more generally. Members heard that officers would share the final recommendations with the Advisory Group.
- 5.4 Professor Martin Doel highlighted that he would be happy to facilitate an invitation from the Centre for Global Higher Education if the GLA/RCU wanted to present the results of the research.
- 5.5 Yolande Burgess provided an update on the HE Journey of Young London Residents report which launched on 21 October 2020.
- 5.6 Members noted that London Councils had decided to continue with the series of reports even in light of a changed world due to COVID-19. Yolande Burgess explained that the HE Journey of Young London Residents report was a longstanding report which contained over a decade's worth of data.
- 5.7 Members heard that London Councils had tracked young people's entry into HE (institutions learners were coming from, the types of qualifications learners were completing, results learners were achieving, etc.) It was noted that a second set of data was used to understand where young people were going (graduate employment, for example). Yolande Burgess explained that the report launched on 21 October 2020 and included data for the year 2018/2019.
- 5.8 Yolande Burgess explained that in previous years, the HE Journey of Young London Residents report had been used to look at trends in HE across London. Members heard that discussions at the launch of the report seemed to focus on the need to use this year's report for benchmarking as it would be difficult for the HE sector to understand what HE would look like in the future due to COVID-19.

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- 5.9 Members noted that the report had a key focus on ethnicity and diversity and what this looked like in HE in London.
- 5.10 Yolande Burgess explained that London Councils had produced borough level reports as part of the HE Journey of Young London Residents report and this could be circulated to Advisory Group members on request after the meeting.
- 5.11 Dr Kate Daubney questioned the use of graduate outcomes data, specifically whether London Councils was using the new Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) graduate outcomes survey data for employment outcomes. Yolande Burgess confirmed that the new data had not been used, but this report was the last time London Councils would be using the 'Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education' (DLHE) survey. Members noted that this would have an impact on the next iterations of the HE Journey of Young London Residents report as it would take two to three years to catch up with the new survey in terms of providing London Councils the full picture of graduate employment.
- 5.12 Dr Kate Daubney explained that there were a lot of interesting differences in the graduate outcomes survey, around meaningfulness and use of skills for example. Dr Kate Daubney offered to link up Yolande Burgess with HE colleagues who had been working with the graduate outcomes survey data set extensively.
- 5.13 Mary Vine-Morris questioned whether the HE Journey of Young London Residents report would continue and whether London Councils would compare what HE in London looked like ten years ago, to what it looked like now, as well as trying to understand where the HE sector would want to be in ten years' time.
- 5.14 Yolande Burgess confirmed that London Council's intention was to continue publishing the report but pointed out that future iterations would look very different due to COVID-19. Yolande Burgess explained that London Councils would want to continue with the trend-setting data, but they would also want to capture some indicators that might come out of the unique assessment arrangements that had taken place due to COVID-19.
- 5.15 It was explained that bigger strategic questions would likely arise in future iterations of the report. Yolande Burgess highlighted that she would like to bring these strategic questions to the Advisory Group for member input, especially on issues such as changes in trends around part time academic study, looking at HE in a different way, whether the HE offer need to be presented differently, etc.
- 5.16 Forogh Rahmani agreed that it would be very helpful to bring this to a future Advisory Group meeting.

5.17 RESOLVED:

- (a) The Higher Level Skills (Level 4/5) Research Update was noted;**
- (b) Officers would share the final RCU recommendations with the Advisory Group when finalised; and**
- (c) Members to contact Yolande Burgess or the Senior Project Officer if they would like to access borough level reports.**

