



Truly Civic: Strengthening the connection between universities and their places



The final report of the UPP Foundation
Civic University Commission



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Foreword by Lord Kerslake



How important is the civic role of universities?

Given the not inconsiderable issues that universities are currently facing – student loans, funding, Brexit – this is a reasonable question to ask. The UPP Foundation Civic University Commission, which it has been my honour to chair, has concluded that it is vital to securing a successful future for our cities, towns and communities.

Universities play a key role nationally through their teaching and research work. But they are

challenges of low growth, low productivity, the impact of austerity and widening spatial inequalities, universities can be (alongside local authorities and the health sector), significant ‘anchor institutions’, able to make an enormous impact on the success of their places.

While universities are vital to their places, they also need the active support of their communities in these turbulent and challenging times. Put simply, they need all the friends that they can get. This support needs to go further than a vague understanding of their general value. The recently proposed accounting changes on student loans by the Office for National Statistics highlights

“While universities are vital to their places, they also need the active support of their communities in these turbulent and challenging times”

also hugely important to the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the places in which they are located. I saw this for myself during my time as chief executive of Sheffield City Council, when the two universities played an essential part in the regeneration of the city. We heard many similar stories during the work of our Commission.

The importance of this civic role is also growing. As the United Kingdom grapples with the

fact that if research funding is included, well over half university funding comes directly from the taxpayer. The public – nationally and locally – needs to understand better the specific benefits that universities can bring.

If the civic role is recognised as important, how well is it being performed? Our Commission has gone some lengths to establish this, taking written evidence and holding evidence sessions up and down the country, and taking into account

of some international examples as well. The good news is that we found much enthusiasm for the civic role and many excellent individual initiatives. We also found through our survey work that people are generally proud of having a university in their area.

However, we found few examples of a systematic and strategic approach to the civic role, based on an analysis of the needs of the place. Our proposal, that universities need to do this if they want to go beyond civic engagement to become truly civic universities, forms a central recommendation of the report.

While not every university has to be a civic university, we do not want to suggest that any particular university is better suited to be a civic university than another. It is simply a question of ambition. We understand that to become a civic university is not something that an institution can do in isolation. They need to work in collaboration with all of the key partners in their area, and particularly their local authorities and Further Education Sector. The civic role is predominantly a team role.

Our Progress Report last October focused on one particular aspect of the civic role – Adult Education. In the final report, we have widened the scope to cover all areas – from economic development to raising attainment

to simply being good neighbours. All of these areas should form part of the Civic University Agreement, with the emphasis and actions driven by local circumstances.

Despite the good work going on, there is scope for improvement here across the sector. If the report is a ‘call to action’ for all of us who are involved in the higher education sector, it is also a challenge to government, who have largely ignored the civic role over a long period and in some cases, actively worked against it. Crucially, government need to recognise the importance of place across all of its higher education policies, including funding. There is so much more that could be achieved with this kind of active government leadership and support.

To conclude, I wanted to place on the record my thanks to the members of the Commission, the brilliant work of Public First, and the support we have received from Universities UK and Shakespeare Martineau. Finally, a big thank you to the UPP Foundation for having the foresight, courage and dedication in establishing this timely and important Commission. Without the hard work and of all these individuals and organisations, the report would not have been possible.

Executive Summary

1. Why this matters: universities in a changing world

The 20th and early 21st centuries saw a transformation in how people in the UK – and increasingly across the world – were educated. In 1920 fewer than 4,500 people received a first degree in the UK. In 2016/17 the number was over 400,000.¹

The same picture is true across the world. The UK is a beneficiary of international growth in higher

the spending on R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. Many countries expenditure is already higher than this.

This is a global story, but there is also a local one. In the UK, the importance of universities in their place is growing. For example, in Sheffield there were 4,000 students and nearly 45,000 people working in the steel industry in 1978. Today there are around 60,000 students and around 3,000 steelworkers. Universities have become one of the largest employers – next to the NHS – in

“Our commission found many good examples of civic initiative and engagement. However, this has happened despite, not because, of government incentivisation or pressure”

education – gaining £11.5 billion² a year from international higher education (HE) last year. This increase has been fuelled by a recognition that universities are key to the economic and social wellbeing of individuals and the country as a whole.

Alongside this, governments have invested ever-more in research and its application. The UK government has committed to increasing

many cities and areas of the country. But equally, if not more important, they have become major contributors to the economic and social wellbeing of their place.

These are gains. There have also been losses. As three-year degrees for eighteen year olds have become the dominant model, the number of ‘adult learners’ – often the majority in the first civic universities – have declined rapidly. Local research

¹ Higher Education Statistics Authority, “Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2016/17” 11 Jan 2018

² Department for Education “UK revenue from education related exports and TNE activity” 25 Jan 2019

is often considered second or third best. And as universities have become magnets for global students and massive research programmes, their connection to their place and the people who can sometimes be created there can sometimes be called into question: how are the people in a place benefiting from the university success story?

This is not a good time for universities to be facing that question. Under the pressure to grow student numbers and become global players, universities have lost some of the tangible connection to their places. This leaves them with fewer friends at a time of unprecedented challenge.

Perhaps most importantly, we now stand on the cusp of another industrial revolution. If estimates on the job shifts from automation are correct, this will have seismic effects around the country – particularly when combined with an ageing population. How are universities going to help people adapt?

2. Civic engagement in an environment of indifference

UK policy has been relatively territorially agnostic for many years. This ignorance of place – and how different places have experienced growth, globalisation, and shifts in the country's sources of wealth – has led to huge inequalities across the country. Many universities, too, have been relatively dismissive of place – at least

in their rhetoric. They have seen themselves as increasingly global first, national second, and local third.

There has been some shift towards place-based policy making – most notably through the industrial strategy and city deals, but also – for example – through opportunity areas in schools policy. This is welcome, but the amount of money routed through the industrial strategy for 'strength in places' is tiny compared to that going to international excellence.

And university policy in England remains almost wholly national, including:

- A lack of recognition in recent policy and legislation that universities are anchor institutions in particular in 'left behind' places and their closure could have drastic effects on those areas;
- Teaching funding that is nationally designed;
- Research funding which is still almost wholly awarded on the basis of national and international excellence.

This makes it more impressive that so many universities have a clear list of activities that amount to 'civic engagement'. Our Commission found many good examples of civic initiative and engagement. However, this has happened despite, not because, of government incentivisation or pressure.

3. The opportunity

There is now a major opportunity. Partly, the industrial strategy and the move towards greater devolution create an opening for a place- based approach.

Shifts in university funding also change the discussion. In our early meetings of the Commission, we were often challenged on how a university could behave in a typically civic fashion when students are responsible for fees, given that the institution's activity is likely to benefit the wider population as much as students, and over decades rather than three years.

That has now changed. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has ruled that much of the debt and ultimately the cost of universities is public, not private. This has two consequences. The first is the pressure from the Treasury to reduce the impact of university spending on the public finances. This is undeniably bad for universities' civic role because they will have less money to do good things.

But the second is that if we are – once again – recognising that universities are supported by the taxpayer as well as the student, then it is more reasonable to expect some of these funds to go towards the wider public benefit. There is an opportunity to rearticulate the university's role. As one former Vice Chancellor said to us, this is about knowledge creation, and knowledge dissemination – and this can and should include all civic activity.

We are therefore at a pivotal moment where government could either enhance or undermine the civic role.

4. Universities are civically engaged. But they are rarely civic universities

As part of the Commission's investigation we looked at public attitudes to universities and their civic role; the history of civic universities and how they have changed; and what the wide range of experts and written submissions discussed in terms of the civic university.

Summarised this:

- **A true civic university has a clear strategy, rooted in analysis, which explains what, why and how its activity adds up to a civic role.** Whether it does that through leveraging international activity or focusing locally; primarily as a research and teaching institution or through a wider anchor role; and alone or in an ecosystem is a local question. But it should be clear why and how universities have answered that question, and how they have organised themselves to achieve their civic aims.
- **Universities that don't do this may be civically engaged with useful activity, but they are not true civic institutions.** Not every university can or should be a civic university – if every university claims this title, it becomes meaningless. But those who do claim the title need to have a clear plan for how they will make the leap from civically engaged to truly civic institutions.
- **Civic universities must be clear about what their 'local' is.** That could include areas without a university, and does not necessarily mean the area in a radius around their institution. It should consider other civic actors. *But it cannot include everybody everywhere.*

Tests for a civic university

A public test

- Can people talk about “our university” with pride and awareness?
- Is civic activity aligned to public wants?
- Are the views of local people reflected in either the formal governance or informal and communications structures and strategies of the university, including as regards the progress against the goals of the Civic University Agreement?

A place test

- How well are the university’s teaching programmes aligned with the structure and demands of the local labour market and likely developments in the coming years?
- Which population is the university serving? How local, and how diverse (including in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation)?
- Are universities following a single national university model or are local variants being adopted?

A strategic test

- Can the university define where its civic boundaries are? What is the geographical area it is primarily focused on?
- Is it clear how the university is linked to local/regional leadership in the area – including its graduates?
- Does the university have a clear analysis and strategy? Can it use that analysis to explain/underpin why its global or national activities supports/strengthen its civic activity, and can it clearly articulate what outcomes, impacts and benefits it wants as a result of its strategy?

An impact test

- Can the university measure the impact of its activity?
- Has the university been thoughtful about how it works with other local universities and other institutions to maximise that impact?

5. Recommendations for a new generation of Civic Universities

In order to think through how we can build on and develop this civic approach for the 21st century, the Commission has made a number of recommendations. These apply to different actors in the system: some are to universities themselves, others are to other local actors (including local government and NHS), and some are to central government.

The first four represent ‘macro’ recommendations. We think the best way of bringing together concerted action is through the process of defining a Civic University Agreement between universities in an area and other civic actors which sets out the actions that will be taken. We also make recommendations on how such

activity should be measured, funded, and then spread across the system. Recommendations 5 onwards then deal with the various activities and measures which could sit in this agreement, and cover specific areas in which civic universities can play a role.

Recommendation 1: The Civic University Agreement

Civic Universities should enshrine their analysis and strategy in a Civic University Agreement that is co-created and signed by other key civic partners. This could include several universities or educational institutions coming together in a single agreement. We think that the starting point for Civic University Agreements has to be:

- **Understanding local populations, and asking them what they want.** Analysis of their place and people's priorities are essential.
 - **Understanding themselves,** not every university will articulate their civic contribution in the same way – indeed it is crucial that they don't, because the sustainability of this agenda relies on reflecting the historical, strategic and geographical nuances that have shaped each individual institution. The first step is for universities to 'know thyself' and decide where to focus their "civic" endeavours.
 - **Working with other local anchor institutions, businesses and community organisations** to agree where the short, medium and long-term opportunities and problems lie in a given area, but also how they interact. The link with local authorities and other local plans, such as the local industrial strategy is particularly important.
 - **A clear set of priorities.** There will of course be no shortage of issues where university involvement could be of value. A process of agreeing clear priorities will therefore be necessary and, again, this is where collaboration and aligning resources with local authorities, LEPs (Local Economic Partnerships), NHS bodies and the like can help to identify the live issues that universities can most usefully help with.
- The output of all this strategic analysis, local engagement and prioritisation will be a clear plan of action. Part of this will include a funding plan. We would also expect as part of this process that universities would have a more systematic engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other coordinated local bodies (as many already do).
- Recommendation 2: Measuring and incentivising the success of the civic university**
- **Local measurement.** This is the simplest. A Civic University Agreement should include clear, measurable objectives agreed by the university and its partners. These can be locally designed and used to measure the success of the strategy over a period of time – as would be true for any organisation or business where people have to be accountable against objectives.
 - **Removing perverse measurement.** It is clear that some of the current measures of teaching and research – which are often designed by government, rather than universities – mitigate against civic activity. Removing those is vital and in particular:
 - Reducing the reliance of measures such as LEO (Longitudinal Educational Outcomes) in high stakes metrics such as TEF, that penalises universities for releasing graduates into regional labour markets with lower employment outcomes, or into self-employment which often involves a period of low / no wages.
 - Any suggestion – linguistic or otherwise – in things like the REF that 'local research' is by definition inferior to international research.
 - **National measurement.** We think there are three avenues government should pursue:
 - **Making sure that existing measures reflect civic activity.** In particular the **KEF (Knowledge Exchange Framework)** must be a broad measure of civic impact not purely research innovation.
 - **A new peer review model.** The Government supports the LGA (Local Government Association) to be the sector improvement body for local government, and the principal tool in the improvement armoury is peer review. The same model should apply, with a review team coming predominantly from other universities but also including members from the private sector, local government, NHS and other key organisations to attempt to capture impact.

There should be a three-part approach to measuring – and therefore incentivising – the success of the civic university.

Recommendation 3 concerns the topic of funding this activity. Given the wider issue of public spending, the Commission thought it was worth expanding the thinking on this a little.

The first point to make is that money isn't everything. Universities are autonomous institutions, albeit ones in receipt of large sums of public money, and will conduct a variety of activities driven by a wide range of incentives, which go far further than relatively short term funding pots.

However, it is worth also noting that the relative proportion of university, industrial strategy, and other funds that are directed at territorially based activity of universities – as opposed to other activities – is tiny. This creates its own incentives and view about what activity should be valued.

Thirdly, the Commission is well aware that this report is being issued while a major review is being conducted around the future funding of universities (the Augar Review), and a few months in advance of the start of the Spending Review which will set the overall quantum for public spending across the whole public sector, including universities. It is important to say that the Commission are not seeking to take a view either way on whether this should be higher or lower than the current sum. That is a judgement for government to make in the light of what they decide on a number of issues, and goes well beyond the remit of this discussion about the civic role of universities.

What the Commission does conclude, however, is that any material reduction in the overall resources available to universities – despite civic work being a clear priority and historical mission of many institutions – will put at risk some of their current activities.

As such, we conclude that a small fund of money – and we recommend here £500m over a number of years – specifically dedicated to this civic mission, and with a focus on disadvantaged places and areas where the civic role can have a particular impact, ought to be beneficial. In addition, we propose a further £120m into the existing Strength in Places fund. Taken together, such spending represents only a couple of percent of the total annual funding of the HE sector but will, we feel, have an outside impact in supporting continued or increased focus in this space from institutions.

Recommendation 3: Funding the civic

- **A new fund – the Civic University Fund.** A new fund should be created that allows universities to bid for resources that will allow them to implement their strategies. We think that the fund should be worth around £500m over a 5 year period, with universities bidding on a competitive basis for multi-year projects (meaning a typical award may be in the region of £20m-£30m. The fund should be administered jointly by DfE and BEIS recognising the dual industrial strategy and educative focuses of the fund – and building on the existing joint departmental responsibilities of the Universities Minister – and it should have a preference towards supporting places that are both economically and socially vulnerable, as with the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund approach.
- **Doubling the Strength in Places Fund,** As announced in the Industrial Strategy White Paper and run by UKRI. The Fund offers £10m-£50m investments for a small number of place-based consortia to work together on innovative projects that build on existing research and innovation capabilities, with the goal of tackling regional disparities by improving the local economy in specific areas. The Government announced in the Autumn 2018 Budget that there would be another £120m for a second round of SIPF. We recommend that this second wave of funding is doubled. This fund should serve as a catalyst for all aspects of universities' contribution to their localities by supporting graduate employment and the use of graduate skills, as well as the take-up of research and innovation.
- **Widening Participation/attainment fund.** If more of the money for universities moves from private to public funding, we think it would be appropriate for some portion of that to operate to support highly evidence-based Widening Participation and attainment work.

Recommendation 4: Spreading good civic practice

We recommend that a **Network for the Civic University** is established. The network will need a hub which should be located in a host university. The hub should have seed funding from the government and the sector, and the involvement of other key partners such as the Local Government Association and the Confederation of British Industry.

The role of the hub would be practical support and information sharing rather than academic study, which is covered elsewhere. It could share good practice, develop a benchmarking system, support peer learning, establish and run our proposed peer-review system, and oversee and support the development of civic agreements.

6. What could be in a civic university agreement, and how does government support it?

Supporting the educational growth of a place

When we asked local people what they considered universities' core civic responsibility, their wider education role consistently came top. We have therefore investigated how universities work in Widening Participation, broader attainment, with adults and in supporting the local public sector could be civically enhanced.

Recommendations 5&6: Civic Widening Participation and Attainment

5: Widening Participation is clearly a key focus when discussing the civic role of universities. Many respondents spontaneously mentioned it as one of their main priorities and a lot of universities devote considerable resources to this activity – almost a billion pounds last year.

Our recommendation is that Civic Universities' Widening Participation plans should be **more**

'locally' based and focus on effective use of spend. They should move away from bursaries and scholarships which often appeal because they are visible, measurable, and scoreable to the OFS, despite the weak evidence base from these initiatives, and towards initiatives with greater impact. This approach is consistent with the sharpening up of Widening Participation plans by the Office for Students, which we support. **The new Evidence and Impact Exchange, funded by the OFS should, as its first project, produce a clear set of evidence or toolkit which provides evidence for these.**

With regards to longer term measures of progress and employment, Civic Agreements could seek to measure against local conditions (to take account of local lower paid labour markets) and could seek to measure local retention and seek to improve this over time.

6: On raising attainment, there is a widely held view that the government focus in recent years on sponsorship of schools was unduly limiting. However, it has been extremely powerful for some universities – it is hard not to be inspired by the individual stories that we heard about.

We also conclude that we need to have distinct strategies for raising attainment and Widening Participation, which are commonly used interchangeably in discussions. The former should be a priority and universities should define their role in collaboration with other educational institutions within a civic agreement. **Each agreement should set out a specific policy goal on raising attainment with clear accountability for the university.** Activity should therefore be deep enough to make a measurable difference.

Our analysis for those universities that do not want to directly sponsor schools or engage in school improvement is that Teacher Training and CPD; and Curriculum Support including assessment and resources are two valuable areas of focus.

The Evidence and Impact Exchange could also usefully look at what university interventions have the most impact.

Recommendation 7: A resurgence of adult education

Adult education formed the core of our recommendations in our progress report. We continue to believe this is the greatest unaddressed challenge facing higher education and vital as we enter an era where graduate as well as non-graduate jobs may be automated.

