

DR DIANA BEECH

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LONDON  
HIGHER 

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# WINNING LONDON'S ARTS AND MINDS

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THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVE  
HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISION  
IN THE CAPITAL



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## Foreword

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When it comes to culture and the arts, London really is the place to be.

For students of creative disciplines in particular, London offers an immersive higher education experience like no other. Arts students of every kind in London have on their doorstep the best cultural organisations the world has to offer, and leading industry professionals both to guide them and inspire them during the course of their studies.

It is no coincidence, then, that London has one of the highest concentrations of globally renowned conservatoires and creative higher education institutions of any city in the world. The intensive training they provide, coupled with strong links to industry, is what equips London's graduates with the skills to go on to power the nation's creative economy for the future, maintaining the UK's outstanding reputation and enhancing the world around us with imagination and flair.

As the Principal of the oldest conservatoire in the UK, it is a pleasure to see this report by London Higher shining a light on the importance of creative higher education provision to the capital, its people and the country at large. As we come out of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is more vital than ever that we nurture this pipeline of our exceptional talent, not just to get London's economy back on its feet, but to uphold the health and wellbeing of the country as we adjust to new ways of living and working.

The creative arts have always been fundamental to the London way of life and as we plan ahead, they must continue to be at the forefront of the city's recovery. We need to act now to maintain and evolve London's status as a capital of culture which the world acknowledges and draws upon.



**Professor Jonathan Freeman-Attwood CBE**  
**Principal of the Royal Academy of Music**

## Executive Summary

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For a predominantly service or knowledge-based economy like the UK, the arts matter. Reviving our creative industries – where ideas are shaped, nurtured and brought to life – is what will set the nation on a faster route to recovery: re-employing a displaced workforce; reviving tourism and associated industries such as retail and hospitality; re-inspiring future generations with new pathways and possibilities; and, ultimately, reinvigorating the nation’s creative spirit as we seek to make our way confidently into a post-Brexit and post-Covid world, where global relationships have to be fostered afresh and traditional ways of working re-imagined and re-designed.

London has long been a global hub for the creative industries. Yet, their future success is now at threat on multiple fronts. By examining the current state of creative higher education provision in London, this report uncovers the modern face of the capital’s creative arts scene and makes the case for the continued support of a higher education in the arts for the sake of both local and national recovery efforts.

In 2019, the London arts sector generated £58bn for the national economy. Contributing to this is undoubtedly the vibrancy of London’s West End and the city’s ample museums, galleries and studios, together with the capital’s wealth of world-leading creative education offerings, which include studies in traditional dramatic and performance arts as well as cutting-edge courses in production, games development and innovation design.

Today, however, London’s status as a great cultural hub is at risk. While the creative industries have continued – and have entertained and distracted us during the low points of the pandemic – the pandemic response has prevented normal performances and events from taking place. With arts venues closed, thousands of workers across the creative industries have either been furloughed or lost their jobs completely. Tourism spend in the capital, in turn, declined by £10.9bn in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Although London is blessed to have a diverse range of world-class creative higher education providers on its doorstep, and student demand has only continued to grow over recent years, the sector now faces renewed negativity from Government, suggesting that creative arts study is not as valuable or as worthwhile as other subjects to students and the economy. By shining a spotlight on the different types of creative arts provision on offer in the capital, this report debunks perceptions that a higher education in the creative disciplines is of little worth and, instead, demonstrates how London’s higher education providers in the creative arts are working hand-in-glove with industry and community outreach projects.

As it stands at present, creative higher education provision in England is facing an uncertain future. On coming out of the pandemic, the Government faces a choice: whether to reinvigorate the creative industries, as the fastest growing part of the UK economy pre-Covid, or whether to persist with pre-pandemic rhetoric to detract applicants away from opting for higher education courses in the creative disciplines in a bid to fill skills gaps in STEM (science,

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<sup>1</sup> Sahar Nazir, ‘Central London loses out on £10.8bn due to lack of tourism’, *Retail Gazette*, 3 February 2021, available at: <https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2021/02/central-london-loses-out-on-10-9bn-due-to-lack-of-tourism/>

technology, engineering and mathematics) professions and other priority workforce areas, such as medicine and healthcare.

This report concludes with a series of recommendations for both local and national Government, as well as higher education institutions themselves, and challenges these players to work collaboratively to ensure the ongoing sustainability and future success of London's creative arts sector.

## Introduction

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London has long been a global hub for the creative industries. Yet, their future success is now at threat on multiple fronts – not least from the destruction caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but also from emerging Government rhetoric encouraging students to “pivot away from dead-end courses that leave young people with nothing but debt”.<sup>2</sup>

By examining the current state of creative higher education provision in London, this report uncovers the modern face of the capital’s creative arts scene and makes the case for the continued support of a higher education in the arts for the sake of both local and national recovery efforts.

In particular, the report highlights real-life examples of modern and innovative creative higher education provision across the capital. These have been obtained through structured interviews with a pre-selected sample of London Higher member institutions, including small, specialist arts institutions, larger, multi-faculty universities and members of our ‘Centres Group’, which comprises universities from elsewhere in the country with branch campuses in London.

It is hoped these examples make clear the value of the arts, not just to the individuals that study them, but also to employers, local communities, public services, and local and national policymakers hoping to expedite an upturn in the economy.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations to a wide range of stakeholders to ensure the value of the arts is recognised and protected as attentions turn to the post-pandemic recovery effort.

