

PRIORITIES

FOR

GOVERNMENT



OUR BELIEFS

People are rightly seen as the most important resource we have in the UK. Higher Education plays an essential role in developing people, equipping them with knowledge, skills, curiosity and creativity and equipping them for the changing world of work. Universities and colleges have a unique capacity to transform their local communities and economy, support social mobility and extend the boundaries of knowledge.

DIVERSITY IS THE KEY TO EXCELLENCE

GuildHE members are universities, university colleges and other institutions, each with a distinctive mission and priorities. They work closely with industries and professions and produce locally relevant and world-leading research. They are a crucial part of the UK's diverse higher education sector.

Diversity means more choice for students and for graduate employers and more opportunities to reach out to new learners. It encourages fresh approaches to research and different ways of engaging with business, industries and charities. It develops new ways of enriching the social, economic and cultural prosperity of life in the UK's communities and regions.

Our priorities for an incoming government are:

- Supporting Economic Development
- Addressing the Climate Crisis
- Promoting inclusion and diversity



SUPPORTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The future UK economy must be highly innovative, globally connected and locally successful, actively addressing regional economic inequalities within the UK. GuildHE members and other higher education institutions have teaching and research links across Europe and globally. They provide the skills, practical research and innovation to support sustainable economic success in every part of the UK. Small and specialist institutions are often deeply embedded in their town/city and region, providing accessible learning opportunities, support for local business and powerful civic engagement.

The next government can help by:

Ensuring higher education institutions are central to the development of high level skills and are funded sustainably.

GuildHE institutions work closely with industries and professions and are major providers in a wide range of technical subject areas:

- o The process for agreeing degree apprenticeships standards needs to be faster and more streamlined.
- o There must not be an artificial divide between technical (T-Levels) and academic (A Levels) qualifications. Sufficient bridging qualifications are needed between the two pathways.

Funding excellent research wherever it is found and supporting innovation and enterprise whatever the scale:

- o Investing a greater proportion of research funding in applied and close-to-market research throughout the UK;
- o Providing additional funding to smaller research environments in between cycles of the Research Excellence Framework to accelerate their development;
- o Reviewing knowledge exchange funding thresholds to allow smaller and specialist institutions to translate their innovations to wider socio-economic success; and;
- o Developing appropriate metrics for measuring relevant knowledge exchange activity.

Securing a post-Brexit relationship with the EU that supports mobility, talent and collaborative research:

- o Guaranteeing the current status of non-EU staff and students in the UK, and that of UK staff and students based elsewhere in the EU
- o Ensuring that UK academics are able to collaborate with researchers across the EU and further afield
- o Securing continued access to EU research and innovation funding streams, such as the Horizon Europe programme, or gaining adequate alternative funding
- o Fostering globally aware students through Erasmus+ and other exchange programmes

Putting in place a fair and robust immigration system that supports all universities and colleges to attract talented people:

- o Lowering the minimum salary threshold to £21,000
- o Having a pro-rata salary threshold for part-time employment. This is particularly important for both portfolio careers, such as those in the creative industries, and equality purposes given the gender imbalances in full and part-time employment.
- o Model the impact of any immigration salary threshold in different parts of the country and lower it where appropriate.

The jobs of the future will require us to imagine new ways of doing things.

The UK is known around the world for the strength of its creative industries - from our film to the computer games industry and from music to art and fashion. The creative industries are worth over £100 billion to the UK economy according to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport:

- o Creativity needs to be fostered at an early age, embedded in the school curriculum and with a strong range of specialist higher education providers delivering a pipeline of creative graduates for the economy;
- o GuildHE endorses the recommendations of the Durham Commission on creativity in education.



ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Responding effectively to the climate crisis must be a strategic priority for any incoming government. Higher education institutions are well placed to help. As educators, researchers and innovators with business and the third sector, higher education institutions have the potential to be uniquely powerful contributors to tackling the climate emergency.

Universities and colleges are already taking action, including through focusing their procurement on sustainable companies; ensuring their energy is from renewable sources, and investing in sustainable estates, highlighting climate change in risk registers and strategic plans and seeking to be active participants in a circular economy.

But we know there is much more to do. GuldHE is collaborating with Universities UK, the AoC and EAUC in setting up a climate commission for education sector leaders, to enable us to more efficiently target these efforts. The next government should work collaboratively with this commission, harnessing the capacity of the sector to solve hard problems and showing leadership in response to the passionate concerns of students and young people.



PROMOTING INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Higher education transforms people's lives and should be accessible to all that are able to benefit from it. Lifelong learning must be a priority for the incoming government:

Ensure access to high quality higher education throughout life:

- Reform student funding so it can be offered on a per-credit basis, rather than the current annual calculation. This would allow students to step on and off education courses at their own pace and encourage institutions to be more innovative in their delivery.
- Reinstate and extend non-repayable maintenance grants for students so that all who want to can succeed in higher education.
- Invest in adult education so that the tens of millions of working-age people who don't have a level 3 qualification can acquire new skills and progress in their careers.
- Fund national widening participation activities to allow for greater reach. National engagement activities are just as needed as local interventions, and will enable a greater number of students to access diverse higher education.

Engage student as partners in shaping their learning experience.

Student engagement has the potential to have a powerful and lasting impact on the student experience. Students should be involved in shaping decisions at all levels, from their course and institution to the national level, including decisions relating to the TEF and the OfS.

Develop the Teaching Excellence and Students Outcomes Framework on the basis of evidence

to ensure students are supported to achieve their potential. Students deserve the best possible teaching, that is challenging, supportive and rewarding:

- Elements of the metrics currently used fail accurately to measure teaching quality. GuildHE institutions firmly believe in the wide and significant benefits a university education can have for the individual, the economy and society. A rounded appreciation of this worth is crucial as a flawed calculation about graduate earnings misleads students, parents and employers.

Schools and the learning of young people will only ever be as good as the teachers in them.

We need to ensure that there is a good supply of excellent teachers, well trained and given opportunities for professional development:

- Universities must be recognised as an essential part of this training to ensure that schools have the skilled staff they need. The government should continue to work closely with the Teacher Education Advisory Group (TEAG).

Regulation of the higher education sector should primarily be about promoting and defending the student interest. GuildHE wants to see a **genuinely risk-based approach to regulation** that understands and mitigates the disproportionate burden and cost of regulation on smaller institutions.

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