UPP Foundation Civic University Commission Progress Report

October 2018

Why a Civic University Commission?

*Lord Kerslake, Chair, UPP Foundation
Civic University Commission*

For more than a decade I was Chief Executive of Sheffield City Council — a city that at the time was still recovering from massive job losses in the steel industry. To succeed, the city relied on its civic partners — and Sheffield's two universities were key.

Sheffield University's story is one that has inspired me and many others. By 1905 Sheffield was the only large city without its own university. £50,000 — around £5.5m at today's prices — was raised in thousands of small donations from steelworkers, miners and other industrial workers. A handbill promoting Sheffield's new university in 1904 promised that it would "be for the people", would bring "the highest education within reach of the child of the working man", would help local industries, improve the health of local people, assist trade throughout the country, and, importantly for local pride, mean Sheffield was no longer the largest big city in England without a university of its own.

Meanwhile Sheffield Hallam was formed out of Sheffield City Polytechnic in 1992. As with many

polytechnics, Hallam emerged from several other institutions: the School of Design, the College of Technology, and two teacher training colleges.

For both of these universities, local needs were in their DNA. Their survival depended on their ability to attract local students and support from funders and local government.

Yet when I returned to public life in Sheffield as Chair of Sheffield Hallam a decade after leaving as Chief Executive, I felt things had changed. Universities have grown enormously. Many have become truly global institutions both in terms of research and teaching. They are increasingly financially incentivised and regulated by the government. Much of that funding and investment is directed at 'core' activities — teaching whichever students pay the tuition fees, and doing research that will be funded by the relevant bodies and get as many REF stars as possible. That only looks to increase as the Office for Students and UKRI grow into their powerful new roles. While universities

defend their 'autonomy', their discretion on how they use their funds and direct their activity is inevitably limited and likely to become more so. This has changed not only how universities behave, but how they think of themselves.

In isolation, all of these changes can be considered positive — we want a focus on good teaching for students. It is important that the research we produce is of high quality and justifies taxpayer funding. But there is also a risk that the harder to define activity that can be of most long-term benefit to a city or county will get lost because it is not driven by central government. Given the origins and defining purpose of many of the universities in this country, that would be a great loss.

Universities are also under constant attack from many directions. Does Vice-Chancellor pay indicate a wider problem with value for money? Are they a breeding ground for extremism — or on the flip side, unnecessarily sheltering students from controversial opinions and turning them into snowflakes? Are they such Remain bastions that they represent a direct threat to the democratic will of the people? Are they too elitist to be credible recipients of public money? Much of this attack does not bear serious examination, but we cannot deny its existence.

This turbulent environment brings an added significance to the work of the Commission. Universities need the support and backing of their communities. That, in turn, means they must earn that support — in some cases by communicating better what they do; in other cases by doing different things.

After all, while national policy has a very significant influence on the environment, universities are autonomous institutions with their own charitable status and objectives. It is reasonable to expect them to decide their own priorities and pursue them — and not wholly blame government for their choices and activities.

In the first few months of the Commission we have therefore tried to understand what is going on today — what does 'civic' activity look like, and how does the current HE environment affect it? We have looked at the public's view, and how this varies between different areas and background. And we have come to some early conclusions on how the civic mission of universities could be strengthened and renewed.

We want to be clear-eyed: constructive but also critical and challenging where necessary. Our view, from our first few months, is there are extremely valuable things being done by universities, and that public support is greater than is sometimes reported. At the same time, rhetoric sometimes seems to outstrip substance; we rarely saw as strategic and focused an approach to civic engagement as we would like; and we are increasingly conscious of how national incentives and structures are mitigating against some civic activity. In other words, we can all — government and universities — do better.

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Commission

The UPP Foundation Civic University Commission has been set up to explore and understand what a modern civic university is and what it should do. Universities will exist for centuries (indeed many already have) — far beyond any piece of government legislation or headline in the papers. The Commission is therefore concerned with the long-term structures and activity that will most benefit local people.

The purpose of the Progress Report

We had originally intended to present a single report at the end of the Commission's work. However, after our third formal evidence hearing in Sheffield, we decided to produce a progress report for two reasons:

1. **To inform the next and final stage of evidence gathering.** We will be holding another formal session in London and will also be continuing our informal hearings across the country. We wanted to share emerging themes and thoughts to inform those sessions, and to see if there is anything we are missing.

2. **To input into the government's current review of post-18 education.** This report is clearly not a formal submission to the government's consultation. But through our evidence we were struck by the decline in adult learning in particular, and how that links to universities' civic mission, and we would like this to be considered in the review.

This report therefore does not seek to address all the activities we heard about. They will form the foundation of our final report. Instead it focuses on our view of how to define a 21st century civic university and our concerns over adult education.

What we've done to date

The Commission has run like a select committee enquiry. We have:

· Looked at the history of civic universities and how they have evolved;

· Held three large formal evidence sessions and several smaller sessions around the country;

· Received written evidence from 48 organisations;

· Held focus groups on the civic role of universities and polled ten university cities and towns to understand public attitudes.

This has given us a historical, public, and expert view to consider the civic role.

What we've found

Wide variations and a tension between a student-first and a citizen-first approach

At one level, the civic role appears to us to be alive and well. Many universities were able to articulate activities that clearly had an impact on the local area and people. When we polled local people, an average of 58% of respondents said they were "proud" of their local universities, and just 7% said they were "not proud". 28% said they were "indifferent" to their local universities.

However, we saw **big variations — geographically and between classes.** This showed up in polling and focus groups: better educated, civically involved people were very positive. For others, universities dominated the town and large expanding student populations could be a serious nuisance. We also saw **high levels of ignorance — an average of 35% of people in the cities surveyed were unable to name a single thing that their local university had done to engage the local community.** Again, this masked big differences between areas: respondents in the smaller cities surveyed were much more likely to answer "none" or "don't know" when presented with a list of measures such as open lectures or assisting local schools and asked whether their local university had done anything similar. This was backed up by our focus groups.

Our focus groups also drew out another tension: **fees and a student-focused approach changed how the public thought about universities and is a threat to civic activity.** The people we spoke to were very aware of fee and bursary changes (*"My daughter is a student nurse...this is the first year without a bursary so we're supporting her"*) and this changed how they thought of universities and what they ought to be spending money on.

This may change if the ONS declares that public subsidy is a major part of university funding, and bring new importance to a civic role that benefits society more widely.

An unstrategic add-on

We also found that while universities undertake a great deal of activity that is valuable in their own terms, relatively few had a truly strategic approach rooted in an analysis of the needs of the population and emerging trends in their area. We certainly did not find that civic activity was a major third pillar that complemented research and teaching. In general, we found that the civic role was sufficiently promoted and recognised at both local and national level.

Nor did we find any evidence that government has thought carefully and strategically about the civic role, and how to incentivise and to reward it. Activity from universities has come despite, not because, of government encouragement. At one level, we think that is reasonable to expect, given universities' civic origins and charitable status but we believe that more could be achieved with clearer government signalling.

Our definition of a civic university

A public-centred view. In many ways, we think a public-centred view is the best way to think about a civic university. Can people talk about "our university" with pride and awareness? If so, it is almost certainly civic. Are a large percentage of the leaders in an area integrally linked to an institution? And finally, not reflected in the current university landscape, but we think a useful challenge for our next round of evidence, is consideration of local people reflected in the governance structures of the university? This may be a way of ensuring a greater map between civic activity and public priorities.

Truly local. A civic university must be truly local — and willing to accept that there are areas to which it does not have a special responsibility. It must also be willing to accept that there are some people it prioritises — in particular those who grow up, live, and work in the area. It should be active in shaping and leading the decisions that affect those people, in the areas where it is expert.

Core or discretionary — as long as it is strategic. While a civic university has often been defined in opposition to a 'traditional' research university, we do not think that has to be the case. In our view, it is entirely possible for that to be expressed through core activity or 'discretionary' activity — i.e. through curriculum and student recruitment and research; or through additional programmes. But a menu of those programmes does not constitute a civic university if the structure, leadership and intent of that university is not clear. It is important that there is a clear strategy that is informed by close partner engagement and an objective analysis of local needs.

Autonomous, charitable institutions. Throughout this report we recognise how national incentives and signals have affected university activity. But we also want to recognise that universities are autonomous and proudly claim that autonomy. It is not enough, therefore, to say that national funding doesn't support civic activity. A truly civic university will have a strategy regardless, that is rooted in a clear and coherent view of the needs of its place.

Disappearance of a core civic role — adult education

In the course of our Commission we found one policy area — adult education — which was:

· An integral part of initial civic university activity;

· In major decline — in particular for non-degree courses which have declined by 42% since 2012 for students over 30;

· Could not be reasonably seen as a 'discretionary' activity, but which was not working as a 'core'

activity either (like teaching, research, or even access and widening participation). Historically, this was a major part of civic universities' mission and activity.

This is likely to become a more acute problem in coming decades as increasing numbers of professional jobs are automated, changing labour market structures and increasing the need for retraining. This will affect different places in very different ways.

The reasons for the decline are well-rehearsed. They include the introduction of loans, with conditions, on part-time learners (who are much more likely to be adult). We haven't seen the same declines in other countries.

Those restrictions mean, for example, that a mother returning to work after a prolonged absence from the labour market — but who might have a degree from 15 years earlier — cannot retrain unless she can just pay the fees upfront, and support herself, from her own resources.

The need for a better adult university education system

This is precisely the wrong moment to have closed off adult education. Graduate jobs will change, and as we leave the European Union the need for a good domestic skills base will be greater. We have already lost long-term capacity in universities — courses have closed and they are difficult to re-open. Rebuilding this capacity will take effort and time. In our view, that work needs to begin now. It is also the case that the majority of part-time learners are women, who often need additional help returning fully to the labour market after having children.

It is also too limiting to see this education in terms of immediate fulfilling of skills gaps. It is extremely hard to predict exactly what the future skills needs of areas are likely to be — many would not have predicted, for example, the size and growth of creative industries and their importance to the economic wellbeing of places.

And even outside pure economic benefit — short and long-term — the benefits of education for adults are huge. It passes down into how children are educated at home — which has a much greater impact on their future success than the school environment. It improves peoples' health and makes them more engaged in the labour market. It makes people more fulfilled and engaged in civic life.

There is clear latent demand. A recent survey by Universities UK (UUK) found that as much as 24% of adults had seriously considered doing higher education, of which around half did not already have a post-A level qualification, and half did. Over half

already worked full-time. Two thirds were interested in either career development or progression — with the remainder interested in 'self improvement'.

Our proposals for adult education

Funding policy

Given that we believe it important to offer education to existing professionals, women returning to the labour market and struggling to attend courses in intensity, and people who want to learn particular things rather than necessarily qualifications, it is important that the government consider:

- **Relaxing the ELQ rule so that graduates are able to do further learning;**
- **Removing the 25% intensity rule so that both short courses, and longer-term learning, are eligible for loans and funding (this is in our view particularly important for women with children);**
- **Allowing education that is not deliberately directed towards a qualification (such as a degree).**

It also seems clear that the lack of direct public funding, and the funding of adult education mostly through traditional loans with RAB charges, is off-putting to many adults. Postgraduate provision and re-graduate provision, as well as first time undergraduate provision, needs to have some public subsidy.

We also think that the government should consider whether the apprenticeship levy has some part to play here. Two options could be:

- **Hypothecating some proportion of the apprenticeship levy for courses that are shorter and more modular;**
- **Having an additional, smaller levy for this particular purpose.**

Widening participation

Many of the universities we spoke to have huge programmes in place to meet their widening participation and access obligations. At no point did a university spontaneously mention adult education as part of that drive.

Given that the OfS has taken on the key regulatory role for access, and has made clear that it wishes to exercise this role in a range of ways (including fines), we think it needs to send a very strong signal to the system — potentially with additional ministerial guidance — that widening participation directed at adults is considered a crucial part of universities' remit and fulfilment of their obligations.

Institutional incentives and funding

The capacity for adult education has declined across the country. We therefore need to think about how to build up institutional capacity. Some of this is the responsibility of universities themselves. But we think there are also ways of funding and incentivising universities to do this.

The new KEF metrics should have a strong weighting on knowledge transmission and knowledge exchange between universities and their local population. In our view it is as important that university staff spend time conveying ideas to the local population, and involving them in their activity, as it is to interact with traditional economic stakeholders.

- **The government should reconsider how the impact element of the REF is currently framed.**
- **The National Retraining Scheme — which is currently highly embryonic, relatively poorly funded, and directed at immediate reskilling — could be a helpful vehicle for funding, as could replacements for current European development funding.**

A civic perspective

The policies above could be pursued in two ways — as national policy or as pilots in specific local areas. The pilot approach we think has real merit, particularly if combined with civic-based policies. These would have to be bid for by areas in conjunction with LEPs and other local bodies. In particular we think the government could consider:

- **Greater local control.** Some adult education budget has been devolved locally. But it is very small and barely enough to fulfil its current role in FE let alone be expanded into HE. But we do think this principle is an important one. If the National Retraining Scheme or similar were to provide *capacity* funds for the delivery of adult education, joint bids between local authorities, LEPs, FE and HE should be a requirement (and for the broader pilots we have recommended). Similarly the Strength in Places and Shared Prosperity Funds should have skills dimensions with strong local control. If widening participation becomes more adult-focused, local analysis of left behind communities and their needs should be central;

- **Greater local accountability.** Earlier in the report we highlighted that local accountability had mostly disappeared in universities. Reviving this, in ways that suit the particular and peculiar local make-up of any given place, is worth pursuing.

