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Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill: London Higher submission of evidence

London Higher is the representative body for nearly 50 universities and higher education institutions across the capital, making it the largest membership body of its kind. London Higher represents the full diversity of the capital's vibrant higher education sector, from small, specialist conservatoires and research institutes to large, multi-faculty universities.

London Higher would like to reiterate that we welcome the Government's aim to embed lifelong learning in our education system. We particularly welcome the flexibility on entry requirements which will go some way to ensure potential students are not excluded at the first hurdle. Similarly, the ability enshrined in this legislation for an individual to enrol on a course at the same or lower level to currently held qualifications is vital in allowing people to reskill and embark on a new career. There are three areas that London Higher would like to highlight in particular: remote learning, the credit framework and the need for better IAG.

Remote learning

We are concerned, however, that remote learning will not be included in this Bill, especially seeing as it was included in the pilot, as well as a considerable percentage of all apprenticeships involving remote learning. The increased role of remote learning, digital learning and blended learning reflect the demands and needs of many students, such as those who have caring responsibilities. Furthermore, the demand for 'in-person' only in a post-pandemic world, where remote working has become the norm in many sectors, seems out of synch. Excluding this provision will undermine the effectiveness of this legislation in widening access and, in turn, addressing the UK's critical labour shortages and skills gaps.

Credit framework

London Higher notes that the Bill will set the minimum credit for modules at 30 credits. A number of London higher education institutions use a system based on modules of 20 credits, which will not fit easily into the proposed structure. A lower credit limit would enable better

alignment with the existing framework and support a more rapid roll-out of this provision (with expectation this will be operational by 2025).

Better information, advice and guidance

For the LLE to work as intended and enable people to access tertiary education flexibly at any point they desire throughout their adult lives, there needs to be major investment in raising awareness of the entitlement and detailed consideration of how independent and impartial information, advice and guidance is made available to people through multiple media and formats. This will require a significant culture change in the way we consider the role and place of tertiary education in the country; yet this is not going to occur overnight, or even in the short-term.

As the LLE is meant for non-traditional students who are unlikely to already have knowledge of the higher education landscape or the same careers advice and guidance that is available to school leavers, ensuring that all eligible adult learners are able to easily access information about the opportunities they will soon have to access the LLE and how to do so, is crucial. This will require a large-scale public information campaign to reach those individuals in society who need it the most. Ensuring that the National Careers Service website has the relevant guidance and that people are better informed of the existence of this resource will be necessary as a first step. Marketing in the mainstream media and through large-scale public information campaigns, as well targeted information through national bodies such as JobCentre Plus and the Citizens Advice Bureau, but also through local and hyper-local community organisations, charities and faith groups will help to ensure no individuals and communities are left behind. This information campaign must be sustained over the long-term to ensure awareness of the LLE grows across society and the uptake of the LLE increases.

We would like to thank the House of Commons Public Bill Committee for the opportunity to comment again at this late stage and hope this response is helpful in informing the Committee's views. We look forward to the publication of the Committee's report later this month. London Higher remains willing to engage and provide views on this landmark bill as it progresses through Parliament.

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