- We again call for national government to implement:
 - **Relaxing the ELQ rule** (Equivalent Level Qualifications) 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 to be accessed via funding that is not deliberately directed towards a qualification.**

One option is to trial pilots of the three areas above, conditional upon joint bids from a coalition of universities and further education providers.

We also see the Apprenticeship levy as a tool for reform:

- As levy payers themselves, universities should think about their role as anchor institutions and work with their own supply chain to share more widely uptake of training among staff in those organisations.
- Universities should also be able to transfer their levy funds to local employers to recruit degree apprentices into their own organisation (currently it is against the rules for a university to transfer levy funds to an employer to do one of their own degree Apprenticeships).
- We recommend that government consider how **10% of levy spend can be allocated for non-Apprenticeship training (and non-qualification bearing training)**, in the same way that a percentage can be allocated to supply chains.

While civic agreements must be decided locally, we would be surprised if adult education did not form a core plank of the majority of agreements and make up one of the biggest shifts in university behaviour.

Recommendation 8: A focus on recruitment, retention and attraction of public sector staff, especially in the health sector

Training for public services is a major focus for many universities particularly in the health space but more is needed to keep public sector workers in underserved areas of the country. Civic universities should work to train and encourage staff to stay in the local area, especially when these are under served by staff.

As Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, suggested to us, universities and **local actors should partner to offer ‘golden handcuff’ proposals to support local retention.**

Given the role of universities as a civic anchor, we think it would be reasonable for them, alongside all other major employers and strategic planners for public service in the region, to pilot such a scheme collectively, with a financial contribution made by universities towards this.

Alongside teaching, research and knowledge exchange is the other core function of the university as a seat of learning. We heard evidence of outstanding world leading research that also undeniably had a civic impact through focusing on local questions, or acting as a hub for spin out companies applying that research and using it in real world scenarios. However, we also heard evidence that – often driven by the REF framework – a lot of research undertaken by universities is not always as locally focused as it could be. The Government is committed (as are the opposition parties) to a big expansion in R&D spending (from c.1.7% of GDP to 2.4% by 2027 and then up to 3.0%, made up by a mixture of private and public money, so this a significant area of focus.

Recommendation 9: Strengthening local impact alongside international excellence

- **We recommend that civic universities develop a robust locally-focused strategy to underpin their collective research efforts.**
- Where it does not make sense for research to be locally produced – and recognising that national and international collaboration can benefit a local area through the creation of high quality research that benefits local people – **we think civic universities could focus on greater application and implementation locally of nationally / internationally designed research.** Public health and wider wellbeing is an opportunity to do this, including co-creation with the public.
- We do also believe that there are a number of good reasons why it would make sense for the Government to give a clear signal that it supports the deployment of some of the HE sector’s formidable academic firepower towards addressing economic and social problems at a local level, through changing the major funding incentives which drive research programmes. This could take one of three routes:
 - To amend the **REF criteria** to explicitly reward a locally focused element to research.
 - To use the new **Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)** which seeks to assess the more systemic side of knowledge transfer to incentivise local collaboration.
 - To use the new **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)** – the replacement for EU Structural Funds – and the strand of funding that is aligned with locally focused university research – to emphasise how local research and innovation can address the mission of the UKSPF to improve productivity and reduce inequality.

Supporting the economic life of a place

Even in London, the economic impact of the HE sector is substantial as a contribution to local growth, comprising billions of GVA and many thousands of jobs. But in other areas, particularly

those whose economies have experienced less growth than the capital, the economic impact of universities is greater still.

This economic impact of universities is evident on many levels. They employ local people with a variety of skill sets, buy a range of goods and services from local businesses and increase the local stock of human capital via their teaching. Through international student recruitment, UK Universities act as major exporters in their local economies, with the financial sustainability this recruitment delivers supporting areas of civic activity. Securing international funding to support local economic and social development. UK Universities have an exceptional track-record in securing EU research, innovation and structural funds that directly support local economies, communities and businesses – in particular SMEs and entrepreneurship, supply-chains and skills.

Recommendation 10: Role models as employers, procurers and brokers

We recommend that all universities consider afresh how they can maximise the positive economic impact they have in their local communities. For instance by:

- **Acting as a model employer.** Each university employs hundreds – if not thousands – of people. The impact of being a good employer will resonate across local labour markets. **All universities should pay the Living Wage to all their employees.** Other actions could include a focus on hiring residents from the most deprived local wards; and supporting staff (and student) volunteering to help tackle strategically important local issues
- **Using their procurement power to maximise local economic benefit by seeking opportunities to ‘buy local’.** Examples here include using procurement approaches to explicitly support the employment of graduates within a local area, and by pledging to pay all local suppliers within 30 days.
- **Ensuring that senior university staff use their power as locally valued honest**

brokers to support local public sector boards and bodies in efforts to improve local economies. This includes sitting on LEP boards, contributing expertise to policy analysis and engaging in the development of local industrial strategies.

Recommendation 11: Catalysts for local economic growth

We recommend that all universities undertake activity that acts as an enabler for local economic growth. For instance by:

- **Providing business support for university spin outs.** Universities across the country have led the creation of many hundreds of spin out companies working at the cutting edge of numerous technologies. These spin-out companies are frequently based close to their parent institution and generate high quality jobs, with the potential to expand rapidly, building supply chains into local areas. A university can increase the chances of success of its spin outs by providing support services such as low-cost premises, guidance on how to file patents, and information on how to access growth financing.
- **Connecting the local business community with the rest of the world.** As providers of world-class talent and innovation, universities are critical to attracting foreign direct investment and businesses choosing to set-up in regional economies, which in turn can deliver new business rates income to support (via the local government finance system) local frontline public services. UK universities with global connections can support civic internationalisation and exports, for instance by using international campuses as bridging points and soft-landing spaces for local businesses and civic partners. Universities and their international alumni base can also drive the international reputation of local areas, providing towns and cities – and the UK as a whole – with a major soft-power advantage across the world, with this dividend also percolating down to local levels.
- **Ensuring that their estate development plans have maximum impact on local placemaking and economic development.**

The scale of investment in campus development over the last decade has been very significant. At its best, this development has not just focused on the building needs of the university, but has taken a wider ‘masterplanning’ approach that looks to enhance the whole area in which the university is located. Opportunities to create new office and industrial space for local business have been taken as part of this enlightened approach, actively engaging with the local community, and ought to become the norm for any civic university undertaking a major investment programme. More prosaically, a really simple change that some universities could make would be to open up their campus to the general public and advertising the fact. If a café or a lecture series is theoretically open to the public but no one ever actually goes, it is not really so.

Supporting the cultural wellbeing of a place

The economic contribution of a university is more measurable than its wider impact on culture and wellbeing, but the latter is incredibly important to the lives of local people – and can in turn have its own economic impact.

Many of the universities that we spoke to were involved to varying degrees in participating in and contributing to the cultural life of their areas and also in many cases to helping to grow the impressive success of the cultural and creative industries. There are countless examples to draw on. Our focus is therefore on maximising their impact.

Recommendation 12: A broadened strategy and narrative on culture, underpinned by University Community Foundations

The consensus of the panel at our public evidence session on culture, arts and heritage was that universities can change their narrative on culture. This should be focused on:

- Helping to ensure that the wider benefits of creativity are recognised given that creativity will be key to employment in a future where

automation and artificial intelligence increasingly impacts labour markets. One option here is to help to encourage the STEAM agenda in local schools where the STEM subjects are combined with addressing creativity (including design) and entrepreneurship.

- Maximising the impact of the work universities do to support the wider cultural life and wellbeing of an area.

Our focus is the more community centric elements of universities' cultural activity. Universities should utilise the capability of their development teams to raise funding for community place-based project to boost the cultural impact in an area. This could be done directly, but we also think there is value in establishing what we call 'University Community Foundations' (UCFs).

UCFs could help to leverage additional private philanthropic giving to place – particularly in areas of deprivation – as well as assisting universities who are looking to develop more focused and strategic approach to the cultural and other support they offer to their local community. A University Community Foundation would have the dual benefit of being integrated into a community, while having the capacity of the university behind it.

Some universities have existed for centuries. Some are not even thirty years old. But regardless of age, many have grown up around a civic role and it remains a key priority for them. At this time of change in the sector, and in light of national and global policy challenges, universities should build upon this heritage, and focus on how they can create real civic institutions for the 21st century.





Introduction

The assets a university can bring are central to a place's present and future.

Universities educate and inspire local people, but they also bring in talent – and may provide a reason for them to stay and serve the area. They do interesting and valuable research – and when that research is of practical benefit to the businesses, public sector institutions,

And that role will only matter more. It has been striking how much – as old industries disappear and as many of the other public and community institutions in a place have shrunk – universities stand as a major anchor of a place. Large parts of the developed world feel increasingly isolated from success and growth and have lost much of their institutional and cultural glue just as we stand on the brink of a new industrial revolution

“If you want to build a great city, create a great university and wait 200 years” Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan

and other entities around them they positively affect their place. They have a wealth of culture and intellectual capital – and if they can spread that to enrich the lives of people in places where institutions and civic glue has faded, they provide a meaning to life beyond economic value. They inspire trust and therefore investment from international, national, and local public and private institutions – and that can have an enormous impact on a place's future.

In other words, the civic has always mattered enormously. If you strip all these things away, you are left with an impoverished place – and it is impossible to think of another institution that could deliver these benefits.

in the form of automation. Universities hold many of the cards that will determine how a place adapts.

At the same time, the civic role matters to universities which are being criticised from all sides. They need civic allies and deep partnerships.

So are they fulfilling their true civic role?

The truth is ‘only in part’. Many universities have an impressive menu of ‘civic engagement’. But few can claim to be strategically civic institutions. Not all of them have to be – but if more don't become what we define in the rest of this report as “civic universities” and are recognised as such by government it will be hard to fulfil our hopes for many places in this country.

At the same time, what they are doing is in spite – not because – of government encouragement.

If we were to leave you with one message from this report, it would therefore be this: we think a step change is required in civic activity and strategy – how universities choose to approach it, and how government supports it – at exactly the time when even existing activity appears under financial threat.

At the same time, we also think that the current context provides an enormous opportunity – for both institutions and government to work together and create changes that last beyond any one administration or vice chancellor, and give places a better future in the long-term.

Part A: Background to the Commission

The UPP Foundation Civic University Commission is an independent Commission that was launched in March 2018. It 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 — 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. Four formal oral evidence sessions and several smaller sessions have been held around the country. Written evidence has been submitted by 57 organisations. No independent research or literature reviews were Commissioned although two roundtables with academics in this field were held and the draft document was peer reviewed by Professor Ellen Hazelkorn. The final report, however, represents only the views of the Commissioners and all recommendations remains our own.

This is the Commission's final report. A progress report was published in October 2018.

The Commissioners

Lord Kerslake (Chair, former Head of the Civil Service and Chair of Sheffield Hallam University Board of Governors)

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)

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 in DCMS, BEIS and MHCLG; Head of Business at Centre for Policy Studies)

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)

Part B: The context for thinking about future civic universities

This Commission has sought to generate a report that addresses the long-term needs of areas and how universities – as permanent institutions – can shape those areas. Our strong view is that universities remain autonomous charitable institutions, and a truly civic university must have its own robust strategy regardless of what the head of the OfS or a minister happens to think.

But it would be foolish to ignore the more immediate political context. Universities are increasingly regulated and centrally incentivised. At the moment those incentives mitigate against, not for, the civic role. That should change. It is also likely that soon after this report is published (at least if the papers are to be believed) there will be a substantial reduction in teaching funding for universities. Obviously, this will change how they consider civic activity, which currently sits mostly in the ‘discretionary’ bucket.

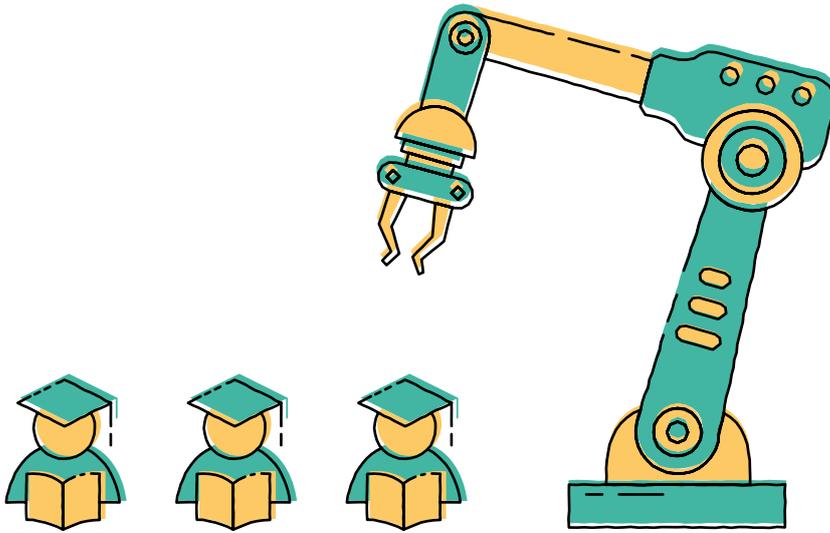
We have divided the relevant political and policy context into four major sections – global trends; how policy considers place, how policy considers the student, and how a changing *labour market and demography* will force policy shifts.

i. Global drivers impacting on higher education

There are a series of macro social, economic, technological and political trends which are affecting the UK and indeed developed

countries all over the world, and which impact on universities and the communities in which are hosted. These include:

- **Changing global labour market.** Globally, the returns to skills remain high, and as countries industrialise, even more people participate in education at higher levels. Many sub-Saharan African countries, for example, are rolling out free universal secondary education and within the next decade will be considering tertiary expansion. Globally, HE is already growing by over 12% a year with the majority of growth in the Americas and East Asia. The UK is already a major player in this, gaining £11.5bn a year from international HE on its own last year. This trend is linked to increasing global mobility of professionals and competition for talent particularly where the population is ageing.
- **The Asian century.** Across many areas of politics, society and economics, the rise of Asia will have profound implications on universities and the UK more broadly. China is the 2nd largest economy in the world and projected to shortly become the first; India is also growing rapidly. Millions of Asians move – daily – into new cities, including mega cities of 10m people or more. Asian consumers, industrialists and citizens drive global patterns of consumption, interest, attraction, and spillovers.
- **Decline of trust in elites and loss of community.** Not just in the UK and US but



across many developed industrial countries we are seeing declines in trust in public institutions, and for established mainstream political parties and the rise of populism. We are also seeing an end not to just to age of deference but the age of recognition of authority in many spheres. Young people, in particular, are growing up with a different relationship to their fellow citizens and the state – often aided by technology – than previous generations.

- **Growth of automation and technology.** The likely next swathe of automation will have profound implications on the labour market and for consumers. Importantly for universities, this revolution of technology will be the first to significantly affect universities as workplaces and students and graduates as workers – both for benefits but also losses. Although the extent and shape of the disruption cannot reliably be predicted, it is likely to be substantial.

ii. National policy drivers impacting on the civic role of universities

- **UK policy has been relatively territorially agnostic for many years.** This ignorance of place – and how different places have experienced growth, globalisation, and shifts in the country's sources of wealth – has led to huge inequalities across the country.
- **Many universities, too, have been relatively dismissive of place** – at least in their rhetoric. Some have seen themselves as creators and

disseminators of knowledge globally almost regardless of their physical location

- **This tension showed up perhaps most obviously through Brexit** – the dominant political issue of our day. The academics who work in universities mostly voted Remain and as a sector HE has been clear there is no upside in Brexit. But many of the cities and towns the universities are in voted Leave. Universities are a high-profile manifestation of the split exposed in this country by Brexit: they are globalised institutions which have prospered in areas which are relatively economically depressed.
- **The Brexit divide may be a modern manifestation of a longer-term issue: town and gown tensions.** These are not universal: our polling suggested that the relationship between people and universities was more positive than the political narrative suggests. But one of the interesting findings from both our polling and our focus groups was that smaller places, and places that were more challenged economically, tended to be much more negative towards their universities.
- **Place has not been reflected in national government policy.** This can be seen in many ways including:
 - A lack of recognition in recent policy and legislation that universities are anchor institutions in particular 'left behind' places and their closure could have drastic effects on those areas;

- Teaching funding that is nationally designed;
- Research funding which is still almost wholly awarded on the basis of national and international excellence.
- **This is not a ‘North – South divide’ so much as it is London and South East as different from elsewhere.** Due to the economic growth in the latter and the diversity of actors, universities play less of an obvious anchor role. The civic role is particularly important in areas where regional disparities and inequalities make the role that universities can play even more prominent.

to envisage or justify a university behaving in a typically civic fashion when students are responsible for fees.

- **That has now changed. The recent Office for National Statistics ruling has highlighted what was obvious to many observers of the system – that much of the debt (and ultimately the cost) of universities is public, not private.** This has two consequences:
 - **Pressure from the Treasury to reduce the impact on public sector net debt of university spending.** This is undeniably

“Civic universities matter more than ever”

- **The government has made increasing noises about place.** The industrial strategy does recognise place and anchor institutions, and some departments – such as the DfE through their ‘opportunity areas’ – are placing an increasing focus on places. There remain questions about the impact of this – the size of the Strength in Places fund, for example, is tiny compared to other national industrial strategy funds.

bad for universities’ civic role because they will have less discretionary money to do good things.

- **Recognising that universities are supported by the taxpayer as well as the student.** This means it is more reasonable to expect some of those funds to go on wider public benefit. That includes, and indeed in our view should prioritise, the needs of the people in the local area.

