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In our Time: A Timeline of Adult Education, from the Mechanics' Movement to Birkbeck

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This document has been compiled to clarify the historical origins of three strands of adult education in the nineteenth century that contributed to the experiment of their conflation at Birkbeck in two decades of the twentieth century, from 1988 when the University of London's Department of Extra-Mural Studies joined the college, through to its finale in 2009, when Extra-Mural was integrated into the college, and its extensive outreach programme across London abandoned.



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For the convenience of readers, we have colour-coded the strands of development of the three main traditions of adult education in the nineteenth century, and provided a key below:

London Mechanics' Institution/Birkbeck

University of London

Extra-Mural

Other

1821 **16 October:** The first mechanics' institution is established in Edinburgh, as the School of Arts of Edinburgh.

1823 **July:** The Mechanics' and Apprentices' Library, the germ of a mechanics' institution, opens in Liverpool.

30 August: The first issue of the *Mechanics' Magazine*, a 3d. weekly, appears, edited by Joseph Robertson and Thomas Hodgskin. Based on news in the Glasgow press about the founding of a mechanics' institution in Glasgow, the editors of the *Mechanics' Magazine* insert a notice in September of a London meeting to investigate the establishment of a similar institution in London, to which George Birkbeck, a former lecturer in Glasgow and now a London physician, responds.

November: Glasgow Mechanic's Institute opens.

2 December: The London Mechanics' Institution (LMI) is formally established at the Crown and Anchor Tavern on the Strand, by George Birkbeck, Joseph Robertson, and Thomas Hodgskin, after earlier meetings at the tavern in November. The LMI is envisaged as a membership organization, which prospective students pay to join, to gain access to its library and to enrol on lectures and classes, for which additional fees apply.

1824 **20 February:** The LMI opens with 656 paying members for the first quarter.

17 September: The LMI moves to new premises, Southampton Buildings in Chancery Lane, situated in a more middle-class part of London, in its legal hub. It remains there until 1883.

- 1826 **11 February:** University College London (UCL) is founded as ‘London University’, a secular alternative to Oxford and Cambridge. It was non-residential and open to all who could afford the fees for courses and pass the matriculation exam.
- 1828 **October:** UCL, then London University, first opens its doors to students. Without degree-awarding powers, it offered Certificates of Honours in connection with each course, and a General Certificate after three years following an agreed programme of study. Even when UCL was granted the Royal Charter in 1836, as a college and not a university, it did not include degree-awarding powers. On opening, it employed staff in academic posts in subjects not previously taught in British universities, including modern foreign languages and English language and literature, although by far the largest single subject of study in the earliest years was medicine, followed by mechanics and law. In this period London University also functioned as a preparatory college: significant numbers of students aged 14–16 were studying junior Latin, Greek, and mathematics, in preparation for university. London University/UCL was initially open to men only, although in 1829 it allowed some women to attend a course of public lectures by the Italian professor Antonio Panizzi, and in 1832 two women are registered on a course on electricity. In 1828–29 641 students were admitted, and the following year 630. The average cost of fees for a student nominated by a proprietor was approximately £22 7s. 6d. per annum. Lower than normal fees, it was nevertheless a sum that would have taken a coachman a year to earn. Negley Harte, John North, and Georgina Brewis note that London University/UCL was well beyond the means of working-class students. The fees were also much higher than those of the LMI (e.g. a mechanics course was £2).
- 1829 **King’s College London is founded by Royal Charter as an Anglican college in response to the controversy surrounding UCL’s establishment as a secular institution.**
- 1830 **The LMI admits its first female students to lectures, but not to classes. Lectures cost 3s. per quarter, but for 5s. per quarter women were allowed to use the circulating library.**
- 1831 **John Thelwall, a radical orator, journalist, and author, lectures on John Milton at the LMI. Although the LMI is predominantly oriented to vocational and practical learning, its curriculum included lectures on literature from an early date.**
- 1836 **28 November:** UCL (then London University) receives its Royal Charter by the Whig government, which included, in Lord Lansdowne and Lord John Russell, two of the members of UCL’s founding council. The opposition of Oxford and Cambridge to the award of degrees to non-members of the Church of England,

and the opposition of various hospital medical schools to UCL ‘securing the power of awarding medical degrees which they themselves did not possess’, is overcome. The solution was to establish an entirely new body as the University of London. UCL is legally recognized — but as a *college*, not a university, under the new name of ‘University College, London’. As such it does not have degree-awarding powers — degrees are awarded by the University of London.