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<sup>2</sup> Gavin Williamson, ‘Skills, jobs and freedom. My priorities for this week’s Queen’s Speech – and the year ahead’, *Conservative Home*, 14 May 2021, available at: <https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2021/05/gavin-williamson-skills-jobs-and-freedom-my-priorities-for-this-weeks-queens-speech-and-the-year-ahead.html>

## Who are we?

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London Higher is the representative body for over 40 universities and higher education colleges located across Greater London. We are committed to raising the voice of London's higher education sector and ensuring our members are influencing the policies that matter.

We are a not-for-profit charity and a company limited by guarantee.

London is a powerhouse of higher education and is home to one of the largest and most diverse higher education sectors in the world.

Together, London's universities and higher education colleges represent over 400,000 students and almost 100,000 staff and offer around 10,000 higher education courses across the capital.

## About the author

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Dr Diana Beech is Chief Executive Officer at London Higher. She was previously Policy Advisor in the Department for Education to the last three Ministers of State for Universities, Science Research and Innovation. Diana holds a PhD in German Studies from the University of Cambridge and has held academic research positions at universities in Canada, Germany and the UK.

As author, I would like to thank all those interviewed for this project for their time and willingness to share ideas and possible policy solutions. I hope I have done justice to your suggestions. I would also like to thank my colleagues Alec Webb and Jack O'Neill for their research and interviews with member institutions.



## Setting the scene: London's creative industries

Before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the UK, the creative arts industry was thriving. Government figures from February 2020 confirm that the creative industries contributed more than £111bn to the UK economy in 2018. This was equivalent to £306m every day, or almost £13m every hour, and represented a growth of 7.4 per cent on the previous year.<sup>3</sup> This meant the pre-pandemic growth in the UK arts sector was more than five times larger than the growth across the UK economy as a whole.

In London alone, in 2019, the arts sector generated £58bn for the national economy, cementing the city's credentials as a hub for creative talent in the UK.<sup>4</sup> Contributing to this is undoubtedly the vibrancy of London's West End and the city's ample museums, galleries and studios, together with the capital's wealth of world-leading creative education offerings, which include studies in traditional dramatic and performance arts as well as cutting-edge courses in production, games development and innovation design. According to the Mayor of London, prior to the pandemic, the creative industries sector supported one in every six jobs in the city and helped to attract four out of five tourists visiting the capital.<sup>5</sup>

In short, pre-pandemic London had come to be seen as a global centre for the arts. This sentiment is epitomised by the words of the current Director of V&A East, Dr Gus Casely-Hayford, who recently spoke highly of London's arts scene:<sup>6</sup>

*"Best arts education. Best arts sector. That's what drew me back here... I know New York. I know LA. I've visited so many of the great cultural hubs but there's something about London. There's a particular kind of originality. If you think of the great East London practitioners of recent years, Alexander McQueen and David Bailey, they are people who, in terms of their background and upbringing, had to push against a lot of closed doors. When those doors do open, those are the people that seem to define eras and moments. Britain is catalysed in great part by people who sit on the margins and the fringes."*

Today, however, London's status as a great cultural hub is at risk. While the creative industries have continued – and have entertained and distracted us during the low points of the pandemic – the pandemic response prevented normal performances and events from taking place. With arts venues closed, thousands of workers

<sup>3</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport press release, 'UK Creative Industries contributes almost £13 million to the UK economy every hour', 6 February 2020, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uks-creative-industries-contributes-almost-13-million-to-the-uk-economy-every-hour>

<sup>4</sup> Sadiq Khan, 'After the Pandemic, I will build a better and brighter future for the arts in London', *Independent*, 1 February 2021, available at: <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/after-the-pandemic-i-will-build-a-better-and-brighter-future-for-the-arts-in-london/ar-BB1dhKnz>

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> cf. Kadish Morris, 'Meet Gus Casely-Hayford, the man on a mission to drag museums into the 21<sup>st</sup> century', *Guardian*, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/mar/21/va-east-repository-of-objects-thoughts-feelings-dream-gus-casely-hayford>



across the creative industries have either been furloughed or lost their jobs completely. Tourism spend in the capital, in turn, declined by £10.9bn in 2020.<sup>7</sup> Plus, the effects of Brexit on the UK's creative talent pipeline are yet to play out fully, with applications to higher education courses from EU students already dramatically down on previous years.<sup>8</sup> Concerns are also growing over various potential policy complications, including creating suitable travel permits for performers, achieving the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and guaranteeing reciprocal rights on patents and designs – to name but a few. As a result, London's creative economy is now facing its biggest challenge to date: not just to build itself back better amid mounting uncertainty, but also to help the nation build back better, economically, culturally and socially.

For a predominantly service or knowledge-based economy like the UK, the arts matter. Reviving our creative industries – where ideas are shaped, nurtured and brought to life – is what will set the nation on a faster route to recovery: re-employing a displaced workforce; reviving tourism and associated industries such as retail and hospitality; re-inspiring future generations with new pathways and possibilities; and, ultimately, reinvigorating the nation's creative spirit as we seek to make our way confidently into a post-Brexit and post-Covid world, where global relationships

have to be fostered afresh and traditional ways of working re-imagined and re-designed.

The value of the arts to the UK's future economic regeneration is clear. There is an urgent need for higher education policy in England to move away from the now outdated idea that a higher education in the creative industries is not beneficial to the nation. While current policymakers remain focused on transforming the UK into a "science superpower", this ambition should not come at the expense of the arts but should have the arts embedded firmly within it – particularly as these disciplines do not only invigorate the economic and cultural capital of the nation, but they also complement understandings in science and business.<sup>9</sup> After all, the origins of the word "science" – as per the Greek term *scientia* or the German concept of *Wissenschaft* – refer to all academic pursuits and are inclusive of knowledge or experiences borne of the arts.

