

## The 1994 Group

**The 1994 Group** represents 19 of UK's leading student-focused, research-intensive universities. It was established in 1994 to promote excellence in University research and teaching.

**The 1994 Group** represents:

University of Bath  
Birkbeck University of London  
Durham University  
University of East Anglia  
University of Essex  
University of Exeter  
Goldsmiths University of London  
Institute of Education University of London  
Royal Holloway University of London  
Lancaster University  
University of Leicester  
Loughborough University  
Queen Mary University of London  
University of Reading  
University of St Andrews  
School of Oriental and African Studies  
University of Surrey  
University of Sussex  
University of York

For further details about the 1994 Group's work and our priorities for the future of higher education visit the 1994 Group website

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**Established** to promote excellence in research and teaching. To enhance student and staff experience within our universities and to set the agenda for higher education.

# Priorities for the future of higher education

## The 1994 Group

The 1994 Group brings together 19 world class universities and is one of the UK's most influential voices on higher education policy. We work to promote excellence in research and teaching so that students can enjoy an outstanding learning experience and universities can contribute to social and economic wellbeing. We are consulted regularly by Ministers and Officials, and our views are frequently sought by the media.

The strength of the 1994 Group comes from the global status of our members. Each of them shares a commitment to delivering outstanding research, teaching, and overall student experience.

### Outstanding research

1994 Group universities achieved outstanding results in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008. 57% of the 1994 Group's research is rated 4\* world-leading or 3\* internationally excellent. 1994 Group universities excel across the full spectrum of disciplines and are UK leaders in seventeen major subject areas from physics to politics and international relations; from health services research to sociology; from geography and environmental studies to linguistics.

### Outstanding teaching

Research-led teaching is central to the 1994 Group's mission. A large proportion of the top academics who achieved the Group's outstanding results in RAE 2008 teach students. High quality research and teaching are mutually supportive. Research-led teaching is the key to high levels of student experience and satisfaction.

### Outstanding student experience

In the annual National Student Survey the majority of the top 10 universities rated on student satisfaction are 1994 Group members every year. The Group's aggregate performance substantially exceeds the sector as a whole. The Group's members are small- to medium-sized institutions that operate on a human and personal scale. This allows them to respond rapidly and flexibly to student needs and maximise student-staff contact whilst having sufficient size to make a substantial contribution to high quality research.

## The changing face of UK Higher Education

The UK's Higher Education sector is in the midst of unprecedented change. Policies are being introduced and decisions are being made that will radically alter the terrain for academics, students, and university administrators alike.

The biggest shift has been in funding. Direct grants for university teaching have been largely withdrawn, with the levels of graduate contribution institutions can levy rising to take their place. As a result, public money will be directed towards subsidised student loans and other support measures. This puts **power in the hands of students**, allowing them to drive funds towards the universities best able to meet their expectations.

Further bolstering this student power, the Government has strengthened the obligations on universities to ensure **fair access**, imposing annual reviews on progress in meeting university set targets for widening participation.

On research, public funds have been reduced, with greater concentration on the institutions and departments best able to **demonstrate international excellence**. This comes at a time when the UK is relying on innovation for economic growth.

UK Higher Education's place in the world is under threat, with the introduction of tough new restrictions on the number of visas awarded to international students and the **rise of global competitors**.

These factors combine to form a host of new challenges for all involved in UK Higher Education. The 1994 Group believes that four key priorities must be followed to meet them.

# Priority 1:

## **Ensure that UK universities are sustainably funded**

The immediate needs of the financial crisis have seen universities suffer sweeping cuts in public investment, even accounting for the revenue gained by increased graduate contributions. In the face of this it is vital that the Government creates a framework which will ensure universities are able to meet the needs of current and future students.

## Actions:

- > Provide incentives to boost private and philanthropic income streams for all UK universities
- > Plan for future capital investment that recognises the social and economic importance of university research, and gives scope to adapt facilities to meet the challenges of climate change

# Priority 2:

## **Enhance the student experience to meet the needs of increased expectations**

While the 1994 Group firmly believes the student finance package to be fair and supportive of those from poorer backgrounds, it is beyond doubt that students will expect to see real value in return for their contributions. Every effort must be made to allow universities to deliver on these expectations.

## Actions:

- > Increase flexibility over student numbers or lift caps entirely to allow the most successful universities to expand
- > Continue to allow universities the autonomy needed to set their own widening participation policies which place student retention and progression above admissions targets

# Priority 3:

## **Maximise the economic and social impact of university research**

At a time when economic growth is more important than ever, the value of university led research and innovation has to be recognised. But at the same time, the benefits that exploration into social sciences and the arts bring must not be discounted. Across every discipline, excellent university research must be supported.

## Actions:

- > Ensure that funding is in place to encourage progression into post-graduate study, supporting the development of future researchers
- > Develop a strategy that places university research at the heart of economic growth and social wellbeing

# Priority 4:

## **Support the global standing of UK Higher Education**

The quality of UK universities is recognised the world over, and our institutions reap the benefits of the international students this attracts. However, this global status cannot be taken for granted. Competitors around the world are investing in and improving on the quality of their own universities, and are increasingly attracting a larger share of international students. The UK's place as a global leader in Higher Education must be maintained.

## Actions:

- > Avoid creating barriers to recruiting and retaining the brightest and best international students and faculty staff
- > Create the conditions for UK universities to form strategic partnerships with others around the world