- **Pursuit of non-degree courses.** As we mentioned, we think that the single focus on the pursuit of qualifications — particularly degrees — has harmed adult education. It also makes more rigid the interaction between colleges and universities. Relaxing this requirement should be a priority.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, those local players need to consider their roles outside national government incentives. Civic universities — as part of their charitable mission and civic responsibility — must prioritise the:

- Rebuilding of capacity in adult education;
- The incentivisation and reward of staff who engage in this activity;
- Organising and resourcing the university in a way that makes shorter courses more suitable to adults possible and desirable.

Other local players also have a part to play. In our view adult education should form a central part of what local industrial strategies consider — and investment in building up the capacity of universities to offer advanced adult education, from low to high intensity — ought to be a priority of LEPs and local authorities.

Where next

This is a progress report, not intended to deal in full with all the issues. It is important in the next phase of the Commission that we hear from universities and others about the ideas we've outlined, but also that the myriad other activities that make up civic activities are considered.

But there are broader categories that civic activity falls into. These are summarised as:

Activity that is a natural function of core *funded* university activities.

This activity is effectively a local expression of university activity that is already funded by government, for example:

- Widening participation through work with local schools (which we have recommended being broadened to adult learners);
- Teaching of local students and linking curriculum to the local economic and business needs (which we have recommended being more focused on adult learners);
- Local impact of research;
- Interaction with the health system (including training and research).

Important activity that is largely discretionary and a function of the locality and circumstances which universities are in (although there may be some national drive)

This activity is slightly less core to universities' daily business. It includes:

· Supporting local government infrastructure and decision making;

· Community projects and volunteering;

· Work with cultural institutions and cultural activity;

· Economic development activity, for example through LEPs.

Activity that is a reflection of being a local anchor institution

This is a reflection of universities' size and influence. It includes:

· The university as a local voice;

· The university as a local procurer;

· Taking the lead in resolving issues with local institutions (such as negotiations between local authorities, or between national and local players); and

· The university as a local employer.

The appendix to this report outlines some questions and themes on each we will be considering in the final report and in the next evidence session.

The UPP Foundation Civic University Commission — Why a Progress Report?

In the course of the Commission, we have taken evidence from a wide range of experts covering schools, skills, the health system, industrial strategy, local government, research, culture and the arts, and more.

We had originally intended to present a single report, looking at all these areas, at the end of the Commission's work. But after our third formal evidence hearing in Sheffield, we decided to produce this Progress Report for two reasons:

1. **To inform the next and final stage of evidence gathering.** We will be holding another formal session in London (and we are conscious that London has played a very small part in our investigation so far — a reverse of the normal prioritisation of reports). We will also be continuing our informal hearings across the country. We wanted to share emerging themes and thoughts to inform those sessions, and to see if there is anything we are missing.

2. **To input into the government's current review of post-18 education.** This report is not a formal submission. But through our evidence we were struck by the decline in adult learning in particular, and how that links to universities' civic mission, and we would like this to be considered in the review's work.

This is a progress report, not intended to deal in full with all the issues. It does not address all the activities we heard about — they will form the foundation of our final report. Instead it focuses on:

· **Our view of a 21st century civic university.** How to define and think about it given its history, our polling and focus groups, and the oral and written evidence we have received;

· **Adult education.** In the course of this Commission we felt this one policy area was:

  – An integral part of earlier civic university activity;

  – In major decline; and

  – Should not be seen as a 'discretionary' activity, but which was also not working as a 'core' activity like teaching, research, or even access and widening participation, because it doesn't have policy drivers of equivalent strength.

It seems to us, given the evidence we have heard, that a transformation of adult education in universities must be part of the post-18 review and future government policy, as well as a core part of universities' own charitable and civic mission. This is not just about the past role of universities, but about the future. Professional roles are likely to be automated for the first time — affecting law, medicine, and other traditional graduate activities. As we leave the EU, domestic skills will become even more crucial. Universities therefore need to think now about how to build the capacity and programmes to help people — including highly educated adults — through this change in a flexible and locally-oriented way.

This report gives some thoughts on how this could be achieved from a civic point of view. We would welcome feedback on those thoughts, as well as other major aspects of civic activity that we will be addressing in our final report.

This report is only possible because of the engagement shown by universities and other bodies across the country. We have seen a lot of enthusiasm for this Commission and the civic role — as well as powerful examples in practice — and we are grateful for the time and effort people and institutions have given.

The Commission

The UPP Foundation Civic University Commission is an independent commission that has brought together experts from across Higher Education and from outside. It was established and funded by the UPP Foundation and is also supported by Shakespeare Martineau and Universities UK.

The Commission has been set up to explore and understand what a modern civic university is and what it should do. Universities will exist for centuries (indeed many already have) — far beyond any piece of government legislation or headline in the papers. The Commission is therefore concerned with the long-term structures and activity that will most benefit local people.

The Commission has run like a select committee enquiry. Three formal evidence sessions and several smaller sessions have been held around the country (and continue to be). Written evidence has been submitted by 48 organisations.

The end product will be a much longer and more comprehensive report which gives concrete recommendations for government, universities and others, and sketches out what different 21st century civic universities might look like and how they might operate. We will also separately publish some of the most interesting case studies from our evidence process.

THE COMMISIONERS

- **Lord Kerslake**
  (Chair and former Head of the Civil Service)
- **Professor John Goddard OBE**
  (Deputy Chair, Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor University of Newcastle and author of *The Civic University: the Policy and Leadership Challenges*)
- **Baroness Bakewell**
  (Journalist and President of Birkbeck, University of London)
- **Dinah Caine CBE**
  (Creative Industries Council, Chair of Goldsmiths, University of London)
- **Professor Glyn Davis**
  (Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Melbourne)
- **Dame Rachel De Souza**
  (Chief Executive, Inspiration Trust)
- **Amatey Doku**
  (Vice-President Higher Education, National Union of Students)
- **David Frost CBE, DL**
  (Chairman of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Governor and Chair of Educational Common Board, Coventry University)
- **Smita Jamdar**
  (Partner, Shakespeare Martineau)
- **Alistair Jarvis**
  (Chief Executive, Universities UK)
- **Nick King**
  (Former Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for DCLG)
- **Diane Lees CBE**
  (Director-General, Imperial War Museums)
- **Dr Paul Marshall**
  (Chair of UPP Foundation)
- **Professor Mary Stuart**
  (Vice-Chancellor, University of Lincoln)
- **Professor Steve West CBE**
  (Vice-Chancellor, University of West of England and Chair of West of England LEP)
- **Professor William Whyte**
  (Professor of Social and Architectural History, University of Oxford and author of *Redbrick, the History of Britain's Civic Universities*)

CHAPTER 1:
What is a 21st century Civic University?

One of our first tasks was to decide how to define a 21st century civic university in all its complexity and local context. We have initially tried to consider this question from a number of angles:

· **The history of civic universities.** Civic universities, for many, evoke the great redbrick universities founded in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Later waves of universities also often had an explicitly civic focus. What themes should we consider given civic universities' history?

· **The public view.** Some of the urgency behind the Civic University Commission stemmed from a concern about political disconnect which, in turn, was a result of people feeling divorced from their local institutions. We polled and held focus groups in order to understand people's perceptions of universities.

· **A contemporary expert view.** Our expert witnesses were asked to describe, in their words, a civic university. Our submissions also provided detailed thoughts on their current civic activity, and how that might change.

We go through each of these in turn and attempt to define more clearly a civic university at the end of this chapter.

While there are obviously multiple dimensions to the definition of the civic university, there are two we thought were particularly important. First, that a civic university should be reflected in how the people of that area consider it — one of the best descriptions we heard was that people talk about "our university" not "the university". Our polling and focus groups gave us some important insights.

Second, that the role and focus of a civic university must reflect the specific and long-term challenges of an area. There is a clear difference between 'civically engaged' universities — and all of the universities we heard from can point to activities that fall under a civic umbrella — and truly civic universities. To be the latter their analysis, strategy, and activity must be directed at their locality and the impact they will have.

Obviously, that strategy will be variable. But there are also common challenges — nationally and between different kinds of areas (such as former industrial cities; or coastal and rural areas). Just as the original civic universities reflected the changing labour market and social structures of the time, so modern civic universities are likely to consider i) regional and inter-regional inequalities; ii) the dramatic shifts in employment and work that will arise from AI automation; and iii) educational inequality and the resulting lack of social mobility. These should be core to their mission, although how they interpret it — as we have heard compellingly from institutions in dispersed areas like Exeter, Plymouth, and Lincoln and traditional 'civic' areas like Sheffield, Birmingham, and Nottingham — will differ.

Adult and part-time education has a huge part to play in dealing with those challenges — and is the focus of the second half of this Progress Report. It is only one element of a civic university's activity — and in our final report we will look more comprehensively at what a civic university should do and does. But we do think its current lack — due to a combination of national policy and local focus — is deeply troubling. It is hard to claim that modern universities are truly civic when they are not structured to deliver the education that people in their area are most likely to need in the coming decades.

A brief chronology of civic universities — and important themes[1]

Universities appeared across Europe in the Medieval Period. But between 1209 (Cambridge) and 1829 (UCL) no new universities were founded in England. Durham — despite efforts by Henry VIII and Oliver Cromwell and intense involvement with Oxford university over centuries — did not get degree awarding powers until 1832.

This, as David Willetts points out in his recent book *A University Education,* is not a typical European story. By 1790 Europe had 143 universities. And in Scotland, four new universities had emerged, becoming a beacon of enlightenment thinking and educating — including, among others, Adam Smith at Glasgow and David Hume at Edinburgh.

After centuries of effort, new universities finally began to emerge in England in the early 19th century.

First half of the 19th century

By the 18th century Oxford and Cambridge were effectively seminaries for the Church of England. Even in the 1850s, ¾ of graduates went on to be parsons. This excluded large numbers of potential students who were not Anglican. High fees excluded others. And, of course, women remained excluded too. It was in this context that new universities began to appear.

What became University College London and King's College London were set up in the 1820s-30s, but were not granted university status in their own right. They faced continual political and financial problems. Eventually, the solution was for them to be overseen by the new 'University of London' (UoL) which was effectively a department of state. The first new universities were therefore a function of national as much as local policy.

Colleges elsewhere also then became able to prepare and enter students for UoL degrees. This became the core model for qualifications — students were taught across the country (including individually), but were accredited by a single examining body. They operated in many ways as "branch campuses". Later these university colleges themselves became universities.

Durham gained a charter in 1837.

The Victorian period: the first 'civic' universities.

The first civic universities in England. Owens College Manchester and Queen's College Birmingham were 'pioneering provincial colleges' founded by local philanthropists, not the state. In Manchester in 1880 a second version of Owens College became a fully chartered university in its own right: the Victoria University. Its federal structure then incorporated both Liverpool and Leeds.

Civic universities in Scotland and Wales. Meanwhile Scotland, which already had universities in Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrew's, and Aberdeen, saw the establishment of University College Dundee in 1883. Dundee was one of Scotland's major manufacturing cities, and the College was established in part because of local demand for University of London degrees. It was intended to be "similar or nearly similar to Owens College at Manchester." As with other universities and colleges tutors were incentivised to take on as many students as possible — and this led to overcrowding. In 1888 in Dundee 110 science students worked in three relays each hour to use facilities designed for 30.

In Wales, the lack of a national university became a major political issue — almost every MP in 1880 was elected on a pledge to obtain state support for Welsh Higher Education.

Civic universities in America. A parallel development occurred in this period in the USA with the establishment of Land Grant colleges for agriculture and "Mechanic Arts" from 1862: states were provided with public lands provided they be used for the establishment of the new colleges. The establishment of these colleges, as well as earlier universities such as the University of Virginia in Charlottesville (established by Jefferson in 1819) were a source of inspiration and influence in the UK.

These institutions were non-denominational, offered professional courses — and were increasingly open to women.

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1   All facts in this chronology are from Whyte, W. *"Redbrick: A Social and Architectural History of Britain's Civic Universities"*, OUP, 2015

A number of important themes for our Commission can be seen in this first flowering of civic universities.

First, the extent to which the growth in university education was a function of broader economic change. Increasingly, attending university became a marker of being part of a sophisticated and educated middle class, with religion a less fundamental part of universities' identity and purpose. This was a reflection of the increase in wealth and the emergence of an increasing professional class in the country, including in the major regional cities.