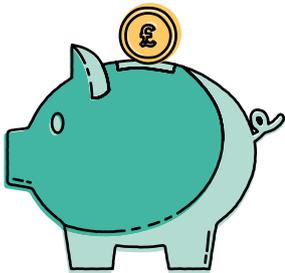
iii. Student drivers

- **Universities are dealing with a more and more diverse student population** – across ages, gender, race, ethnicity etc., and the fact that students/learners are coming/need to come in and out of the education system in a more flexible way throughout their lives. This has implications for the way HE is organised as well as implications for the curriculum, pedagogy and the relationships universities have with their local community.
- **In our focus groups, the move to tuition being paid for by student loans changed how people thought of universities and what they ought to be spending money on:** One comment, which summarises commonly expressed views, was “If I was paying out all that money, I’d want it spent on me, not other people [the city]”. In other words, it is harder

- The wider policy context may prompt us to **reverse an increasing homogeneity in the student population** – young undergraduates doing three year degrees. Adult learning – once the core of civic university function – has declined rapidly.

iv. The surrounding labour market

- **Labour market.** The likely shifts in the labour market in the next few decades will not only affect particular places, but cause major upheaval to graduate as well as non-graduate jobs. Automation, according to some estimates, puts 30% of British jobs at high risk by the early 2030s.³ For the first time this includes professional jobs — such as law; medicine; accounting; and finance. None of us know exactly what the consequences of 21st century technologies will be, and the degree to which new jobs will emerge. What most of us



³ “Higher Education Statistics Authority, “Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2016/17” 11 Jan 2018

agree on, however, is that retraining of adults – including currently quite highly educated adults – is likely to be paramount.

- **An ageing population.** The UK's population will continue to age over the next few decades (along with most of the developed world). This will put an increasing burden on working age people – but as importantly it will mean that efforts to make an older population healthy and productive will be of increasing importance.

v. What does this context mean?

- **Civic universities matter more than ever.** “Anchor institutions” are a poorly defined and loose term (we try and define it in one of the chapters of this report). But it is clear that universities are – alongside the NHS and local authorities – one of the key institutions in and for local society, and especially in many economically vulnerable places and this role will become more important. This includes enhancing the global reputation of their places and contributing to the attraction and retention of international investment and talent.
- **There is both threat and opportunity in expanding the civic role of universities.**
 - The potential decline in teaching grant could deter universities from spending money on activity that does not win them high rankings in the TEF or the REF.
 - However we are finally recognising that the taxpayer, not just the student, pays for degrees. This means that benefits to those taxpayers – in the form of civic activity – is a reasonable focus. This should mean a shift from the purely student-centric regulatory system that has been put in place in recent years towards one which recognises that the purpose of a university is one of knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination, which clearly includes all forms of civic activity.
 - Research funding is also only at the very early stages of recognising different places,

and there is scope for much larger targeted funds which consider the needs of different geographies. We discuss this in one of the chapters in this report.

- **Universities have a responsibility. But so does government.** Universities are autonomous charitable institutions. They proclaim and defend that autonomy. That means they must also take responsibility for institutional decisions – including how much priority they give to the civic role. But government is increasingly involving itself in university activity with greater demands and sanctions. It also, therefore, needs to be clear how much it cares about what universities do in their localities, and the impact that has.

Part C: What is a civic university?

i. The public view

Before we launched the civic university Commission, we conducted focus groups and a poll in ten cities to understand better what the public thought about the universities in their city. This influenced the framing of the Commission and the questions we asked.

We have appended to this report some detailed analysis of the public view, and place our main conclusions below.

The public are more proud of their local universities than political commentary would suggest

Given the discussions 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 backs up earlier research – including that Commissioned by Britain Thinks for Universities UK – which shows strong public support for the HE sector.

Our focus groups reflected this. Participants across groups felt pride in their universities. There was a sense the universities "put them

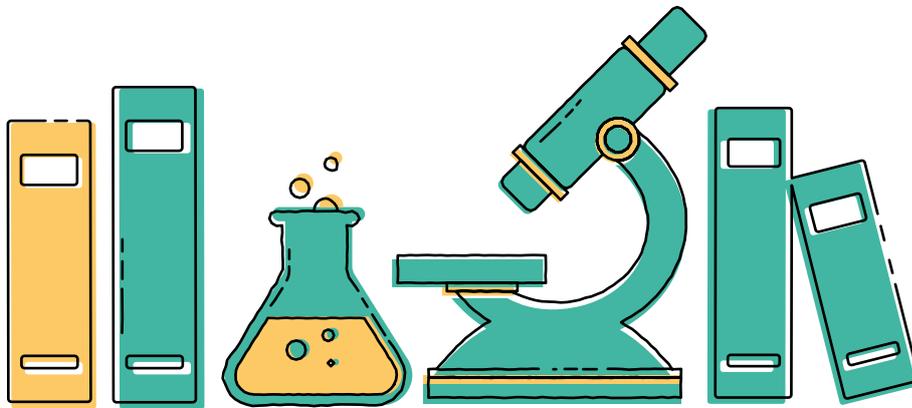
on the map". For example, participants in one city were able to identify that there were several famous scientists teaching at the city's main university. There was also a clear understanding that the local NHS benefited from the presence of high-quality universities.

That said, we did not get the sense that the people we talked to would rush to put in money to set up a university the way that the population of Sheffield (and other cities) did in the admittedly very different circumstances in the 19th Century.

But different geographies and classes viewed things differently

In our focus groups, better educated and more civically engaged people were very positive about the university. Almost 80% of social group ABC1 respondents had visited their local university across the ten cities. For others, knowledge of what the university did locally was much lower.

Interestingly we saw major differences between places. It is notable that in large metropolitan cities that are succeeding economically, the view towards local universities was much higher than in places which were smaller or economically depressed. This fed into the interaction with the university (just 21% had visited their local university in the last 12 months in Bradford) but also their views of its benefits. Pride was lower.



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.

In smaller places, for obvious reasons, students’ presence was more felt – but this could also be annoying to residents. Focus groups found the crowding, nightlife, and restriction on local housing that universities generate to be major frustrations.

Students were also seen as a potential major benefit. We 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.

The public want universities to localise their national and international responsibilities

In terms of the main responsibility of universities, four themes came out strongly:

- The impact the university ought to have on local pupils;
- Ensuring that ideas and discoveries have a local impact;
- Holding open lectures and events;
- Promoting local graduates to local employers.

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.

Other public considerations

Governance – often an abstract and boring subject for the public – did not come up in our focus groups. But it is interesting that while schools include local people into their governance structures, universities generally have not done this in any formal way or made a great effort in communicating their contributions to civil society locally in any systematic way – with the possible exception of medicine.

There are risks to a lack of a formal role for local institutional actors in the governance of universities or at the very least structured programmes of communications. One consequence is that the people who become involved with the university are activists with little connection to most people in the area.

It is not for the Commission to decide how universities be governed. We think the most important principle is that local people’s views and civic actors’ priorities be reflected in governance discussions of the university, and also in the communications back out from the university – including that local people and civic actors can be kept informed about the progress against the goals set in the Civic University Agreements.

Taking this together then, we can suggest a public test for a civic university:

A public test for civic universities

- Can people talk about “our university” with pride and awareness?
- Is civic activity aligned to public need?
- Are the views of local people reflected in either the formal governance or informal and communications structures and strategies of the university?

ii. The historical view

Our progress report offered a brief history of civic universities. From this we drew a number of themes which reflect the current civic role of universities and how it might change in the future.

What remains the same

- **The everlasting 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 widespread desire for more local control, be it through devolution or new local industrial strategies. Currently, despite the rhetoric, the weight of funding and regulatory power lies overwhelmingly 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, come close to counterbalancing these national funding and regulatory bodies.

- **Structural changes in the labour market driving universities.**

The emergence of the middle class and the emancipation of women were major factors in the massification of higher education and 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 21st century technologies work for the majority of people.

What has changed

- **The growing 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. Education and research collaborations with other universities, in the EU and beyond, academic and student outward mobility, etc. reflect this global role.

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 as to where a university should focus its activities.

- **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 the early civic universities). After a long period during which universities have focused on full-time undergraduate programmes for school leavers there is now a growing recognition of the need to give individuals credit for what they learned outside of HE and to enable learners over time to accumulate credits that recognise informal and non-formal qualifications in the qualifications frameworks.

- **A growing view by universities that they are “anchor institutions”.**

Several of the universities we spoke to consider their role as anchor institutions to have grown as local authorities have faced budgetary challenges, as the relative economic performance of areas has declined, and as their role in catalysing local economic development via LEPs and now local industrial strategies has 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 (one of our Commissioners) 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.

Taking these issues together gives us a second, historical test, for a civic university.

A historical test for civic universities

- How well are the university’s teaching programmes aligned with the structure and demands of the local labour market and likely developments in the coming years?
- Which population is the university serving? How local, and how diverse (including in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation)?
- Are universities following a single national university model or are local variants being adopted?

iii. The expert view

- As part of our enquiry, we asked all of the experts we consulted — as well as those who gave evidence — to define a ‘civic university’ and help to define the major strategic questions facing universities. A number of key strands emerged:

Common themes

- **Place.** Most obviously, civic universities were related to their place. Their name, history, and the demographics, labour market, and wider economic context had influenced 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 taking account of the cultural identity of the city or region.
- **This implies there must be a boundary to the civic.** 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 local authorities, NHS Trust areas and LEAs. For example, in rural areas with dispersed populations universities consider their bounds very differently.

- **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’.
- **Local leaders.** Some people giving evidence suggested that if graduates of the university did not stay in the area or return sometime after graduation, and then become part of the civic fabric (for example leading local councils) it could be a great university, but 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.

Emergent tensions

We also explored a number of tensions with our expert witnesses:

- **Local, national, or international?** Most of our witnesses thought there was no true tension between an institution being international and local – and that international links could be leveraged to serve local needs. Others thought they were in tension – a civic university’s 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. The national:local tension came up with 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? We reject this distinction. All universities have to make some choice about how to balance the global and the local.

- **A core or additional activity?** In our discussions we thought there were two dimensions in which universities varied in their activity. The first was whether civic engagement was embedded in day to day institutional activity — teaching and research and professional services such as procurement — or a separate strand of public engagement. The public were clearly most interested in the former, but there were strong cases from other local actors for the latter). The incentives and way in which a university is organised for each is very different, but both have strong rationales.
- **Strategic or a menu?** Universities differed in whether they gave us a menu of activity, or a strategic rationale for how to use research, teaching and professional service 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).
- **How many civic universities can there be?** None of our witnesses thought their universities were not civic universities. In some of our conversations, though, there was a question of whether in a place with several universities one should take on the civic mantle – often suggested to be the less high tariff institution. This idea was rejected by most of our witnesses (and after consideration by us) for two reasons. First, because we felt in some places the e.g. Russell Group universities were actually behaving in a more civic fashion than some newer universities. Second, because (as we will explore in the rest of this report) there is a good argument that civic universities can be most effective working together collaboratively in local ecosystems as long as this is done consciously (and this should extend to other education institutions, not just universities). We should note though that we did not think any of the universities we spoke to had, yet, formed the most effective possible partnership for working in their place. In some cases, they were quite unaware of what other universities in their area were doing.

- **Are civic universities urban?** This was one of the easiest questions for us to address. The first civic universities did belong in cities. It has been the unanimous view that this does not need to be – and should not be – the case. Working within rural communities requires a different strategy, but still one that bears all the hallmarks of civic engagement by relating to the needs and opportunities of a specific region.

It is worth noting that in all of these discussions, other countries have similarly considered the specific civic role of a university. One of the specific examples which we find interesting is that of the Netherlands, and another is the very specific role of land grant universities in the US, considered further in the appendix.

A strategic test for civic universities

- Can the university define where its civic bounds are? What is the geographical area it is primarily focused on?
- Is it clear how the university is linked to local/regional leadership in the area – including its graduates?
- Does the university have a clear analysis and strategy? Can it use that analysis to explain/underpin why its global or national activities supports/strengthen its civic activity, and can it clearly articulate what outcomes, impacts and benefits it wants as a result of its strategy?

Civic Universities in the Netherlands

In the case of the Netherlands the Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, 2015–2025 identified knowledge valorisation – the creation of economic and social value from knowledge and social benefit – as a key priority. The ambition is that by 2025, research universities and universities of applied sciences will form part of valuable and sustainable “ecosystems” alongside the secondary education sector, secondary vocational education, research institutes, government departments, local and regional authorities, companies, hospitals, community centres and sports clubs.

The overall performance of universities’ contribution to this agenda is monitored through a process of Performance Agreements (2013–2016) – now called Quality Agreements (2019–2024). Funding can be withheld if the plans do not meet the criteria.

Significantly, the separate ministries with responsibility for higher education and for city development have recently announced joint funding for “city deals” specifically to support collaboration between universities and municipalities. Most Dutch universities and their municipalities are participating in the programme. The extract below sets out the rationale for such an approach.

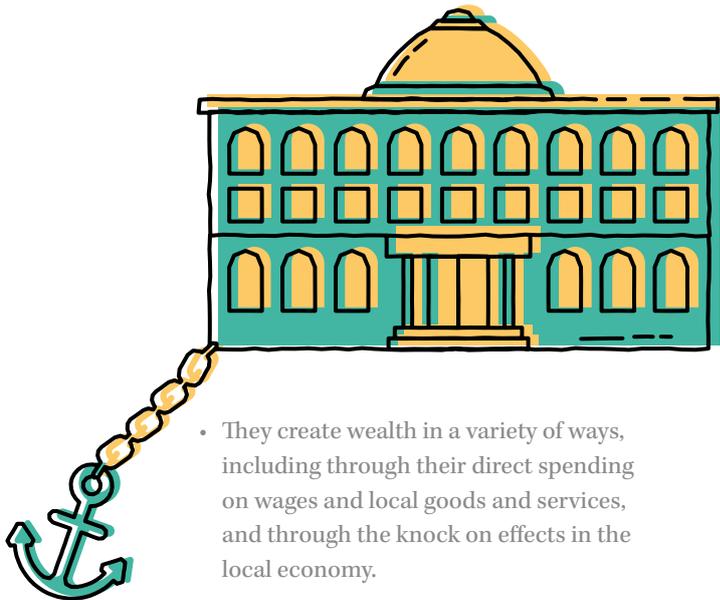
It is important for a city’s capacity for innovation that it has a strong relationship with knowledge institutes and that researchers, lecturers and students are involved in solving social problems. Not only to strengthen the problem-solving ability of the city, but also because it contributes to the training of the students of the future – who will contribute to shaping society – and gives them a better understanding of social issues. Using the society as a rich learning environment for students is therefore an important theme in the Strategic Agenda Higher Education and Research 2015–2022.

The starting point is that education, research and practice are always connected with each other in the rich learning environment. The idea is that students formulate the relevant research questions together with researchers and the field (businesses, government, social institutions, citizens’ initiatives, etc.), carry out further research into urban problems and evaluate whether assumed problem-solving approaches are effective. This can have different shapes, such as community service, knowledge workshops, urban laboratories, student housing in the learning environment itself (e.g. house students between holders of a residence permit). Cooperation can take place in multidisciplinary and multilevel (multiple types of education, such as senior secondary, higher professional and scientific level) teams, and within the framework of triple and quadruple helix partnerships.

iv. What does all this mean for the civic role?

Civic universities matter more than ever

“Anchor institutions” are a poorly defined and loose term. But it is clear that universities are – alongside the NHS and local authorities – one of the key institutions in many places.



- They create wealth in a variety of ways, including through their direct spending on wages and local goods and services, and through the knock on effects in the local economy.
- They play – and are required to play – a core role in an ageing and automated society. Lifelong learning will be crucial to deal with both of these challenges and help places around the country thrive.
- They also are increasingly involved in activity that makes life meaningful and pleasurable for local people: including education more broadly, and arts and culture. Without them, many places would be poorer on most measures.
- In a time when other local anchor institutions, particularly local government, are declining in size and spending, they become even more important.

There is both a threat and an opportunity in expanding the civic role of universities

A potential decline in support for teaching could deter universities from spending money activity that does not win them high scores in the TEF or the REF. Against this it could be argued that many TEF outcomes that relative

to the student experience (e.g. work based learning, volunteering) can contribute to a civic mission. Likewise, research submitted for REF Impact. And if in its final form the KEF embraces teaching as well as research as a legitimate mode of knowledge exchange and cities/regions as an important forum, then these drivers could enhance civic engagement.

But relying on these metrics on their own is not enough. First, we must recognise that the taxpayer, not just the student, pays for degrees. This means that benefits to those taxpayers – in the form of civic activity – is a reasonable expectation. This should mean a shift from the purely student-centric regulatory system that has been put in place in recent years.

The second is that research funding must formally recognise and reward the role of place based co-creation of knowledge and its translation into business and public service innovation. This suggests that there is scope for much larger targeted funds which consider the needs of different geographies. We discuss this in one of the chapters in this report.

Universities have a responsibility. But so does government

Universities are autonomous charitable institutions. They proclaim and defend that autonomy. That means they must also claim responsibility for institutional decisions – including how much to balance the civic against other demands, and how.

Given the importance of higher education to achieving personal and societal objectives, government is becoming increasingly involved in driving and monitoring university activity with greater demands and sanctions. It also, therefore, needs to be clear how much it cares about what universities do in their localities, and the impact that has. And the way government shows how much it cares about things is with money or controls (legislative or regulatory). If we want to help universities enhance their civic role, we therefore have to remove current constraints or put in new incentives.



Part D: What does a future civic university look like?

i. Civic engagement vs. the civic university

The evidence we received has led to three conclusions about the civic role of universities in the 21st century:

1. The civic role is alive and well. Given that it has not been an explicit priority for many policymakers or some universities to date – and set against other priorities for universities that have come with identified funding or regulatory incentives from the same policymakers – it is remarkable how much time, energy and attention many universities give to the civic role. Almost every university that submitted evidence to us was able to give a long list of activities that were worthy and undoubtedly civic. Some money was spent on the civic role despite there being no ‘formal accountability’ for that money. There were, in almost every institution, people who were passionate about making a civic impact.

2. Civic activity takes place despite of – not because of – government encouragement. No one was able to name any central government incentive or system beyond the small formulaic Higher Education Innovation Fund that supported civic engagement and even that did not have a dimension relating specifically to the needs of places. It could be argued that the place-making strategies of Whitehall departments

almost always involve universities and are inherently civic. But place-making strategies have different purposes and priorities and are regularly ripped-up and replaced. It is also notable that in the relatively recent Civil Society Strategy, for example, universities were barely mentioned at all.

3. Civic roles rarely form part of a coherent civic vision. We saw and heard about lots of very impressive civic activity. But we almost never heard of a strategy – backed by rigorous analysis, ambitious objectives and a clearly articulated plan – that made place based civic engagement a core part of the university’s mission.

