

## UPP Foundation Civic University Commission: How can organisations and universities get involved?

### Introducing the Civic University Commission

Universities are facing a host of challenges. Politicians and commentators from all sides are asking fundamental questions about their purpose, whether they provide 'value for money', and whether they serve students and taxpayers. As universities have become more business-like entities, attracting large numbers of international students and investment, they have started to receive criticism over their behaviour. This is in part due to the political environment and the debate about student fees. However, it can also be seen as the sector failing to demonstrate its wider 'public benefit' as the narrative on higher education has shifted towards individual student outcomes over the last two decades.

Consequently, in 2018 the UPP Foundation has established the Civic University Commission. The Commission aims to shift the debate on the value of higher education as well as help universities understand how to sustainably maintain an international focus – both on students and research – while serving those close to home.

The Commission is chaired by **Lord Kerslake**, former Head of the Civil Service, and the panel comprises of expertise drawn from the worlds of policy, business, civil society and the university sector itself. A small initial group of university and industry partners (University of Nottingham, University of Manchester, University of Portsmouth, University of Lincoln, UUK, Shakespeare Martineau, Public First) are supporting the development of the Commission.

It will be publicly launched in March 2018 and report in October 2018 – but we anticipate its programme of events and engagement will run beyond this point via dissemination events and a series of civic summits across the UK that will look at how recommendations can be tailored to different local contexts.

### What is the Civic University Commission trying to achieve?

Despite the topicality of the issue, there is currently no report, forum or bank of evidence that brings together best-practice and clear, targeted policy recommendations aimed at the university sector, local and regional policymakers and civic partners, or national government.



The Commission will seek to develop these recommendations, but use the act of evidence-gathering, engagement and debate as a mechanism to raise the profile of the issue amongst national and civic stakeholders from policy, industry, the media and the sector.

The Commission will adopt a dynamic 'Touring Select Committee' model – developing policy recommendations and influencing decision-makers nationally by establishing a programme of localised evidence-gathering and dissemination sessions hosted by a select number of universities from cities and towns across the UK. This hyper-localised sourcing of intelligence, combined with a review of national and international research and practice; will lead to a comprehensive series of evidence-based policy recommendations of relevance to universities, local and regional stakeholders and national policymakers.

## How can universities get involved?

For reasons of practicality, the three local evidence-sessions will take place in Manchester, Nottingham, and Sheffield – and will be delivered in conjunction with university partners in those cities.

However, we very much want universities across the UK (the Commission will welcome evidence and engagement from institutions in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland) to get involved with the work of the Commission. Indeed, it will not succeed in its aims without this engagement. Here's a few ways in which universities might want to get involved:

### **Evidence (written and case-studies)**

The Commission will be issuing a call for written evidence, with questions themed around the different dimensions of what the civic role of universities might entail. These calls will be open to all organisation, but we are particularly keen to get the views of universities, students' unions and individual researchers with expertise in the relevant fields.

In addition, we want the Commission's web-site to host and promote a vibrant, attractive and compelling bank of case-studies of how universities across the UK are putting their articulation of civic responsibility into practice.

### **Evidence (oral)**

In the manner of Commons and Lords Select Committees, we will be inviting a limited number of individuals to give oral evidence. Universities are encouraged to proactively suggest individuals for the consideration of the Commission.

### **Evidence and engagement (private testimony)**

The Commission is limited by practicality to undertaking only three evidence gathering sessions across the UK. However, we recognise that in many ways the diversity of how different universities define their civic role is a significant strength of the UK higher education sector. As such, if universities wish to engage with the Commission and Commissioners via direct or private testimony (invitations to meetings, discussions, other private engagements/roundtables with local stakeholders etc) then this would be welcomed.

### **Dissemination (public)**

Following the publication of the report and its policy recommendations for the sector, local and regional stakeholders and national decision-makers, we hope to hold several 'Local Summits', hosted by universities. The idea is for these summits to serve as a prompt for discussion within universities, and between universities and their civic partners to discuss whether/ how the recommendations apply to their specific localities. The Summits could be held independently, or in conjunction with the Commission, who would then put forward representation.

## How can other organisations get involved?

The Commission seeks to work with major organisations with an interest in the future of the civic university. We will proactively seek to engage bodies representing the higher education sector, National and Local Government, business, cultural organisations and the third sector.

### **Evidence (written and case-studies) and Evidence (oral)**

As above.

### **Evidence and engagement (private and public testimony)**

The Commission seeks to promote awareness and engagement in the debate as to the future of the civic university. Therefore, we would welcome approaches from major organisation with an interest in the work of the Commission to discuss ways in which they might feed into the process. This might be something as simple as a meeting with the Commission, or something more public like developing a joint event or dinner, co-badging planned activity to include the Commission if we can field a Commissioner on a panel, holding a 'public evidence session'-style debate or discussion or any other collaborative activity. Given the breadth of the topic, we both anticipate and welcome different organisations approaching the Commission from their particular perspective.

### **Dissemination (public)**

We encourage organisations to work with their partner universities to support the post-Commission local Summits.

## Appendix

### Commissioners

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

### Key dates

**February** – Focus Groups conducted and poll commissioned

**7 March** – Commissioner Briefing

**20 March** – UPP Formal Launch

**15 June** – Oral evidence session in Manchester

**22 June** – Oral evidence session in Nottingham

**29 June** – Oral evidence session in Sheffield

**October [date tbd]** – Publication of report

### About the UPP Foundation

The UPP Foundation is a registered charity that offers grants to universities, charities and other higher education bodies. In recent years, as higher education has expanded, the burden of paying for a degree has shifted towards the individual. This presents difficulties in maintaining the 'University for the Public Good', as well as ensuring there



is greater equity in going to, succeeding at and benefiting from the university experience. The UPP Foundation helps universities and the wider higher education sector overcome these challenges.

The UPP Foundation was created in 2016 by University Partnerships Programme (UPP), the leading provider of on campus student accommodation infrastructure and support services in the UK. UPP is the sole funder of the UPP Foundation. The UPP Foundation is an independent charity and all of its grants are reviewed and authorised by its Board of Trustees. The Foundation is supported by an Advisory Board. More information is available at the UPP Foundation website: [www.upp-foundation.org](http://www.upp-foundation.org)