6 London Recovery Update

- 6.1 The Advisory Group received a presentation on the work the GLA and the Skills & Employment Unit had been doing around COVID-19 Recovery.
- 6.2 Members noted that the London Recovery Board had been set up to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic at the GLA. The 'Grand Challenge' set by the London Recovery Board was to 'restore confidence in the city, minimise the impact on London's most vulnerable communities, to recover and renew the city's economy and society.'
- 6.3 The Principal Policy Officer – Strategy and Relationships explained that eight economic and social Missions and five cross cutting principles (including tackling inequality, sustainability and value for money) had been developed so that the GLA could meet this challenge.
- 6.4 The Principal Policy Officer outlined the Good Work Mission which aimed to support Londoners into good jobs with a focus on sectors key to London's recovery.
- 6.5 The Principal Policy Officer explained that officers were in the process of setting up a new steering group which would sit under the Skills for Londoners (SfL) Board and Business Partnership. This steering group would act as a sounding board for developing proposals linked to the Recovery Missions. The Principal Policy Officer asked the Advisory Group to consider the questions outlined at point 4.5 of the report.
- 6.6 During the subsequent conversation, the following points were discussed:
 - The need to integrate government initiatives, make them more coherent (for example, how the Kickstart Scheme¹ was related to apprenticeships as two government departments had started two different initiatives) and then signpost a route to higher skills through that means.

¹ In response to COVID-19 and subsequent high youth unemployment, the Government launched the Kickstart Scheme which provides funding to employers to create job placements for 16 to 24 year olds.

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- The need for integration at the point of delivery (at a borough level rather than a city level).
- The need to model the user journey for a range of students so that the GLA could identify which types of people it needed to reach out to and at which stage. The GLA could then map out the journey for these groups of people, from their perspective as the basis of integration.
- The need to acknowledge that different people were at different stages of their career journeys (for example, someone who had been made redundant but had a plan of what they would like to do next vs. someone who had been made redundant but did not know what to do next).
- The need to understand where people were on their career readiness journeys. The unemployed/underemployed status would include a much broader range of people in a COVID-19 world than it did before and there would be a spectrum of journeys taking place.
- The need to make sense of these different career journeys and explain them to employer groups.
- The need for the RCU final report to be tied into the GLA's London recovery work.
- The need to understand the journey for different people in different situations (for example, a key group could be adults who were looking at work and how they could change their career but were working at the same time).
- The need to understand what jobs/careers were out there and the need to link up the modelling of journeys with careers advice and available opportunities.
- The challenge of shaping provision against skills needs.
- The importance of understanding how the jobs market was shaping up, understanding what jobs there were and what jobs were needed.
- The importance of working collectively and collaboratively at a sub-regional level and the importance of removing anything that would hinder conversations such as how things were going to be funded and the recognition of the work that needed to go into things, for example.

6.7 Ruben Hale explained that ScreenSkills² had been doing a lot of labour market intelligence work, highlighting that ScreenSkills had some interesting statistics about the level of employment regionally. Forogh Rahmani explained that the GLA had been in touch with ScreenSkills and wanted to do more work with them on what a cultural academy could look like. It was clear that parts of the culture sector had been severely impacted by COVID-19 and freelancers faced a real challenge.

² ScreenSkills is the industry-led skills body for the screen industries - film, television (including children's, unscripted and high-end), VFX (visual effects), animation and games.

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- 6.8 Professor Martin Doel explained that if the GLA wanted swift action, it should work with a set of trusted providers (colleges, university and independent training providers (ITPs), for example) rather than going through a competitive bid process. Professor Martin Doel highlighted that the amount of time spent on bid writing, bid preparation and speculative work would drive a lot of inefficiency into the system and would drive out responsiveness.
- 6.9 Forogh Rahmani agreed that there was a need for rapid interventions but the GLA was also thinking about longer term strategies and how the GLA worked with its anchor institutions.
- 6.10 Forogh Rahmani asked for members to contact the Clerk or the Senior Policy Officer if they were interested in joining the new steering group which would act as a sounding board for developing proposals linked to the Recovery Missions. Members were also encouraged to contact the Clerk and the Senior Policy Officer if they had any further thoughts on this item.

6.11 RESOLVED:

The update on the work of the London Recovery Board was noted.

7 Date of next meeting

- 7.1 The next meeting of the Higher Level Skills Advisory Group was to be confirmed.

8 Any Other Business the Chair Considers Urgent

- 8.1 Mary Vine-Morris highlighted that it was Colleges Week 2020 (Monday 19 October – Friday 23 October 2020). She thanked the Mayor and the GLA for publicising Colleges Week 2020 on their social media accounts and asked members to use their social media channels to publicise it also.
- 8.2 Forogh Rahmani thanked Mary Vine-Morris for involving the GLA in Colleges Week 2020.