As the UK emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government is faced with getting the country out of the biggest economic slump in centuries.<sup>10</sup> Tweaking student supply into subjects which offer a larger and more immediate pay-back of the Treasury loan book is not going to cut it. Rather, what we need now is to hit the accelerator on the sectors and industries which proved so lucrative to our economy prior to the pandemic and not put the

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<sup>7</sup> Sahar Nazir, 'Central London loses out on £10.8bn due to lack of tourism', *Retail Gazette*, 3 February 2021, available at: <https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2021/02/central-london-loses-out-on-10-9bn-due-to-lack-of-tourism/>

<sup>8</sup> cf. '2021 Cycle Applicant Figures – January Equal Consideration Deadline', UCAS (latest data available prior to this report's publication), available at: <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-releases/applicant-releases-2021/2021-cycle-applicant-figures-january-deadline>

<sup>9</sup> cf. 'PM sets out vision to cement UK as a science superpower', Press release, 8 August 2019, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-sets-out-vision-to-cement-uk-as-a-science-superpower>

<sup>10</sup> cf. 'UK economy suffered record annual slump in 2020', BBC News, 12 February 2021, available at: [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-56037123#:~:text=The%20UK%20economy%20shrank%20by,National%20Statistics%20\(ONS\)%20said.](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-56037123#:~:text=The%20UK%20economy%20shrank%20by,National%20Statistics%20(ONS)%20said.)

handbrake on those activities just at the very moment that we are ready to get them going again.

Reinvesting in the creative industries will be central to our post-pandemic success and this is no better demonstrated than in the capital. If the Covid-19 outbreak should have taught us anything, it is that science may well hold the key to getting us out of the pandemic, but it is the arts that continue to get us through it – with creative pursuits having proven so vital to the nation’s mental health and wellbeing during lockdown. In the same vein, it is the arts that will act as the glue to keep our society united behind a common purpose as we move forwards, inspiring individuals and ideas as we seek to rebuild our economy for the future.

It is against this backdrop that this report exposes the modern face of the arts in London and the role they can play in the national recovery effort, with the UK capital – as a hub for creative talents, with its wealth of creative higher education provision – leading the way. It shows exactly what London has to offer by way of

a higher education in the arts and demonstrates how creative higher education provision is evolving, not just to meet the needs of the present day, but also the needs of future generations and society’s ‘as-yet-unknowns’. In doing so, this report underscores the importance of the arts to local communities, generating civic outreach and social impact, as well as to broader, national policy ambitions, such as understanding and tackling climate change.<sup>11</sup>

Continued Government support and a willingness from policymakers to invest in and reinvigorate the creative industries will be vital to drive economic growth back to pre-pandemic levels and beyond. That is why this report ends with policy recommendations to the Westminster Government, to the Mayor of London and to the higher education sector as a whole as to what should be done to ensure the power of London’s creative higher education provision is both recognised in emerging policy initiatives and harnessed in such a way that it can play a full and fulfilling role in the city and nation’s future recovery efforts.

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<sup>11</sup> Events such as ‘Art History and Climate Change’ hosted by The Courtauld on 25 June 2020 help establish the role of representation in our understanding of climate and explore the place of art in the effort to avert global warming, cf. <https://courtauld.ac.uk/event/online-art-history-in-climate-change>

## Creative higher education provision in London

The terms “arts” or “creative industries” are naturally broad and are frequently used to encompass a wide spectrum of skills, predominantly based on emotions and focused on different modes of expression. Yet, despite their breadth and depth, the arts are commonly reduced down to five core creative activities, in which the UK undoubtedly excels – namely literature, art, music, dance and drama.

Although these five pursuits remain central to the artistic endeavour today, they are by no means the only way to define the arts. Creative disciplines are continually changing in line with technological trends and societal developments – today encompassing subjects such as digital creation, graphic design and games development. A true appreciation of the arts therefore requires an acknowledgement of their fluidity and constant evolution, including the transferable skills they nurture in students.

London’s creative higher education provision sufficiently reflects the diversity of genres and appeal of modern-day creative arts. The capital is world-renowned for its many specialist arts conservatoires and a glance at websites like that of the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (CSSD), for example, reveals impressively long lists of high-profile alumni, who continue to fuel the UK’s soft power and international appeal.<sup>12</sup> However, it would be wrong to think of these institutions as offering a ‘static’ or ‘abstract’ education in the arts, which has remained unchanged for centuries. As this report shows, London’s creative higher education providers are continually enhancing their relevance to society, be it by forging collaborations with specialists from other academic fields or focusing on their applicability to the wider world through business links and the incubation of ideas.

In the UK, the demand for the creative arts has been growing in recent years, with students studying creative arts and design increasing at a steady pace between 2014/15 and 2018/19 from 166,930 to 181,830. This represents a growth of 8.93 per cent. Only a handful of subjects (namely biological sciences, veterinary science, mathematical science, social studies, business and administrative studies, and architecture, building and planning) have increased by more during this time, enshrining the importance of the creative arts for the modern UK student.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See the list of CSSD high-profile alumni here: <https://www.cssd.ac.uk/alumni/our-alumni/high-profile-alumni>

One such example can be found at the Royal College of Art (RCA), which is the only entirely postgraduate provider of art and design education, not just in London but in the UK as a whole. In order to ensure it is equipping its community with the capabilities to transform their creative talents and ideas into successful products and businesses, the RCA is home to a centre for entrepreneurship and commercialisation, called InnovationRCA, which helps students, staff and alumni bring ideas to market – often providing solutions to many of the world’s societal challenges.<sup>13</sup> As their centre for entrepreneurship, enterprise, innovation and business support, InnovationRCA encourages individuals to develop creative solutions to solve problems which are having a significant and real impact on society. To date, InnovationRCA has helped to launch 71 start-ups; creating 750 UK jobs and raising £82 million in investor funds.