Later in this period the expansion of the franchise to some of the working class, and a growing demand for women's education, increased demand for universities. This was accompanied by a growing sense of responsibility among local governments — particularly city councils — for culture and civic renewal. Again, major shifts in the country were reflected in what people wanted from universities, and what they provided.

Second, a rapidly growing tension between local and national. For example in Liverpool and later Nottingham academics wanted freedom from the control of local authorities and sought national funding as a means of regaining power. National funding would also protect the universities from the unpredictable funding of local benefactors, who had been crucial in establishing some of the civic universities (for example Mary Ann Baxter's endowment founding Dundee; and the 'patriotic citizens' who gave £650,000 to help turn Birmingham from a college into a university).

This tension between local and national — and the desire of different people in the university *not* to be too local is interesting given the current debate on the tension between universities' global/national/local role.

There was also a very real tension — seen most evidently at Liverpool and Nottingham — about who governed the university.

Third, the co-existence of young undergraduates and older part-time students. A lot of the funding for these early universities came from two sources: first, from professional vocational training — particularly medical training. Second, from evening students. While there were younger 'regular' full-time undergraduates, adult education was a large part of the early civic universities, activity and income. At Manchester, by 1880, there were 392 day students and 855 who attended in the evening.

Students consisted of:

> "A motley mixture of young ladies attending afternoon lectures on Renaissance Art, foremen from the steelworks or laboratory assistants from the dye works taking night classes in chemistry, possibly for a City and Guilds Examination, schoolboys getting up some science before taking an Oxford or Cambridge scholarship, intending school teachers in training, and the hard core of the dedicated studying for a London external degree."

Fourth, a broad view of what a civic university should teach. The curriculum varied quite widely between institutions. In Manchester, Owens College was highly traditional with a focus on classics and mathematics. Meanwhile, Birmingham focused on 'vocational' training for an increasing professional class — for doctors, clergy, architects and engineers.

Pre-First World War:

A rapid expansion in civic universities. In 1880 there were five universities in England. Over the following decade this more than doubled, and the numbers continued to increase. The University of Birmingham was chartered in 1901 and Sheffield in 1905. In this period having a university became almost essential for a serious city of a certain size.

In Wales, campaigns finally led to the establishment of the University of Wales in 1893 by the union of three recent colleges — Aberystwyth, Bangor, and Cardiff (Swansea would follow in 1920).

Debates about the role of universities. Many of the tensions visible in university policy today were already debated at this point. Did civic universities exist to fill skills gaps or did this turn them into a 'glorified night school'? Could a civic university really be just local or would this mean it was "little known, and less respected, beyond the town limits"?

Civic, not national, institutions. Students did however remain local — for example in 1908 nearly 90 % of Bristol's undergraduates were drawn from within 30 miles of the city. They were also much more likely to be women — the new universities were the only places women could get a degree (in London from 1878 and finally in Durham in 1895). By 1901 almost a fifth of undergraduates were women. At this point teacher training colleges — which many women attended — were entirely separate and did not award degrees.

Inter-war and 1940s

Civic universities become the norm. The original civic universities became part of "the establishment", and influence began to flow from the new universities — including to Oxford and Cambridge. Nottingham became one of the new campus universities — it gained its charter in 1948 — with a focus on increasing the proportion of students living in halls of residence in more suburban parts of the city.

Many of the universities established in this period emerged from "university colleges" — entities that taught university level courses but used a university, such as the University of London for examinations.

A national student body. There was a growing 'national student body' and inter-redbrick-university links were fostered, such as sports leagues. Campus universities also changed the relationship between students and the town — they were increasingly part of a separate institution, with concomitant tensions ('town and gown'). This still varied widely — in the 1940s 70% of Exeter students lived in halls vs 10% in Sheffield, but the direction of travel was clear. Student and staff tensions were common — D.H. Lawrence wrote of Nottingham "I came to feel I might as well be taught by gramophones as by these men, for all the interest and sincerity they felt," and in Liverpool there was a protest by students in the form of a three-foot biscuit presented to the university Senate "which took the biscuit for its impertinence in trying to exclude the students".

From the 1930s, universities became increasingly dependent on the state for funding.

1960s-1990s.

Plate glass. Many new universities — the 'plate glass' universities to distinguish from the 'redbrick' architecture of the civic universities — were founded in this period. Keele, in 1949, had been given degree awarding powers *before* becoming a university (a first), but became a full university by Royal Charter in 1962. Lord Robbins, who authored a review proposing expansion of universities, became the Chancellor of the new university of Stirling in 1968.

Many of these universities were named after wider areas — such as counties — rather than cities. This is a shift in the traditional 'civic' role of universities tied to major cities and towns. This was also the moment that student mobility became standard in England (though not in Scotland). At Leeds two thirds of students came from within a 30 mile radius in 1938. By 1958 two thirds came from beyond 30 miles.

Polytechnics. In 1967, Crosland founded the polytechnic system. The polytechnic degrees were validated by a national body (the CNAA) and subdegrees (HNCs; HNDs) by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC). The polytechnic system was almost entirely funded by the central state (degrees from HEFCE, and sub-degrees from the separate Further Education funding council).

Debate over the future of institutions. This period also marked a period of financial uncertainty for universities. In public discourse, arguments that are familiar today continued to rage: were universities insufficiently linked to business and too 'academic' in the Oxbridge mould? Or had they become too capitalist and too much a reflection of the class structure? By this point, post-18 was very diverse with polytechnics (Central Institutions in Scotland) and a flourishing FE sector. Of the 407,000 members of the NUS in 1969, only 42% were at university.

1992-today.

The homogenisation of universities. Polytechnics were given the ability to become universities, and sometimes absorbed FE colleges. Homogenisation began to occur as the former polytechnics in many ways emulated the traditional redbricks in style — including a growing desire to do research.

This was another great expansion of universities and Higher Education. By 1997 there were 115 universities. Since then drives to increase participation to 50% and give local areas the ability to propose and set up universities has led to 162 publicly funded HE institutions. In 1974 there were a quarter of a million full-time students in universities. Today there are 1.8 million, with around 450,000 international students.

National funding regimes. The expansion of universities put ever-increasing pressure on budgets and led to two very important changes in how funding was allocated. First, the introduction of differential research exercises which gave more funding for research to particular universities (the RAE which became the REF): as universities expanded in number, the RAE became one way in which they were given a hierarchy. Second, the introduction of student fees in different forms, culminating in the current system of tuition fee loans. Scotland diverged, abolishing fees entirely in 2008, and Wales offered highly subsidised fees for students from Wales. Scotland and Wales also have more generous regimes for part-time and postgraduate students.

The removal of the cap and the decline of adult education. The 2010 coalition government removed the restriction on numbers of full-time undergraduate students. This drove major expansion of many universities and a more competitive, market-driven approach.

In this period the balance of full-time young undergraduates vs part-time and mature students changed substantially. While student numbers have almost doubled in the last two decades, in the last ten years the number of mature students (part-time and full-time) has declined.

Themes from civic university history

While the history of universities is of course complex, there are some interesting themes from the earlier periods of civic universities which are — in our view — particularly relevant to the Commission.

· **The tension between national and local.** From the earliest establishment of civic universities, tensions have arisen between local control and funding and national government. In current policy, this tension can be seen between the strength of national bodies like UKRI and OfS (as well as the DfE), which have no responsibility for place, and the desire to have devolution and local industrial strategies. Currently, despite the rhetoric, the weight of funding and regulatory power lies with the former. This is also true of other forms of university funding — for example DCMS, the Arts Council, and planned medical education and research — which are nationally based and focused (public health is a notable exception). Despite large numbers of local structures (GROs RDAs, Business Improvement Districts, Combined Authorities, and LEPs) they have not, yet, counterbalanced these national funding and regulatory bodies.

· **The tension between global and local.** Universities — particularly the earliest redbricks — have become truly global institutions. The UK has over 450,000 international students and more than £1 billion of research income comes from overseas. The recent debates over Brexit — including EU research programmes and immigration policy — have made clear how much many universities depend on international funds for their growth and operations. When these sources dwarf local income streams, there is an inevitable tension.

· **Structural changes in the labour market driving universities.** The emergence of the middle class and the emancipation of women were major factors in the development of civic universities, what they offered and to whom. In the next fifty years, the major structural change is likely to be automation and the widescale change in the number and nature of jobs. Most agree that retraining is fundamental to making automation work for the majority of people.

· **A recent decline in the mature students who drove the early civic universities.** One theme that we picked up on in our evidence sessions, and was of particular interest, was the decline in mature and part-time students who — in the 19th century and early 20th century — formed a very large proportion of university students. Tied to this is the growth of formal degrees (compared to a mix of degrees and more informal courses and lectures that characterised civic universities). We develop this in the next chapter, but it was clear that widening participation was increasingly focused on young disadvantaged people, with little attention paid to older workers. This is particularly important in terms of the previous point — labour market shifts are likely to change adult working patterns and skill needs.

· **A growing view by universities that they are "anchor institutions".** Several of the universities we spoke to consider their role as anchor institutions (usually characterised as large, local institutions that are non-profit or state and have a significant local influence) to have grown as local authorities have faced budgetary challenges, as the relative economic performance of areas has declined, and as local industrial strategies have become more important. Universities have moved from being dependent on the cities in which they are situated, to being economic drivers of places in their own right.

· **An increasing homogenisation towards a redbrick model.** One of the striking conclusions of Professor William Whyte's book "Redbrick" — the most comprehensive history of civic universities — is the extent to which all universities have converged on a redbrick model in terms of research, teaching, and student life (although some are becoming increasingly focused on employability, apprenticeships, and business growth). This is in part driven by a standardised funding model — focused on full-time undergraduates recruited nationally and living away from home, and an increasing use of metrics and league tables that evaluate universities on their research and international renown.

What does the public think of civic universities?

To understand the public view, the Commission ran focus groups in two major university cities, and also ran a regional poll in ten university cities.

Given the commentary over the last two years, we might have assumed that local populations would have strained relationships with their universities. On first glance, that's not true. In our poll an average of 58% respondents said they were "proud" of their local universities, and just 7% said they were "not proud". 28% said they were "indifferent" to their local universities.

This was also true in our focus groups. Participants across groups felt pride in their universities. There was a sense the universities "put them on the map". For example, participants in one city were able to

identify that there were several famous scientists teaching at the city's main university. There was also a clear understanding that the local NHS benefited from the presence of high-quality universities.

But there are big variations — geographically and between classes. This showed up in our focus groups: better educated, civically involved people were very positive. For others, universities dominated the town and large expanding student populations could be a serious nuisance.

The poll found that the less affluent are much less likely to have visited the university. Only 19% of social group ABC1 respondents had never visited their local university across the ten cities. For social group C2DE that figure was higher, with 30% of respondents on average across the ten cities never having visited a local campus. There's also a big regional difference: just 21% had been to their local university in the last 12 months in Bradford, compared to 59% in Norwich.

An average of 35% of people in the cities surveyed were unable to name a single thing that their local university had done to engage the local community.