On the same day, the University of London is established by Royal Charter as a degree-awarding examination board for students holding certificates from UCL, King’s College London, and ‘other such institutions, corporate or unincorporated, as shall be established for the purpose of Education’. The new University of London can award degrees in arts, law, and medicine.

1839 The first University of London degrees are examined, following a two-year course.

June: By this date there were LMI classes in ‘English grammar’, ‘writing’, and ‘literary composition’, and in ‘arithmetic, book-keeping, mathematics, practical geometry, drawing — architectural, mechanical, perspective, and ornamental — drawing the human figure, modelling, landscape drawing, geography, shorthand, French, and Latin’. The report in the *London Saturday Journal*, from which this list is taken, continues: ‘Besides the above, the following are conducted on the plan of mutual instruction — literary composition, chemistry, experimental philosophy, natural history, phrenology, Latin. There is also a class for French conversation and several for the various branches of vocal and instrumental music, for admittance to which an additional subscription is required. Concerts are occasionally given in the theatre, the performances consisting chiefly of those by the members of the music class.’

1841 **1 December:** Death of George Birkbeck.

1843 The LMI offers ‘a course of instruction in English Grammar’ and classes in ‘Literary Composition’: ‘these Classes each meet once in every week and can be attended by the members and students at a trifling expense.’

1846 The Birkbeck Laboratory, UCL’s first teaching laboratory for chemistry, opens in conjunction with the establishment of a new chair of practical chemistry. George Birkbeck was one of the founders of UCL. According to Thomas Kelly, he was an active member of its first council, recruited shareholders, and helped to appoint new professors. His main interest was the medical school, and the establishment of a dispensary and a hospital. In September 1831 Birkbeck resigned from the council in disgust at the dismissal of the professor of anatomy.

- 1849 UCL's first hall of residence, University Hall, opens in Gordon Square. It was built by Unitarians in commemoration of the 1844 Dissenters' Chapels Act.
Bedford College is founded as the first higher education college for women in the UK.
- 1850 **December 1850–August 1852:** Arthur Hugh Clough is professor of English language and literature at UCL.
The Public Libraries Act enables the provision of free municipal libraries which, as they began to appear, diminished the membership of the subscription libraries of the mechanics' institutions, for which readers had to pay a members' subscription or other sum to access.
- 1854 The Working Men's College, one of the earliest adult education institutions in Britain, is founded by Christian Socialists to provide a liberal education for skilled artisans, situated in Oakley Square, Camden, in the midst of industrial London, unlike that of the LMI in Southampton Buildings in Chancery Lane, the legal hub of London, on the outer edge of the City. The Working Men's College is an alternative model of workers' part-time education in London to that of the LMI, from which it differed markedly: its syllabus offered continuous pathways between courses of study, it was not dominated by science, and it welcomed classes and lectures on contemporary controversial topics, such as politics and economics, of interest to workmen. It also promulgated the Christian Socialist notion of associationism in the college, whereby different classes made a communal effort towards a common end. College founders included F. D. Maurice (first principal), Thomas Hughes (author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*), John Malcolm Forbes Ludlow, Frederick James Furnivall, Lowes Cato Dickinson, John Westlake, Richard Buckley Litchfield, and John Llewelyn Davies. Notable early promoters and supporters included Edward Vansittart Neale, D. G. Rossetti, John Ruskin, Charles Blachford Mansfield, J. S. Mill, James Clerk Maxwell, and Charles Kingsley.
- 1855 King's College London begins to offer evening classes, with certificates. Dickens, in *Household Words*, describes it as the 'college by gaslight in the Strand'. Women are excluded, although a ladies' department would be founded in Kensington in 1885.
- 1857 **The 1857 LMI Report includes notices of lectures on literary topics such as 'The Christmas Books of Charles Dickens', 'Characters in Imaginative Literature', 'The Romance of Biography', and an 'Entertainment by Elocution Class'.**
- 1858 Changes in the University of London's charter resulted in an opening of access to the examinations for its degree. The university reform also introduced

degrees specifically in science; Harte, North, and Brewis note that ‘Science courses had previously simply been part of the Faculty of Arts’.

From 1858, the LMI became a pathway to University of London degrees, and its students are permitted to enter for university examinations. Among its many other affiliations and professional qualification provisions, the LMI gradually became the main provider of part-time university education.