#### **KwickScreen (InnovationRCA)**

A versatile retractable screen that creates a temporary partition for hospital wards, helping infection control and improving patient privacy and dignity. It has been specifically designed for the healthcare environment and has been sold into more than 30 National Health Service (NHS) trusts and is being exported to Europe, the Americas and the Middle East.

#### **The Tyre Collective (InnovationRCA)**

The Tyre Collective mitigate emissions by capturing tyre wear at the source to ensure clean air, safeguarding our environment and health. Tyre wear particles account for up to 50 per cent of PM<sup>2</sup> (particulate matter) emissions from road transport. The Collective’s device catches tyre wear pollutants as vehicles are moving, preventing 60 per cent of these airborne particles from escaping into the air we breathe.

The RCA is also pushing disciplinary boundaries through its joint Master’s degree in Global Innovation Design alongside Imperial College, which not only offers students the chance to study internationally, but sees students working at the interface of science, technology and design to create the innovation leaders of tomorrow.<sup>14</sup> Although a small institution by size, the RCA has considerable influence over the way we adapt to the changing world around us. Its leadership of a consortium of large, prestigious, multi-faculty universities, including Cambridge, Manchester and University College London (UCL), to combat the environmental impacts of fast fashion, perfectly demonstrates the importance of the creative disciplines to finding sustainable, human-centred, scientific solutions to pressing industrial challenges.<sup>15</sup>

Arts faculties at larger, more mainstream universities across London are also transforming the face and nature of the UK’s creative industries, with many

<sup>13</sup> Read more about successful InnovationRCA start-ups here:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/business/innovationrca/start-companies/?sector=healthcare-wellbeing-medtech>

<sup>14</sup> See course details here: <https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/programme-finder/global-innovation-design-ma-msc/>

<sup>15</sup> Read more about the Textiles Circularity Centre’s research here: <https://www.rca.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/rca-awarded-grant-by-uk-research-and-innovation-to-lead-the-textiles-circularity-centre/>

institutions leading the way in modern digital arts provision in the form of cutting-edge video games development, graphic design or 3D animation. The Creative Industries Council (CIC) credits UK higher education as a “strong supporter of the games industry” and recognises London and the South East as an established games development hub, contributing to the success of the wider UK’s games industry. In 2018, this was valued at £3.864bn.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, universities across the capital – from the University of West London (UWL) to the University of East London (UEL) – all offer degree courses in games design or equivalent.

The film industry is another major arts

Creative arts provision, in all its forms, often makes up a large share of course offerings at London’s multi-faculty universities – thereby accounting for a significant number of staff jobs as well as a high proportion of estates usage. At Kingston University, for example, the School of Art spans all three of the University’s campuses, which house specialist spaces such as industry-standard workshops and studios, all designed to enhance students’ practice-based learning experience. The University is also home to workshops and facilities like the ‘hackSpace’, which allows students with common interests – often in computers, technology, digital or electronic art – to come together and collaborate across

## Case study

### *Middlesex University: Creative Campus Network*

The Connected Campus for Creative Industries initiative is a joint academia-industry initiative between Middlesex University and Film London. Beginning with film industries, the project is to create a blueprint for other creative industries, informing and leading the way in collaboration between academia and industry – ensuring that graduates gain highly-valued skills and experiences.

This initiative is creating the JoDo Platform: an online, on-demand, resource platform for students, lecturers, support staff and employees in the screen industries. The platform includes behind-the-scenes case studies and insights into the screen industries as well as contact on subjects ranging from engineering and construction to business and finance. With the support of industry organisations and practitioners, the JoDo platform seeks to grow and further establish itself as the go-to platform for the screen industry sector – both within academia, and industry itself.

sector boosted by London’s higher education institutions. Middlesex University is just one provider with strong links with Film London and has created a platform to boost collaboration between academia and industry. (See case study above).

courses and skill-sets to reimagine the future of creative innovation.

Importantly, creative arts provision at non-specialist providers plays a core widening access role, allowing people from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-

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<sup>16</sup> CIC, ‘Games: Why the UK?’, last updated 2 March 2021, available at: <https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/site-content/industries-games-games-why-the-uk#:~:text=Official%20government%20figures%20estimate%20that,1.35bn%20in%20games%20hardware.>

represented groups to realise their potential and learn creative and digital skills to improve their employment prospects and life satisfaction. Ravensbourne University London invests heavily in creative outreach programmes, for both school children and adults, to help inspire people in south-east London to realise their creative potential.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, many creative HE providers in London actively support community-based arts outreach, for instance by hosting Saturday Clubs that have collectively reached thousands of 13-16 year olds in the capital.<sup>18</sup> They also partner with schools and colleges to close participation gaps in the creative industries. Via initiatives such as the London Higher-supported AccessHE Creative Platform, higher education institutions route relevant information, advice and guidance on creative study and careers directly to the young people least likely to enter into a creative job, such as those from Black and Minority Ethnic groups or from low-income backgrounds.<sup>19</sup>

Several UK universities from outside London have also set up bases in the capital to better hone their specialisms in creative higher education provision. Staffordshire University London is a case in point, which dedicates its London base

wholly to creative studies into new and emerging technologies – offering courses in concept art for games and film and ‘esports’, among others.<sup>20</sup> The British School of Fashion is similarly based at the London campus of Glasgow Caledonian University, offering easy access to industry leaders and educational content informed by the latest practice in fashion. The decision to base the School in the capital ultimately evidences how creative higher education is becoming ever more closely linked to industry through both geography and collaborations.<sup>21</sup>

As the above center through London’s higher education landscape shows, then, the creative arts are core to what many providers in the capital do – be it by training the next generation of creative professionals to power the UK’s world-leading creative industries, or cross-pollinating ideas with other sectors and disciplines to bring about the discoveries and inventions of tomorrow. In short, creativity is what makes London and the UK tick, and higher education institutions across the capital play an important role nurturing the emerging talent that our creative economy needs, not to mention shaping the creators and innovators that will prove so vital to the city and nation’s post-pandemic recovery efforts.