Figure 1: How proud if at all are you in the role that your local university(ies) play in the city that you currently live in?
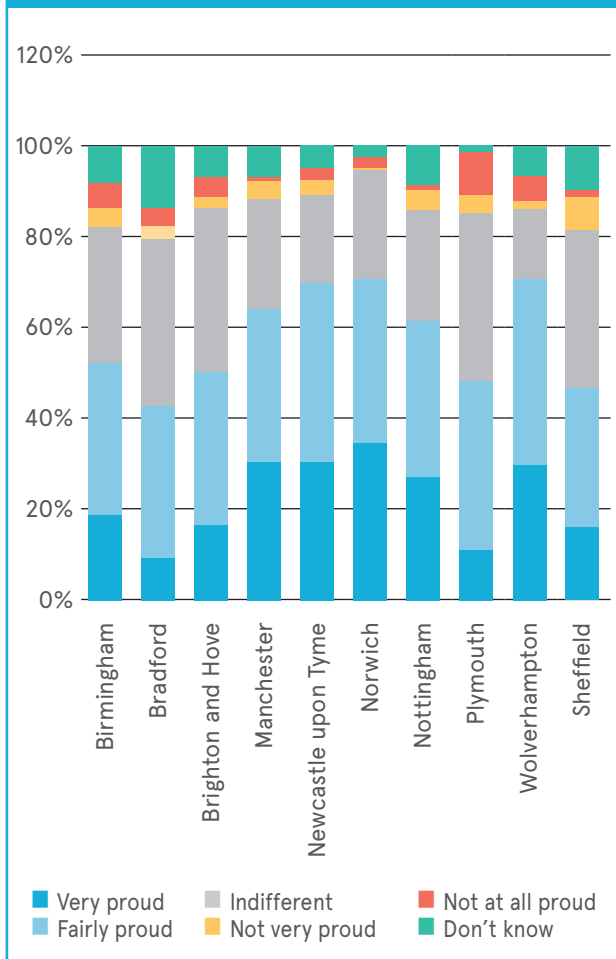
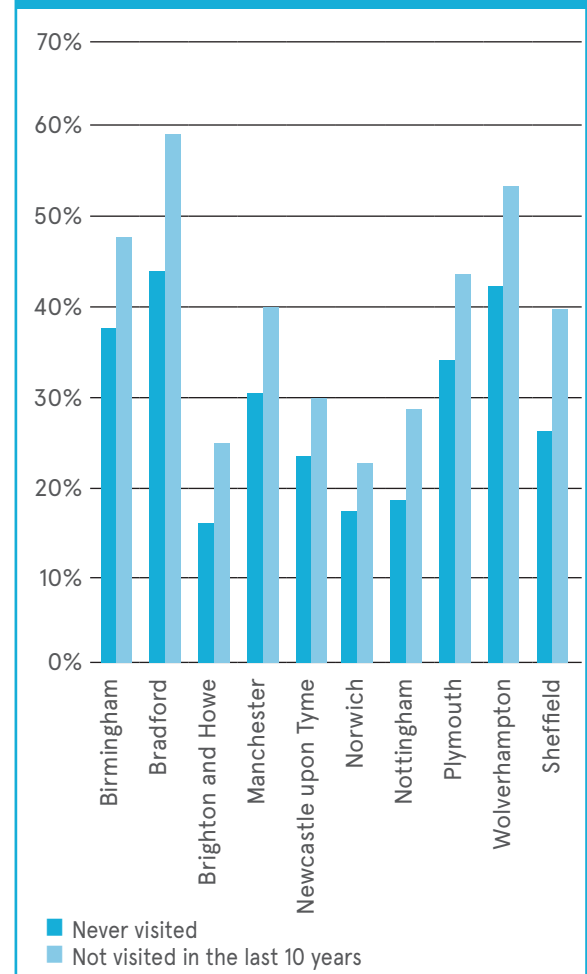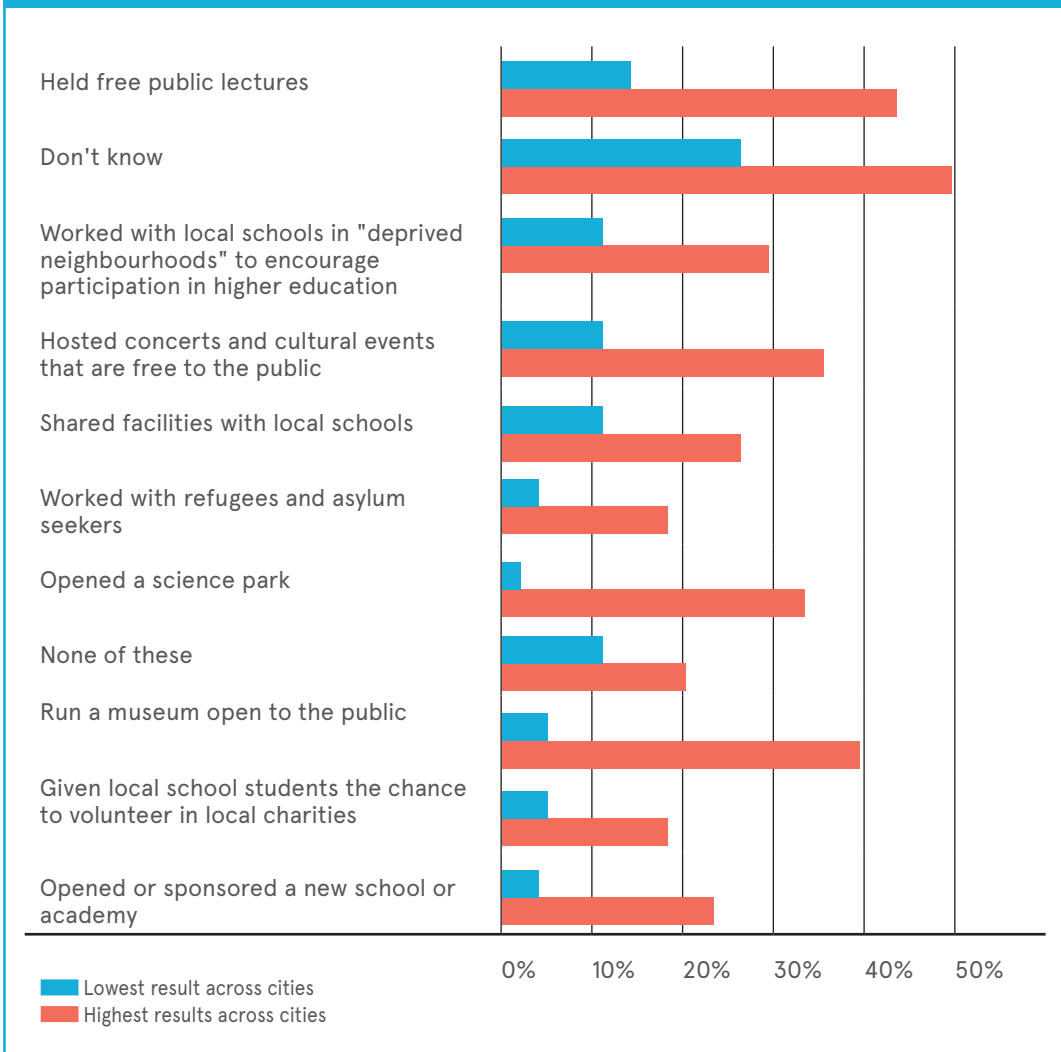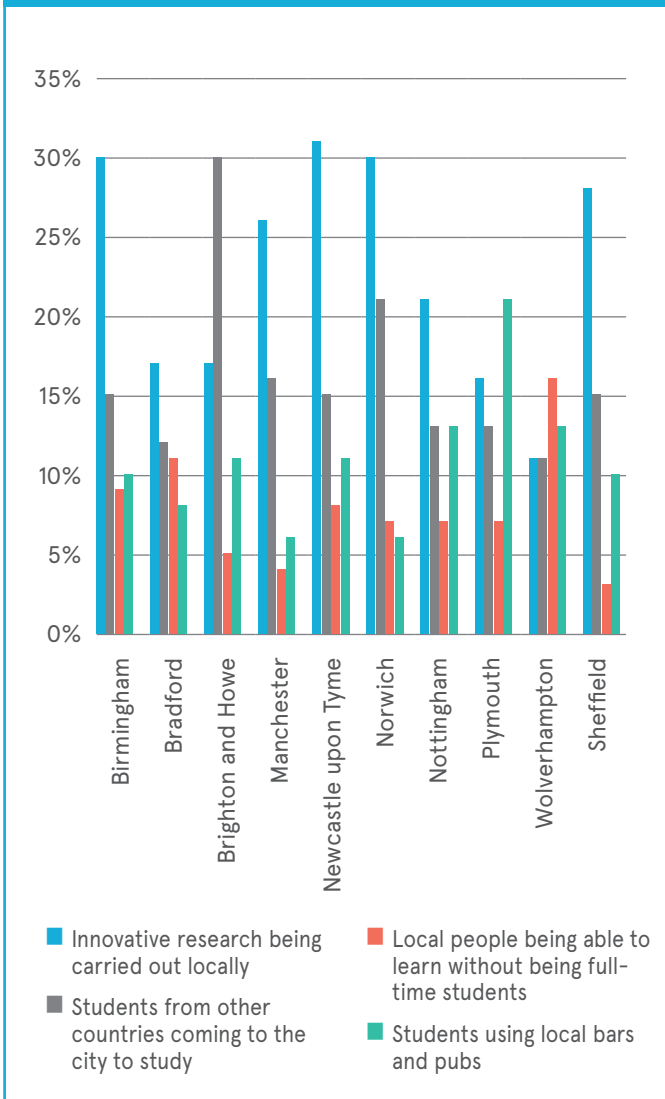**Figure 2: When did you last visit your local university?**

Figure 3: What has your university done?

Again, this masked big differences between areas: respondents in the smaller cities surveyed were much more likely to answer "none" or "don't know" when presented with a list of measures such as open lectures or assisting local schools and asked whether their local university had done anything similar. Again, this was backed up by our focus groups — **the views of those where the university was a larger presence (because in a smaller place) were more negative for the non-civic group.**

Figure 4: How do you think your local universities benefit others MOST (most frequently selected options)?

Legend:
- Innovative research being carried out locally
- Students from other countries coming to the city to study
- Local people being able to learn without being full-time students
- Students using local bars and pubs

We also asked in both the poll and focus groups what they thought was most beneficial in terms of current university activity, and what their real responsibility was (i.e. what they should be doing).

On the first question, four options consistently came out top:

· Innovative research being carried out locally (this was usually the top answer by a considerable margin);

· Students from other countries coming to study;

· Students using local bars and pubs (presumably because it stimulated the local economy). Interestingly in our focus group we found that some people found this to be a negative (or at least, student nightlife and its effect on the city); and

· Local people being able to learn without being full-time students.

Other options included: graduates working for local employers; students volunteering for local charities; and, local people being able to learn without being full-time students.

In terms of the main responsibility of universities, four themes came out strongly. First, the impact the university ought to have on local pupils. Second, ensuring that ideas and discoveries have a local impact. Third, holding open lectures and events. Fourth, to promote local graduates to local employers.

This is interesting for three reasons. First, because it seems that the public sees a university's job to be effectively localising their current national obligation — teaching, research, and to a lesser extent the local economy. Second, some of the things that

were highlighted most in our written submissions — and particularly the sharing of facilities — were of relatively little interest to the public. Third, because in all our questions 'don't know' and 'not applicable' were very common answers: awareness of what universities do, and what they could do, is low.

Figure 5: What is your university's main responsibility?
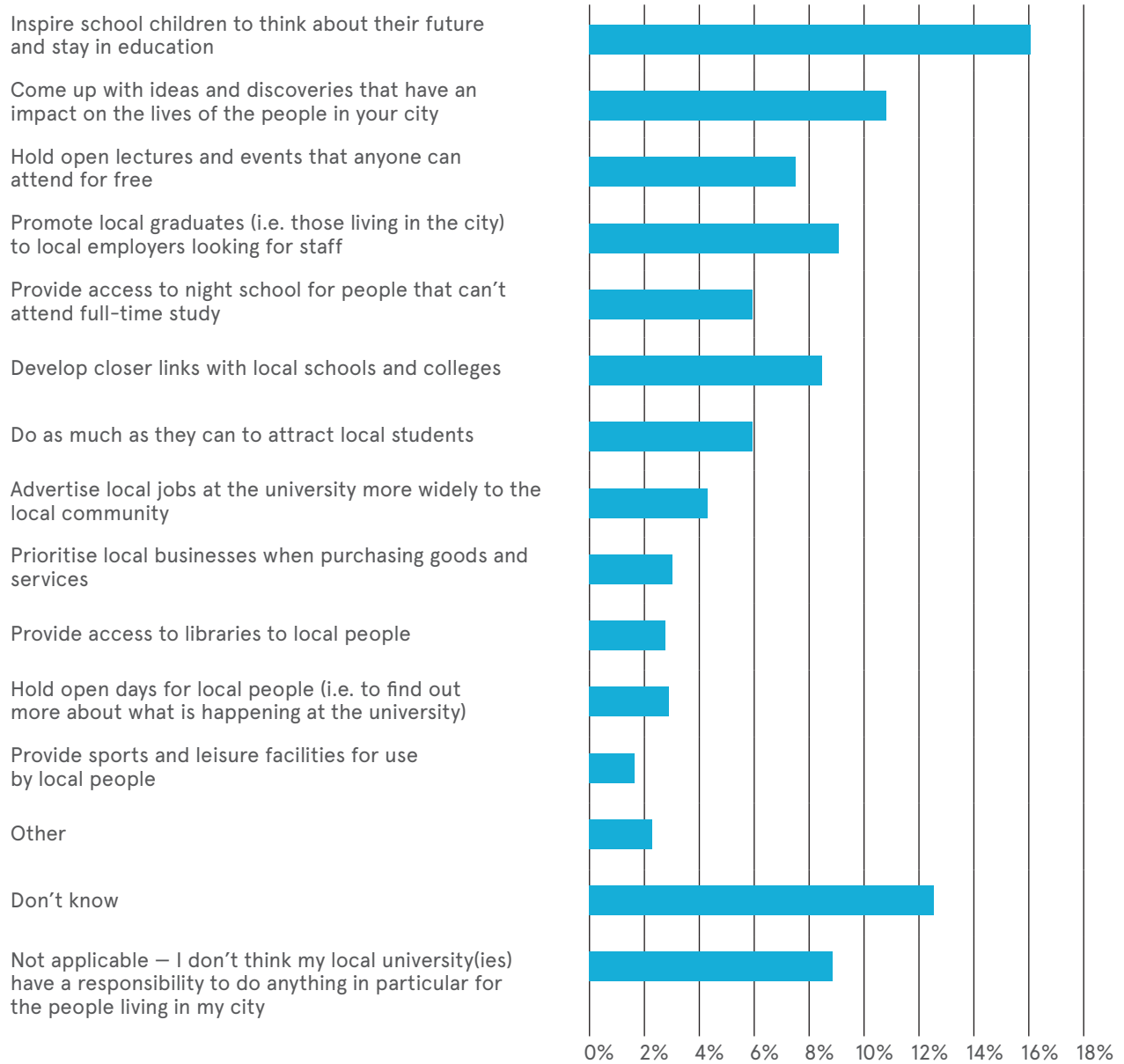
Our focus groups also drew out some major tensions:

- **The uninterest and disengagement of some.** Our groups showed a similar pattern to the poll — those from lower socioeconomic groups knew less about their local universities, and were less enthused by them:

  "The only way they play a role [in the city] is for those connected to the university"

  "I think they care about people in [rich borough] but not people in [deprived borough]"

A couple of participants felt that local students were now actively ignored in favour of 'richer' students from London and the Southeast.