[–1861] Parliamentary commission on education. The Newcastle Commission, which reported in 1861, recommended the establishment of county and borough education boards, which would be empowered to levy a rate to complement central government education grants. It prefigured a central feature of the 1870 Education Act.

1861 [–1862] 113 women attended a special, all-female course of Saturday lectures at UCL on the subject of animal physiology delivered by John Marshall. Instituted in partnership with the Ladies’ Sanitary Association, it was mostly attended by women involved in district visiting, education, and charitable work.

1865 [–1889] Henry Morley is professor of English at UCL. He was editor of Morley’s Universal Library, a series of cheap reprints of the classics.

1866 **The LMI changes its name to the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution. Classes in ‘English literature’ were added to the Birkbeck curriculum, according to Burns.**

1867 **August:** The University of London is given powers to hold special examinations for women.

1868 The University of London draws up plans to grant women certificates. It would be another ten years before women could graduate with full degrees (from 1878).

The London Ladies’ Educational Association is founded, and organizes classes for women that UCL professors teach, the first to do so being Henry Morley (English literature) and Carey Foster (physics). According to Harte, North, and Brewis, ‘These first classes, attended by 150 students, were very successful, and the curriculum was extended the following year to include Geometry, Chemistry, French, and Latin.’ Initially, the women’s classes were not held in UCL, but from 1871–72 all the classes moved into college, although the association, not the college, organized the teaching.

1869 The National Education League is founded to campaign for free, compulsory, and non-religious education for all.

- 1870 The Elementary Education Act sets the framework for schooling of all children between the ages of 5 and 12 in England and Wales. The Act establishes a system of new, secular 'board schools' alongside schools of the two voluntary religiously affiliated societies, the National Schools (Anglican) and the British Schools (Nonconformist).
- 1870s **University extension first emerges as an organized and functional education scheme in the 1870s and 1880s.** Hubs of extension teaching were founded in Leeds, Birmingham, Sheffield, and Bristol, for example. Originating and organized by the few extant universities, they later became university colleges, and eventually independent institutions.
- 1873 The first university extension course is launched in Derby by the University of Cambridge, commencing on 8 October 1873. In the same year Cambridge engineer James Stuart (1843–1913) established the Local Lectures Syndicate at the university. In 1924 the Local Lectures Syndicate became the autonomous Board of Extra-Mural Studies. In August 1991 it was renamed the Board for Continuing Education.
- December: Fiftieth anniversary of the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution.**
- 1875 **10 May:** A meeting held at the Royal Institution in London considers how to extend the benefits of the Cambridge University extension scheme to London.
10 June: A meeting is held at Mansion House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor of London, in support of the scheme of the University of Cambridge for the extension of university teaching. An executive committee was formed to secure financial support and membership and to incorporate the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching (LSEUT) under the 1867 Companies Act.
- 1876 **12 January:** LSEUT is registered with Companies House. It was established partly in response to the inaccessibility of university education: its cost, and insufficient level of secondary school education. In fact, university education was beyond the ken of rising middle-class people as well as the working classes. LSEUT was modelled on the example of the Cambridge University extension scheme, running lecture courses and setting examinations. It was monitored by a joint board of three delegates, from the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London, who recruited lecturers, organized courses, appointed examiners, and awarded certificates. It paid its costs by charging fees for lectures and courses and supplemented its income with grants from the City livery companies and the Trustees of the London Parochial Charities.

13 March: The first meeting of LSEUT is held at Mansion House. A council of twenty-two members is elected, which includes leading figures in education and representatives of the following organizations: the University of London, the London School Board, Women's Educational Union, Girton College, Bedford College, Birkbeck Institution, City of London College, the College for Men and Women, King's College, the London Institution, Queen's College, the Royal Institution, and the Working Men's College.

LSEUT locates itself in Albemarle Street, in London's West End, where it remains until 1886, when it moves to larger premises at Charterhouse, in the City of London.