## Creative industries graduates and skills

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Higher education institutions, of all types and specialisms across the capital, ensure that their graduates complete their

courses with a wide range of applicable, transferable and industry-relevant skills. Due to the breadth of creative arts courses,

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<sup>17</sup> Read more about Ravensbourne University London’s outreach programmes here:

<https://www.ravensbourne.ac.uk/information/schools-and-outreach/young-creatives-make-it-ravensbourne>

<sup>18</sup> For more information see <https://saturday-club.org/>.

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.accesshecreative.co.uk/>.

<sup>20</sup> Read more about Staffordshire University London’s Digital Institute here: <https://dilondon.staffs.ac.uk/>

<sup>21</sup> Read more about the British School of Fashion here: <https://britishschooloffashion.com/>

the skills that creative industries graduates obtain throughout their courses of study often enable them not only to make meaningful contributions to the industries related to their courses, but also other sectors and trades. Unsurprisingly, creative industries graduates display great originality and are often the creative lifeblood for employers, providing a collaborative, “can do” attitude, with out-of-the-box thinking. It is no surprise, then, that some of the world’s most impactful disruptors have a creative arts background.

Higher education institutions that deliver creative arts provision play a critical role in ensuring that graduates are equipped with not only the transferable skills any higher education course provides, such as leadership, communication and self-discipline, but also with skills that ensure positive employment outcomes. This requires institutions to ensure that they instil skills in students which address

creative higher education institutions are known and, second, through significant engagement with third parties – namely key local, national and global industry partners. An example of this can be found at Staffordshire University London, which has taken a technology-informed theory approach to curriculum development. By partnering with some of the world’s largest and most high-profile information technology companies, Staffordshire University London has been able to develop an innovative curriculum, which ensures students graduate with skills and competencies that are highly valued by industry. (See case study below).

Engaging in iterative skills-focussed curriculum development, and ensuring these skills are validated by industry, allows creative higher education institutions the ability to deliver innovative and life-changing educational experiences confidently to students, who they know

## Case study

### *Staffordshire University London: Industry Advisory Board*

Staffordshire University London recognise that in order to fill the skills gaps in industry, the academic and experiential offering to students must be informed by those leading industry. This approach prioritises the employability of students, ensuring that the skills and learnings taught within the classroom enable graduates to be “industry ready”, leading world-class organisations and industries through technological and creative innovation. With leading figures from Microsoft and IBM coming together with other innovative thinkers on the Industry Advisory Board, the Board helps to ensure that courses are relevant, up-to-date and successful in equipping graduates with the skills required within industry, as well as the drive and ambition to lead industry thinking for the future.

industry’s immediate skills needs and will also set graduates up for life and ensure they meet their personal, long-term career ambitions.

This can and has occurred in two primary ways: first, organically, through utilising the academic expertise for which London’s

will go on to be impactful and highly sought-after graduates in a variety of sectors and industries. Indeed, many higher education institutions in London

specialising in the creative arts continue to support graduates long after they have completed their studies, supporting them to engage and progress into industry. For example, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance recently launched the Trinity Laban Ignite Fund, directed at early-career artists resident in the local south-east London boroughs. It offers them one-off grants alongside bespoke professional support to assist them in establishing sustainable and productive careers.

Moreover, LinkedIn's research on the most sought-after job skills by employers for 2019 found that the three most-wanted "soft skills" were creativity, persuasion and collaboration, whilst one of the five top "hard skills" was people management.<sup>22</sup> This has recently been corroborated by research from Kingston University, which indicates that the top ten future skills, as chosen by businesses, considered important to protect the UK's global competitiveness include problem-solving (77 per cent), communication (66 per cent), critical thinking (64 per cent) and creativity (56 per cent).<sup>23</sup> All these skills are embedded in creative arts courses during the curriculum development process, ensuring creative arts graduates develop talents in many of these areas. Anecdotal evidence also points to creative arts graduates most highly valuing their creativity, practical persuasion and collaboration skills. Due to the nature of the courses they undertake, graduates of the creative arts also tend to be more practical in nature and are equipped to adapt their skills so as best to support the ever-changing dynamic and requirement of the future of work.

Many higher education institutions across London actively find ways to give their creative arts students practical "hands-on" experience of applying their skills and ideas to business and industry. The Projects Office at London Metropolitan University is

### **Case study**

#### *London Metropolitan University: The Projects Office*

Established in 2004 to provide professional support for students and staff from the School of Art, Architecture and Design at London Metropolitan University, the Projects Office is a supportive, professional environment for students to develop and contribute to community projects. It is an opportunity for students and staff to undertake consultancy commissions and research projects, as well as access project management support for live projects and work-related learning experiences.

This project is just one manifestation of London Metropolitan University bridging the worlds of pedagogy and practice by providing students with access to the broad University network of professional contacts and stakeholders. It favours projects with a clear social purpose and co-ordinates carefully chosen work placements.

just one example, where students and staff take on consultancy commissions – not just for the benefit of their own professional development, but also for the society

<sup>22</sup> cf. Paul Petrone, 'The Skills Companies Need Most in 2019 – And How to Learn Them', *LinkedIn Learning Blog*, 31 December 2018, available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/business/learning/blog/top-skills-and-courses/the-skills-companies-need-most-in-2019-and-how-to-learn-them>

<sup>23</sup> Kingston University London, *Future Skills League Table 2021*, June 2021, available at: <https://www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/future-skills/>



around them, as many of these projects address challenges pertaining to the future of the city, including housing and climate change. (See case study overleaf.)