- **Geography matters.** Again, like our poll, it was clear that people had different views in different cities. Some of that seems to be size — in smaller places, the impact of universities including negative externalities were more obvious and caused more frustration.

- **Fees changed how the public thought about universities and is a threat to civic activity**

The people we spoke to were very aware of fee and bursary changes *("My daughter is a student nurse... this is the first year without a bursary so we're supporting her")* and this changed how they thought of universities and what they ought to be spending money on:

  "If I was paying out all that money I'd want it spent on me, not other people [the city]"

  "...[universities are now] just another corporate entity there to make a profit"

In other words, it is harder to envisage or justify a university behaving in a typically civic fashion when students are responsible for fees, given that their activity is likely to benefit the wider population as much as students, and over decades rather than three years.

This tension doesn't always seem to be recognised by national government. For example in an early speech Sam Gyimah, Universities Minister, said:

  "Now students pay the bills, and universities are under more public scrutiny, it is more important to look outwards: to build relationships with students by providing excellent teaching, support and value for money, and taking advantages of the freedoms of the new regulatory system to offer new courses and modes of study to meet student needs; to foster your civic role, building links with local communities, and promoting access and opportunity; and to have regard to the wider public debate, showing that you are delivering the public benefit people expect from our universities."

But 'looking outwards' is in direct tension with a purist consumer demand for services.

- **Students can appear transient and therefore of little benefit.** If students aren't coming from the local area or staying to work there, their benefit was not always obvious to the focus group participants *("They come, they study, they party, they go")*. At the same time there was a sense they were being benefited over local residents *("The council has forgotten about the rest of the community")*.

People wanted more engagement with universities. Music recitals and public lectures were mentioned in all the groups, although often people wished they were more aware of what was on offer. The idea of lifelong learning was particularly popular, and some of the attendees who did not go to university already availed themselves of the opportunity *("I just sneak into the lectures. They never check IDs and there are always loads of spare seats")*. There was a sense that universities had intellectual and learning capital to spare and it should be easier for local people to participate — although this was said more strongly by more affluent groups.

What did our expert witnesses say?

As part of our enquiry, we asked all of the experts — as well as those who gave evidence — to define a 'civic university'. A number of common themes emerged:

- **Place.** Most obviously, civic universities were related to their place. Their name, history, demographics, labour market, and wider economic situation determined what the university did and was. The first civic universities educated local people who did not go to Oxford or Cambridge. In 1960, over 60 % of students at the redbricks still came from within 30 miles of the university. Place was defined broadly, including the cultural identity of the city or region.

- **Local ownership.** Some expressed this in terms of how people in the area thought about the university — 'our university' not 'the university'. One of our expert witnesses said a civic university had to 'constantly earn the right to be part of that place'. This is obviously linked to our opinion research — people need to articulate what 'our university does for us'.

One of the subjects that did not come up in our formal sessions, but we would be keen to explore in future sessions, is local accountability. For example, should university governing bodies have a locally elected member? Or clearer accountability to existing elected institutions (i.e. the local authority)? The early civic universities were much more locally owned in a literal sense

than today's national — even international — institutions.

- **Local leaders.** Two of those giving evidence drew a strong link between a civic university and civic leaders — that if the graduates in the university did not stay in the area, and become part of the civic fabric (for example leading local councils) then while it could be a great university, it could not be a *civic* university. An analogy was drawn to some of the great local companies in the country, where someone could rise from being an apprentice to being CEO or on the board.

This linked strongly to the Manchester Mayor's vision of the future, where he hoped Manchester could incentivise the graduates of Manchesters' universities to stay and work in public services in the area.

It is also a potential cause for concern. The data below from HESA and a Centre for Cities report shows the wide variation in graduate retention by city.

Figure 6: Retention rate, 2013/14–2014/15 (%)
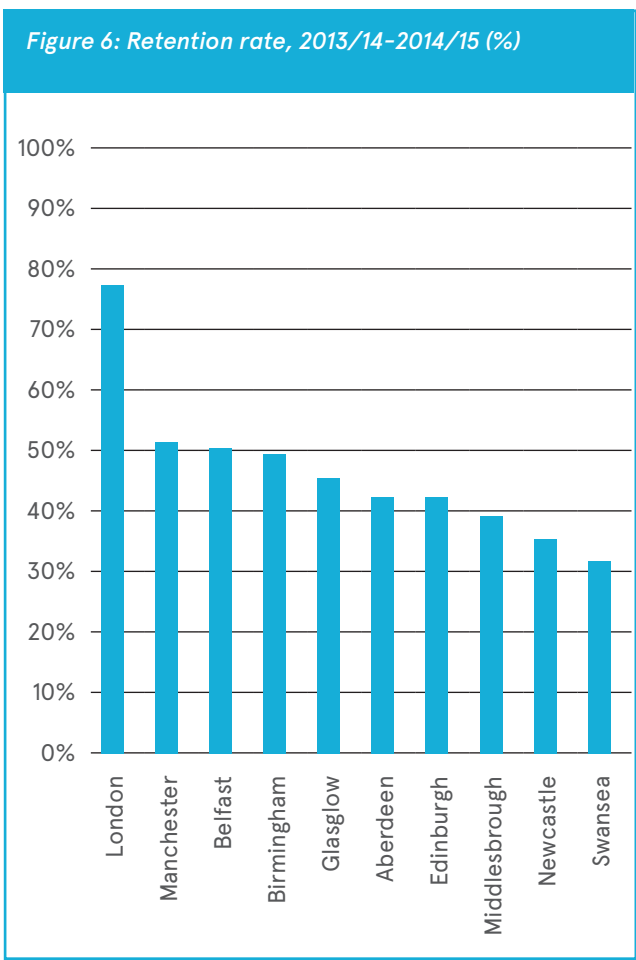
- **An anchor institution.** "Anchor institutions" have become increasingly important to policy makers as they think about an industrial strategy. An anchor institution is large, locally embedded, and usually non-profit (public sector, like a hospital; or a museum or other possibly publicly funded institution).

Universities are increasingly anchor institutions. The Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam, for example, noted that in the 1970s there were 4,000 students in Sheffield and nearly 45,000 working in the steel industry. Today, the number has reversed with around 60,000 students and less than 4,000 steel workers. With that size, a responsibility and focus has emerged for universities to drive social mobility, quality of life, and the economy.

For at least some of our witnesses, the role of an anchor institution was particularly vital now that local government funding had reduced.

There were also some interesting questions and tensions:

- **Local vs global.** Some people defined the civic university in terms of what a global institution can bring to a locality — a translation of expertise from the world into a local area (one institution refers to themselves as "locally embedded, globally connected"). For them the global complemented the local role rather than contradicted it.

For others, the two were in tension: a civic university is fundamentally a bottom-up institution whose first consideration is the needs of its local people and economy; a global institution is more concerned with meeting the demands of international students; academics; and other audiences. For them, universities have to make some choice about how to prioritise the two.

- **Local vs national.** Who do universities serve first — their local area or the country? One obvious area where this came up was students: should a civic university care most about getting pupils from the city or region to go there? Should it privilege those students in any way, and care more about the ones that stay and work in the area than the ones who move away?

Some of those who defined a civic university spoke in terms of social mobility — one of the driving purposes of most universities. What was less clear was whether those universities wanted the people of, for example, Nottingham, to advance faster than everywhere else.

· **An extension of core activity, or separate?**

Figure 7: An extension of core activity, or separate?
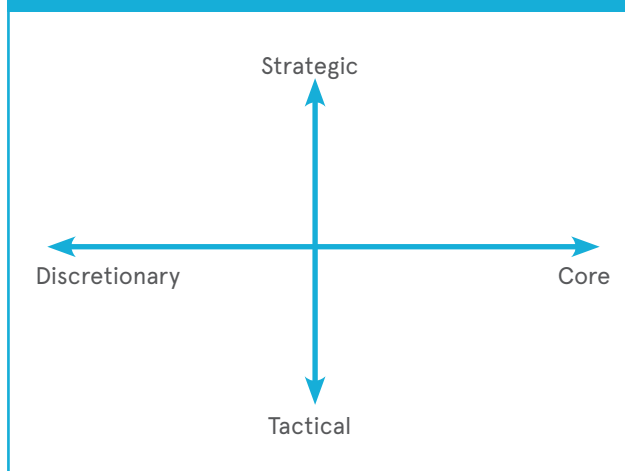
In our discussions we thought there were two dimensions in which universities varied in their activity.

The first was whether civic activity was linked to core activity — teaching and research — or discretionary activity. For example some universities thought interaction with local schools should be about research, what the education department does and how that could be shared. Others set up entirely new schools.

The second was whether there was a tactical menu of activity, or a strategic rationale for how to use research or other activity to benefit the local area. In our view this latter dimension — strategic or tactical — defines whether you are a civic university or just civically engaged (which all universities seem to be).

· **Should there be one civic university?** The original civic universities were the first, and only, in their city. Now, most substantial cities have at least two universities. One question raised was whether there ought to be one civic and one global university — where the post-92 universities might naturally play the civic role.

This was not, however, how Russell Group universities — most of the original civic universities — conceived of themselves. In terms of activity, it seemed some Russell Group universities were still very civically minded — in a few cases *more* self-consciously so than their more modern counterparts. This inevitably leads to overlapping activities and roles (or, more positively, cooperation and collaboration).

· **Do civic universities belong to large cities?** The term civic usually applies to cities, or at least substantial urban areas, and the original civic universities were founded in major industrial cities.

But many of the ideas we heard around civic universities — anchor institutions, major employers, and integral to their place — applies to rural universities. Lincoln University is a good example — while it is in a cathedral city and developed from institutions in Hull, it fundamentally serves a rural economy. Yet its activity and self-image is very similar to the classic urban civic universities.

· **What are the bounds of the civic?** In one fascinating evidence session in Manchester, the local authority leaders spoke warmly about relationships with their universities. Meanwhile, the head of a neighbouring Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was clearly frustrated that the universities appeared to have no interest in her own area despite its potential economic and cultural links.

If the civic role is to be enhanced this will become more difficult. A civic university cannot serve everywhere, and that means someone must fall on the wrong side of a boundary. It is impossible to define this nationally — the natural bounds of the civic will depend on both history and the current organisation of local institutions such as LEPs. For example, in rural areas with dispersed populations universities consider their bounds very differently. But the bounds *will* exist.

· **In line with government direction, or against?** One of the most frequent concerns that came up in our conversations was whether the drive by government to focus universities on serving current students, as well as tight criteria in the REF which still rewarded global effort, cut against civic activity. Since civic activity is inherently tied to place and circumstance, it is more difficult to create a clear set of criteria against which it can be measured — especially while the financial and regulatory incentives are all pointed elsewhere. The one current exception is the 'Impact' requirement in the REF — but our strong impression was that this was not a major counterweight. Certainly as it is currently described and interpreted, it cannot be used to meet the local priorities from our poll and focus groups.

· **Does government direction matter?** Universities clearly respond to government incentives. At the same time, they are institutions that fiercely proclaim their autonomy, as well as being charities for the public good. There is no reason why universities cannot define their own purpose as civic institutions, seek funding and conduct activity regardless of government direction. However, government signals, in the form of policy and funding, do make a huge difference to how universities act. Government can and should encourage civic activity, albeit with a light touch.

What did our written submissions say?

Submissions were received from universities, charities, councils, interested individuals and social enterprises. Many of their thoughts echoed those of our witnesses, but there were several other themes we thought were interesting.

Civic engagement vs civic university

Most importantly, and the main reason we have separated the written and oral evidence, is that universities made relatively little distinction in their submissions between being a truly civic university — one whose entire purpose, strategy, and activity is based around the locality — and civic engagement. By the latter, we mean the endlessly varying ways in which particular activities the university does — sharing facilities; widening participation; working with local institutions — have an impact on local people and on other civic institutions. While this activity is admirable civic engagement of the kind that all universities should and can do, it is not the same as a civic mission and strategy- which is likely to be a choice only made by some universities.

Some submissions from universities did highlight how civic activity is embedded in organisational strategies — for example, King's College London has an ambition to be, "...*London's leading civic university, making a valuable contribution to the capital's health and success"*. Some also pointed to a senior member of staff having responsibility for civic engagement, or for the delivery of civic engagement programmes.