LSEUT formed a number of local committees that were then responsible for organizing courses staffed by the society's lecturers. According to John Burrows, fees were collected by each committee to cover the expenses of the lecturer, and the costs of publicity and accommodation. Three different types of person were likely to attend LSEUT: (a) persons of leisure of both sexes; (b) clerks and young women employed during the day; and (c) workmen especially of the artisan classes. Fees proposed for these three groups were (a) £1 1s. for a course of twelve lectures; (b) 7s. 6d.; and (c) 5s. There were often higher charges for afternoon classes, compared with those payable for evening classes for working people. Weekly lectures (each one hour), which were often attended by large audiences, were often followed by class instruction in a series that made up a short course, for the small proportion of the larger group who wished to pursue the subject. At the end of each course, students could elect to sit a written exam.

Autumn: Seven term-length classes are launched by LSEUT for the autumn term: at the London Institution (classes on political economy, astronomy, and English constitutional history); at Birkbeck Institution (astronomy); at the Working Men's College (electricity and magnetism); at the City of London College (history and political philosophy); and in Wimbledon (political economy).

1878 Women are allowed to sit for University of London degrees. The London Ladies' Educational Association is closed, having achieved its aim. Six women at UCL obtained degrees, four took BAs in 1880 and two gained BScs in 1881.

By **October**, all classes at UCL are open to both men and women, although many were taught in separate groups.

Extension courses begin to be offered by the University of Oxford. T. H. Green organizes the first lecture in a school in Birmingham in September 1878. The Oxford extension model differed from that of Cambridge, according to Richard

Clarke: Oxford had a tutorial classes model in which ‘tutors (not “lecturers”)’ were provided by the university but the syllabus was negotiated with students themselves. By 1892 Oxford University’s Standing Committee in Charge of Extension Lectures was formalized into the Delegacy for the Extension of Teaching Beyond the Limits of the University and housed in the Oxford offices of the Examination Schools.

- 1879 **October:** The LSEUT term opens with twenty-six courses, held at thirteen centres. According to *The Echo*, the subjects most in demand are political economy, English history and literature, physical geography, and physiology. During this academic year LSEUT awards fifty-seven certificates.

LSEUT suffers a perennial shortage of funds and a public appeal for additional funds is launched. In the early days fifty-five members’ subscriptions kept LSEUT afloat, supplemented by generous help from the Gilchrist Educational Funds, and in 1881 a donation from the Clothworkers’ Company. Over the years other public bodies and private individuals made donations. Life membership was 50 guineas and the standard annual subscription was 2 guineas.

- 1880 A further Education Act (extending the 1870 Education Act) makes school attendance obligatory between the ages of 5 and 10.

John Churton Collins (1848–1908) gives his first university extension lectures, at Brixton, after studying history and law at the University of Oxford. He was employed by LSEUT from 1880 to 1907, during which time he delivered approximately three thousand lectures.

- 1884 **Funded by a generous donation from Francis Ravenscroft (of the robe-making firm Ede and Ravenscroft), Birkbeck Institution moves from Southampton Buildings in Chancery Lane to the Breems Building on Fetter Lane, London, where it remained until 1952. It then relocated to Malet Street, in the heart of the University of London, near UCL and adjacent to the university library and administration in Senate House.**

May: The Association for Promoting a Teaching University for London is established, with members from UCL, KCL, and London’s various medical schools. The association sought ‘the conferring of a substantive voice in the government of the University upon those engaged in the work of University Teaching and Examination’ and recognition of the ‘existing institutions in London of university rank’ as ‘the bases or component parts of the University’. Plans were drawn up for the forming of faculties and boards of studies controlling a ‘Teaching University’ to be grafted onto the existing University of London, reconstituted into a ‘dual organisation’ **for teaching and examining.**

Two Royal Commissions were set up in response: the Selborne Commission, which reported in 1888, and the Gresham Commission in 1894.

Autumn: According to Burrows, LSEUT targets publishing houses in London for financial support. Twelve publishers responded to the appeal, donating £77 5s. and paying annual subscriptions of £55 8s.

November: Oscar Wilde lectures in the Birkbeck theatre on 'The Value of Art in Modern Life'.

24 December: After being proposed and agreed at three meetings in Oxford, at St John's College and Balliol College, between November 1883 and February 1884, the first university settlement house, Toynbee Hall, is established in the East End of London by Revd Samuel Barnett, a Church of England vicar, and his wife Henrietta. A significant programme of LSEUT courses immediately commences at this institution. According to Burrows, hundreds of manual workers, 'probably in larger proportion than have ever since attended university adult education classes in the London area, were given a solid grounding in economics, literature, history, electricity, biology, and other subjects'. At the height of its influence, Toynbee Hall spread its activities to surrounding areas providing classes at Poplar, Millwall, and Limehouse. In 1895–96, when this activity was at its peak, the average attendance at the eleven university extension courses at Toynbee Hall was 668, and 483 at the seven courses at the outlying centres, with nearly one hundred students taking the relevant examinations.

