



LONDON  
METROPOLITAN  
UNIVERSITY



Sir John Cass's  
Foundation

# Breaking Down Barriers

## Higher Education for All

Sir John Cass's Foundation  
and London Metropolitan  
University



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# Foreword

Founded in 1748 in the name of City of London politician and philanthropist Sir John Cass (1661 – 1718), Sir John Cass's

**Foundation has a rich history of supporting pioneering initiatives to promote participation and achievement for the most disadvantaged young people in the capital. The Foundation has evolved over its more than 250-year history to become one of the leading independent education charities in the UK.**



We proudly continue to support the work of our founder by offering funding to schools, organisations and individuals in need across inner London. The Foundation also works hard to establish innovative partnerships with leading educational bodies and higher education (HE) institutions to improve attainment and access to opportunities for young Londoners, a mission shared by our friend and partner London Metropolitan University.

The University and the Foundation share a long history of bringing students from all backgrounds into education, dating back to the start of the twentieth century when the Foundation established the Sir John Cass Technical Institute in Jewry Street in 1902. The Foundation went on to support the Institute and its successor bodies: The Sir John Cass College, London Guildhall University and the body as it is today, London Metropolitan University.

**The University and the Foundation share a long history of bringing students from all backgrounds into education.**

Our shared vision for supporting young people in the capital was proudly extended in 2015 with a grant of £2.6million for the enhancement of the University's widening participation mission and the furthering of its social mission. With over 40% of students at London Metropolitan University coming from within seven miles of the University, the Foundation was acutely aware of the important and socially valuable role it plays in the capital. The Foundation, therefore, was delighted to make the multi-million pound grant to enable the University to engage with students in some of London's most deprived boroughs, helping young people from disadvantaged backgrounds transform their lives through higher education.



## The Foundation and London Met have, for centuries, been supporting students in the heart of London.

The commitment to widening participation remains a core priority for the Foundation in the work we undertake through our charitable

giving, strategic partnerships and commissioning of research. Our historic links with London Metropolitan University and its current status as one of the most socially inclusive universities in the UK, with over 60% of its students coming from minority ethnic communities and 98% from state schools or colleges, means our continued partnership makes significant strides in redressing the inequalities in participation in higher education.

The University's enduring commitment to social responsibility and social justice makes it a key player, and a dedicated champion, for designing effective, innovative and impactful outreach and engagement initiatives. The Foundation is proud to see efforts going beyond support at pre-entry level and that a strong focus has been established on retention and support for students throughout the duration of their studies. Access and engagement is very much the first hurdle in widening participation and London Met has successfully achieved a balanced approach to investment in not just outreach-based activities but also for the ongoing support of the entire student journey and beyond.

We are delighted to present this report to showcase the excellent work the London Met community, outreach and events team and the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (now the Centre for Professional and Educational Development) has undertaken over the past three years with the grant from the Foundation.

We are grateful to all our partners at the University and wish to extend special thanks to Professor John Raftery, Vice-Chancellor of London Metropolitan University, for leading such inspirational commitment to the programme and to Sophie Clutterbuck, Head of Community, Outreach and Events, and her team, for delivering the outstanding portfolio of work to promote student aspirations, achievement and progression into higher education.

The Foundation and London Met have, for centuries, been supporting students in the heart of London from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. We are proud to be one of the University's largest benefactors, not only through our grant funding and making the Jewry Street building available for no consideration from 1970 to 2015, but also through our ongoing partnerships with joint-ventures such as the Sir John Cass School of Art, Architecture and Design, opened in 2012.

As the Foundation moves into our tercentenary year commemorating the life of our founder, we look forward to continuing our joint efforts in support of the capital's young people and exploring opportunities for future collaboration.

**Dr Kevin Everett (Deputy)**  
Treasurer and Chairman  
Sir John Cass's  
Foundation

**Mr Richard M Foley**  
Clerk/Chief Executive  
Sir John Cass's Foundation

## We share a tradition of collaboration with the Foundation that has extended over a century.

**London Metropolitan University exists to transform lives through excellent education. This core mission has endured since our earliest days, with the founding of the Metropolitan Evening Classes for Working Men by Charles McKenzie,**

**Bishop of London, in 1848. We have always been, first and foremost, a university for the people of London – an ethos that has never changed.**

Our historic ties with the capital extend to close links with some of its leading civic institutions – we are proud to count Sir John Cass's Foundation as chief among them. There are many reasons why we have always maintained a close relationship with the Foundation: our shared belief in the importance and transformative possibility of education, a shared history and common link with Sir John Cass himself and a strong connection to the great city for which Sir John and his foundation has done, and continues to do, so much.