9 Close of Meeting

- 9.1 The meeting closed at 14.58pm.

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GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Skills for Londoners Board Higher Level Skills Advisory Group

Date of meeting: **24 February 2021**

Title of report: **Actions Arising from previous meetings**

To be presented by: **Laura Marshall, Senior Board Officer, Skills & Employment and Beth Wheaton, Senior Policy Officer, Skills & Employment**

Cleared by: **Julia Harrowsmith, Senior Manager – AEB Delivery, Skills & Employment**

Classification **Public**

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates the Higher Level Skills Advisory Group on actions arising from the previous meeting.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Higher Level Skills Advisory Group is asked to **note** the update on actions arising from the previous meeting.

3 Actions arising from the meeting of 22 October 2020

Agenda Item	Action	Status
5. Higher Level Skills (Level 4/5) Research Update	Officers would share the final RCU recommendations with the Advisory Group when finalised.	In Progress. Report will be published in March 2021.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Outlined elsewhere within this report.

Appendices:

- None.

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GREATER**LONDON**AUTHORITY

**Skills for Londoners Board
Higher Level Skills Advisory Group**

Date of meeting: **24 February 2021**

Title of report: **Contextual admissions and work experience research**

To be presented by: **Beth Wheaton, Senior Policy Officer, Skills & Employment, GLA; Rachel Moreton, Associate Director, CFE Research; and Sophie Spong, Research Manager, CFE Research**

Cleared by: **Forogh Rahmani, Senior Manager – Strategy, Policy and Relationships, Skills & Employment**

Classification: **Public** with Appendix A and B reserved from publication as they contain information intended for publication at a later date.

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 While London has high levels of progression to Higher Education (HE) including for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, there remain inequalities in access and outcomes.
- 1.2 Building on previous research in this area, the GLA commissioned CFE Research to conduct two separate qualitative studies. The first report looks at the use of contextual admissions by London's universities. The second focuses on the provision of work experience and employability support.
- 1.3 Representatives from CFE will present key findings from the research in the meeting. This report contains background information on the aims and objectives of the research.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Higher Level Skills Advisory Group are asked to:
 - 2.1.1 **Note** the Contextual Admissions and Work Experience reports attached at Appendix A and B.

3 Introduction and Background

- 3.1 London is one of the leading centres of HE in the world with leading universities and specialist colleges and schools. London's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can be important assets in strengthening social mobility. The Mayor wants all Londoners with the potential to succeed to have the opportunity to study at HEIs and on the programme best suited to them.

- 3.2 London has seen a growing proportion of its population entering HE – the highest of any area in England – and a significant number go to London HEIs.¹ A GLA-commissioned report [*Building on success: Increasing higher education retention in London*](#) has found that, much like London's population, HE students in the capital are more diverse than elsewhere in the country, in terms of both their routes into HE and their socio-economic backgrounds.
- 3.3 However, the same report found that students who had taken non A-Level qualifications and who also lived in the parental home were more at risk of dropping out at undergraduate level. These students were more likely to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds and attend lower tariff HEIs. The research also found limits to the Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) measure to identify disadvantage. Along with other reports, it recommends that the use of POLAR is reviewed and that a more suitable approach is developed.
- 3.4 The research also highlighted that certain ethnic groups were more likely to have characteristics that increased the risk of non-continuation or transfer. In particular, Black students were more likely than White and Asian students to have both entered HE through a non-A-Level route and live in the parental home. Further GLA analysis of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data has also highlighted significant differences in the ethnicity of students between London HEIs.²

Contextual admissions

- 3.5 The use of contextual information and data has become widely recognised in recent years as a potential way for universities to widen access to HE through their admissions processes. Contextual admissions, where HEIs take into account a candidate's background when making decisions on whom to admit³, can be part of a wider approach to access and participation and could have a role to play in ensuring that London's diversity is reflected in its HEIs at all levels.
- 3.6 The GLA commissioned research to understand more about the existing use of contextual admissions by London's HEIs and awareness of contextual admissions amongst students, particularly those from underrepresented groups. The Mayor recognises the autonomy of HEIs in recruiting and selecting students and their commitment to widening access and participation. The aim of this work is to share best practice in the use of contextual admissions policies to widen opportunities across London's HE sector.
- 3.7 Considering the context in which a student has achieved their grades has become increasingly important due to COVID-19, and the significant disruption learners have faced.