1885 LSEUT institutes sessional certificates, and the possibility of a certificate for continuous study. According to Burrows, this was appealing to pupil teachers who were given some exemption from the Queen's Scholarship Examination on the basis of their certificates. The certificate for continuous study meant six awards based on not more than three subjects, each of which had to be studied over two successive terms, covering both literary and historical subjects. Men working in the City were also given incentive to attend classes and study for certificates, as 200 firms belonging to the London Chamber of Commerce agreed to give preference to employees showing this enterprise. However, LSEUT's expectation that certificates should pave the way to a university degree was to remain unfulfilled, even if it might involve eight years' study.

Spring term: Mrs Sophie Bryant becomes the first female lecturer for LSEUT, giving a course on 'Moral Ideals'.

October: A LSEUT course of twelve lectures on 'The Age of Milton and Dryden' commences, taught by John Churton Collins. Lectures are followed by 'class instruction', and an exam was held at the end of the course, with certificates awarded to successful candidates.

- 1886 LSEUT moves its offices from Albemarle Street, London to Charterhouse, London.
The federal Victoria University (in Manchester) becomes involved in extension teaching.
24 November: Oscar Wilde lectures at the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution on Thomas Chatterton.
- 1887 LSEUT arranges the first ‘People’s Lectures’, free of charge, which often attracted large audiences. The series was funded by the Gilchrist Trustees and the City Parochial Trustees.
26 February: John Morley delivers LSEUT’s annual address, titled ‘On the Study of Literature’, at Mansion House.
- 1888 LSEUT gives evidence before the Selborne Commission. According to Burrows, one representative of LSEUT stated: ‘Nothing would give us greater pleasure than to hand over the whole of our work to a teaching university’; another gave an account of LSEUT’s work, indicating its appeal to middle-class and artisan audiences. His evidence indicated that LSEUT was ‘increasingly concerned about wider opportunities for some of its students to be admitted to degree studies, with some concessions for their work in extension courses’. The Selborne Commission conceded that if various educational institutions in London, including LSEUT, could be coordinated under the direction of a university, then ‘the cause of education in the Metropolis might gain a great impetus’.
LSEUT presents a memorial to the University of London Senate, which argues that university extension students should be permitted to complete their study for a degree over six to eight years.
- 1889 Twenty-five per cent of all courses conducted in this year by LSEUT were on English literature.
Morley Memorial College for Working Men and Women, for adult education, is established by Emma Cons, funded by an endowment by Samuel Morley MP.
[1889–1922]: W. P. Ker is the first Quain Professor of English Language and Literature at UCL, taking over from Henry Morley, professor of English at UCL. Ker was interested in comparative literature of the Middle Ages and, in addition to English, taught Icelandic and founded the UCL Scandinavian Studies department.
- 1890 University extension lecturer Richard G. Moulton founds the Backworth and District Classical Novel-Reading Union, set up in a Northumberland community after a brutal wave of redundancies left miners unable to afford extension

courses, to read contemporary nineteenth-century fiction. The secretary was John U. Barrow, also a miner.

1349 certificates are issued by LSEUT.

The 1890 Local Taxation Act gives local authorities the power to supply or aid technical education. West Ham Town Council and the Technical Education Board of the London County Council joined LSEUT in organizing courses.

- 1891 **Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution becomes one of three institutions (with Northampton Polytechnic and the City of London College) to form the federal City Polytechnic.**

- 1892 **24 February: Charles Dickens, Jr lectures at the Birkbeck Institution.**

John U. Barrow publishes a report on the Backworth experiment: 'Backworth and District Classical Novel Reading Union: Report, 1891–92'.

Mrs Millicent Fawcett, wife of Henry Fawcett MP and later a suffragist, gives two courses for LSEUT at Canonbury and Marylebone on 'Problems of Poverty' to large audiences of social workers.