We share a tradition of collaboration with the Foundation that has extended over a century, and in that time we have achieved a great deal in furthering education and creating opportunity in London. This report looks back on a particular period of important work that London Metropolitan University has carried out in partnership with Sir John Cass's Foundation, to transform lives in our communities today. The Foundation's donation to the University in 2015 has enabled us to do much more for the people London Met exists to support and develop. Not only has it seen us create a new outreach team to elevate our work with disadvantaged people in the capital, it has also helped us to continue delivering on our mission to transform lives through the innovative, inspirational initiatives we run.

At London Met, we make it our purpose to go out into the capital and nurture the talent that will one day drive our city forward towards a brighter and more enlightened world for all.

We're delighted to work so closely with Sir John Cass's Foundation. We are grateful for the Foundation's support and look forward to continuing to work together successfully over the many years ahead.

**Professor John Raftery**  
Vice-Chancellor  
London Metropolitan University

**Mark Anderson**  
Chair  
Board of Governors  
London Metropolitan University





# Context: Higher education today

**Higher education has experienced dramatic change in the last two decades. The disappearance of the state grant and the funding model shift to a loans-based system has arguably extended opportunity among students from all backgrounds. Yet more recent developments have served as potential blockers to entry. The government's decision in 2010 to remove the Education Maintenance Allowance prompted concerns that young people would be unable to pursue further education (FE) – and thus make higher education a distant prospect.**

More recently, the transfer of the higher education (HE) student maintenance grant to a loan, and the decision to transfer the funding of universities from the government to direct fee payment by students themselves, have made it more expensive for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access university education.

In June 2017 the Office for Fair Access reported a five-year high in the number of students from poor backgrounds leaving higher education. The report found that 8.8% of young, full-time, disadvantaged undergraduates did not continue in higher education beyond their first year – up from 8.2% the year before.

As an autonomous grant giving foundation Sir John Cass's Foundation has both the independence and resource to respond proactively to these challenging times of change. The significant changes to the higher education setting, in particular the government's decision to discontinue student maintenance grants, called for reflection and refocusing from the Foundation on how to best maximise the impact of its charitable giving. Whilst support for outreach and widening participation is core to the Foundation's work the impact of recent changes left the young people it set out to support with a new range of challenges, obstacles and barriers in their journey from compulsory to higher education.

It is through meaningful partnerships with institutions such as London Met, which share Sir John Cass's Foundation's commitment to access for all, that they can invest in new and innovative responses to such changes. With an ever-shifting political landscape it is increasingly important that support for the most disadvantaged and underrepresented young people continues to receive suitable investment and attention from collaborations between the third sector and higher education providers.



# London Metropolitan University's mission



**London Met exists to provide opportunity to all those who have the ambition and ability to succeed in higher education. It is one of the most diverse universities in the UK, with students from 148 countries. More than 60% of London Met students are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, 98% are state-school educated and more than 70% of students are from low-income households.**

The policy changes outlined before are likely to have had a significant impact on London Met's traditional demographic, creating the need for the University to do more both to inspire students to pursue higher education and to support those who have done so.

## **The response**

In 2016, London Met made £3,000 bursaries available to all students who would have qualified for the state maintenance grant in attempt to go some way in replacing the financial support withdrawn by the government.

It also launched a raft of initiatives aimed at better supporting students during their studies, including the Peer Assisted Student Success (PASS) scheme, supported by the Sir John Cass's Foundation grant, which sees talented second and third year students trained to coach first years, paid at the London Living Wage for their time.

London Met continues to inspire with its vibrant programme of summer schools for marginalised students, covering subjects from the arts to engineering. The widening participation team also runs long-term programmes such as the National Saturday Club (Art), the Royal Institution Masterclass programmes, Upward Bound (Islington), mentoring with the Stephen Lawrence Trust, the Primary Project and many more. The aim is not to recruit students to London Met; rather, success would be participating students seeking further and higher education opportunities anywhere including outside the capital and abroad.

One of the key escalations in the University's work in this area has been the creation of a new outreach team to complement London Met's already impressive widening participation work.

# Enhancing widening participation provision

The new schools and colleges outreach team and the programmes they run have been hugely supported by the generous donation from the Foundation. A small team of five, including a specialist Mature Learners Officer, was created to work specifically with schools and colleges in London, particularly in those boroughs and neighbourhoods with lower participation in higher education.