Others talked mostly about a bottom up informal approach. Representatives of the university — from professors to students — are often involved in informal civic engagement activity that is not recorded and that university management will not know about. This is almost certainly true — and valuable — but it is not the *university* being civic, but rather individuals who happen to work for it.

For the rest of this section we have therefore referred to civic engagement, not being a civic university, and this is a theme we will return to in the final report.

Physical assets are critical to universities' own view of civic engagement

The typical use of a university's physical assets in civic engagement is giving the local population access to sports facilities, green space and buildings that hold free exhibitions or concerts. While this is positive, one submission notes that events held on campus can limit audiences to a subset of the local population, as some demographics may be reluctant to enter university sites (in other words, these events have the potential to be "culturally elitist").

This is exactly what we found for our poll and focus groups. Although several submissions highlighted how university buildings were being used — including for business to set up co-working spaces for business start-ups — this was neither a major priority for the people we polled and talked to, nor something most members of the public noticed.

If there is clear evidence that businesses are growing more rapidly because of the way that universities are using their spaces, this is clearly an important civic activity regardless of whether it affects the majority of the population. But we were a little concerned at the amount of weight some universities put on it.

Collaboration with local institutions is a staple of civic engagement

The submissions gave numerous examples of how universities work with institutions such as LEPs and councils (for instance, the vice-chancellors of both Plymouth and Exeter universities sit on the board of the Heart of the South West LEP). Senior university staff sit on boards or steering groups, or partnerships are used to help disadvantaged groups such as the homeless or care leavers. Vice-chancellors sit on LEPs; on Combined Authorities; and on different bodies and networks. Universities provide secretariat and analytical support to these bodies.

This integration with local bodies and particularly local government also came out very strongly in some our witness sessions. In some cases it was leadership and mediation, not just collaboration. Universities were used to broker conversations between different local authorities; between national and local government; and to try and resolve tensions and questions between different organisations.

Access to knowledge is an underutilised tool for civic engagement

Research programmes were referenced as a tool for civic engagement, both in terms of having the local population take part and the local population benefitting from influential work. An example of the latter is using university researchers to understand better local policy problems, but also to lobby national government on changing policy to benefit the area.

Other submissions convincingly argued that the knowledge and skills that universities possess could be better used to help address local problems. For all the talk of universities having highly innovative problem-solving capabilities, they had not yet been applied to the biggest economic and social challenges facing local areas, such as the pressures on providing social care.

Relatively few universities have talked to us about 'coproduction of knowledge' — the idea that local people can be part of, and contribute, to research efforts as well as be beneficiaries of it. However for some universities, such as Newcastle, this is clearly part of their research strategy.

Measuring civic engagement is not widespread (or obvious how to do well).

Most of the submissions that described civic engagement initiatives had little or nothing to say about how they are measured. Some referred to undertaking measurement activity in future, like benchmarking surveys. But mostly it was vague.

There were a couple of notable exceptions. For instance, Cardiff uses quantitative and qualitative analysis to assess its engagement. This includes mid-term evaluation reports, public and stakeholder surveys and workshops and interviews with project staff and stakeholders. In our final report we will be investigating measurement in detail — it is much harder for civic activity than peer review research, and we are reluctant to move to yet more league tables, but we are also conscious that things that remain unmeasured are often given tertiary importance.

'A failure to listen' is a barrier to successful civic engagement

While describing well-intentioned civic engagement strategies and initiatives, it was not clear from many of the submissions why universities thought that their approach to civic engagement was what the local population wanted or needed. That is not to say that universities had not attempted to find out — they may not have presented the information.

This does, however, raise a question about whether universities are listening to their local populations. As one submission put it:

> "*Institutions often suffer from a failure to listen. Too often, social action programmes are delivered without listening to key local actors and gaining understanding of the needs of any given area.*"

Of course there are dozens of different actors — local authorities, schools, colleges, the local population, charities, and others and universities need to balance which 'local actors' to spend time with.

We also think there are some challenges with how project funding relates to the long-term capacity and relationships needed to understand local people, actors, and their needs.

Some initial conclusions: so what is a 21st century civic university?

A public-centred view

In many ways, we think a public-centred view is the best way to think about a civic university. There are three dimensions to this. First, can people talk about "our university" with pride and awareness? If so, it is almost certainly civic. Second, are a large percentage of the leaders in an area integrally linked to an institution? If so, that institution is probably civic.

Third, which is not reflected in the current university landscape, but we think is a useful challenge for our next round of evidence, is consideration of local people reflected in the governance structures of the university? There has been a century-long divergence between the universities and local government. Do we want to recapture that link? Should the councils of universities be elected or more generally appointed by local people?

A civically bounded university

A civic university must be truly local — and willing to accept that there are areas to which it does not have a special responsibility. It must also be willing to accept that there are some people it prioritises — in particular those who grow up, live, and work in the area. It should be active in shaping and leading the decisions that affect those people, in the areas where it is expert (for example economic analysis; research impact; cultural understanding; and teaching and widening participation).

Oriented towards the great challenges of a place

As our next chapter details, we are concerned that the decline in adult education at universities undermines their ability to be civic. While national policy has affected life-long learning — and needs to change — if universities want to claim to be truly civic they need to prioritise the education of their entire local population. The labour market is going to change, and universities will be key to helping people adjust. And even if universities remain focused on widening participation of younger people, the education and environment provided by those people's parents are crucial to their success, as well as to the wider health and wellbeing of a population. Universities are already, in many cases, focused on social mobility and the provision of education as a route out of poverty. Adult education is an important element of that mission.

Core or discretionary — as long as it is strategic.
While a civic university has often been defined in opposition to a 'traditional' research university, we

do not think that has to be the case. In our view, it is entirely possible for that to be expressed through core activity or 'discretionary' activity — i.e. through curriculum and student recruitment and research; or through additional programmes. But a menu of those programmes does not constitute a civic university if the structure, leadership and intent of that university is not clear. It is important that there is a clear strategy that is informed by close partner engagement and an objective analysis of local needs.

Autonomous, charitable institutions. We wanted to end this section with a challenge. Throughout this report, and in the next section, we recognise how national incentives and signals have affected university activity. But we also want to recognise that universities are autonomous and proudly claim that autonomy. It is not enough, therefore, to say that national funding doesn't support civic activity.

A truly civic university must have its own robust strategy regardless of what the head of the OfS or a minister happens to think. A civic university needs to have a clear and coherent view of its place, and that place's economic, social, and cultural needs. It should be able to describe how those needs differ from national concerns, and how it has changed its activity in large or small ways to meet those needs. And it should seek funding and mechanisms to reward its staff for engaging in civic activity. Universities are charities, not businesses, and we think it appropriate they behave in ways not wholly determined by their funders.

Civic activity

The previous chapter focused on what a civic university was, and did, in principle. But those principles need to translate into real activity that benefits the local people we have identified.

In the course of the Commission, we've taken evidence from experts in different aspects of civic activity — work with schools; with apprentices; with local people who might work for the university; culture and the arts; interaction with the health system; impact on the local economy; collaboration with local government; research and global impact; and more.

We've deliberately not addressed these activities in this Progress Report since they will form the foundation of our final report. But we do think they fall into some natural categories.

Activity that is a natural function of core _funded_ university activities.

This activity is effectively a local expression of university activity that is already funded by government, for example:

- Widening participation through work with local schools;
- Teaching of local students and linking curriculum to the local economy and businesses;
- Local impact of research; and
- Interaction with the health system (including training and research).

Important activity that is largely discretionary and a function of the locality and circumstances which universities are in (although there may be some national drive)

This activity is important to places but not core to universities' functions of teaching and research. It includes:

- Raising educational attainment in schools;
- Supporting the local government infrastructure and decision making;
- Community projects and volunteering;
- Work with cultural institutions and cultural activity; and
- Supporting economic development with the local Council and through the LEPs.

Activity that is a reflection of being a large anchor institution

This is a reflection of universities' size and economic clout. It includes:

- The university as a local voice;
- The university as a local procurer;
- Taking the lead in resolving issues with local institutions (such as negotiations between local authorities, or between national and local players); and
- The university as a local employer.

The funding of this civic activity is as varied as the activities themselves. It seems to be a combination of core resources from the university itself and money attracted from external funding sources. This has the benefit of being quite entrepreneurial but the disadvantage of being fragmented and fragile.

Adult education — an outlier

In the course of our commission, we found one policy area — adult education — which was:

· An integral part of initial civic university activity;

· In major decline; and

· Could not be reasonably seen as a 'discretionary' activity, but which was not working as a 'core' activity either (like teaching, research, or even access and widening participation).

We are also conscious that the government is currently considering major changes to post-18 education. It seems to us, given the evidence we have heard, that if a transformation of adult education in universities is not part of this then it will be difficult for universities to fully fulfil their civic mission.

We therefore decided to present some initial thoughts on adult education outside of our main report (in the next chapter).

CHAPTER 2:
Adult education; a 'core' civic activity

Adult education — a new urgency

For the UK the manufacturing workforce has more than halved since 1981 with three million fewer jobs. This has been more than matched, however, by a significant expansion in professional and other service jobs.[2] This restructuring has radically affected many of the cities and towns we engaged with on the Commission.

We are now entering a new restructuring. Automation, according to some estimates, puts 30% of British jobs at high risk by the early 2030s[3]. For the first time this includes parts of professional jobs — such as law; medicine; accounting; and finance.

If large numbers of people, including highly educated people, are at risk from automation, then the only route for recovery is effective retraining — which will inevitably be part-time for many. Yet we have an adult skills budget that has been in general decline (by 29% in cash terms 2010-2015[4]). Although this has recently been somewhat offset by the apprenticeship levy, it is still not returning to 2010 levels.

At the same time, many universities have social mobility at the core of their mission and activity. This is important and worthy, but is currently mostly on 'widening participation' activity directed at increasing the number of 18 year olds going to university.

Yet there is a huge 'stock' of adults who would benefit themselves and their children if they were able to access higher-skilled jobs. The education of adults, and the habits of education (such as books in the home and constant reading to their children) is one of the best ways of improving social mobility for the next generation. Constant learning through life has demonstrable impact on people's health — including their mental health and protection against dementia — which will help protect us against some of the challenges of an ageing population.


2   ONS workforce jobs by industry
3   E.g. see PWC analysis, March 2017
4   House of Commons Library, 13 June 2018

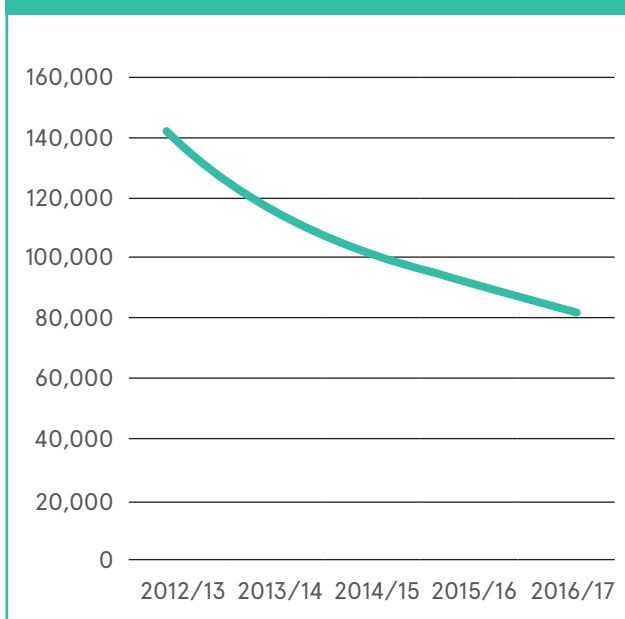## The decline in adult education at university

Yet adult education in universities has rapidly declined, in substantial part driven by a major decline in undergraduate courses that are not full first-time degrees. (see charts below).