With these conclusions in mind, our view is that a university can only be regarded as a *civic university* if purpose – and strategy to support that purpose – includes making a positive civic impact. Universities which do not do this, but which do undertake valuable civic activity, can only be regarded as a *civically engaged university*.

All universities can make more of a civic impact. But in our view being a civic university involves a level of effort and direction that has profound implications for how an institution operates.

ii. What's missing?

It is important that we are frank about where universities fall short when it comes to their civic activity. When gathering our evidence, too often the descriptions of universities' civic activity came across as superficial and complacent. We identified:

- An insufficient connection to the public and their views and needs. Our polling and focus groups showed that the public had a very different set of priorities from the civic activity that universities listed in much of our written evidence. For instance, the public are relatively indifferent to the sharing of facilities – which although a good thing which should continue, is seen by universities as more important than it is to the public.
- Playing a 'passive' anchor role, rather than a proactive one. The distinction between a civic university and civic engagement has parallels with what we have learned about the impact of universities as anchor institutions. Our evidence suggests that most universities perform their anchor role almost by default. Because of their size, they require lots of workers, will spend relatively large amounts on the procurement of goods and services and need a diverse and sizeable physical presence to function. In other words, universities do not think about how to

leverage their anchor role; instead, their anchor impact simply happens.

- A reliance on staid measures to show economic value. A number of universities express their economic importance through standard measures of impact. Yet standard economic impact reports tend to overclaim and do not take account of opportunity costs or claim credit for things that would have taken place in any case. Reliance on these narrow measures of economic contribution lacks imagination. More notice should be taken of the other effects universities have: building our scientific knowledge, accelerating innovation, improving social mobility, influencing public and intellectual discourse, enhancing local culture and so on.

iii. The Civic University Agreement

As stated above, there is a distinction between civic engagement, and a civic university. Should universities want to define themselves as civic universities, they ought to demonstrate how their civic mission is aligned to a clear strategy for how they will discharge their responsibilities. Our main recommendation is therefore for universities to formalise their civic strategy in public and create Civic University Agreements.

Recommendation 1: The Civic University Agreement

Civic Universities should enshrine their analysis and strategy in a Civic University Agreement that is co-created and signed by other key civic partners. This could include several universities or educational institutions coming together in a single agreement.

We think that the starting point for Civic University Agreements has to be:

- **Understanding local populations, and asking them what they want.** Analysis of their place and people’s priorities are essential.
- **Understanding themselves,** not every university will articulate their civic contribution in the same way – indeed it is crucial that they don’t, because the sustainability of this agenda relies on reflecting the historical, strategic and geographical nuances that have shaped each individual institution. The first step is for universities to ‘know thyself’ and decide where to focus their “civic” endeavours.
- **Working with other local anchor institutions, businesses and community organisations** to agree where the short, medium and long-term opportunities and problems lie in a given area, but also

how they interact. The link with local authorities and other local plans, such as the local industrial strategy is particularly important.

- **A clear set of priorities.** There will of course be no shortage of issues where university involvement could be of value. A process of agreeing clear priorities will therefore be necessary and, again, this is where collaboration and aligning resources with local authorities, LEPs (Local Economic Partnerships), NHS bodies and the like can help to identify the live issues that universities can most usefully help with.

The output of all this strategic analysis, local engagement and prioritisation will be a clear plan of action. Part of this will include a funding plan. We would also expect as part of this process that universities would have a more systematic engagement with LEPs and other coordinated local bodies (as many already do).

Civic University Agreements should be publicly endorsed – ideally by co-sign off – by other local anchor institutions, including local government – the only organisations in most local areas to have a direct representative mandate.

iv. Measuring the civic university

Measurement has been one of the most difficult areas of discussion for the Commission. On the one hand it seems absurd to suggest a nationally prescribed measurement system for something

that is inherently local and decided by different local actors. On the other hand, we have to accept that what is measured and rewarded is what is done – and if we ignore measurement it is unlikely that a true focus on civic activity will emerge.

Recommendation 2: Measuring and incentivising the success of the civic

We have thought about measurement in three contexts:

- **Local measurement.** This is the simplest. A Civic University Agreement should include clear, realistic and measurable objectives agreed by the university and its partners. These can be locally designed and used to measure the success of the strategy – like any organisation where people have to be accountable against objectives. In addition:
 - Universities should reconsider how they measure their economic footprint. We have criticised how some universities express their economic footprint using standard measures. There are, however, some examples of better data being collected, such as the number of graduates that stay in the local area to work. But these examples are few and far between. The best way to understand these effects is by directly asking those people who are impacted: students, university staff, and local residents and businesses. Not only can this give directly relevant information, by combining it with other kinds of quantitative analysis it can generate better estimates of economic, cultural or social value.
- **Removing perverse measurement.** This is also relatively simple – it has been clear that some of the current drivers behind teaching and research can mitigate against civic activity. Removing those is vital and in particular:
 - Reducing reliance on measures, for example the use of the LEO on graduate employment rates and wage premia, in high stakes metrics like TEF, that risk penalising universities for releasing graduates into regional labour markets with lower employment or wage returns.
- Ensuring that criteria for measurement of research in the REF do not imply, even inadvertently, that there is a ranking order of quality from international through national and then down to local.
- **National measurement.** We think there are three potential ways to capture this:
 - **Making sure that existing measures reflect civic activity. In particular the KEF must be a broad measure of civic impact not purely research innovation that embraces knowledge exchange through teaching as well as research.** KEF must also have an explicit place dimension that acknowledges the different local contexts within which universities operate.
 - **A new peer review model.** The Government supports the LGA to be the sector improvement body for local government, and the principal tool in the improvement armoury is self-evaluation against a common template and peer review. As part of this, a small team of council officers and elected members (from other parts of the country) spend a week at a council (at their invitation) doing a deep dive into a number of (pre-agreed) issues. In this case the review team should include end-users who may come predominantly from other universities but could also include members from the private sector, local government, NHS etc to attempt to capture impact and which will be measured in the Civic Agreements.
 - **A bidding system.** The two big weapons of the government are measurement and funding. One of the most effective mechanisms for supporting local improvement has been challenge funds – for example the Race to the Top challenge fund in the United States. Clearly for this to work in the case of universities, eligibility for funding would have to be tied to a civic agreement.

v. Funding the civic university

Recommendation 3 concerns the topic of funding this activity. Given the wider issue of public spending, the Commission thought it was worth expanding the thinking on this a little.

The first point to make is that money isn't everything. Universities are autonomous institutions, albeit ones in receipt of large sums of public money, and will conduct a variety of activities driven by a wide range of incentives, which go far further than relatively short term funding pots.

However, it is worth also noting that the relative proportion of university, industrial strategy, and other funds that are directed at territorially based activity of universities – as opposed to other activities – is tiny. This creates its own incentives and view about what activity should be valued.

Thirdly, the Commission is well aware that this report is being issued while a major review is being conducted around the future funding of universities (the Augar Review), and a few months in advance of the start of the Spending Review which will set the overall quantum for public spending across the whole public sector,

including universities. It is important to say that the Commission are not seeking to take a view either way on whether this should be higher or lower than the current sum. That is a judgement for government to make in the light of what they decide on a number of issues, and goes well beyond the remit of this discussion about the civic role of universities.

What the Commission does conclude, however, is that any material reduction in the overall resources available to universities – despite civic work being a clear priority and historical mission of many institutions – will put at risk some of their current activities.

As such, we conclude that a small dedicated fund of money – and we recommend here £500m over a number of years – specifically dedicated to this civic mission, and with a focus on disadvantaged places and areas where the civic role can have a particular impact, ought to be beneficial. In addition, we propose a further £120m into the existing Strength in Places fund. Taken together, such spending represents only a couple of percent of the total annual funding of the HE sector but will, we feel, have an outside impact in supporting continued or increased focus in this space from institutions.

Recommendation 3: Funding the civic

A new fund – the Civic University Fund.

A new fund should be created that allows universities with co-signed Civic University Agreements to bid for resources that will allow them to implement their strategies. We think that the fund should be worth around £500m over a 5 year period, with universities bidding on a competitive basis for multi-year projects (meaning a typical award may be in the region of £20-£30m). The fund should be administered jointly by DfE and BEIS recognising the dual industrial strategy and educative focuses of the fund– and building on the existing joint departmental responsibilities of the Universities Minister – and it should have a preference towards supporting places that are both economically and socially vulnerable, as with the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund approach.

In addition, two other funds could be geared towards funding the content of co-signed Civic University Agreements:

- **The Strength in Places Fund**, as announced in the Industrial Strategy White Paper and run by UKRI, should be increasingly focused on this issue. The Fund offers £10-£50m investments for a small number of place-based

consortia to work together on innovative projects that build on existing research and innovation capabilities, with the goal of tackling regional disparities by improving the local economy in specific areas. The Government announced in the Autumn 2018 Budget that there would be another £120m for a second round of SIPP. **We recommend that this second wave of funding is doubled and used to cover a larger number of smaller projects to broaden the impact across the country in recognition of the need to support and accelerate innovation in left behind places and in the process contributing to reduce the inter-regional productivity gap. This fund should serve as a catalyst for all aspects of universities’ contribution to their localities by supporting graduate employment and the use of graduate skills, as well as the take-up of research and innovation.**

Widening Participation/attainment fund. If more of the money for universities moves from private to public funding, we think it would be appropriate for some portion of that to operate to support highly evidence-based Widening Participation and attainment work.

vi. Sharing good practice of the civic university

Good civic practice ought to be collaborative – between universities in a locality and also between universities and other partners. But although context will be different and each civic agreement should reflect local circumstances, it is likely that much good practice will be common across more than one agreement, and there is public value in such good practice being shared.

In addition to good practice, the civic infrastructure would benefit from a system of support including seminars/peer learning, and for a benchmarking system to be created to help universities assess their practice. All of this will help create sector ownership of the concept rather than this being something seen as imposed on them.

To aid with the creation of these, we recommend a small network is created to incubate the creation of these agreements, hosted in a university and supported initially by some small government funding to recognise its public good status.

Recommendation 4: Spreading good civic practice

We recommend that a **Network for the Civic University** is established. The network will need a hub which should be located in a host university. The hub should have seed funding from the government and the sector, and the involvement of other key partners such as the Local Government Association and the Confederation of British Industry.

The role of the hub would be practical support and information sharing rather than academic study, which is covered elsewhere. It could share good practice, develop a benchmarking system, support peer learning, establish and run our proposed peer-review system, and oversee and support the development of civic agreements.

Our thinking on this has been inspired by some existing work around public engagement led by the National Co-ordinating Centre on Public Engagement, or NCCPE.

National Co-ordinating Centre on Public Engagement

NCCPE is a collaborative arrangement between universities – initially funded by HEFCE – to create a centre for expertise and establish a co-ordinated approach to recognising, rewarding and building capacity for public engagement. It is hosted by University of Bristol and UWE.

It operates through three main principles:

- Support excellent public engagement practice
- Create the conditions for public engagement to thrive in universities
- Build strong networks and partnerships to amplify our impact

It works through creating a series of best practice guides, engages with universities and third parties on specific projects, and does some original survey and other engagement work to act as a case for change.



Putting purpose at the heart of engagement: delegates in discussion at the NCCPE's 2018 Engage Conference



Part E: What might be in a Civic University Agreement, and how can it be supported?

i. Supporting the educational growth of a place

At the core of a university is its educative role. We use the term educating here as opposed to teaching to recognise the broader function a university plays with schools aged population, and with mature learners, such as adult, community and lifelong learning. A Civic University should maintain a strong focus on education, but with a greater place-based focus to it.

These activities break down into three main areas:

Widening Participation activities

Widening Participation is clearly a key focus when discussing the civic role of universities. Many respondents spontaneously mentioned it as one of their main priorities and a lot of universities devote considerable resources to this activity – almost a billion pounds last year.

While there is a huge amount of activity, it isn't clear that the significant resources spent are focused on the areas where the evidence suggests are of maximum benefit to Widening Participation. Part of this may come because, as one expert witness said to us, it's something that universities have to do because of OfS, rather than because they (all) want to do it strategically. In other words, at least some of the spending is driven by regulatory compliance rather than sector desire, and activities may be pursued for

their visibility rather than because of a strong evidence base.

Widening Participation, when viewed through a civic university lens, should be more biased towards the local (with a special focus on pupils from low socio-economic or BME backgrounds). Regardless of any Augar Review led changes to headline tuition fees, Widening Participation is a major societal responsibility of universities – as well as being in their own direct financial interest as regards direct recruitment. Universities should make clear statements as to its effectiveness, value and efficiency.

The OfS is moving away – rightly, in our view – from agreements that measure levels of spending in favour of those that measure impact, and are also more long term and measure progression and status after graduation. A high proportion of students stay in their home region to study and work (45%) and they are disproportionately the most disadvantaged. Widening Participation efforts agreed with OfS should also focus on how universities will support the prospects of these students when they leave university, as well as getting them in Civic Universities should be at the forefront of leading work on evolving these agreements. This will include learning from the evolving evidence base on what works on Widening Participation as being developed by amongst others the new Evidence and Impact Exchange.



Civic Universities could also consider working in partnership to deliver a combined Widening Participation offer across their ‘home’ area. This could build on the work of the National Collaborative Outreach programme (NCOP) which brings together 29 local partnerships of universities, colleges, local authorities, LEAs, employers and others who work together to complement and add value to the work that individual universities undertake, in particular work that is best delivered in collaboration. During 2017-18 NCOP partnerships worked with around 1,500 schools and colleges to deliver sustained and progressive programmes of targeted higher education outreach with 102,000 young people.

Much school-based activity by universities is with schools in the ‘home’ civic environment, and case studies offered by respondents and the way in which they described their activities and aspirations had an implicitly local focus. But it’s hard to see real civic work happening systematically if the majority of Widening Participation work isn’t explicitly focused on the university’s local place. As such, universities must begin to systematically prioritize – and deepen – their commitment to their local areas through their Widening Participation activities. This should be strengthened through a broader set of access and participation agreements with the OfS, using the greater powers in the Higher Education and Research Act.

Universities should establish how they define their ‘sense of place’ – but options could include:

- Using existing formal geographical and political structures for example city boundaries, or unitary or other local government district boundaries, Parliamentary constituencies, or new combined city authorities.
- Travel to Work areas could be used which assess how far it is reasonable for people to travel to reach work and allows for differing geographic distances depending on the accessibility of the university.
- Types of people resident in them, using, for example the commercial Mosaic segmentation model owned by Experian, which divides the population into 15 groups and 66 types.

We also considered whether there should be an explicit focus on retaining graduates within the civic area after they finished studying. Universities differed in their views on this. Some respondents, as the University of Lincoln, noted that there is a shortfall of public sector workers in the region around the university and thought that one major role of the university ought to be to help address that. Other universities and respondents took the view that this would be unduly limiting – either because their graduate ‘diaspora’ was already national or international, or because they felt that one of the elements which a university education ought to give was to offer options to graduates beyond their home region, however defined.

It will clearly be up to each university to take the approach that best fits their graduates and their circumstances. But we are clear that even for the most national and internationally mobile university and graduate population, there will still be some who come from, and / or wish to stay after graduation, in the local area. Universities should work with local employers to maximise the opportunities and awareness of these for those graduates who do want to stay.

The last question we considered was whether Widening Participation activity should focus on those who are unlikely to go to university – in other words, raising aspirations to non-university education, or work, or wider social mobility actions. Universities do in some senses play a wider educative role – not least through training large numbers of teachers who will teach local students. It is also not possible to say for certain that work to raise primary aged standards will result in those students attending university many years down the line. But broadly, we believe that universities’ core purpose as seats of learning is to offer tertiary study at a higher level. This can include, as many respondents noted, higher level technical or professional or vocational education as well. But a university has a specific role in the ecosystem, and we think that their overall approach should principally be for themselves to encourage study at universities – albeit not just their own.

Effective Widening Participation spending

Nottingham Trent has a longstanding and deep partnership with a large number of schools in its area. Given its proximity to other universities, it needs to take a collaborative approach to the schools within its remit. It can sometimes work with pupils across schools, some students from age 8 to 18 and they are tracked through their education and monitored their outcomes to assess the efficacy of their work. The university uses not only their skills in data and qualitative research to measure student outcomes, but also recognises that its advantage is in pedagogic work, and innovation – as opposed to broader aspiration raising work.

Step UP / Move UP / Aim UP

The University of Portsmouth has designed a strong package of programmes to work with local schools to improve Widening Participation and attainment. It includes

- Step UP – A series of projects for students in secondary schools pre 16 focusing on attainment raising
- Move UP – specific in school events for Y10 and Y11 students encouraging them to think about post 16 participation
- Aim UP – campus based activities for pre 16 students focused on Widening Participation and providing an insight into student and academic life at university

Some of these programmes are run in partnership with third parties – for example sport science focused events run in collaboration with Portsmouth Football Club



Pupils from Crookhorn College with author Ali Sparkes and University of Portsmouth students’

Recommendation 5: An evolution of Widening Participation spending

Civic Universities' Widening Participation plans should **be more place-based** and **focus on effective use of spend**. They should move away from bursaries and scholarships which often appeal because they are visible, measurable, and scoreable to the OFS, despite the weak evidence base from these initiatives, and towards initiatives with greater impact on the life chances of students and graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds. This approach is consistent with the sharpening up of Widening Participation plans by the Office for Students, which we support. **The new Evidence and Impact Exchange should, as its first project, produce a clear set of evidence or toolkit which provides evidence for these.**

With regards to longer term measures of progress and employment, Civic Agreements could seek to measure against local conditions (to take account of local lower paid labour markets) and could seek to measure local retention and seek to improve this over time parties – for example sport science focused events run in collaboration with Portsmouth Football Club.

Attainment

Raising attainment is arguably even more a civic duty for universities than Widening Participation. One of the other areas in which universities can play a role with schools is in improving performance of school aged pupils. Work to boost overall attainment in a local area, far from being subsumed into broader Widening Participation activity, should become a clear activity in its own right. Indeed, given that Widening Participation spend is inextricably bound up in direct recruitment, there is an argument to say broader attainment activity is even more of a direct civic responsibility for universities and should also be included in the new broader agreements with the OFS referred to above.