While national data about the industries in which graduates go on to work is in short supply, anecdotal evidence shows that graduates with creative arts degrees work in a variety of sectors, across a variety of roles. Discussions conducted as part of this report reveal that while many creative arts graduates go on to establish their own businesses and are net positive contributors to the economy, many others contribute to the education of the next generation through teaching roles and tutoring. For example, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance estimate that 70 per cent of their alumni will at some point pursue paid teaching work, with many more graduates

contributing to the education of the nation through other forms of coaching and instruction.

Whatever their chosen career path, it is important that graduates perceive that their qualifications matter and are able to pursue their dreams and careers. Evidence from the Graduate Outcome Survey shows that 80 per cent of creative arts and design graduates either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “My current activity is meaningful” and 71 per cent of creative arts and design graduates either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “My current activity fits with my future plans”. These statistics demonstrate the immense value that creative arts graduates obtained through their higher education experience and having a well-engaged workforce is vital to increasing productivity and the UK’s economic recovery.

## Case study

### *University of Roehampton: Dance for Parkinson’s*

Dance for Parkinson’s (*DfP*) is a pioneering body of research led by Dr Sara Houston, from Roehampton’s School of Arts, that has encouraged people with Parkinson’s disease (PwPs) to dance, enabled dance artists to teach them, and helped dance organisations to support them. By providing an evidence base that demonstrates the benefits of dancing for PwPs, Houston has changed dance practice and transformed lives for PwPs across Australia, Europe and North America. The research has had several specific impacts which have had global reach, including evidence to support the expansion of the English National Ballet’s *DfP* programme throughout England and Wales.

*DfP* is an innovative project, supported by a BUPA Foundation Prize and the English National Ballet to examine the potential benefits of dance for PwP and to explore what this might mean for dance practice and the arts community. *DfP* is also now widely recognised as a case study for demonstrating the value of arts, and arts-based health interventions.

## Creative arts in the community

Higher education institutions are beacons of knowledge and expertise, not only

accessible to staff and students, but also to the benefit of the community around them

and local residents. For many higher education institutions in the capital, this civic agenda is a key aspect of their operations and creative arts disciplines are central to communications and outreach. London's universities help to enrich local cultural activity, displaying art and showcasing performances, as well as being directly involved in local community efforts to enhance the lived experience of residents: whether this be through extending educational opportunities to the local community; working with local businesses to deliver events and programmes of cultural significance; or furthering the historical and cultural understanding of the local area.

Staffordshire University London, for example, defines itself as a digital institute that enables individuals of all backgrounds

Fellows, recognising members of the public who operate in the local community and make a difference to those within it.

London Metropolitan University similarly engages in civic-centred work and its "Made in Hayes" project is a recent example of how the University's creative arts students have helped to regenerate local London spaces through community activities. (See case study below).

As the UK begins the process of economic recovery, creative arts will form a pivotal pillar of regenerating local communities and businesses and enabling creative and innovative thought. Higher education institutions in the capital have multiple strategic and key partnerships with local businesses and initiatives that provide a dual benefit to collaborating on projects.

## Case study

### *London Metropolitan University: Made in Hayes*

London Metropolitan University's community of students and staff contributed to a regeneration project called Made in Hayes. Between 2012 and 2017, students delivered a range of art, architecture and design projects as part of a collection of public arts and architecture projects for the Hayes area of London. Projects reflected on the estate's civic life and explored the notion of a "town hall" for the estate. They started with the construction of a mobile Work Shop to explore social enterprise potentials. They also hosted a series of events and other one-to-one installations, which brought residents together and allowed them to get to know each other and participate in several new activities. Student proposals explored areas such as the canal area (which divides Hayes into two sides), looking into ways to utilise the space and introduce new public leisure activities, as well as bridging the divide between the two sides of Hayes. The inventive, innovative and creative proposals by students contributed to the attempts to regenerate Hayes – developing alternatives for community groups and spaces. This enabled students to learn skills such as project and client management, through engaging with numerous industries and directly benefited the local community and ecosystem.

and ages to up-skill, providing expertise for students, carers, parents and local residents alike. In addition to committing to the Civic University Pledge, Staffordshire University London offers a scheme of Civic

On the one level, students learn hands-on skills, liaising with clients and managing projects, and gain practical experiences where they can demonstrate their skills in a real-world setting. Additionally, this also

benefits local community initiatives, which are able to harness the talents of skilled students and graduates, enabling programmes to run effectively and providing vital services to local people. For example, the University of Roehampton in south-west London holds partnerships with a range of London arts organisations such as Wimbledon BookFest, Battersea Arts Centre and Barnes Children's Literature Festival. University involvement in these organisations and activities helps them to run and deliver tangible benefits to local residents and schools and provides cultural organisations with capacity and skills from students and staff.

power of the Notting Hill community as a symbol of harmony and unity for a better tomorrow. Supported by London Projects and Studio Indigo, the 55-metre-squared hand-painted mural depicts scenes from local history and the site's architectural restoration. The design is divided into three scenes: the first tells the story of the rural *Knottyngull* village populated with pig farming and the pottery industry. The second represents an early Portobello Market when the vendors were selling fruit and vegetables. The third presents the intimate moment of a family preparing for the annual Notting Hill

## Case study

### *Royal Academy of Music*

The Royal Academy of Music consistently has among the strongest graduate outcomes in the country and a long track record of shaping the music profession globally. Recent graduates include Sheku and Isata Kanneh-Mason, Jacob Collier and Benjamin Grosvenor, who are already forging successful careers and acting as important role models for future generations of musicians

The Academy continues to attract students from over 50 countries, building on its reputation for equipping students with the necessary skills and range of experience to work at the highest level in all disciplines. This means working in an innovative, creative environment that allows individuals to find their own voices, succeed in a full range of genres and act as advocates for the social benefits of music. Partnerships with festivals, concert series and recording labels throughout the world give students platforms to reach wider audiences and make professional connections for their careers. London audiences flock to its famous site on the Marylebone Road and follow them in over 500 concerts and events per year, the majority of which are free. Plans for its third century include an ambitious scheme to expand the Junior Department and offer opportunities to talented young musicians from backgrounds previously under-represented.