- 1893 **The Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act raises the age of compulsory attendance at school to 11; a further Act of 1899 raises it to 12.**

The Cowper Commission is established to confront the still unresolved problem of university organization. One of the commissioners was Canon Browne, a former member of LSEUT's council. According to Burrows, Professor Ramsey, a professor of chemistry at UCL, stated that university extension was 'good work but not University work' and that it lacked 'sufficient provision for sequence and co-ordination of study'. But there was pressure for wider facilities for degree studies. The commission's report stated that 'the University Extension system deserved the encouragement of the University' and recommended the appointment of 'a standing board to encourage and extend this work in London and the suburbs'.

- 1894 **Charles Whibley, an example of conservative resistance and disdain for the democratizing of education, writes a series of withering articles on extension teaching in the *Nineteenth Century*.**

June: The University Extension Congress is organized as LSEUT's contribution to the twenty-first anniversary of the beginnings of the University Extension Movement at Cambridge. Seven hundred representatives meet to discuss the future development of the movement, its relationships with centres and local governments, and studies for university degrees.

- 1896 **[–1918] George Armitage-Smith becomes principal of Birkbeck.**
An honours degree in history becomes available at UCL.
- 1898 **12 August:** The 1898 University of London Act is given royal assent. The Act gives the University of London a federal structure, with responsibility for monitoring course content and academic standards within its institutions.
The administration of LSEUT hopes to become an established department of the University of London, possibly with degree-awarding facilities.
- 1899 **October:** LSEUT receives a letter from the commission established to implement the 1898 University of London Act, excluding them from the university: ‘the Commission do not feel justified in treating the Society as a Public Educational Institution within the meaning of the Act’. However, it referred to ‘the appointment of a standing committee to advise the Senate upon the means best adapted to encourage work of the kind done by your Society’.
- 1900 The reforms initiated by the 1898 University of London Act come into force with the approval of the new federal statutes. The University of London is reconstituted as a federal university with constituent colleges, altering its previous status as primarily a degree-awarding examination board. UCL, along with many other colleges in London, becomes a school of the University of London. Boards of studies were set up in the different subjects.
7 November: A Board to Promote the Extension of University Teaching (BPEUT) is appointed at the second meeting of the newly created University of London Senate. BPEUT would be responsible for university extension work, and the inspection and examination of schools (other than primary). It would also have power to grant ‘any certificate of proficiency in any subjects of study to any student of the university’, according to Burrows.
5 December: The first meeting of BPEUT takes place.
- 1901 **29 October:** At a meeting of BPEUT the business of taking over LSEUT’s affairs is discussed.
10 December: BPEUT receives the report of a conference between some of its members and LSEUT representatives, which stresses the financial importance of keeping up direct and personal relations with the City livery companies.
- 1902 **28 January:** R. D. Roberts is recommended as registrar of BPEUT to supervise the organization, which has an expanded remit compared to LSEUT. Roberts was charged with the supervision of two broad areas of activity: university extension lectures and examinations, and the inspection and examination of schools.

According to Burrows, during LSEUT's last year of operations 46 sessional and 57 terminal courses were arranged. During the following year, under BPEUT's direction, this was reduced to 37 sessional and 56 terminal courses. BPEUT reports continued to testify to the generosity of public benefactors, especially the City Parochial Charities, the Gilchrist, and the Mitchell Trustees.

2257 certificates are issued by LSEUT.

17 July: LSEUT passes three resolutions at a meeting: 1) that the society (LSEUT) be dissolved on 1 October 1902; 2) that its activities be transferred to the Board to Promote the Extension of University Teaching (BPEUT) in accordance with two previous Senate resolutions; and 3) that university extension work be encouraged and maintained.

October: LSEUT formally joins the University of London as BPEUT.

18 December: The 1902 Education Act radically reorganizes the administration of education at a local level, abolishing the school boards in England and Wales and creating new local education authorities, empowering them to provide secondary schools and technical education. It also provides financial support for schools operated by the Church of England and the Catholic Church.

1903 The 1902 Education Act is extended to cover London.

An Association to Promote the Higher Education of Working Men is founded in Britain by Albert Mansbridge (1876–1952), an employee of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, and his wife Frances Mansbridge.

BPEUT's 'Scheme of Study in the Humanities' is created 'to present a broad view of history in its largest aspects'. The course is set to extend over four to five years.

At the turn of the century, the BA degree course in English was reorganized by the University of London. The Board of English was chaired by W. P. Ker, Quain Professor of English Language and Literature at UCL. This restructuring of the BA degree created, for the first time, something similar to a modern BA English degree, although as the preoccupations of the period were notably philological there were more compulsory language elements. The first graduates in English under the new system took their degrees in 1903.