We also think it important to note raising attainment is not the same as Widening Participation, even though they were commonly elided in our discussions with witnesses and in evidence. It is possible that on occasions there is a direct trade-off between Widening Participation work and attainment raising work. For example, efforts by a university to teach advanced mathematics for highly able sixth formers who

might be able and willing to study maths but who don't have locally qualified staff is highly likely to be effective at raising attainment. It is, all things being equal, perhaps less likely to have a significant Widening Participation impact. If attainment raising and Widening Participation are thought of as both needing to be achieved, then such a scheme such as advanced maths teaching may not be pursued, which would be a shame.

While Widening Participation and raising attainment work should interrelate, the latter should be clearly and explicitly focused on raising attainment regardless of the Widening Participation angle on it.

The interim report noted that there were different views among those who responded and gave evidence as to how universities could get involved in this. Government efforts in recent years have emphasised the role of universities in directly supporting schools to raise standards through sponsorship of academies and free schools. In the recent Green Paper, "Schools that work for everyone", the government was explicit that they wanted *"all universities to sponsor existing schools or set up new schools in exchange for the ability to charge higher fees"*.

Following a strong argument that the track records of universities in academy sponsorship in particular was mixed, the Government approach is now that *"Universities with the capacity and capability to sponsor an academy or establish a free school are strongly encouraged to do so"* and that for others, they should focus efforts on *"sustainable and reciprocal partnerships"* in at least one of teaching, curriculum, leadership or other targeted partnership.

We considered what the best way in which universities could support schools. As a point of principle, it should be up to universities which activities they choose to take forward.

We concluded that for those who wanted to, direct involvement through academy or free school support or supporting exam syllabi was positive and should continue.

One other strategy which Civic Universities could adopt, as some already have done, is support for highly able students from underrepresented groups through offering targeted lower admissions grades, or foundation year programmes, to support attainment in their local area. This could be done in collaboration with local FE providers.

Similarly, for universities that wish to stay or become involved in school improvement directly, this should also be pursued – including through senior university staff serving as trustees or governors of local schools or multi academy trusts.

Universities setting up schools

Aside from the King's Maths School and Exeter Maths School, which were discussed in the interim report, we heard other case studies of universities both raising attainment and widening the type of provision in the pre-18 curriculum through setting up schools.

The Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, a specialist HE provider, set up LIPA Primary, a free school for primary aged children, in 2014. Alongside the normal primary curriculum, the school specialises in using the creative and performing arts to enrich teaching and learning in the early development of language, reading, writing and mathematics skills.

Plymouth College of Art, which is also a specialist HE provider in fine art, set up Plymouth School of Creative Arts, which is a mainstream 3-16 free school which focuses on a cross curricular and project based approach to learning, with options for the students to then enter the college and pursue learning up to Masters level.

In both of these instances, the universities felt that their areas of specialism were being underplayed in the mainstream 5-18 school system so used their expertise to set up provision and models of pedagogy directly.

At a minimum, and for those universities which do not deliver any of the activities above, we suggest that there are two very concrete sets of activities which universities will also be well placed to focus on:

- **Teacher training and CPD:** the English school system is currently reporting year-on-year shortages of trained teachers, driven both by missing of recruitment targets and also greater levels of early exit from the school system. Where teacher training is effective, schools and HE work well together already to help plan supply and train teachers. But part of the issue is that a national picture of supply needs hides local and regional variation. A much better and targeted set of working between schools / groups of schools and HE to get a) an understanding of local need in recruitment and in subject training and b) to work together, and in partnership with the school led teacher training alliance and teaching schools in the region to help meet that, is a real civic responsibility and benefit which the university can lead.
- **Curriculum support including assessment, resources, and content planning.** The clear focus by government is to move to a much better design of curriculum and increased focus on what pupils are taught. The new Ofsted framework due out early in 2019 and taking effect from September 2019 will reflect that. As such, there is a real need for high quality resources for schools and teachers to access. While there is much existing in the marketplace, the quality is sketchy. Universities are very well placed to a) write and b) quality assure materials and resources and disseminate to schools as part of their civic duty and supporting the raising of attainment. For some this can go further with, as noted, direct writing of textbooks or exam syllabi.

South Yorkshire Futures

South Yorkshire Futures is a social mobility partnership committed to improving education and raising aspiration for young people in South Yorkshire – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The programme – led by Sheffield Hallam University and backed by the Department for Education – addresses the educational attainment and wellbeing of learners, and aims to develop a dedicated and talented workforce to support them.

It includes three areas of focus:

- improving work in early years, known as Preparation
- developing efforts on teacher recruitment and retention at primary and secondary, known as Performance
- improving progression into work and further study post 16, known as Aspiration

It is chaired by the COO of Sheffield Hallam university and as well as several members of staff from the university also includes representatives from local MATs, the local authorities, FE colleges, and the DfE.



Children from Southey Green Primary School receiving their Gold Awards at the Sheffield Children's University graduation. The Award recognises students who have gained 100 hours of extra-curricular learning through activities throughout Sheffield with a Passport to Learning. Research in Sheffield has shown that students who participate in out of school Children's University activities achieve better at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 and exceed their estimated results.

Recommendation 6: A more focused strategy for raising school aged attainment

- **Work to boost overall attainment in a local area, far from being subsumed into broader Widening Participation activity, should become a clear activity in its own right.** Indeed, given that Widening Participation spend is inextricably bound up in direct recruitment, there is an argument to say broader attainment activity is even more of a direct civic responsibility for universities.
- Universities should therefore adopt a more targeted and focused approach towards their work on attainment raising, including defining their role in collaboration with other educational institutions within a civic agreement. **Specifically, we recommend that each university should set out a specific policy goal on raising attainment, similar to that which they prepare on their Widening Participation work.** While the two should interrelate, the latter should be clearly and explicitly focused on raising attainment regardless of the Widening Participation angle on it. And this attainment policy goal should be clearly accountable to the university i.e. activity should be deep enough to make a measurable difference.

Our analysis for those universities that do not want to directly sponsor schools or engage in school improvement is that Teacher Training and CPD; and Curriculum Support including assessment and resources are two valuable areas of focus.

The new Evidence and Impact Exchange could also usefully look at what university interventions have the most impact.

Adult learners

The policy importance of adult education is rising up the agenda but still needs addressing. We spent a considerable amount of time in the interim report discussing the importance of adult education for civic universities, and the reasons it has declined in recent years.

The demand for adult education is going to grow hugely in future due to automation and changing composition of workforce. The interim report cited work by McKinsey which suggested that 30% of British jobs could be at high risk of automation by 2030. Other evidence which the Commission has reviewed, including that submitted to us in evidence, includes the Working Futures report, which represents the latest cross government assessment of future skills needs, and covers the period 2014-2024. This shows in general an expectation that labour market growth will be at both the higher skilled and the lower skilled ends of the labour market – specifically in IT, then in construction, and then in health and social care:

Adult education is a civic activity because of the place-based nature of residence and employment. The average distance travelled to work is 9.32 miles. In other words, a university as an anchor institution for a population of working age people is also likely to be one which includes the majority of their workplaces within its remit (and vice versa – a university which considers itself to have a major employer within its local civic orbit will also have the majority of that business' employees).

As well as showing the local nature of work and travel, the Travel to Work Area data also similarly shows the scale of demand for upskilling. In even the most highly qualified TTWAs, barely half of adults are qualified to Level 4 or above.

We have been pleased to note the positive impression given by the Augar review team that this is front and centre in their minds, and of speeches made by the Secretary of State for

Education on this topic. Nevertheless, we remain strongly of the view as set out in the interim review, that changes need to be made to the funding and regulatory environment.

National shifts are necessary. The almost universal consensus from everyone who we spoke to during this report and in the research considered by the Commission is that funding changes need to be at the heart of a resurgence of adult education. All of the experts we talked to agree that shifts are necessary in:

- National funding policy in terms of fees and loans;
- National direction in terms of Widening Participation; and
- National incentives in terms of lifting the cap and the increase of the potential supply of easier to-teach undergraduates.

We continue to think though that small changes will be unlikely to have sufficient weight behind them to reverse the trends of declines in adult education. We call again, therefore, for the relaxation of the ELQ rule and the removal of the 25% intensity rule. One option for exploring this, which would also incentivise and recognise the civic benefit of close working between universities and further education providers, would be to trial pilots of ELQ relaxation or the removal of the 25% intensity rule conditional upon joint proposals for doing so from a coalition of universities and further education providers.

The Apprenticeship levy is also a tool for reform if it is made more flexible. While it has huge potential as a mechanism for improving skill levels under a strong brand and programme, it is also unduly restrictive for the types of training which individuals and employers sometimes need and which universities can offer. Many organisations, including the CBI, have also noted that the current structure of the Apprenticeship levy is insufficiently flexible to allow adult learners as employees to really access the training they need.

The Government has recently announced a greater level of flexibility in that levy paying employers can now transfer up to 10% of their levy pot to other organisations, to encourage wider uptake of training – this is expected to particularly benefit SMEs and other organisations in the supply chain of larger employers.

For levy payers, the great flexibility in the amount they can pass through to their supply chain is welcome and universities should take actions to consider how they can use this as civic anchors and levy players.

At present, all incentives are for organisations to only seek out Apprenticeships, because that is what they have funding for. Similarly, universities are incentivised to try and make all their existing training Apprenticeships if at all possible, so as to become levy-eligible. This is a significant amount of displacement activity which distracts from what really should be the main question – what training do individuals need as adults to improve their skills and productivity, and how can civic universities and local individuals and employers work together to offer this training?

Recommendation 7: Reversing the decline in adult education, and improving the Apprenticeship levy

- The interim report set out three major recommendations for consideration:
 - **Relaxing the ELQ rule** (Equivalent Level Qualifications) 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 to be accessed via funding that is not deliberately directed towards a qualification.**
- We have been pleased to see indications from government that reversing the decline in adult education is a priority for them. **We call again in this final report for the three recommendations in the interim review to be taken up.**

One option is to trial pilots of the three areas above, conditional upon joint bids from a coalition of universities and further education providers.

As levy payers themselves, universities should think about their role as anchor institutions and work with their own supply chain to share more widely uptake of training among staff in those organisations.

Universities should also be able to transfer their levy funds to local employers to recruit degree apprentices into their own organisation (currently it is against the rules for a university to transfer levy funds to an employer to do one of their own degree Apprenticeships).

We recommend that government consider how a similar 10% of levy spend can be allocated for non-Apprenticeship training (and non-qualification bearing training), in the same way that a percentage can be allocated to supply chains. This would not take away from the central drive of Apprenticeships policy, but it would acknowledge a need for more flexibility around the side.

University of East London and access to HE

UEL works with local adults in their community who might want to access a bachelors degree but have been out of education for some time and/or don't have the qualifications and/or skills to be able to go straight into tertiary education. The New Beginnings course offered by the university allows adults access to a foundation programme through three different routes depending on their starting position: a regular 10 week course, an accelerated 5 week course, or an intensive 1 week course. Following completion of these, students are eligible to apply to be considered for a Bachelors programme at UEL.

Centre for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

The University of Kent has delivered higher Apprenticeships since 2011, working with industry-leading employers including GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Novartis and Unilever. Kent launched the Centre for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships in 2016 to build on this experience. The centre works in partnership with regional and national employers to develop Apprenticeships tailored to their needs. The centre also has an important role to play within the University, supporting academic schools on all aspects of delivering Apprenticeship training are eligible to apply to be considered for a Bachelors programme at UEL.



Laboratory Scientist Degree Apprentices studying at the University of Kent. Kent offers bespoke higher and degree Apprenticeship provision, managed by a dedicated central service department, offering a full range of support to employers of every size, with multiple start dates throughout the year, and a focus on a blended learning approach permitting flexibility for the employer and learner.

Public service training

Training for public services is a major focus for many universities particularly in the health space but more is needed to keep public sector workers in underserved areas of the country.

Public training is coming under pressure as workforce numbers and budgets in many public services decline, and is also something where universities are part of an often rigorously centrally planned ecosystem for staff training numbers and placements and facilities.

Staff shortages in public services are particularly problematic. More broadly public sector staff are needed nationally and often their training and placements are centrally controlled and not under the universities' management. Nevertheless, universities as anchor institutions can play a vital soft power role in training and encouraging staff to stay on the local area, especially when these are under served by staff.

The question we asked is how universities can best support these national programmes from a civic perspective.

In some senses, locally based placement of medical staff happens naturally:

- The new medical school at the University of Sunderland was placed there because of the university' strong track record in recruiting and then retaining students from the local area.
- The Lincoln University medical school responds to NHS staffing gaps by contributing materially to the financial difficulty of their local NHS trust.
- At Sheffield University, 70% of doctors trained with them stay in the region post-graduation, despite the central manpower planning undertaken by the NHS.

We think that universities should continue to work alongside the national NHS placement scheme for Foundation year doctors to maintain a focus on local retention.

We also think that a local golden handcuffs scheme may be worth considering and it would be an undeniably civic activity for some universities to participate in this alongside other local actors. One way of taking this forward was made by Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, during the Commission's process. He suggested that those trained in public services in Manchester be incentivised to stay and work in the public services there, to boost civic engagement. Given the role of universities as a civic anchor, we think it would be an option for them, alongside all other major employers and strategic planners for public service in the region, to pilot such a scheme collectively, with a financial contribution made by universities towards this. To give a sense of scale, a proposal which targeted 500 health sector professionals across a region with a financial incentive of £10,000 structured across three years (£2k / £2k / £5k) would have a steady state cost of £4.5m a year, which seems a reasonable sum to be split between the city region and other local government bodies, other economic players such as the LEP, the NHS institutions covering the city region themselves, and the universities in the region.

Recommendation 8: A focus on recruitment and retention of public sector staff especially in the health sector

- Civic universities should work to train and encourage staff to stay on the local area, especially when these are under served by staff.
- As Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, suggested to us, **universities and local actors should partner to offer 'golden handcuff' proposals to support local retention.** Given the role of universities as a civic anchor, we think it would be reasonable for some who wanted to work in this area, alongside all other major employers and strategic planners for public service in the region, to pilot such a scheme collectively. To give a sense of scale, a proposal which targeted 500 health sector professionals across a region with a financial incentive of £10,000 structured across three years (£2k / £2k / £5k) would have a steady state cost of £4.5m a year, with some universities potentially well placed to make a financial contribution towards this.

Research and knowledge exchange

Countless intellectual breakthroughs that helped to drive the advances of the last century originated in British universities. The research output of universities is absolutely fundamental to their role and recognised as such not just by Government but by the population at large.

The Government is committed (as are the opposition parties) to a big expansion in R&D spending (from c.1.7% of GDP to 2.4% by 2027 and then up to 3.0%, made up by a mixture of private and public money, so this a significant area of focus.

Historically, the overwhelming proportion of this research has been theoretical in nature, seeking to push the intellectual boundaries of a particular subject. But we also heard evidence of a wealth of examples of universities conducting research that has real local impact. To give just some examples:

- The University of Sheffield's world-leading Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre which has attracted dozens of leading industrial companies to the city region;
- The City Region Economic Development Institute at the University of Birmingham established to better understand and influence regional and national economic growth policies; and
- Newcastle University's Politics Work Placement module which sees students spend a minimum of 70 hours in placements with local organisations where they are undertaking research projects.
- Queen Mary University of London is working with its local community in East London through the East London Genes and Health project looking at over 100,000 participants of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin to explore differential health outcomes for this group.

But we also received evidence that 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 many local areas, such as the pressures on providing social care.

The pushback is often that the REF framework doesn't incentivise such research and the academy can be complicit in this. The consultation on the next iteration of REF makes clear that impact can be local, by saying "impact of any type may be local, regional, national or international, in any part of the world". But this seems hardly to encourage a focus on the local. There is a risk that that is not measured will inevitably be seen as of lesser importance. But we argue that as well as enterprising academics and other staff setting up research programmes relevant to the locality, a civic university must also know its priorities in this area and pursue them — regardless of whether or not this is REF optimal.

We think that there are opportunities for civically focused universities to do more in this area. Alongside outstanding national and international research collaborations, we think universities have the potential of looking at how their research impacts locally. One way of doing this is co-production of research with both (local) end users and relevant public sector partners. Such co-production is certainly a notable strand in the activities of some universities, but it was not evident to us that such approaches are as widespread as we might hope.

Another is to look to strengthen collaboration with local partners in health research — which can include clinical research through academic health science centres or local NHS bodies, or through a wide range of institutions in the public health space.

We also think that if research is ever going to have a significant civic focus, then government is going to need to address the incentives around its production. It is right that research funding follows excellence wherever that is found. And it is also right that research is about the boundless search for knowledge and application of it, and the strengths of universities are the borderless collaborations that academics participate in. Nevertheless we think a greater civic focus in some of the major funding frameworks — either strengthening the local focus of REF, or potentially using the new KEF or the UKSPF to focus on targeted local research, could be of huge benefit.

While not every discipline can have a local impact, research in health is a major area where universities clearly contribute to civil society in their area. There are two spheres where they could look to strengthen their civic focus. For universities with a clinical research function and a medical school, by seeking closer working with the local NHS, either through Academic Science Health Centres where they exist, or other fora, but with a clear focus on the local application of medical research. For all universities, thinking broadly about the application of their research in a myriad of fields — education, planning, transportation, engineering, geography, marketing and communications — to support local public health efforts.

Strong Communities, Healthier People

Cardiff University is leading a partnership alongside the Welsh Government to explore how to narrow health gaps between Wales' most deprived and more affluent areas.

As well as using the university's medical facilities to conduct research, the programme is innovative because of the various ways it includes the community in the collection, analysis and dissemination of work on public health. This includes research which allows for the testing of innovative forms of engagement, data collection, analysis and interpretation within the local community, and ways of utilising the skills of the local community to both feed in issues and also disseminate messages.