This includes annual public festivals supported by Roehampton students, alumni and staff.

Similarly, the RCA has collaborated with the Kensington and Chelsea Art Week (KCAW) for *Together as One*, which is a site-specific artwork that celebrates the

Carnival. The story moves from the 18th century to current times, from a rural setting to an urban one and then inside the house itself. The overall aim of the piece is to celebrate the shared histories and traditions of the Borough and, as Steve Howat, Managing Director of London Projects, confirms, the project received

“some very encouraging feedback from the community” and “it has provided some much-needed positivity during what is a difficult time”.<sup>24</sup>

Higher education provision in the creative industries offers great benefits to the public, as has been further illustrated during the pandemic, and this is no greater than in the capital. London’s rich cultural landscape is testament to the creative individuals and industries that continue to generate vibrancy, entertainment and practical benefits: this is no different for higher education institutions working in this space. A strategy to re-imagine town centre streets and community spaces, led by Kingston University London, is another example of how university art schools and

their students are inspiring change in the local community. (See case study below).

Moreover, during the pandemic, The Courtauld Institute of Art continuously engaged with between 800 and 900 people as part of their *Open Courtauld Hour*, which enabled the community to benefit from artistic performances and displays at a time when many people were suffering from isolation and poor mental health. Broadening opportunities for a diverse range of students and opening up cultural knowledge and understanding to the public has been the driving ethos of The Courtauld for some time. Since May 2017, volunteers have undertaken a major digitisation of The Courtauld’s Conway Library collection, which consists of over

## Case study

### *Kingston University London*

Utilising the creative and design expertise of its students, Kingston University played a leading role in delivering and commissioning "Re-imagining Kingston Town Centre's Streets & Spaces", a public realm strategy with community and business engagement, and co-creation at its heart.

The project, delivered in partnership with Kingston First, the Greater London Authority, and Kingston Council, set out transformational and tactical project ideas to inspire change and coordinate investment in the town centre. A central aim of the project was to inspire a range of ideas across the community, and help foster greater collaboration with the University's student community.

Since its publication in late 2019, the strategy has been adopted by Kingston Council as policy, being used by the town planners for developer contributions and serving as an evidence base for future funding opportunities. To date, Kingston has been successful in receiving nearly £1m of funding to transform a vacant undercroft, adjacent to Kingston's historic bridge, into a "Factory of the Futures" that will provide much needed space for the creative industries and opportunities for young people, creating new reasons to visit the town centre.

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<sup>24</sup> cf. PrimeResi Editor, 'Super-prime design and construction firms collaborate on Notting Hill street art project', 19 February 2021, p.2, available at: [https://studioindigo.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Prime-Reso\\_Feb-2021-construction-firms-collaborate-on-Notting-Hill-street-art-project.pdf](https://studioindigo.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Prime-Reso_Feb-2021-construction-firms-collaborate-on-Notting-Hill-street-art-project.pdf)

one million images of world architecture, sculpture, applied arts and medieval manuscripts. In addition to opening the collection for future preservation and public access, this has provided thousands of volunteers with training in areas such as cataloguing and photography – key skills which can be applied to various sectors and industries.

The impact of the creative arts on areas such as public health cannot be overstated, and this is potentially best demonstrated through providers' work within their local communities. Whether this be Trinity Laban's "Singing for Lung Health", "Dancing for Health" or "Pulse" (a holiday

As well as helping to improve people's physical health, creative higher education providers are particularly key to tackling the nation's poor mental health and Trinity Laban's outreach work has proven vital to those suffering from isolation during the pandemic. (See case study below).

From these examples, it is clear that London's creative arts institutes are interwoven into the rich tapestry that is London's creative community and any reduction of community involvement from these institutions would leave London and the United Kingdom bereft of the creative benefit that London's creative arts institutions provide to all. These

## Case study

### *Trinity Laban Conservatoire for Music and Dance*

As a world-leading small and specialist provider, Trinity Laban Conservatoire for Music and Dance has sought ways to enhance the cultural richness of its local area, such as working with the London borough of Lewisham to support the delivery of their "Borough of Culture 2022" initiative. The Conservatoire also works directly with local community residents, particularly in assisting those who may experience loneliness or other difficulties – a point which was even more emphasised during the pandemic when vulnerable individuals suffered from social isolation. For the elderly in the local community, for example, Trinity Laban runs "Inspired not Tired" classes, which are weekly dance and music sessions for those aged over 60 in the local area. It also runs projects where students get directly involved with interacting and engaging with the local community, such as the finale of Lewisham's Festival of Creative Ageing in 2019. Indeed, these projects, and others, have touched the lives of around 1,770 local residents aged over 60. Other community projects have engaged 1,636 disabled children and 26,223 young people and a phenomenal 176,682 people have attended Trinity Laban performances.

programme combatting obesity through dance and healthy cooking), creative higher education providers not only provide entertainment and cultural enrichment to the local community, but also vital services for local people – the benefits of which ultimately reduce the burden on public services such as the NHS.

community activities provide opportunities for academics, students and the local community alike to benefit from the diversity and resourcefulness of London's creative higher education institutions.