1904 BPEUT holds the first holiday courses for foreign teachers.

Walter Raleigh (1861–1922) becomes the first professor of English literature at the University of Oxford.

1905 The Association to Promote the Higher Education of Working Men is renamed the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), partly in recognition of the

legitimate claims of working women to higher education. The association was quickly recognized by universities, and Mansbridge left clerical work in 1905 to become its full-time general secretary (until 1916).

The Chancellor's Certificate, based on study and examination over a minimum of three sessions, is approved at BPEUT.

- 1906 The first grant from London County Council is received by BPEUT; it gives £50 for each of the nine sessional courses. London County Council also began to run its own educational activities, for younger students.

The Liberal Party wins a landslide majority in the general election. A Liberal-Labour pact ensured the Labour Party gained support.

- 1907 **The Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution is renamed Birkbeck College, although the name had started to appear on documents from 1903. Birkbeck's union with Northampton Polytechnic and the City of London College is dissolved.**

Under the 1905 University College London (Transfer) Act, in 1907 UCL was incorporated into the University of London and ceased to have a separate legal existence, also parting company with University College Hospital and University College School. (This incorporation into the University of London was reversed seventy years later, in 1977.)

- 1908 **John Hay Lobban is appointed lecturer in English literature at Birkbeck.**

Dissatisfaction about the BPEUT Chancellor's Certificate emerges when a memorandum is presented to the BPEUT about the future of the scheme. The work was exacting, according to Burrows: 200 hours of lectures and classes; seventy-two essays; 1000 hours of prep; and unspecified amount of time reading. BPEUT asked whether it would be possible for holders of the certificate to proceed to a higher degree, and whether the London County Council could recognize the certificate as a qualification for teaching positions. A committee was appointed but concluded that it would be impossible for BPEUT to provide for higher degrees 'by custom and statutes', and also expressed concern about diplomas in pedagogy and other professional areas, although they welcomed the idea of diplomas in the humanities. Burrows suggests that this may have been the origin of the establishment of BPEUT's diplomas in literature, history, economics, and social science.

- 1909 BPEUT's 'Scheme of Study for Diplomas in the Humanities' is created. By 1957 there were seven diplomas: literature, history, economics, history of art, biblical and religious studies, sociology, and international affairs. According to Burrows, courses for these diplomas were restricted to the Central London area,

and those for the fourth and final year were usually based at a school of the university: courses in English literature, for example, were held in King's College. The examination entry requirements were high, especially for the fourth year, when candidates had to pass not only the subject of this final session but also those studied during the preceding three sessions. Student numbers for these courses were limited but grew steadily: 176 registered students in 1909–10; 201 in 1910–11; 263 in 1911–12; 338 in 1912–13; and 349 in 1913–14. When the first diplomas were awarded in 1913, there were thirty-eight successful candidates. E. M. Forster gives ten lectures on the 'Renaissance at Rome' at a new BPEUT centre in Ashted, Surrey.

BPEUT organizes a series of tutorial classes in partnership with the WEA, in part to supplement the study done in the extension courses.

- 1910 The total elementary school population reaches five million.
[–1914] Years of industrial unrest and significant increase in trade union membership.
- 1913 Lord Haldane's Royal Commission recommends that Birkbeck becomes London's evening university.
Birkbeck's art school is closed, a result of London County Council's policy to concentrate technical and commercial subjects in other institutions.
Albert Mansbridge, one of the pioneers of adult education in Britain, and general secretary of the WEA, publishes *University Tutorial Classes: A Study in the Development of Higher Education Among Working Men and Women*.
- 1917 Women are admitted to study medicine at UCL.
- 1918 The Education Act raises the school-leaving age to 14 and abolishes elementary school fees.
[–1939] George Senter becomes principal of Birkbeck.
- 1919 The Report of the Centenary Commission on Adult Education advocates the 'permanent national necessity' of adult education to deal with democratic, societal, and industrial challenges to rebuild the nation after the First World War.
- 1920 Birkbeck College becomes a constituent college of the University of London for a probationary period of five years. It reapplies in 1925.
Albert Mansbridge (of the WEA) publishes *An Adventure in Working-Class Education*.