Figure 8: Students over 30 years
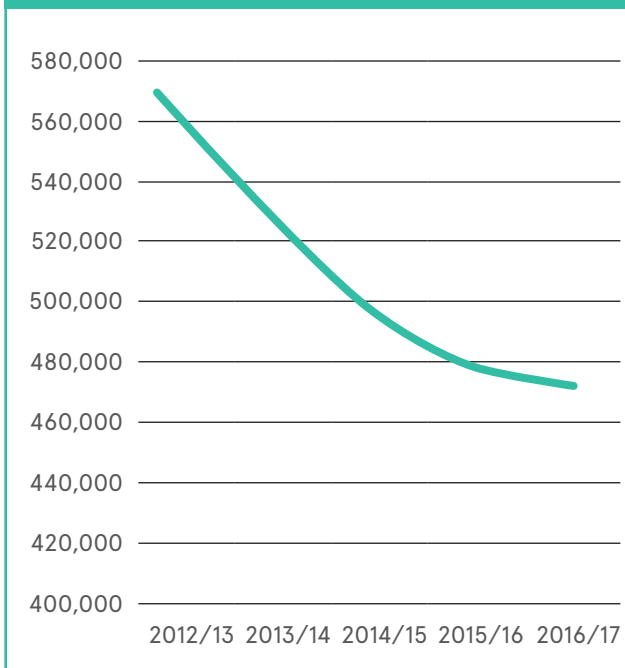
(HESA)

Figure 9: 'Other undergraduate courses' students over 30 years

(HESA)

Reasons for decline

The reason for the decline is well documented. As both the minister and the main policy adviser of the time have reported, when tuition fees shifted to being paid overwhelmingly through loans rather than through grants, conditions were placed upon financial support for part-time and 'other undergraduate' learners (adults are more likely to study part-time, and are also more likely to seek courses that don't lead to a full degree) including:

· That they could not already have a degree;

· That they must study for at least 25% intensity; and

· Studying for a 'qualification aim' — which meant individual modules or courses would not qualify.[5]

In addition, it seems as though the form of loans themselves were more off-putting to older, part-time students. Loan take-up for part-time students was predicted at 33% by the coalition government — in fact it is just 19%.[6] It is likely that this reflects a broad debt-aversion among students who already have mortgages; childcare costs; and potentially existing student loans.

This means that, for example, a mother returning to work after a prolonged absence from the labour market — but who might have a degree from 15 years earlier — cannot retrain unless she can just pay the fees upfront, and support herself, from her own resources.

It means that someone who wants to do a short course in coding would not qualify for a loan. And for anyone who 'just wants to learn something', or even try certain areas before fully committing to doing a full degree, loans aren't available and nor is direct government support to the university. According to Clare Callendar, one of our expert witnesses, up to two thirds of would-be part-time students do not qualify for loans.

A recent survey by UUK found that of those who seriously considered adult higher education, 43% said they would have attended if one or more of the 2012 tuition reforms had not happened. The main factors that would have persuaded them to attend were cheaper tuition fees and more flexible options to fit around life and work commitments.

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5   There are some minor exceptions to these rules for example on Computer Science

6   HEPI, "It's the Finance, stupid!", October 2015

Some of the more casual adult education has also declined. We think staff incentives has had an impact — when academics are tightly incentivised to compete in the REF and fulfil metrics for the OfS, the importance of giving free (or low cost) evening lectures to interested parties inevitably declines. Impact in the REF has potentially exacerbated this — it is clear that this kind of activity does not count as 'impact'.

There is also, perhaps, a degree of relief from institutions that they can decrease highly complex provision. The Vice-Chancellor of Wolverhampton wrote in a report for HEPI on part-time learners: "We have failed to take these people and their desire to progress and acquire new skills and knowledge into account in our rush to increase the number of easier-to-teach, easier-to-manage, income-stable and more homogenous full-time students."[7]

And finally, and probably least easy to resolve, the public sector has become a much smaller source of adult training as budgets have declined.

Who should benefit?

For some in the HE sector, part-time education was regarded as of limited value — it was for 'privileged middle class' people who should not be priorities for state backing. That seems to have been at least partly true (although that has also been true of undergraduates). The recipients of adult education at the original civic universities were not, generally, the most deprived. It was the rising middle class who were most attracted to the new universities and the lectures and teaching they offered. This was also true in the 20th century. Nor was the teaching always 'vocational'. While for some it was an entry into the professions, for others a classical education was sought out for its own sake.

We think this kind of education — as well as more classic 'skills' training and retraining — is of extremely high value, and indeed essential if you take a civic lens and think about likely shifts in the labour market.

First, even for the middle class, this is precisely the wrong moment to have closed off adult education. Graduate jobs will change. We have already lost long-term capacity in universities — courses have closed and they are difficult to re-open. Rebuilding this capacity will take effort and time. In our view, that work needs to begin now. It is also the case that the majority of part-time learners are women, who often need additional help returning fully to the labour market after having children.

Second, it is too limiting to see this education in terms of immediate fulfilling of skills gaps. It is extremely hard to predict exactly what the future skills needs of areas are likely to be — many would not have predicted, for example, the size and growth of creative industries and their importance to the economic wellbeing of places.

And even outside pure economic benefit — short and long-term — the benefits of education for adults are huge. It passes down into how children are educated at home — which has a much greater impact on their future success than the school environment. It improves people's health and makes them more engaged in the labour market. It makes people more fulfilled and engaged in civic life.

Third, there is clear latent demand. Recent survey by Universities UK (UUK) found that as many as 24% of adults had seriously considered doing higher education, of which around half did not already have a post-A level qualification, and half did. Over half already worked full-time. Two thirds were interested for either career development or progression — with the remainder interested in 'self improvement'.

This includes populations of extremely high interest locally and nationally. For example high-skilled women, who find it difficult to access the labour market after time out for childcare, should be a priority for education rather than locked out because of funding rules.

The global picture

Other countries are not taking as limited an approach.

In 2016, one of Singapore's leading politicians gave a seminar at 10 Downing Street on their analysis of the challenges facing their country and the world. High on the agenda was the global slowdown on productivity growth, and the likely shifts in the labour market resulting from automation.

Singapore's response was a radical restructuring in adult education and investment. Anyone over 40 — including those in managerial and professional roles — have up to 90% of their course fees paid for at universities, polytechnics, and other institutions.

Overall in the UK, the proportion of over 25s enrolled in tertiary education is one of the lowest in the OECD at 1.8%. Twelve OECD countries had more than 3% of their population enrolled in tertiary education in 2015, three of which had over-25 enrolment rates above 5% (Australia, Turkey and Iceland).[8] During the 2000s, 22 OECD countries saw an increase in the number of over 25s enrolled

7   Ibid.
8   OECD

in tertiary education greater than in the UK. In Australia the number of students in tertiary education over 25 years old increased by 38%, in Belgium the number increased by 50% and in Ireland the number increased by 96%.

In the United States, between 2005 and 2015 the number of over 25s enrolled in tertiary education increased by 13% and the US Department for Education projects a further 8% increase by 2026.[9]

It does seem, therefore, that the UK is starting with a weak comparative position in terms of adult education as we enter an age of automation.

What does this mean for policy?

Our view is that both government and institutional policy must be directed at rebuilding capacity and delivery of adult education; and that this education should be broad both in terms of who it serves (including existing graduates) and what it teaches. We outline some ideas below that we want to pursue and debate in the next few months.

Funding policy for students

First, funding policy. All of the experts we talked to agree that shifts are necessary in:

· National funding policy in terms of fees and loans (as outlined earlier);

· National direction in terms of widening participation; and

· National incentives in terms of lifting the cap and therefore increasing the potential supply of easier-to-teach undergraduates have driven much of the decline in adult education. While universities themselves have a part to play in driving and prioritising adult education, it is also important that some of the national funding levers change.

Given that we believe it important to offer education to existing professionals, women returning to the labour market and struggling to attend courses in intensity, and people who want to learn particular things rather than necessarily qualifications, it is important that the government consider:

• **Relaxing the ELQ rule so that graduates are able to do further learning;**

• **Removing the 25% intensity rule so that both short courses, and longer-term learning, are eligible for loans and funding (this is in our view particularly important for women with children); and**

• **Allowing education that is not deliberately directed towards a qualification (such as a degree).**

Together these rules mitigate against exactly the education we want to see — namely courses of value to the individual, fitted around people's existing work and lives, and which is designed to support their learning rather than a badge of qualification.

The relaxation of the last rule, in particular, we think could result in some very interesting collaborations and patterns of provision between universities and further education colleges.

It also seems clear that the lack of direct public funding, and the funding of adult education mostly through traditional loans with RAB charges, is highly off-putting to many adults. Postgraduate provision and re-graduate provision, as well as first time undergraduate provision, needs to have some public subsidy.

We also think that the government should consider whether the apprenticeship levy has some part to play here. Two options could be:

• **Hypothecating some proportion of the apprenticeship levy for courses that are shorter and more modular;**

• **Having an additional, smaller levy for this particular purpose.**

Clearly the apprenticeship levy is designed to work through employers (rightly). This is an important part of adult provision, but as we have argued in previous chapters not the only part. A large amount of adult education must operate outside the employer (particularly when employment disappears). The levy cannot be the only vehicle for a recreation of adult education in universities.

Widening participation

Many of the universities we spoke to have huge programmes in place to meet their widening participation and access obligations. At no point did a university spontaneously mention adult education as part of that drive.

While school activity is important, it is the strong view of this Commission that both for those adults — and for future generations — education for mature learners is a *crucial* part of access and widening participation.

Given that the OfS has taken on the key regulatory role for access, and has made clear that it wishes to exercise this role in a range of ways (including fines), we think it needs to send a very strong signal to the system — potentially with additional ministerial guidance — that widening participation directed at adults is considered a crucial part of universities' remit and fulfilment of their obligations.

9   NCES

Institutional incentives and funding

One of the key challenges is that the capacity for adult education has declined across the country. Oxford and Cambridge have two of the only fully fledged adult learning centres outside specialist provision such as Birkbeck.

We therefore need to think about how to build up institutional capacity. Some of this, as we outline below, is the responsibility of universities themselves. But we think there are also both ways of funding and incentivising universities to do this.

First, on incentives, we think that it is vital that the new KEF takes a broad view of knowledge exchange. The metrics should have a strong weighting on knowledge transmission and knowledge exchange between universities and their local population. In our view it is as important that university staff spend time conveying ideas to the local population, and involving them in their activity, as it is to interact with traditional economic stakeholders.

Second, we think that the government should reconsider how the impact element of the REF is currently framed. The Public Impact in the REF finds that the act of engaging the public with research **does not count as impact.** Impact is what happens when people **interact with the research, take it up, react or respond to it.** While the KEF can counterbalance this to some extent we think that deep engagement and education on research is of enormous value and currently insufficiently incentivised.

Finally, we think that the National Retraining Scheme — which is currently highly embryonic, relatively poorly funded, and directed at immediate reskilling — could be a helpful vehicle for funding, as could replacements for current European development funding.

A civic perspective

The policies above could be pursued in two ways — as national policy or as pilots in specific local areas. The pilot approach we think has real merit, particularly if combined with civic-based policies. These would have to be bid for by areas in conjunction with LEPs and other local bodies.

What would those civic based policies look like?

We considered, and relatively quickly discarded, the idea that we could and should strictly define how different educational actors in a place should collaborate. Universities exist in a local ecosystem which is highly variable. There is no rule that determines how many universities a place has, or how they interact with FE colleges or schools. Instead, history and chance have played a very large role in the current make up of further and higher education in the UK.

This makes defining the precise role of universities in adult education impossible. Interaction between FE and HE vary enormously. In many places collaborations are extremely effective. In others they are not. Universities can compete with some FE colleges and work closely with others. Trying to rationalise this is, in our view, likely to be highly destructive.

Rather, we need to make it possible for the right strategies — in their place — to emerge. In our view that means:

- The analysis of place must form a large part of the provision of adult education in institutions;
- Interaction and collaboration between schools, FE, and HE is critical and should be supported; and
- There should be some accountability to the place and the local population. Our proposed pilots are one way of seeing if this can be done.

We think there are three things we should consider in how to achieve that:

- **Greater local control.** Some adult education budget has been devolved locally. But it is very small and barely enough to fulfil its current role in FE let alone be expanded into HE. But we do think this principle is an important one. If the National Retraining Scheme or similar were to provide capacity funds for the delivery of adult education, joint bids between local authorities, LEPs, FE and HE should be a requirement (and for the broader pilots we have recommended). Similarly the Strength in Places and Shared Prosperity Funds should have skills dimensions with strong local control. If widening participation becomes more adult-focused, local analysis of left behind communities and their needs should be central;
- **Greater local accountability.** Earlier in the report we highlighted that local accountability had mostly disappeared in universities. Reviving this, in ways that suit the particular and peculiar local make-up of any given place, is worth pursuing; and
- **Pursuit of non-degree courses.** As we mentioned, we think that the pursuit of qualifications — particularly degrees — has harmed adult education. It also makes more rigid the interaction between colleges and universities. Relaxing this requirement should be a priority.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, those local players need to consider their roles outside national government incentives.

Role of Universities

In our first chapter we said that civic universities need to have their area's needs at the heart of their strategy, and that adult education must be part of that strategy.

In our view, this means that 'regardless of national incentives' civic universities — as part of their charitable mission and civic responsibility — must prioritise the:

- **Rebuilding of capacity in adult education;**
- **The incentivisation and reward of staff who engage in this activity; and**
- **Organising and resourcing the university in a way that makes shorter courses more suitable to adults possible and desirable.**

Other local players also have a part to play. In our view adult education should form a central part of what local industrial strategies consider — and investment in building up the capacity of universities to offer advanced adult education, from low to high intensity — ought to be a priority of LEPs and local authorities.

CHAPTER 3:

Where next?

Our Progress Report is deliberately partial. It is important in the next phase of the Commission that we hear from universities and others about the ideas we've outlined, but also that the myriad other activities that make up civic activities are considered.