## Conclusion

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As it stands, at the time of publication, creative higher education provision in England is facing an uncertain future. On coming out of the pandemic, the Government faces a choice: whether to reinvigorate the creative industries, as the fastest growing part of the UK economy pre-Covid, or whether to persist with pre-pandemic rhetoric to detract future applicants away from opting for higher education courses in the creative disciplines, based in large part on crude graduate earnings data from Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) data.

The shortcomings of this data are numerous and well-documented. For creative arts graduates in particular: they take no account of the freelance and portfolio nature of early careers in the arts; they are only based on salaries for the first ten years after graduation when earnings are typically lower; and they do not account for any changes to the world of work in the decade since the data was collected. To avoid outdated and unfitting information being used as a proxy to measure the value of graduates today, the sector would therefore do well to work with Government to come up with a measure of value that is more appropriate to capturing the value of degrees and careers in the creative industries.

For higher education institutions in London, the Government's "levelling up" agenda poses an additional challenge, with the desire to invest in the regions focusing attentions on supporting the growth of high-value businesses and investing in "big ticket" infrastructure projects to join up transport and spatial planning. On the outset, none of this appears to directly involve the arts, let alone London or the South-East. So, there is a very real risk that the capital's creative industries base will not be targeted for investment without either the advocacy of business leaders, who recognise the power of arts graduates to propel productivity, or the Mayor of London, who has the ability to speak up for the power of London's creative hub to revive both the local and national economies and put the capital back on the world map with the soft power emanating from its world-leading arts scene.

## Recommendations

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To ensure London's higher education provision in the creative industries remains strong – to ensure future generations of graduates go on to underpin various businesses and industries with their talents, as well as continue to invigorate our globally-renowned arts sector – clear action is needed. The following recommendations capture the most pressing measures, which will help us to build the arts back better for a brighter future.

To secure a strong future for the creative industries, the **Government** should:

- make it a priority to bolster the UK's creative talent pipeline by fostering an appreciation for the arts at an early age in the curriculum, including providing better information, advice and guidance to primary school pupils, to prevent them from closing off creative career pathways too early in their educational development;
- make creative arts subjects a core part of the state secondary school curriculum to ensure students in state schools are not locked out of a creative education and that the future of creative higher education in England does not become the preserve of those from independent schools or, indeed, the international student market;
- ensure funding parity and equality for all subjects, including through the Strategic Priorities Grant, to ensure creative arts provision is sufficiently funded at different types of higher education providers, catering to differing students' needs and tariff thresholds;
- ensure that higher education institutions, especially those with a strong provision in the arts, receive base levels of capital funding and are able to bid for and receive additional competitive capital funding, mindful of the fact that many creative arts providers are guardians and custodians of world-heritage buildings, architecture and history which attract visitors from around the world and need funding to maintain these to their required standard – let alone advance and invest in new state-of-the-art equipment and facilities;
- provide targeted funding for arts-based community projects in the areas that need them the most, irrespective of where in the country they may be found – including in London – to ensure that community engagement can continue effectively and help 'level up' individuals and families;
- ensure future funding policies support student choice not restrict it, including refraining from using derogatory judgement terms, such as "Mickey Mouse degrees" and "poor value" or "low quality" courses, when referring to creative higher education, to lessen the stigma on potential applicants, particularly those from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds, who may be deterred from following their passions and talents;
- in conjunction with the higher education sector, develop a mechanism to capture the social value of higher education to sit alongside existing LEO data so that outdated graduate salaries alone are not used as proxies for quality and value; and
- develop ways to ensure the Graduate Outcomes Survey data better tracks the industries that students work in post-graduation relative to their field of study.

The **Mayor of London** should:

- make the case to Government for urgent investment in London's creative industries to help put them at the forefront of the local and national recovery efforts;
- consider launching a "Creative Capital" campaign, to run alongside the existing "Let's Do London" initiative, to shine a spotlight on the contribution of London's creative industries and all who work in them to the local and national economy;
- make visits to other regions of the UK where business and industry are reliant on their linkages to London's creative economy, to help show the importance of London's creative scene to the rest of the UK and the damage that would be inflicted on other regions if London's creative institutions are not supported or are hampered by Government policy;
- establish an advisory panel (via London Higher) comprising a range of London's higher education providers with expertise in the creative industries to support the development of London's first Creative Enterprise Zones, to maximise outputs and impact; and
- seek to involve the full diversity of London's creative higher education providers (which, again, can be accessed through London Higher) in plans to revive the city post-Covid, including all nine Mayoral recovery missions, to ensure the arts and associated community outreach projects are reaching out to the individuals and families who need them the most across all London boroughs.

Finally, the **higher education sector** should foster stronger relationships with media, government and industry partners, as well as notable alumni, to ensure:

- positive news stories involving a wide range of higher education providers, including small, specialist conservatoires and modern, technical universities, make it into the press, to make the public aware of universities' work and help attract future applicants;
- initiatives are reported where the arts and creative industries have played a key role in improving opportunities for local communities or business and industry to foster an appreciation of their civic contribution;
- serious attempts are made to capture the value of a higher education in the creative arts and to help Government devise a more appropriate model for assessing the value of degrees that does not just solely rely on LEO data;
- the UK's leading actors, musicians, dancers, artists and directors are encouraged and seen to speak publicly about their own UK creative arts higher education, wherever possible, to raise awareness of the formative role played by their higher education experience and encourage future generations to pursue their ambitions; and
- the UK's major employers are compelled to advocate publicly for the benefits that creative arts graduates bring to their workforce and productivity levels, especially making clear how the creative industries work hand-in-hand with more scientific and technical disciplines – not least in the development of digital technologies.