¹ *The Higher Education Journey of Young London Residents*, London Councils, December 2018.

² Using HESA data 2017/18. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-5>

³ Boliver *et al* (2017) *Admissions in Context: The use of contextual information by leading universities*, Sutton Trust https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Admissions-in-Context-Final_V2.pdf

Work experience and employability

- 3.8 There remain inequalities in degree outcomes and graduate employment rates in London. Among people aged 21-30 living in London, 75 per cent of White graduates work in a professional occupation, versus 65 per cent of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) graduates.⁴
- 3.9 It is widely recognised that work experience plays a crucial role in improving equality of opportunity in degree outcomes and graduate employment rates. The type and quality of work experience and employability skills a student gains during their degree programme, including during vacations, can influence outcomes.
- 3.10 The strengths and characteristics of London's economy should provide significant opportunities to improve outcomes for HE students in the capital. London is a leading world city with a number of sector specialisms where it enjoys a relative international competitive advantage. However, there is a need to explore how HEIs can support students to make best use of these opportunities.
- 3.11 The GLA commissioned research in this area to assess the provision of work experience and employability support for students across London's HEIs. The aim of this work was to identify good practice and provide recommendations on developing this at an institutional and London level. One organisation was commissioned to deliver pieces of work due to the significant crossover in research participants.

4 Issues for consideration

- 4.1 In February 2020, the GLA commissioned CFE Research to deliver two separate qualitative research projects, focused on contextual admissions and work experience.
- 4.2 Field research with providers and students was undertaken from March – October 2020. COVID-19 had a significant impact on the fieldwork, and the influence of the pandemic on the findings is considered in both reports.
- 4.3 A summary of key findings will be presented to attendees for consideration. A draft copy of each report can also be found in Appendixes A and B, including executive summaries.

5 Equality comments

- 5.1 The research commissioned by the GLA focuses narrowing social and economic equalities. This includes widening access to HE for learners with protected characteristics through the use of contextual admissions and reducing inequalities in graduate outcomes.
- 5.2 The use of contextual admissions considered in this report, helps HEIs consider factors that may have affected an applicants' education attainment. This includes individual level data (e.g. care leaver), area-level (e.g. Index of

⁴ GLA City Intelligence Unit analysis using Annual Population Survey three-year pooled dataset 2015-17.

Multiple Deprivation (IMD) or POLAR) and school-level indicators. The report includes practical suggestions for HEIs implementing and developing contextual admissions processes.

6 Risks arising / mitigation

- 6.1 Early evidence suggests school closures as a result of COVID-19 are likely to widen the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Without the right support, this could have an impact on progression to university and subsequent outcomes.
- 6.2 Findings from both reports conducted by CFE Research include suggestions and best practice HEIs can adopt to help mitigate some of these challenges. The GLA will share findings with key stakeholders and continue dialogue with HEIs.

7 Legal Comments

- 7.1 This report is for noting only and therefore Legal advice has not been sought. Should any subsequent legal issues arise, officers will contact TfL Legal for advice.

8 Financial Comments of the Executive Director Resources

- 8.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report. GLA Finance will be consulted on any formal decisions that arise from the considerations set out in this report.

9 Next steps

- 9.1 GLA to publish and disseminate findings to a wider audience, including admissions and careers professionals from London's HEIs.
- 9.2 Incorporate research findings into GLA COVID-19 recovery planning and future policy development.

Appendices:

- Appendix A – CFE Work experience report (*reserved from publication*)
- Appendix B – CFE Contextual admissions report (*reserved from publication*)

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