University of Plymouth and health research and education

The University of Plymouth plays a major role in health education and research across the South West of England. The University's wide ranging health provision is the largest in the South West and trains large numbers of practitioners in over 200 different career paths. The University collaborates closely with University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust allowing for clinical collaboration and for research at the university to be translated into patient wellbeing. This research agenda is formalised through close working across a range of partnerships including The Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care South West Peninsula (PenCLAHRC) which is a partnership between the University of Plymouth, the University of Exeter and NHS organisations across Devon, Cornwall and Somerset (one of only 13 such partnerships in the UK), through the South West Academic Health Sciences Network (SWAHSN), one of only 15 academic health science networks in the UK, and as one of only 4 universities working alongside Brain Tumour Research UK to conduct cutting edge research into this disease.



Recommendation 9: Strengthening local impact alongside international excellence

We recommend that civic universities develop a robust locally-focused strategy to underpin their collective research efforts.

- Where it does not make sense for research to place-based – recognising that national and international collaboration can benefit a local area through the creation of high quality research that benefits local people – **we think civic universities could focus on greater application and implementation locally of nationally / internationally designed research by focusing on global grand challenges with a local dimension.**
- We do also believe that there are a number of good reasons why it would make sense for the Government to give a clear signal that it supports the deployment of some of the HE sector's formidable academic firepower towards addressing economic and social problems at a local level, through changing the major funding incentives which drive research programmes. This could take one of three routes:
 - To amend the **REF criteria** to explicitly reward a locally focused element to research.
 - To use the new **Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)** which seeks to assess the more systemic side of knowledge transfer to incentivise local collaboration.
 - To use the new **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)** – the replacement for EU Structural Funds – and the strand of funding that is aligned with locally focused university research – to emphasise how local research and innovation can address the mission of the UKSPF to improve productivity and reduce inequality.

GoWell East

GoWell East is a multi-year project looking at the impact of the 2014 Commonwealth Games on the deprived communities in the East End of Glasgow.

It is a significant 10 year practical and applied research programme being led by the University of Glasgow and funded by the Scottish government looking at many different elements of regeneration – housing, physical fitness, school attainment, employment, and neighbourhood quality.

This case study shows how world leading research from a university can combine with a major civic project and be applied to the particular context in a local area.



City REDI

Based at the University of Birmingham, City REDI is a research institute focused on developing an academic understanding of major city regions across the globe to develop practical policy which better informs and influences regional and national economic growth policies.

Until recently the discussion about the growth of cities was dominated by disciplinary-based studies rather than an inter-disciplinary perspective. Birmingham takes the approach that the 'problems' facing city regional economies are complex, multi-dimensional, multi-scalar and multi-disciplinary, City-REDI moves beyond disciplinary or thematic focused research by developing an overarching conceptual framework for understanding the functioning and on-going evolution of regional economies.

As such, it both advances the academic discipline and then applies that to its local area – the Greater Birmingham region – and also provides lessons for other city regions all over the world.



Launch of the Birmingham Economic Review

ii. Supporting the economic life of a place

Universities are economic actors of note

in London, the impact of the HE sector is substantial, comprising billions of GVA and many thousands of jobs. But in other areas, particularly those whose economies have experienced less growth than the capital, the economic impact of universities is greater still. They employ local people with a variety of skill sets, buy a range of goods and services from local businesses and increase the local stock of human capital via their teaching.

Alongside the NHS and local authorities, universities are one of the key institutions in many economically vulnerable places and are likely to become more so. It is clear that, were they not there, local economies across the country would be gravely harmed – and that the magnitude of this anchor impact has been amplified as local government has shouldered year after year of funding reductions.

All universities will be able to give examples of local procurement, employment and community involvement happening as a result of their presence. However, despite this, it was not clear to us that all universities are fully cognisant of the full impact that their presence could have upon the local economies which host them. In other words, while the economic impact was undoubtedly positive in all locations, it seems that this may to some degree be more by accident than design in some cases i.e. there was a lack of a strategic dimension.

The Works, Manchester

The Works is a social enterprise which works to support local residents to boost skills and jobs – driven by very low employment rates in some areas of Manchester and the need for a locally focused response which focused on the interrelated issue of jobs, skills, and wider pastoral needs of some individuals who are a long way from the labour market.

One of the founding partners is the University of Manchester. As one of the region's largest employers the university is keen to improve the opportunities for their local residents. Since its creation in 2011, 3,226 people's lives have been transformed by taking them out of unemployment. £47 million of social and economic value has been generated.

The university as an employer

As major local economic force, responsible for many hundreds of jobs, a civic university should always strive to be a model employer. Many universities pride themselves on being Living Wage employers. The Commission approves of such approaches and recommends that all universities consider how, as employers, they can exemplify their role as a socially responsible economic actor through their day to day operations – including a clear recommendation that all universities should become Living Wage employers for all of their staff.

As major local employers, universities can also support their staff to volunteer in the local community and we heard of lots of different examples of volunteering in practice, many involved local schools, particularly Widening Participation schemes and roles as school governors. Clearly, we would encourage all universities to support such initiatives, while urging that such volunteering (as well as additional efforts coordinated by student unions) is guided by a strategic understanding of how best it can help the local community.

Procurement

As major local institutions supporting substantial workforces, universities have at their disposal significant procurement budgets for all manner of goods and services. While there is a historic tendency to focus on price alone as the determinant of value delivered for procurement spend, more recently there are those – anchor institutions in and around Preston being perhaps the most notable example – who have championed the benefits of focusing on greater local spending. Buying local could mean a university purchasing goods and services that are not the cheapest they can find. However, sourcing from local supply chains can create social value that offsets potential negative cost implications. Examples here include using procurement approaches to explicitly support the employment of graduates within a local area, and pledging to pay all local suppliers within 30 days.

University of Northampton procurement

The University of Northampton is fully committed to the power of procurement not to just secure the goods and services needed, but to add more value to the local economy and civic infrastructure, as exemplified in the social value proposition set out in the Social Value Act which makes clear the ability that buyers have to seek wider value in procurement and not just procure on cost.

The procurement process for the construction of the University's new £330m town centre campus – one of the UK's largest higher education construction projects in recent years – has social impact clauses included. The university's tendering processes means that local companies are proactively invited to tender for contracts.

Taking the approach more widely, the university has also launched a £1bn Challenge campaign encourages other UK universities to follow Northampton's lead, and spend at least £1bn of their combined annual procurement budget with suppliers that can deliver social impact. Universities can buy direct from social ventures, social enterprises such as mutual or co-operatives, or work with private sector partners to ensure they embed social value into their supply chain. The Challenge encourages institutions to use their stature to improve their local economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

Convening power

Conversations, cooperation and partnerships with influential local actors – such as councils, combined authorities, local enterprise partnerships and health services – were prominent in our evidence as being extremely important to creating a better future for local areas. Yet working with local government and other influential local institutions is likely to be the least visible element of the civic university (although, arguably the most effective).

In the current policy landscape, the university role in Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) is, we believe, the principal embodiment of this support for local decision making. LIS are due to be in effect across England from April 2020, so will be under development across much of the country during 2019, with LEPs leading their development in all the parts of the country that do not have a Mayoral Combined Authority. Universities playing a leading role in the development of their LIS, and subsequently in their implementation, offer an excellent platform to highlight the positive work they are doing and subsequently in their implementation.

Recommendation 10: Role models as employers, procurers and brokers

We recommend that all universities consider afresh how they can maximise the positive economic impact they have in their local communities. For instance by:

- **Acting as a model employer.** Each university employs hundreds – if not thousands – of people. The impact of being a good employer will resonate across local labour markets. **All universities should commit to paying the Living Wage to all employees.** Other options could include a focus on hiring residents from the most deprived local wards; and supporting staff (and student) volunteering to help tackle strategically important local issues.

Using their procurement power to maximise local economic benefit by seeking opportunities to 'buy local'. Examples here include using procurement approaches to explicitly support the employment of graduates within a local area, and by pledging to pay all local suppliers within 30 days.

Ensuring that senior university staff use their power as locally valued honest brokers to support local public sector boards and bodies in efforts to improve local economies. This includes sitting on LEP boards, contributing expertise to policy analysis and engaging in the development of local industrial strategies.

- Indeed some went further, saying that universities should be looking to train the local public services leaders of the future, suggesting that if graduates of 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.

Universities do not just impact local economies directly through their own actions as anchor bodies, they are crucibles of invention and innovation.

- As a result, universities across the country have led the creation of many hundreds of spin out companies working at the cutting edge of numerous technologies, and have helped to support these (and other similar start-up companies) by providing co-working spaces.
- These spin outs are usually located near to their parent institution, so generating high quality jobs, and can expand rapidly, building supply chains into local areas.
- But sheer intellectual power and expertise in particular areas of study can attract those who wish to capture some of that innovation, leading to the relocation and/or creation of companies nearby, for example at Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Park.
- Similarly, we heard positive evidence about how universities' support – both directly for cultural activities and indirectly via creative courses taught and the workforce subsequently produced – has delivered strong local impacts.
- This can take the form of promoting and supporting existing creative bodies. But it also includes the creation (both directly and indirectly) of new artistic organisations and companies that spread cultural benefits, create jobs, act as a draw for tourists and generate civic pride.
- Furthermore, the point was made that creatively trained graduates who stay in the area don't benefit just creative sector companies, they can create value for companies in all sectors.

Economic catalysts

Universities impact on local labour markets stretches well beyond their direct influence as major employers:

- We discuss above the absolutely vital role that the HE sector will have to help deliver the adult education that the national workforce will need in the coming years, and the hugely valuable part that universities can play in retaining students post-graduation. This retention can be graduates working in companies spun out of the university, or just choosing to stay in the area and so helping to bolster local skills levels.
- Alternatively it can be in local public services (especially where particular areas are struggling with recruitment e.g. the University of Bradford, partnering with Mid-Yorkshire Trust, opened a school of adult nursing in Dewsbury – a more deprived area where recruitment of nurses had been proving difficult.

Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship

The ICCE, part of Goldsmiths University, delivers entrepreneurship, cultural management and policy education to the creative and cultural sectors, and supports research into new approaches to business, financial models and management in the Creative Economy. It merges Goldsmiths' capability and expertise in creative and cultural sectors with a recognition that this sector is of increasing economic importance – 9% of the UK's GDP and a rising part of its export trade and total employment. Business skills, management skills and entrepreneurial skills with a specific understanding of the sector are needed to support its continued growth. The University works closely with creative sector to provide focused training with external partners – thus advancing both the academic discipline and also the practical applications of this to the sector.



The Lincoln Institute of Agri-Food Technology

The Institute is a specialist research institute of the University of Lincoln and focuses on research into greater productivity into agriculture and food growing. It works closely and collaboratively with agriculture providers and combines academic research with practical learning with an aim to develop technology which add value or solve challenges across the food chain, 'from farm to fork'.



Universities as global actors

The economic role of universities is not limited to the local. Universities also act as economic connections to the world with a growing variety of ways in which universities' global activities can have direct and tangible civic value. Local actors and businesses are starting to realise the potential benefits of having a civically-minded, globally-connected institution on their doorsteps – with more ambitious collaborative initiatives being developed, which include everything from destination-marketing and tourism through to international student translation services for export-curious SMEs and joint programmes to support foreign direct investment and localised export activity.

These global links deliver positive effects in both directions:

- Through international student recruitment, UK Universities act as major exporters in their local economies. International students are part of the new diaspora – when they return to their home country, they become soft-power ambassadors. The economic impact of this is particularly important in regional economies outside of London. And the financial sustainability this recruitment delivers then acts to support direct expenditure towards other areas of civic activity. In addition, international students bring wider social and cultural benefits to their local areas.
- UK Universities secure international funding to support local economic and social development, with an exceptional track-record in securing EU research, innovation and structural funds that directly support local economies, communities and businesses – in particular SMEs and entrepreneurship, supply-chains and skills. The consequential impact of these European structural funds has been substantial and widespread over many years.
- As providers of world-class talent and innovation, universities are critical to attracting foreign direct investment and businesses choosing to set-up in regional economies, which in turn can deliver new business rates income to support (via the local government finance system) local frontline public services. Many universities work with local

investment agencies and sub-national DIT agencies through their business development operations and science parks to try and attract international investment and business to the UK, for example Cambridge and Silicon Fen.

- Universities and their international alumni base can drive the international reputation of local areas, providing the UK with a major soft-power advantage across the world, with this dividend also percolating down to local levels.

- UK universities with global connections can support civic internationalisation and exports. Those with a well-established presence overseas, for example with an international campus, are increasingly using these as bridging points and soft-landing spaces for local businesses, civic partners and cultural and educational exchange.

Students supporting SMEs to export: University of Nottingham Languages for Business

Part of the University of Nottingham’s Careers and Employability offer for language students, Languages for Business is a free service providing language skills and cultural expertise for small to medium sized businesses (SMEs) in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Whether it be a company looking

to start exporting goods and services or attract business from abroad, the project helps businesses to succeed in a global market place through student placements and projects which allow organisations to understand and overcome the key challenges in cross-cultural communication.



Students with Chinese language skills working with company director, Kayleigh Renberg-Fawcett, of the China Britain Football Centre

Negative Economic Impacts

Despite these obvious economic positives, we also heard about some economic negatives – or at the very least, perceived negatives – arising from universities size and activity. One of these negatives is that universities are exempt from business rates, and student accommodation is exempt from council tax, meaning a reduced tax base available to local government. Another of these negatives is that university students have an impact on housing availability, pricing local residents out of homes near to town or city centres.

It is important not to overstate these negatives. The focus groups we held, the written submissions we received and the oral representations that we heard all majored on the direct economic positives created by a university’s activity. Equally, it is difficult to see what universities could do about the negatives that were attributed to them. For instance, the examples given above are influenced to a much, much greater extent by national housing and tax policy than they are by the activity of a university.

Recommendation 11: Catalysts for local economic growth

We recommend that all universities undertake activity that acts as an enabler for local economic growth. For instance by:

- **Providing business support for university spin outs.** Universities across the country have led the creation of many hundreds of spin out companies working at the cutting edge of numerous technologies. These spin-out companies are frequently based close to their parent institution and generate high quality jobs, with the potential to expand rapidly, building supply chains into local areas. A university can increase the chances of success of its spin outs by providing support services such as low-cost premises, guidance on how to file patents, and information on how to access growth financing.
- **Connecting the local business community with the rest of the world.** As providers of world-class talent and innovation, Universities are critical to attracting foreign direct investment and businesses choosing to set-up in regional economies, which in turn can deliver new business rates income to support (via the local government finance system) local frontline public services. UK universities with global connections can support civic internationalisation and exports, for instance by using international campuses as bridging points and soft-landing spaces for local businesses and civic partners. Universities and their international alumni base can also drive the international reputation of local areas, providing towns and cities – and the UK as a whole – with a major soft-power advantage across the world, with this dividend also percolating down to local levels.
- **Ensuring that their estate development plans have maximum impact on local placemaking and economic development.** The scale of investment in campus development over the last decade has been very significant. At its best, this development has not just focused on the building needs of the university, but has taken a wider ‘masterplanning’ approach that looks to enhance the whole area in which the university is located. Opportunities to create new office and industrial space for local business have been taken as part of this enlightened approach, actively engaging with the local community, and ought to become the norm for any civic university undertaking a major investment programme. More prosaically, a really simple change that some universities could make would be to open up their campus to the general public and advertising the fact. If a café or a lecture series is theoretically open to the public but no one ever actually goes, it is not really so

iii. Supporting the cultural wellbeing of a place

For all that this Commission firmly believes that there needs to be more, and more strategic, civic activity by UK universities, the fact is that having a university is already a source of pride for local areas across the country. Our research found that even in the least enthusiastic areas there were many more times those who were proud of their universities than those who were not.

Some of this satisfaction will derive from the various benefits discussed above, most notably educational and economic, that they bring to their host areas. But the impact of a university reaches much further than that and can play a fundamental role in helping to define how a community feels about itself. In this section, we will look at two of the other main ways that civic universities can positively impact their areas and generate civic pride.

Culture

Culture is key to the two-way links between university and local community, building confidence and aspirations and helping define identity and place. It also important in attracting and retaining talented staff and students.

Culture influence is a term used to capture a variety of activity. The arts, heritage and the creative industries – to name but a few – are all subsets of the UK’s cultural output. While often interlinked, these subsets have distinctive characteristics that means they are not interchangeable. Hence, a university’s cultural influence as an anchor institution covers a wide-range of topics and disciplines.

The evidence shows that that many of the universities that we spoke to were involved to varying degrees in participating in and contributing to the cultural life of their areas and also in many cases to helping to grow the impressive success of the cultural and creative Industries through work with local partners.

The varied activity that counts as a university’s cultural influence was evident in the examples provided to the Commission.

Derby Theatre

Derby Theatre, as well as being a regional theatre, has a strong partnership with the University of Derby. The theatre acts as a 'learning theatre' offering a range of undergraduate and masters courses for anyone interested in developing their skills in technical theatre or performance.

Specialist academic teams at the University work alongside the professional theatre team so that students benefit from a truly unique and inspirational blend of theatre experience and academic expertise.

Students from the courses then have the opportunities to take this practical qualification and enter into the professional theatre world through graduate internships at the theatre and a broader artist development mentoring programme.

The National Trust's University Partnerships

- The University of Manchester has been working with one of the early industrial revolution copper mills, Quarry Bank, a National Trust site near Manchester Airport. The research of one of the University's professors has been used to tell the story of the mill, dispelling myths of grey, miserable, and drab places, and presenting a more accurate picture that is more colourful and far richer.
- National Trust, Oxford, and Innovate UK have a 3-year partnership, which encompasses historical, cultural and environmental issues. This programme includes telling the story of Jewish country houses in the Thames Valley, finding and presenting information about individual Jewish families, as well as the bigger story of their migration to Britain.

There are also more indirect ways through which a university can have a positive civic impact via culture. One example is student volunteers helping out at cultural events. Another is students' extra-curricular activities, such as putting on live music and comedy shows.

The civic nature of these examples of cultural activity is obvious – it makes more culture available and accessible to both residents and students. It is, however, important to note that a university's cultural activity is not typically driven

by altruism. More often than not universities and their students benefit from it too, particularly through the knowledge sharing that is derived from cultural partnerships.