In this chapter, therefore, we have outlined some overarching thoughts and questions that we hope will spark additional conversations in our next evidence session and in additional written submissions. The questions we would like answers to are summarised in Annex I.

We are keen to hear not just from universities but from local authorities, businesses, LEPs, and the voluntary sector.

Areas of focus for the Commission

Before the adult education chapter we outlined some categories we felt — outside adult education — that civic activity fell into. These are summarised as follows:

Activity that is a natural function of core *funded* university activities.

This activity is effectively a local expression of university activity that is already funded by government, for example:

· Widening participation through work with local schools (which we have recommended being broadened to adult learners);

· Teaching of local students and linking curriculum

to the local economic and business needs (which we have recommended being more focused on adult learners);

· Local impact of research; and

· Interaction with the health system (including training and research).

Important activity that is largely discretionary and a function of the locality and circumstances which universities are in (although there may be some national drive)

This activity is slightly less core to universities' daily business. It includes:

· Supporting local government infrastructure and decision making;

· Community projects and volunteering;

· Work with cultural institutions and cultural activity; and

· Economic 'anchor' activity for example through LEPs.

Activity that is a reflection of being a large anchor institution

This is a reflection of universities' size and economic clout. It includes:

· The university as a local procurer; and

· The university as a local employer.

We wanted to outline some brief reflections and questions on each of these.

Core activities with a civic lens

Widening participation and raising educational attainment in schools

Social mobility and supporting left-behind students and areas is a core mission of many universities. In an evidence session in Nottingham, and in many of our written submissions, we heard about the efforts both universities in Nottingham had made through schools and with their own programmes to improve attainment and aspiration. In our session in Portsmouth, their partnership with 6th forms came across as a good example of universities going to where the challenges were, rather than expecting people to come to them.

We've already discussed in our previous chapter the ways in which widening participation could be broadened to consider adult learners, but we also have some specific reflections on schools.

Government focus

For some universities the government's drive on academies and, for example, maths free schools, was exactly the right one. The story of Exeter's Maths Free School — which recently took a child from care through to Oxbridge — was an inspiring one.

For others, the focus on some schools detracted from the support needed for all schools in the area. Some expressed a fear that the expertise of universities did not extend to running schools. For others, universities have always been closely involved in schools — running examination boards, and in some cases setting up schools that later became private schools.

Given this, what's the right national framework, and how should universities define their responsibilities? Are there bigger roles they should and could take locally (as they did historically with school examinations)?

Where to focus

Should universities tightly define which schools they help? If there is a boundary to the civic how is that reflected in work with schools? What does that mean for rural universities with dispersed populations? And what does it mean if the city is relatively wealthy and there are left-behind pockets elsewhere?

And should the focus of a university be making sure that students not only attend university, but attend university in that place and then stay in that place? The flight of students to wealthier areas can be a 'brain drain' on an area and its economy — how does a university link its widening participation and its wider civic responsibility?

And finally, we heard in Nottingham about how the global student body had an impact on the local population experiencing other cultures and ideas. Should this be a more explicit part of transmission into schools — is that part of translating global to local?

What should they focus on?

Is a university there to raise aspiration or attainment or both? How should they weight these?

Is domain specific education — in maths, physics, chemistry — an important part of what universities can offer in areas with shortages for those teachers?

Local priorities

Our focus groups and polling found that people most clearly associated the civic role of universities with working with local schools. That suggests it should be one of the universities' main civic focus. Is that true (outside of government incentives)? If there were no access agreements what would be done differently for local people?

And how much of a responsibility do universities have towards locals who will never attend universities?

Can we measure this?

We have faced a consistent challenge in this Commission with measurement. It is hardest to do with the sort of activity that tends to make up civic engagement — which is locally variable and has value beyond simple indicators.

But widening participation ought to be the most measurable of activities. Can we sharpen how we measure this and hold universities accountable — and if so how do we do so?

Local impact of research

We have heard many isolated examples of research that involved the local community, was done locally, or had a local impact. This is admirable, but we heard a much less clear articulation of how this was done strategically by institutions. Highly enterprising academics and other staff setting up programmes is of course important, even if it doesn't fit a specific strategy, but our view is that a civic university must also know its priorities in this area and pursue them — regardless of whether this is REF optimal.

We're particularly interested to understand more about how the global, national, and local roles intersect here. As the government considers how EU research funding might be replaced, how should local impact — particularly in left behind places, or

areas with poor health outcomes — be prioritised? Again the role of businesses and other institutions — particularly health and public health — seems crucial to us and we'd like to understand this interaction better.

Interaction with the health system

Our health evidence session was fascinating but also, in some ways, the most frustrating. In most of our other sessions the university was the behemoth — a huge employer, procurer, and presence in many places. Its influence and importance was clear.

This was not true with health — where there was a strong sense that the health system was its own incredibly complex juggernaut and it was almost impossible to get strategic purchase.

That said there were a few key themes that emerged that seem to us crucial in considering civic universities.

Training

Universities train people — and they train a lot of doctors, nurses, and other health professionals. The creation of new medical schools has been a major recent civic move of this government. Universities tend to train different people — some focus on nursing, others have major medical schools.

Andy Burnham articulated a potential policy where those trained in Manchester would be rewarded for staying and working in public services there. This is an undeniably civic proposal. How much of a priority should it be for local areas and universities?

The impact of research on health outcomes

The involvement of universities in improving medical treatment and research was brought up in our focus groups and a priority in our polling. If universities were to focus on one area of communication and public engagement, it would be this — it is the public's biggest priority, and the easiest way to convey the concrete ways in which universities benefit the locality. How could this be done better and how could it be discussed better?

Public Health

Public health varies enormously from place to place. How old and poor a population is has a big impact on health activity and outcomes. We'd be keen to understand whether public health research which involves the community and helps the community could be a more major priority for universities — and how this could be incentivised. It would also be interesting to understand how local authorities and universities should work together on this priority — and how it should be funded.

Measurement

Universities are analytical powerhouses. Can they contribute better to the understanding of local populations, their needs, and the interventions that can help? How does that intersect with other health bodies?

Discretionary activities with a civic lens

Supporting local government infrastructure and decision making

We were struck both in our formal session and in other informal evidence sessions how positively local authorities spoke about universities as brokers, mediators, analysers and actors in institutions such as LEPs. It seems as though universities are playing an increasingly important role as local decisions makers.

But this is often closed door work — should it, and can it, be clearer to local populations? And is there a tension with core roles — does it take too much senior staff time compared to other priorities?

Cultural activity and institutions

We had an initial discussion on cultural activity and the arts at Newcastle university — and the work they are doing to support local museums is a good illustration of how universities are filling a gap that local authorities traditionally played. In London we would like to explore universities' cultural role further. It is clear that interaction with museums and cultural institutions is a huge part of universities' civic activity. It is also a natural partnership — both sets of institutions are concerned with knowledge, creativity and its transmission. Museums are probably better at communicating to the public than universities — and on the flip side universities create and hold knowledge that benefits museums.

Is there more that could or should be done to incentivise this, or is it already working very well? We have heard so many good examples, that it is not obvious to us if this is something to celebrate, or a focus for institutional and policy action.

On the other hand it was clear there were concerns over whether creative roles and the creative industries were sufficiently valued in national and local policy, particularly given their input into the local economy and the number of globally successful creative industries created in different parts of the country. Should this collaboration between universities and other institutions on the arts be a bigger part of local industrial strategies?

Finally, we heard some good examples of how universities contribute to the cultural life of cities

— festivals, theatre, and other experiences. How important is that to civic activity, and how if at all should universities be judged on it?

Economic development activity

Which brings us to in many ways the biggest 'discretionary' activity (not teaching or research) universities engage in: trying to support the inclusive growth of their place. Universities, particularly in cities have huge potential to support economic development and shape the urban fabric. LEPs are now the only vehicle to achieve this but the way they operate seems to vary widely.

It is also not always easy to understand exactly how universities and local authorities have worked in partnership with businesses to form highly distinct strategies. We did hear extremely good examples of this in our session on industrial strategy — where an analysis of Manchester's particular strengths in advanced material, health and digital formed the core of the local industrial strategy — as well as in Sheffield when we visited the ARMC. We also heard about the huge breadth of contacts with SMEs and large businesses.

But we would value more submissions which are highly specific on what they have done, why, and how businesses and other local actors have changed strategies.

Universities as local anchor institutions

There is no recognised definition of what an "anchor institution" is. But most would agree that an institution would need to hold a certain set of characteristics to be considered as a local anchor. Some of the most important of these characteristics are: being large (both in terms of land use and as an employer); being a procurer of goods and services from local businesses; and, creating a benefit to the local community in addition to economic activity.

The large majority — if not all — of the universities we have spoken to would regard themselves as local anchor institutions. And there were some fascinating examples of how being an anchor worked in practice:

· In Manchester we heard about an inspiring programme where the university had a deliberate policy to hire and train people from the poorest wards who lived right next to the university, with high unemployment and no interaction with the institution. But it struck us that others in the city had low awareness of the programme — spreading this kind of practice seems, to us, crucial if we are to revive civic activity across the country.

· Coventry University told us about its campuses in Scarborough, Liverpool Street and Dagenham — a new approach on how to be an effective anchor institution in different locations.

Our evidence also provided some insight into the anchor role that we would like to learn more about. These insights are:

· As other civic institutions grapple with a challenging funding environment and fragmentation the anchor role of universities is increasing.

· Anchor institutions have relative permanence and the ability to influence local decision-making. Examples of how this influence is used will tell us much more about how universities change outcomes in their local area.

· Some universities are acting strategically as local procurers and stimulating local business. But more information is needed on how this is being done and if it should be done more.

· There is a dearth of information on how global academic staff interact with local employees.

Some final thoughts

In this Progress Report we have offered descriptions, tensions, definitions, proposals, and questions. We hope that readers will respond to all of these. Civic universities are hard to define and there are difficult questions for those who wish to be truly civic. We expect there will be disagreement with some of our analysis and ideas — and this is an important part of the Commission's work.

We are going to be spending much of the next few months thinking through and testing the different ways in which central government should, and *should not* try and encourage the kind of activity we've outlined above — in policy, funding, and regulation. Government plays a very active role in teaching and research but is fairly silent on the civic role — and there is a risk it will actively undermine it by too pure a focus on student fees.

We look forward to the next phase.

ANNEX I

Summary of questions

Core activities with a civic lens

Widening participation and raising educational attainment in schools

· What is the right national framework to guide the relationship between universities and widening participation/raising educational attainment in schools?

· Are there bigger roles that universities could and should take locally with schools?

· Is helping schools only civic if help is given within a defined geographic area? If so, what does that mean for rural universities with dispersed populations? Or for cities that have wealthy cores but areas of deprivation on their outskirts?

· What emphasis should universities put on encouraging local school students go to university? And should that encouragement be focused on getting students to attend a local university?

· Should universities be making an effort to translate how their global activities are relevance to and benefit local schoolchildren? If so, how?

· Is a university there to raise aspiration or attainment of schoolchildren? Or both?

· Is domain specific education — in maths, physics, chemistry — an important part of what universities can offer in areas with shortages of teachers in those subjects?

· If government incentives are not considered, should working with local schools be a point of civic focus?

· If there were no access agreements what would be done differently for local people?

· Is it possible to measure university impact on widening participation? If so, how?

Local impact of research

· As the government considers how EU research funding might be replaced, how should research that involves the local community — particularly in left-behind places, or areas with poor health outcomes — be prioritised?

· What is the role of businesses and other institutions in interacting with universities on local research — particularly related to public health?

Interaction with the health system

· How much of a priority should retention of locally trained medical students to work in local public services be?

· How much should medical training vary to reflect an area — if at all?

· Improving medical treatment and research is one of the public's biggest priorities, and should be a focus of any university's communication and public engagement. How could this communication and engagement be done better?

· Could public health research which involves the community and helps the community be a bigger priority for universities? If so, how could it be incentivised?

- How could local authorities and universities work together on this priority? And how should it be funded?
- Can they contribute better to the understanding of local populations, their needs, and the interventions that can help? How does that intersect with other health bodies?

Discretionary activities with a civic lens

Supporting local government infrastructure and decision making

- Our evidence suggests that universities are playing an increasingly important role as brokers, mediators, analysers and actors in local institutions such as LEPs. Should this be clearer to local populations?
- Does engagement with local institutions take too much senior staff time compared to other priorities?

Cultural activity and institutions

- Is there more that can be done to incentivise the interaction between museums and cultural institutions? Or is it already working well?
- Should this collaboration between universities and other institutions on the arts be a bigger part of local industrial strategies?
- How important is a university's contribution to the cultural life of cities — festivals, theatre and other experiences? How — if at all — should universities be judged on it?

Economic development activity

- What examples are there of universities and local authorities working in partnership with businesses to form highly distinct strategies? What has been done? Why has it been done?

Universities as local anchor institutions

- Is the role of universities as local anchors changing as other civic institutions face challenging funding environments and fragmentation? If so, how?
- How are universities acting strategically as local procurers and stimulating local business? And should more be done?