The schools and colleges team runs a range of activities designed to highlight the benefits of higher education in a fun and interesting way to local school and college students. Covering the wide range of subjects taught at the University, students get to have real world experiences, work with mentors from industry, attend subject conferences and learn to navigate their way to higher education. They also provide support to teachers to ensure they have all the information they need to help their students make the right choices about their future, for example, hosting networking events so teachers can meet academics and internal service providers who offer non-academic support.

Working on bespoke interventions, long-term projects and one-off conferences they work with students as young as year 10 all the way up to mature further education students. The programmes consist of a number of different free activities to engage students either on campus or at the school/college premises. To date this year, circa 5,000 individual students have benefited from the programmes and activities run by the outreach team.









## Case study one: Big Idea Challenge

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**A key programme outcome of the outreach team's creation is the Big Idea Challenge – one of the UK's fastest growing enterprise competitions for young people. Working in partnership with London Met's specialist business incubator, Accelerator, the London Met student enterprise competition was adapted for local schools and colleges.**

Launched in 2016, the Big Idea Challenge ([bigideachallenge.co](http://bigideachallenge.co)) has rapidly become one of the biggest entrepreneurship competitions for young people in the UK with 17 colleges and more than 700 students participating in 2017. The start-up scene is booming but a closer look reveals one major failing; UK start-ups are severely lacking in diversity. Most founders have access to family money and are disproportionately male and white. This programme set out to challenge this and work with students from underrepresented backgrounds.

We had very strong support from industry for this project and partners included but were not limited to NatWest, Unilever, Microsoft, iDEA, and The Prince's Trust. These brought instant credibility, deep knowledge and valuable resources to the competition – providing mentors, spaces, catering, connections, prizes, marketing and press coverage. This also allowed us to scale the project up quickly from 10 colleges in 2016 to 17 in 2017 and a projected 25 in 2018.

**The programme included:**

1. Workshops – Unlike most competitions at this scale we ran in-depth workshops with every student who took part – this was key for our demographic as many don't recognise entrepreneurship competitions as being "for them".
2. Bootcamp day – NatWest hosted the annual bootcamp day where the 20 strongest teams are paired with mentors to develop their idea and create a two-minute pitch, which they deliver on stage to more than 100 people. The transformation over the day is inspiring.
3. Online voting – Pitches are filmed, put online and open to a public vote. The 2017 finalists received 12,110 unique votes from 124 countries.
4. Judging – Our judges decide the award winners. The People's Choice award is decided through the public vote.
5. Awards night – HRH The Duke of York hosted the 2017 gala awards night at St James's Palace, giving out awards and making closing remarks. The capacity audience included finalists, other students, principals, teachers, the Tech City community and VIPs.

Our goal is to raise aspirations and make college students realise that entrepreneurship is a realistic option for them. All students taking part gain the confidence, network and skills to help them progress to the next stage of their journey. Looking forward, as well as increasing the programme to 25 colleges for 2018, we are also talking to NatWest about bringing the Big Idea Challenge to other parts of the country and we have international colleges approaching us to join. We are also going to start some new Big Challenges in other subject areas.



# Case study two: Higher education passport

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The Big Idea Challenge allowed London Met to deepen its relationships with the local schools and colleges involved. Off the back of the competition we have formed strong relationships with many of the colleges who championed the Big Idea Challenge. With one college, NewVic (Newham Sixth Form College), we have gone on to support them in many more ways, including running an in-depth consultation with 100 of their student reps around barriers to their students entering higher education. We have also just launched a passport programme to help students navigate their way to higher education.





The higher education passport was developed to give further education college and sixth form students the support they need on their journey to undertake the next steps after college. Throughout the year they will get the chance to go to a wide range of sessions to help them make the right decision about their future and achieve their goals. In the sessions they will learn about the different options available after college, decide which path they're going to take and meet student ambassadors to hear about their experiences. Some of the activities will be during tutorials and as part of a college's higher education week; others will be during enrichment time and online. The sessions include:

#### **Year 12**

- Tutorial one: Focus on different options after college
- Enrichment autumn term: Introduction to university and choosing courses
- Enrichment spring term: Goal setting and facing challenges along the way
- Enrichment summer term: Exam skills
- Tutorial two: Using your summer wisely

#### **Year 13**

- Tutorial one: Skills and selling yourself in applications
- Enrichment autumn term: Personal statements
- Enrichment spring term: Finance and making your money count
- Enrichment summer term: Exam skills
- Tutorial two: Preparing for life after NewVic
- Kickstart online course

Once students have completed all the activities in the programme we will recognise their commitment and achievement with a certificate and a special prize at the college awards ceremony. After a pilot year in 2017–18 this will be rolled out to other partner colleges.