Despite the overwhelming positives we heard about, we also heard about some barriers that prevent universities having cultural influence:

- **Geographic imbalances.** The UK's cultural activity – like in many sectors of the economy more generally – is heavily concentrated in the Greater South East. In the rest of the country, small organisations tend to form small clusters of cultural organisations. These clusters do not necessarily understand how to deal with the large and complex organisations that universities can be.
- **Inability to measure cultural value.** It is difficult – and, as a result, imprecise – to measure the benefit of cultural activity to the economy and society. As such, cultural activity can suffer from being thought of through one-dimensional calculations (such as recording the typical arts graduate's earnings in the labour market), which exclude intangible benefits that may arise. In short, these narrow measures can dominate a university's attitude to culture.
- **Cultural elitism.** A written submission to the Commission noted that cultural events held on a campus may be "culturally elitist", as certain demographics within the local population may be reluctant to visit university sites. While this may be true, it was also noted by a witness in one of our evidence sessions that there is no "quick fix" to democratise access to culture. But there is room here for more conscious co-production: less of the university providing cultural activities and more of it learning from its local community and communicating this with a national, even global audience.

There is no obvious course for a university to take to overcome these barriers. They are deep-rooted and complex and are not created solely by universities.

That said, the consensus of the panel at our public evidence session on culture, arts and heritage was that universities have an opportunity to describe more clearly their impact in culture. Specifically, there are concerns that university guidance for

school leavers on what degree course to take can undermine arts subjects by promoting STEM subject areas, with the same message being echoed within careers guidance in the schools system. This is being reinforced by, for example, Russell Group universities identifying and defining creative A-levels as ‘facilitating’ subject areas which are not given the same status in terms of entry.

These issues are particularly worrying given that we heard from experts that creativity will be key to employment in a future where automation and artificial intelligence is increasingly defining the labour market. Changing this narrative will require greater prestige being placed upon culture by universities, their staff, students, potential students and the local residents.

We would therefore urge all universities to challenge their own attitudes to cultural activity, asking themselves whether they place sufficient weight on the importance and benefit of courses related to culture and to cultural activity more generally. One option here is to help to encourage the STEAM agenda in local schools where the STEM subjects combined with addressing creativity (including design) and entrepreneurship are combined, to better fit labour market needs of the future.

Another issue that was repeatedly referenced by the experts we spoke to on the subject of culture, arts and heritage was the link between cultural engagement and participation and mental health. The evidence linking participation in cultural activity to improvements in mental health – and health and well-being improvements more generally – is broad and expanding, and has led to the growth of ‘social prescribing’.

We therefore strongly encourage the creation of ‘Cultural Clusters’ to develop long-term relationships between universities and local cultural organisations that can be used to understand more about how culture can improve the mental health of both students and local residents. In turn, this will support the government in understanding an issue that it is increasingly prominent part of the national debate around health.

Physical presence

A university’s physical assets affect the look and feel of a town or city. How acutely they affect the look and feel of place can depend on a number of variables, ranging from design and size, to location, to the size of the town or city where they are based. Whatever the context of the asset itself, the physical presence of a university is something that is visible and tangible, and is a tool for engaging with the local population.

There are numerous examples of civic positives related to physical presence. Local non-student populations are given access to sports facilities. Green space belonging to universities is made freely available to every local person to use. Local residents will visit health facilities attached to university campuses. Cultural spaces such as art galleries put on open exhibitions that anyone can visit.

The Hive

The Hive is the UK’s first library which is jointly a university library and public library. It recognises the role of a university in acting as a physical asset and offering this to the local community.

The Hive has over a quarter of a million books and as well as lending to students and the local community it also has a busy events programme, with regular public lectures, exhibitions and performances. Since it opened, book borrowing and library visitor numbers have soared, with an increase of over 200% in the number of books issued, and a 100% plus increase in visits compared to the previous public Worcester Library.



Universities can also boost the physical presence of an area even when it is not in their immediate locality, through branch campuses and other ways in which they work in higher education ‘cold spots’.

There are also some negatives that are associated with a university’s physical presence. As mentioned above, local residents have complained about the construction of new off-campus, purpose built student accommodation. Other prominent gripes were that student houses (known as Homes of Multiple Occupancy, or HMOs) could negatively impact on neighbourhoods with overflowing rubbish bins, and that students increased the incidence of anti-social behaviour. However it was notable that all the universities we spoke to were keen to be good neighbours and, as such, were very much alive to these and similar concerns in their localities and had measures in place to try and combat them.

The total amount of universities’ physical assets is not set in stone. Universities across the country own significant amounts of land and are collectively, at any given time, considering dozens of major developments or redevelopments of this asset base. Any such projects will inevitably have long lasting and often substantial impacts on host areas. While we are confident that, in the majority of cases, there is strong joined up work between the university and the relevant local authorities to maximise the potential economic and social benefits of such regeneration, it is possible that not all such development projects have been progressed in as collaborative manner with local councils as would be ideal.

It also appears clear that some universities do better than others in attracting local populations to use its physical assets. A polling exercise that we conducted at the start of the Commission asked residents of towns and cities across the UK when, if ever, was the last time they had visited their local university (for example, the campus or a university building). The lowest percentage of residents (15%) who had visited their local university in the last year was in a small city in the West Midlands; the highest percentage of residents (59%) who had visited their local university in the last year was in a small city in the East of England.

Over the last decade there has been substantial growth in the amount of money universities have raised from private donations. The Commission believes that universities, at the very least, should use the capacity and capabilities of their development teams to raise funding for place-based projects and initiatives that provide mutual benefit to local communities and the university. These would not necessarily have to be substantial scale projects and programmes; a few innovative pilot schemes can enrich any place. Of course, there are examples of this already taking place. But we think this could be expanded upon so that as a minimum the development team is specifically tasked to raise funding for a small number of community projects per year, in partnership with other civic organisations.

Some universities have existed for centuries. Some are not even thirty yeasers old. But regardless of age, many have grown up around a civic role and it remains a key priority for them. At this time of change in the sector, and in light of national and global policy challenges, universities should build upon this heritage, and focus on how they can create real civic institutions for the 21st century.

Recommendation 12: The creation of University Community Foundations

Universities should utilise the capability and capacity of their development teams to raise funding for community place-based project to boost the cultural impact in an area. This could be done directly, but we also think there is value in establishing what we call 'University Community Foundations' (UCFs).

These would be collaborative foundations, in line with the universities' charitable objectives, and which aligned with existing charitable activity in the civic area, and would act as a focus for universities' financial and in-kind contributions to the cultural development of an area.

UCFs could provide a focus for drawing down additional private philanthropic giving – where place is becoming an increasing focus of philanthropic funders particularly in areas of deprivation – as well as assisting universities who are looking to develop more focused and strategic approach to the support they offer to their local community.

Each University Community Foundation will have a unique culture and focus depending on the needs of their place and expertise of the university but the general principles underpinning them would be:

- Each UCF would be an independent charity, supporting projects in their local area only, with the university (or in some areas, one of the local universities) being the charity's member (often described as a corporate parent).
- The member would appoint the Chair and other members of the Trustee Board. Similar to best practice for corporate foundations, there could be members of the governing body from the sponsoring university/ies and from outside, for example civic leaders, the wider staff body and local civil society.
- The UCF could be funded in a number of ways. One approach would be for the university to provide an annual donation (as is the case with many corporate

foundations) and/or additional in-kind support (e.g. some space on the campus and seconding a member of the development team). The UCF could also have a small fundraising arm for projects by tapping into the growing interest of place-based initiatives from public and private funders.

We believe that UCFs would prove a better vehicle than universities themselves for supporting and raising funding for place based projects for a number of reasons, starting with the fact that they sidestep the problem of preconceived perceptions of what a university does. The explicit charitable focus on supporting community projects would be attractive to potential funders, who may also feel that they have greater ability to shape a project with a smaller foundation than a university.

And being one step removed from the university enables the UCF to be a neutral arbiter between the community, university and funder[s]. Furthermore many place-based charities delivering community projects are small; having the capacity of a university behind a foundation would reassure funders of deliverability.

A University Community Foundation would have the dual benefit of being integrated into a community, while having the capacity of the university behind it. As such, it could empower community voices through its governance structure, enabling civic and community leaders to shape its strategy and activities, ensuring the themes of the Foundation were based on a mutually agreed definition of the needs of their area.

We also believe that UCFs may well prove better at communicating the impact universities are having on local areas, which is not always a strength in many areas at present. Whilst such projects may never be a priority for university communications teams, an independent UCF will be very keen to communicate its impact, not least to its partners, funders and trustees.



Appendix 1: Some model civic universities

To illustrate what civic universities might and might not look like in a range of contexts, we have developed a short series of hypothetical case studies. These are inspired by real life examples but are very deliberately combinations of practice we have seen during the Commission, and should not be taken to be a view on what any particular university or universities are doing.

Case study 1: A city with two civic universities

In this large metropolitan area there are two universities – one older than the other – and a range of other post 16 provision, including a number of FE colleges and lots of private training provision.

The universities have a collaborative relationship, helped by the fact that they do not typically compete for the same students. They have worked together and with other institutions – including through the LEP – to jointly map the predicted economic needs of the area and the skills shortages predicted, which focus around technical and applied skills in information technology as well as more advanced coding, and growth of financial services and supporting professional services for the supply chain. They can all describe the ‘local’ area they can impact as civic actors. They recognise that other institutions have considerable civic and economic power, including a thriving local government

under a Combined Authority, and major private sector employers.

The universities have thought about how they can each, respectively, contribute to these skills gaps. They also recognise that graduate degrees are not necessarily the whole answer and that the FE colleges and private training providers will play a role. Collectively, they are designing and offering courses and training to meet the local needs, including for school pupils and low skilled adult learners. Overlap of provision is minimised and they check frequently with employers and students and collect data to ensure the content of provision is what is needed and is leading to employment and wage gains.

Students come to these universities from within the metropolitan area but also nationally and internationally. The universities work collaboratively to ensure graduates are aware of the many local employment opportunities that are available in the region, but many do depart for London.

Academics are funded to do world leading research but also try wherever possible to consider the local impact of this research and how it can be applied, though this is sometimes more descriptive than really impactful.

All of this activity is set out in a Civic University Agreement signed by both universities’ Vice Chancellors and the other major civic players

in the region. It has been collaboratively written and sets out clear goals and measurable impact targets across defined areas. This agreement drives budget allocation amongst both universities in areas including in teaching, research and other discretionary areas. It is also used as evidence to the KEF, and for bids to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, though it has had relatively low success in these areas to date.

On a daily basis, activity is led by a member of the senior management team in each university. They also meet frequently with other major anchor institutions to consider the wider civic environment and how they can all support it. Universities recognise there are times they will take the lead, times they will collaborate, and times they will step back. They measure their impact using traditional economic measures but also recognise their wider contribution including through creating a social and cultural infrastructure. They know what they want their local area, and their university, to look like in ten years and have a concrete and achievable plan to get there.

Case study 2: A rural civic university

The university is set in a relatively deprived area that is sparsely populated. There is no other university within 50 miles of the main campus although there is FE provision in the more urban areas across the sub region.

The local population is older than the UK average and less qualified. The major economic activity in the region is agriculture, and some tourism. In a couple of the towns, there is increasing demand for low and medium skilled labour to work in a new call centre and a commercial warehouse.

The university is absolutely clear that its role is both to be a University of Area X (i.e. to be a seat of learning) but also a University in Area X (i.e. to be a major anchor institution). It sees these roles as complementary and equally important. The University strategy focuses on how it can increase attainment in its local area and broaden participation into HE, and then retain graduates in the region.

The challenges of provision are augmented by the geography. The University is addressing this by establishing provision in local towns, co-locating space with FE colleges and other local civic providers. It has secured EU funding to make significant capital investment in new facilities and accommodation and is conscious of the economic spillover effects it can have by using as much local labour and suppliers as possible.

The University has worked with the LEP and the various local councils at all levels (of which there are many in their area) and the local NHS bodies to identify priorities. Public sector workers are a clear priority in an area where it is difficult to attract and retain skilled workers, but where because of low school aged standards, and an ageing and sickening population, there is

projected to be significant increases in teachers, doctors and allied health professionals needed. The University is trying to secure a new medical school and works closely with schools to deliver very large numbers of teacher training places.

The University also works with the major private sector employers and local FE providers to offer work focused training programmes for workers for the call centre and warehouse. Many school children have low aspirations in the region and HE participation is significantly below the average, so the university works with schools and other post 16 providers, including FE colleges and the local University Technical College, to raise attainment and aspirations to go on to tertiary study.

The University is interested in creating a Civic University Agreement, but the local partners are less engaged. Local government is fractured across many institutions and hollowed out by funding cuts. In the absence of a joint agreed way forward, the University doesn't consider that it needs an agreement to allow it to continue to play a major civic role in its very large 'local' area.

Case study 3: a university that is civically engaged, but not a civic university

The University is in a small city and is the only higher education provider in the area (as defined by existing local government boundaries which the university has adopted as the best way to describe its locality).

The local area is in many ways a microcosm of the UK. Economic participation, school attainment rates, adult qualification levels, crime rates, and health indicators are all around average. Students come to the university from the local area but also across the UK. There are a reasonable number of international students from the EU and few from elsewhere.

The University's priorities are to grow student numbers and increase its global reputation through the results in REF and higher citations in global research journals. The University is nervous about the possibility of falling income in future years driven by declining international students and changes to tuition fees.

The University is proud of its local area and can speak positively about it and its history and growth over the last fifty years or more. It can highlight a myriad of activities that it carries out in its local area – including cultural and social activities, partnerships with a number of third sector institutions, and Widening Participation activity. However, it is apparent that most of their civic engagement only reaches local population from wealthier neighbourhoods and it is not clear about the impact of its WP outreach programme. Senior people from the University sit on many committees and bodies and steering groups, some of which they have created and some of which are created by other civic institutions. Not all these activities have clear goals or any way of measuring success and some of them wither away when a key individual move on.

The local population is broadly supportive of the university but feel no real sense of attachment to it. A small number regularly attend free events that the university puts on or use its facilities. The population recognises that the university supports a large number of jobs in the city but has concerns about housing and transport pressures and localised crime hotspots in student areas. When asked, relatively few of the population describe the university as 'our university'. Local students who attend the university sometimes feel caught between 'town' and 'gown'.

The University does not have a Civic University Plan. It is starting to bring together the source material to consider whether it should have one and is doing so by collating all the current activities that the university does in the local area.

Case study 4: a civic university working in a Higher Education 'coldspot'

As part of their agreed Civic University Agreement, a university has committed to working in a 'cold spot' area some distance from their location. The university has strong capacity and a very civically minded senior team, and considers this to be a natural progression in how it can deliver impact.

The 'cold spot' area is in an area often described as 'left behind' in government documentation. It is an area where patterns of industrial growth and consumerism have led to declining economic participation in the area (including a decline of UK tourism) and an exodus of many of the young population.

There are two FE colleges in the local area who are already working together with an emphasis on meeting local labour market demands and helping to create support for a growing self-employment sector in the creative industries. The University starts its activity by working with these FE colleges to see where the gaps are and where it can contribute helpfully. It decides not to build permanent HE provision in the town – and there is also no capital funding to do so. Instead, the strategy is to offer HE in FE, and augment existing provision through the well regarded colleges.

The University sees that it can add value through the provision of Level 6 training, and also supporting school based activity – where attainment levels are significantly below average and it is very hard to attract teachers. There is no local teacher training provision in the area because of a lack of an HE partner so that quickly becomes a priority, in clear agreement with local schools and the local council.

Activity is coordinated by one group on which representatives from all the main institutions – local government, NHS, FE, and university – sit. Although the plan is for some academics to travel to the area regularly and focus some research there, this is harder to achieve in practice.

Nevertheless, the local participants have a plan which has defined their area of activity and set clear goals which are measurable. This is set out in a jointly signed Civic University Agreement – meaning that the university now has two separate agreements with two different sets of partners.

The university invests a considerable amount of its Widening Participation budget into these activities but funding from other partners is tight. A lot rests on the partnership being able to access central funding pots, including the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Opportunity Areas funding, and funds from the Industrial Strategy.

The local population is positive about activity in the local area, but there is some scepticism as to whether it will have impact and be sustainable in the long term. There are unresolved issues about whether the university should be focused on technical training or whether it ought to offer more classically academic subjects. There is also a question about whether success means that young people from the area can become higher skilled and move away, or whether success means improving the skills base locally and retaining young people.

Appendix 2: Land Grant universities in the USA

Civic engagement was the *raison d'être* behind the establishment of US Land Grant universities under the terms of the 1862 Morrill Act. However many universities lost sight of this mission in the later part of 20th Century in the pursuit of science for its own sake. In 1995 the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges with the support of the Kellogg Foundation established a high level Commission on the future of these universities. The Kellogg Commission reported in 2001 under the title *Returning to our Roots* and urged universities to become once more the place based transformational institutions they were intended to be. Recommendations under the headings of: the student experience; student access; the engaged institution; a learning society; a coherent campus culture; and learning, discovery and engagement in a new and different world are still of relevance. In relation to engagement, the Commission proposed a seven-part test for universities, and these set out below in full as they are also relevant to the Civic University Commission.

1. Responsiveness. *We need to ask ourselves periodically if we are listening to the communities, regions, and states we serve. Are we asking the right questions? Do we offer our services in the right way at the right time? Are our communications clear? Do we provide space and, if need be, resources for preliminary community-university discussions of the public problem to be addressed? Above all,*

do we really understand that in reaching out, we are also obtaining valuable information for our own purposes?

