

City University London
University Research & Enterprise Committee
Proposal for City University London to join The Knowledge Quarter

Summary

- The Knowledge Quarter is a network organization initiated in 2012 which now comprises of over 55 academic, cultural, research, scientific and media organisations within a one mile radius of King's Cross;
- The network provides a range of opportunities which are benefitting higher education institutions in Bloomsbury (who are already members), with City being the only remaining HE institution within the geographical boundary not to be a member;
- City has a very good fit with the Knowledge Quarter and membership is likely to yield a wide range of benefits aligned with the University's strategy;
- Membership will contribute significantly to the partnership element of the 'Quality, Growth, & Partnership' that is the basis of Vision and Strategy 2026; it also complements City joining the University of London.

Recommendation: The University Executive approve the proposal for City to join the Knowledge Quarter.

Context

The Knowledge Quarter is a network of over 55 academic, cultural, research, scientific and media organisations situated within a one mile radius of King's Cross, who all have within their purpose the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Although it has considered various formats (for example, whether to be a Business Improvement District (BID)), the organization has decided it is best constituted as a network with the primary goal of fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration between specialists in numerous fields, providing opportunities for member organization staff and network users to exchange ideas, expertise and evidence.

The Knowledge Quarter has attracted significant public and media attention and has been successful in building its international profile. In December 2014 at the official launch of the Knowledge Quarter, the Chancellor George Osborne MP endorsed the initiative "If you look at all the exciting things that are happening here – the renovation of Kings Cross –it really is one of the most exciting places in the world."

The network describes itself as 'a remarkable cluster of organisations spanning research, higher education, science, art, culture and media. Individually these organizations offer resources for specialists in numerous fields, from architecture and the arts to biotechnology and veterinary science. The Knowledge Quarter argues that taken together, 'they represent a concentration of knowledge and expertise to rival any in the world.' The objective is to focus on 'the advancement and dissemination of knowledge for research, inspiration, growth, creativity and enjoyment.'

With regard to its activities, The Knowledge Quarter aims to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration between staff and users of cross-disciplinary communities to exchange ideas, expertise

and evidence. Following a discussion between the Chair of the Knowledge Quarter and the Vice-Chancellor, it was agreed to explore City becoming a member.

Rationale for Joining

It is a natural strategic decision for City to become part of the Knowledge Quarter and it is primarily a consequence of the University being on the periphery of the geographical area that we have not engaged with this network earlier. Membership includes the British Library, the Francis Crick Institute, The Guardian, Google and the British Museum. A range of other higher education institutions within the University of London and Bloomsbury (UCL, SOAS, Birkbeck, London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene) have already joined and are benefitting from a number of collaborative initiatives as a consequence (for example, Birkbeck is working on short courses with The Guardian). City would be the only significant HE institution within the geographical area not to be part of this network if it were not to join, and its academic and research profile arguably fits better with the current composition of the network than some already existent members. Not joining is also likely to give competing institutions within Bloomsbury potential advantages over City in terms of research opportunities, reputation and impact.

Benefits to City

City already has some linkage with the activities of the Knowledge Quarters, primarily through the work of Professor Andy Pratt and colleagues in the Centre for Culture and Creative Industries within the Department of Sociology. Professor Pratt's research and policy activity is closely related to several core threads of work between existing partners in the network (including Camden Council) and he is collaborating on funded research and consultancy with a colleague from Queen Mary. He has agreed to help champion and lead the initiative across City upon the University joining the network. However, joining the network will open up scope for widening these activities across City through a range of networking events and opportunities disseminated. There are therefore a range of benefits including:

- Membership represents a key contribution to the partnership component of the 'Quality, Growth, & Partnership' that forms the basis of Vision and Strategy 2026;
- Enhanced reputation in line with the goals of City's strategic vision and aspirations in line with comparator institutions in the University of London;
- Scope for increased collaboration with University of London institutions and other network members as City joins the University of London;
- Increased research grant and consultancy income as a result of network collaboration
- Increased scope for impact through research activities related to the network;
- Fostering longer term collaboration and integration with nearby institutions such as the British Library;

Costs

The Knowledge Quarter is a subscription organisation with an annual payment met at the institutional level. The subscription is based on the size of the member organization and will be £10000 for City as an organization of between 1000 and 3000 employees.

Next Steps:

Upon joining the Knowledge Quarter, with the support of the Research and Enterprise office, a series of initiatives to publicised member and encourage participation across City will be initiated (information, events, workshops).