## Case study three: Kickstart online project

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**Once someone has decided whether to go to university, there are still barriers to overcome, particularly at the start of the journey. Another outcome from the relationship with local colleges built from the Foundation grant is London Met's new online programme, Kickstart. Kickstart aims to raise aspirations and motivate young people to delve into university education, as well as preparing them for higher education.**

The outreach team worked with Cecile Tschirhart, Head of Student Experience and Student Outcomes at London Met, and Trushar Adatia, Head of the School of Human Sciences, to develop this online toolkit after the aforementioned consultation with college students regarding barriers to higher education. The toolkit is made up of videos, games, quizzes and other interactive activities with the aim of preparing all students for higher education. Once the toolkit was created, students at NewVic were given the chance to pilot and review it. Of the students who attended the test session, over 80% said Kickstart helped them make a decision about whether they were going to attend university. The feedback from the test session was taken into consideration and now the toolkit is available online to all new starters as well as partner college students.

This online toolkit goes hand in hand with the new Kickstart events the University has been able to put on thanks to the funding. As well as a free study skills book and early access to the library, offer holders can attend exclusive events preparing them for university. These events include a family day, preparation for returning to learning and study skills, mindfulness, finances and budgeting, networking with other students and academics, and much more.

# Case study four: Peer Assisted Student Success (PASS) scheme

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London Met recognises the importance in not only supporting students coming to university but making sure they are supported once they arrive to ensure successful progression. The Peer Assisted Student Success (PASS) scheme, aimed at all first-year students, was initially established as a pilot, commencing from scratch in autumn 2014 to complement the support services already in place for students. The grant from Sir John Cass's Foundation has allowed the scheme to expand and it is now implemented across nearly all undergraduate courses.



Its purpose is to boost academic success and bonding between participants through access to peer-facilitated small group sessions, integrated as part and parcel of the course learning process (it is thus not a “remedial” scheme focused only on struggling students or difficult subjects). This course-embedded model entails offering weekly small group sessions (commonly one to three hours per week) run by trained and paid mentors called success coaches.

Success coaches may meet students in class (seminars, labs, workshops, studios) and/or in additional timetabled sessions (one to three hours per week). Success coaches may also see students on a one-to-one basis by individual arrangement. Sessions should focus on helping mentees with immediate learning needs/issues and may be used to:

- clarify course/module and assessment expectations and requirements
- help students develop more effective study strategies and academic skills to become more successful and independent learners
- help students catch up
- help students develop confidence
- help students deal with personal issues and know where to get expert advice/support

Additionally, in the 2016–17 academic year, we piloted running PASS sessions to support Level 5 students. Here, focused PASS sessions, facilitated by Level 6 success coaches, were offered to support a particular learning need and were run for a limited number of hours during the term, usually prior to an upcoming assessment. For 2017–18 we will look to fill the remaining gaps in provision and strengthen the Level 5 support.



# The future

The Sir John Cass's Foundation grant has allowed the University to increase its focus on outreach while maintaining other long-term widening

participation and outreach programmes such as Upward Bound, the highly successful scheme aimed at improving GCSE results for students at risk of receiving low grades, summer schools and the National Saturday Club, and will continue to do so. After the donation enabled the piloting of the schools and colleges outreach team the University has now made the team permanent. We aim to grow the Big Idea Challenge and other Big Challenges in 2017–18 and roll out the passport and Kickstart programmes to other schools and colleges, emulating these successful schemes elsewhere in the capital and advising even more students on their progression to higher education.