2. Respect for partners. *Throughout this report we have tried to emphasize that the purpose of engagement is not to provide the university's superior expertise to the community but to encourage joint academic-community definitions of problems, solutions, and definitions of success. Here we need to ask ourselves if our institutions genuinely respect the skills and capacities of our partners in collaborative projects. In a sense we are asking that we recognize fully that we have almost as much to learn in these efforts as we have to offer.*

3. Academic neutrality. *Of necessity, some of our engagement activities will involve contentious issues— whether they draw on our science and technology, social science expertise, or strengths in the visual and performing arts. Do pesticides contribute to fish kills? If so, how? How does access to high quality public schools relate to economic development in minority communities? Is student “guerrilla theater” justified in local landlord tenant disputes. These questions often have profound social, economic, and political consequences. The question we need to ask ourselves here is whether outreach maintains the university in the role of neutral facilitator and source of information when public policy issues, particularly contentious ones, are at stake.*

4. Accessibility. *Our institutions are confusing to outsiders. We need to find ways to help inexperienced potential partners negotiate this complex structure so that what we have to offer is more readily available. Do we properly publicize our activities and resources? Have we made a concentrated effort to increase community awareness of the resources and programs available from us that might be useful? Above all, can we honestly say that our expertise is equally accessible to all the constituencies of concern within our states and communities, including minority constituents?*

5. Integration. *Our institutions need to find way to integrate their service mission with their responsibilities for developing intellectual capital and trained intelligence. Engagement offers new opportunities for integrating institutional scholarship with the service and teaching missions of the university. Here we need to worry about whether the institutional climate fosters outreach, service, and engagement. A commitment to interdisciplinary work is probably indispensable to an integrated approach. In particular we need to examine what kinds of incentives are useful in encouraging faculty and student commitment to engagement. Will respected faculty and student leaders not only participate but also serve as advocates for the program?*

6. Coordination. *A corollary to integration, the coordination issue involves making sure the left hand knows what the right hand is doing. The task of coordinating service activities—whether through a senior advisor to the president, faculty councils, or thematic structures such as the Great Cities Project or “capstone” courses—clearly requires a lot of attention. Are academic units dealing with each other productively? Do the communications and government relations offices understand the engagement agenda? Do faculty, staff, and students need help in developing the skills of translating expert knowledge into something the public can appreciate.*

7. Resource partnerships. *The final test asks whether the resources committed to the task are sufficient. Engagement is not free; it costs. The most obvious costs are those associated with the time and effort of staff, faculty, and students. But they also include curriculum and program costs, and possible limitations on institutional choices. All of these have to be considered. Where will these funds be found? In special state allocations? Corporate sponsorship and investment? Alliances and strategic partnerships of various kinds with government and industry? Or from new fee structures for services delivered? The most successful engagement efforts appear to be those associated with strong and healthy relationships with partners in government, business, and the non-profit world.*

Building on this work the American Association of State Colleges and Universities published a report on universities *Stepping forward as Stewards of Place*. The report also resonates with the CUC in arguing that:

- Transforming engagement from a cost centre to a revenue centre would result in stronger and more vibrant communities and regions better prepared to for the economic and social challenges they face.
- There was a need for different state agencies to identify policies that might stand in the way of creative and entrepreneurial engagement activity by universities.
- University presidents needed to ensure that an engaged institution can take its shape from the community/region it serves.
- Engagement should be based on a rigorous analysis of regional needs.
- There should be procedures for including external publics in institutional activities.
- Public engagement should be aligned with the scholarship of discovery and have an academic legitimacy so that it is embedded in the culture of the institution.
- Universities need to improve the alignment of Faculty (academic) roles with engagement initiatives.
- There should be frameworks for student involvement in engagement.
- Capacity needs to be created to monitor engagement, measuring what matters not just what can be counted.
- Taking every opportunity to indicate the ways that the future of the institutions depends on the vitality of the community/region in a way that both parties' benefit.

- Engaging with citizens of the region in strategic planning of the future to identify immediate joint actions that can contribute to that future.
- Provide more intensive professional development opportunities for academic and professional staff so that they can learn how to be more effectively engaged with the community and region as part of their normal activities.

In the period since these reports were published the need for US universities to re-assert their civic mission has become even more pressing. A 2018 summary of interviews with Presidents of 27 leading universities published under the title *Land Grant Universities for the Future: Higher Education for the Public Good* has highlighted the threats and opportunities arising in the form of left behind places and people. The authors argue that land grant universities must position themselves as standing for distinctly different values than all other universities, countering the long standing drive to make institutions more homogenised. This works against the historical strength of the US H.E. system as reflected in the diversity of missions. To counter this trend, land grant universities need to re-establish the bond or covenant with the regions they serve. The interviews with Presidents highlighted a number of tensions in seeking to achieve this:

- The requirement for narrowly defined efficiency gains to counter declining funding.
- Research prowess versus teaching and service responsibilities.
- Demand for research knowledge for its own sake versus more applied work.
- The focus on rankings versus access and affordability.

- Meeting the needs of rural communities versus those of urban areas.
- Global reach versus closer-to-home impact.
- The value of degrees versus other forms of learning.
- Governing board members who fail to fail to understand the value of higher education in the context of the land grant mission.
- The unequal distribution of the engagement effort across different disciplines and the link to promotion and tenure.

Notwithstanding these challenges the authors conclude that the land grant mission is alive and well in US institutions. Campus Compact, a federal membership organisation of over 1,000 colleges and universities from across the states that are committed to the public purpose of higher education through civic education and community development.

“Campus Compact advances the public purposes of colleges and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility. Campus Compact envisions colleges and universities as vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy, committed to educating students for responsible citizenship in ways that both deepen their education and improve the quality of community life. We challenge all of higher education to make civic and community engagement an institutional priority”

Appendix 3: Excerpts from our opinion research on the civic role of universities

The public are more proud of their local universities than political commentary would suggest.

Given the discussions 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.

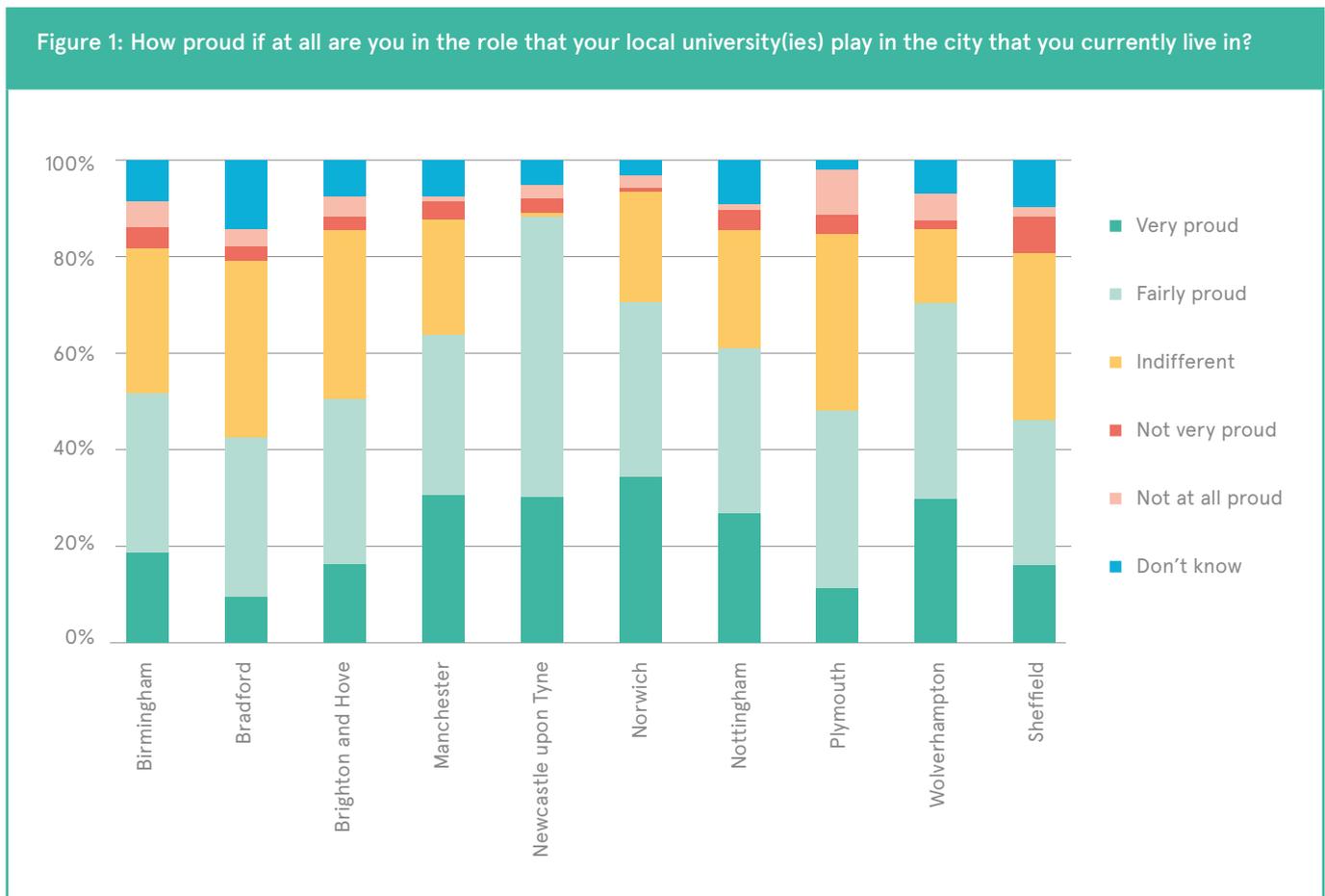
This was also true in our focus groups. Participants across groups felt pride in their universities. There was a sense the universities "put them on the map". For example, participants in one city were able to identify that there were several famous scientists teaching at the city's main university. There was also a clear understanding that the local NHS benefited from the presence of high-quality universities.

That said, we did not get the sense that the people we talked to would rush to put in money to set up a university the way that the population of Sheffield (and other cities) did.

But different geographies and classes viewed things differently.

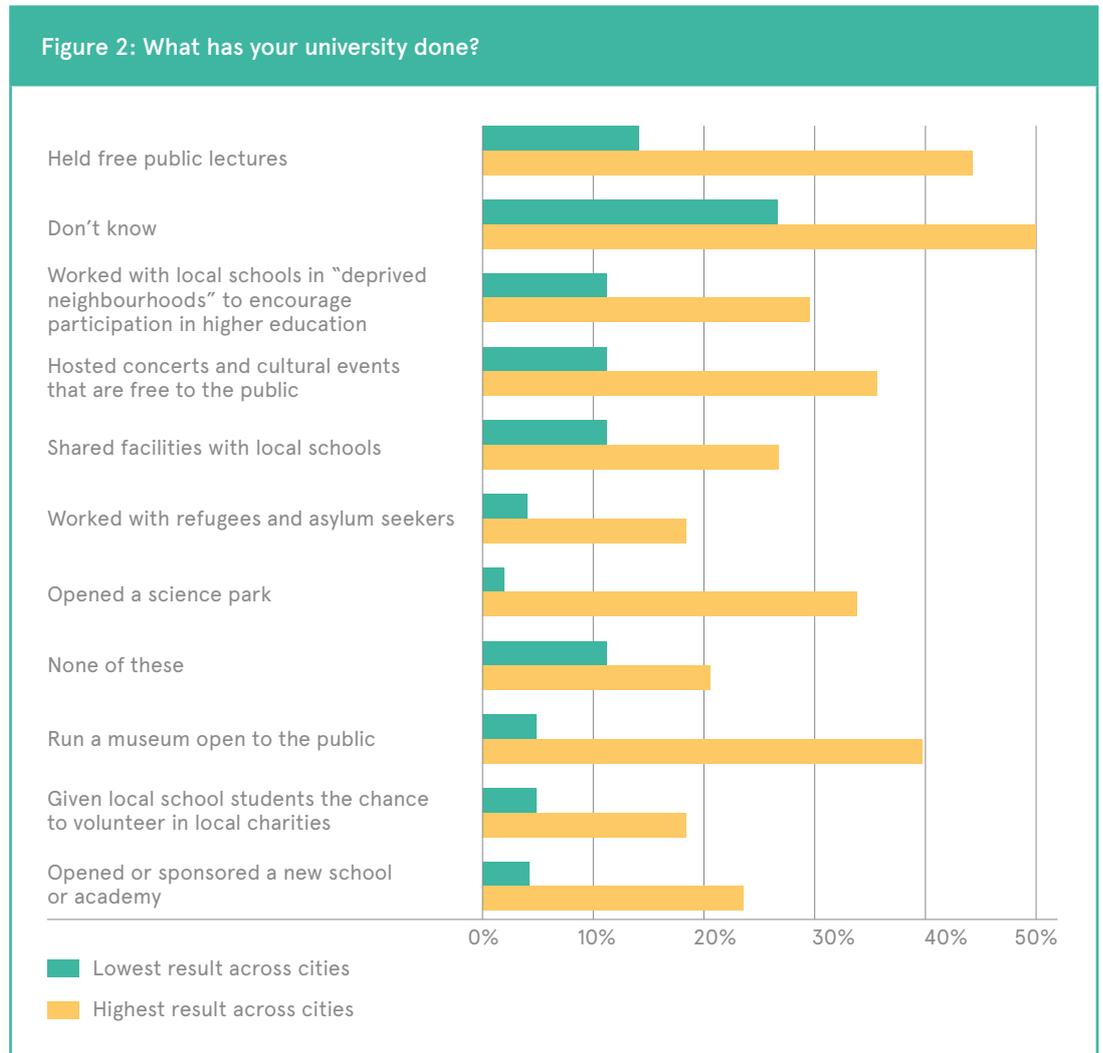
In our focus groups: better educated, civically involved people were very positive about the university. Almost 80% of social group ABC1 respondents had visited their local university across the ten cities. For others, knowledge of what the university did locally was much lower.

Interestingly we saw major differences between places. It's notable that in large metropolitan cities that are succeeding economically, the view towards local universities was much higher than in places which were smaller or economically depressed. This fed into the interaction with the university (just 21% had visited their local university in the last 12 months in Bradford) but also their views of its benefits. Pride was lower.



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.



In smaller places, for obvious reasons, students’ presence was more felt – and was more annoying to residents. The spouse of a Commissioner responded to the review with the question ‘will this sort out the local parking?’. This was a sentiment echoed by many in our focus groups who found the crowding, nightlife, and restriction on local housing a major frustration.

Students were also seen as a potentially major benefit. We 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:

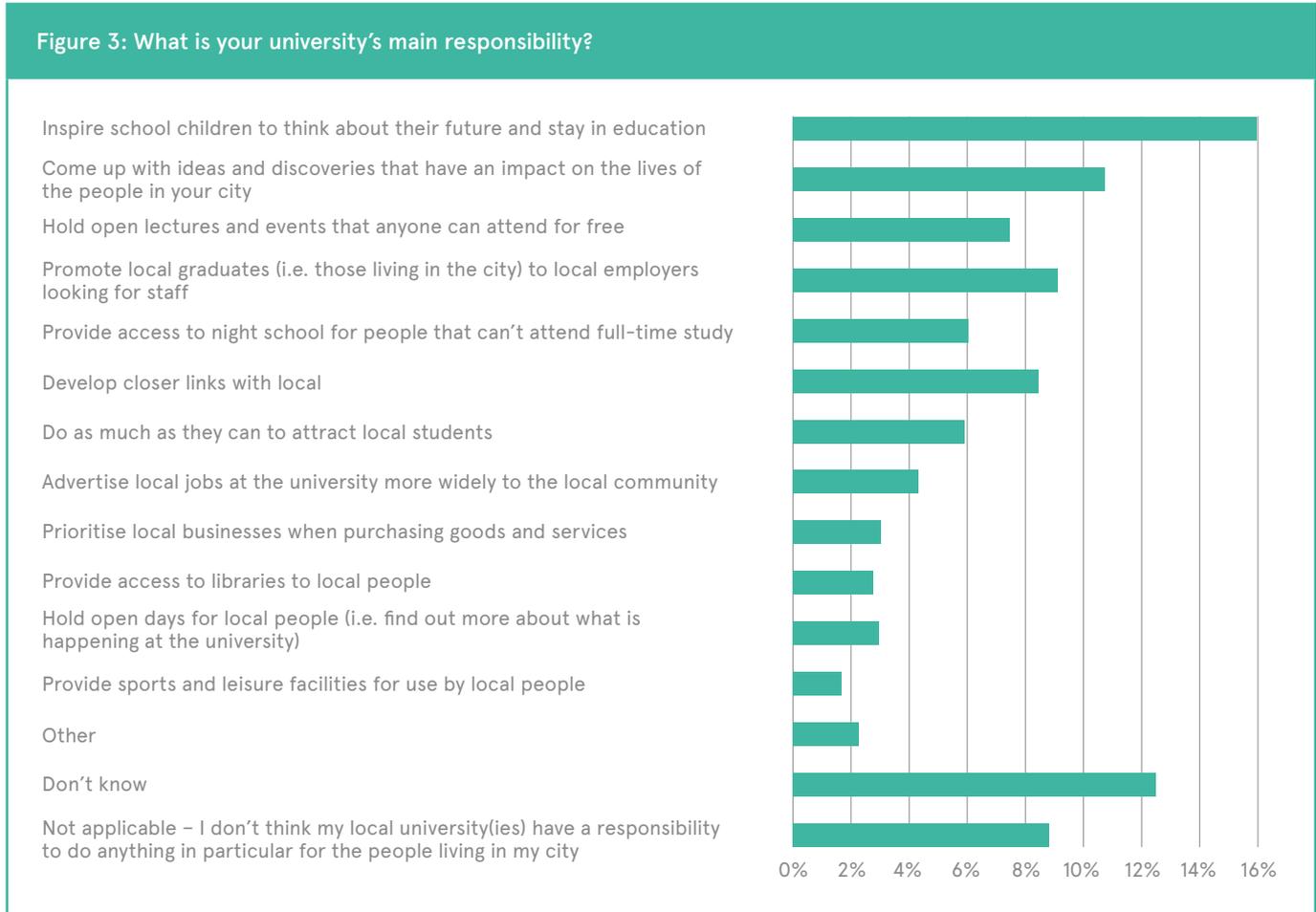
- Innovative research being carried out locally (this was usually the top answer by a considerable margin);
- Students from other countries coming to study;
- Students using local bars and pubs (presumably because it stimulated the local economy). Interestingly in our focus group we found that some people 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.

The public want universities to localise their national and international obligation

In terms of the main responsibility of universities, four themes came out strongly:

- The impact the university ought to have on local pupils.
- Ensuring that ideas and discoveries have a local impact.
- Holding open lectures and events.
- Promoting local graduates to local employers



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.



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