## A university to meet the needs of our time

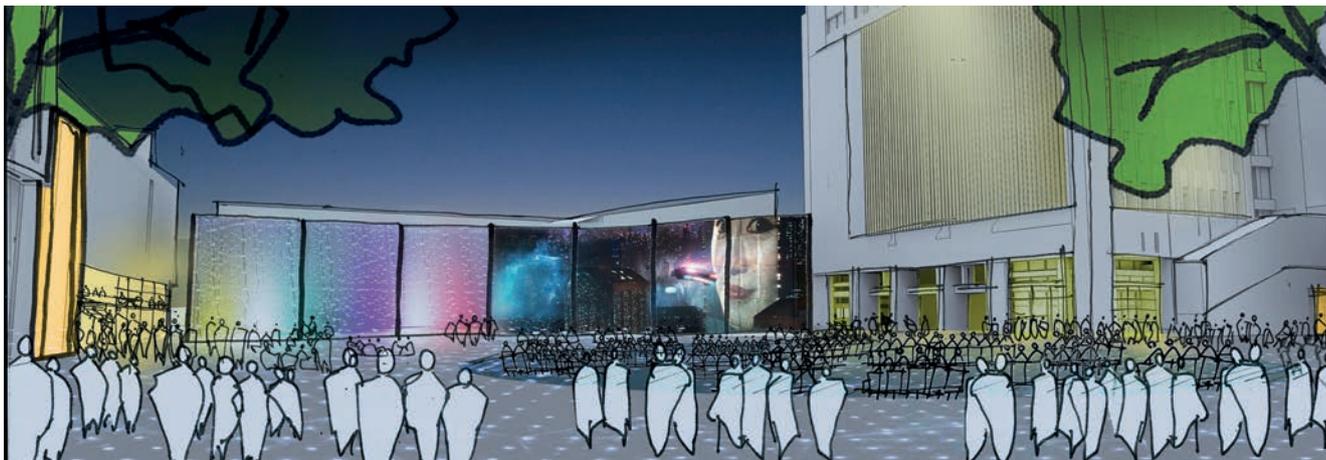
London Metropolitan University is evolving. The University's Strategic Plan 2015–2020 placed emphasis on the need to improve student outcomes, and much progress has been made in pursuing this aim. Student satisfaction is up 7% since 2014, and a record 95% of all graduates are in work or further study six months after graduating. The Times Higher Education Young University Rankings named London Met as the best “millennial” university in the country in 2017, reflecting the strong upward trajectory the University now enjoys.

That trajectory is set to continue, as more investment is made and London Met continues to innovate. The University's One Campus, One Community programme is seeing a multi-million pound investment in facilities, technology and services aimed at transforming the student experience. The Sir John Cass School of Art, Architecture and Design is now united under one roof at Calcutta House in Aldgate, bringing all of its creative resources together in one single location for the first time in its history. This is an early outcome of the One Campus, One Community project, which will eventually see all areas of the University co-located in Islington.

The focus on teaching quality will continue, with the percentage of qualified teachers at London Met currently some 20% above the sector average. By 2020, the aim is for all academic staff to have a recognised teaching qualification. This commitment to offering professionalised teaching to students saw London Met outperform all five London Russell



An artist's impression of our new Islington campus



The new campus will feature a central space open to the local community.

Group universities (University College London, Imperial, London School of Economics, Queen Mary and King's College) in the Sunday Times Good University Guide 2017. London Met also outranked several universities for teaching quality and learning outcomes in the National Student Survey 2017. These scores are expected to grow over the years ahead as the University continues to innovate in how it delivers education to the people of London and beyond.

A defining feature of the One Campus, One Community project is its unwavering ambition to establish London Met as the capital's community university. The University's plans for its Holloway campus include "opening up" its estate and selected facilities for the benefit of local people. It is an ethos that reflects London Met's origins of being a university for all those with the desire to educate themselves in search of a better life. It will enable London Met to continue inspiring people to aspire for many years to come.

#### **Sir John Cass's Foundation's future plans**

Alongside London Met's ambitious and exciting plans to further its social and outreach mission, the Foundation will also continue to support efforts to ensure access and opportunity is afforded to all young people across the capital. The Foundation will maintain its focus in seeking impactful and innovative approaches to increasing the number of

inner London students from disadvantaged backgrounds to successfully participate in higher education. Efforts will also be made to explore how best to serve and support communities currently underrepresented in higher education. In particular, the Foundation seeks to expand its focus on support for care leavers and looked-after children (LAC), young people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities and the issue of engagement and retention of students from white working-class backgrounds.

The success of the Foundation's partnership with London Met paves the way for future collaboration to improve attainment and access to opportunity for young Londoners. Whilst much success has already been achieved, there is still a long way to go in embedding both equality and equity in our education system. We look forward to tackling the challenges ahead and are confident that together with the skill, ambition and commitment of our partners we can make significant strides in redressing inequalities of participation in higher education.





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