- 1921 The Newbolt Report, published as *The Teaching of English in England*, calls for greater recognition of extension and WEA classes and integration into English departments. It became a bestseller and established English literature as a central feature of English curricula.
- 1922 R. W. Chambers publishes *The Teaching of English in the Universities of England*. The same year, Chambers succeeded W. P. Ker as Quain Professor of English Language and Literature at UCL.
- 1925 **Daytime teaching is phased out at Birkbeck.**
- 1926 **Birkbeck receives its Royal Charter.**
- 1928 Extension teaching at the University of London is reorganized. The BPEUT becomes the University Extension and Tutorial Classes Council (UETCC; a governing body). There are also separate bodies to deal with tutorial classes and university extension work: the Tutorial Classes Committee for non-accredited classes (which were often delivered together with WEA branches, trade unions, and/or local community organizations); and the University Extension Committee, for accredited certificates and diplomas.
- The Matriculation and Schools Examination Board is also established, as a separate body from the UETCC, thus ending the responsibility of the Extra-Mural Department for school examinations.
- 1929 Allen Mawer, an English philologist, becomes provost of UCL.
- 1938 Spens Report on the future of secondary education.
- 1939 **[–1943] John P. R. Maud becomes master of Birkbeck (the title was formerly ‘principal’).**
- 1941 **June:** *Education After the War*, a memorandum compiled by Board of Education officials, circulates on a confidential basis. Commonly referred to as the ‘green book’, it formed the basis of the 1943 ‘white paper’, *Educational Reconstruction*, which was used to formulate the 1944 Education Act.
- 1943 **[–1950] H. Gordon Jackson becomes master of Birkbeck.**
- 1944 **19 July:** A V1 rocket destroys Birkbeck’s library and a large part of the Breams Building.
- 3 August:** The Education Act is given royal assent. The Act raised the school leaving age to 15 (with future provision for it to be raised to 16) and provided free secondary education for all pupils. Section 42 of the Act imposed on local education authorities the obligation to make provision, after consultation with universities and educational associations, for the education of adults.

- 1945 Birkbeck awards its first PhD and MA to postgraduate students.
- 1947 The University of Leeds begins to offer diploma and certificate courses.
- 1949 The University of Leicester begins to offer diploma and certificate courses.
- 1950 [–1951] E. H. Warmington is acting master of Birkbeck.
- 1951 [–1965] Sir John Lockwood is master of Birkbeck.
- 1952 Birkbeck leaves the Breams Building on Fetter Lane, London, moving to a new site in Malet Street, adjacent to the University of London Library and Senate House, and near UCL. It officially opens on 28 April 1953.
The Council for Extra-Mural Studies supersedes the University Extension and Tutorial Classes Council.
- 1953 By this year the WEA had become a national organization with over a thousand branches grouped in twenty-one districts.
- 1960s A proposal to change Birkbeck College from an institution for part-timers and evening students to a college for full-time undergraduate school-leavers is defeated by Birkbeck staff and supporters. According to Richard Clarke, ‘the consequence was that the college and the federal University’s Extra-Mural department continued their development along parallel, but largely separate paths — the College focusing on high-quality research and part-time degree teaching, and the Department developing an extraordinary diversity of activities beyond its traditional “liberal” core.’
(and 1970s). Several new departments open at Birkbeck, including economics, organizational psychology, applied linguistics, and politics.
- 1963 **8 September:** Harold Wilson, leader of the Labour Party, gives a speech in Glasgow about his plans for a ‘university of the air’ (the Open University). On 1 October the same year, he outlines his ideas again at the Labour Party conference in Scarborough (in his ‘white heat of technology’ speech).
- 1965 [–1966] E. H. Warmington is acting master of Birkbeck.
- 1966 In the academic year 1966–67, the total number of Birkbeck students is approximately two thousand.
[–1968] Kenneth Hare is master of Birkbeck.
- 1968 [–1977] Ronald C. Tress is master of Birkbeck.
- 1969 **23 April:** The Open University is established by a Royal Charter.
- 1971 **January:** The Open University opens to students: 24,000 enrol.
- 1977 [–1979] Tony J. Chandler is master of Birkbeck.

- 1979 [-1987] W. G. 'George' Overend is master of Birkbeck.
- 1980 Bourke writes that the *Times Higher Education Supplement* headline 'Birkbeck May Close Seven of 24 Departments' reports on a confidential memorandum to the Court of the University of London, in which Overend worried about a drop in the college's income. There were freezes in staff recruitment.
- 1983 Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, a professor of mathematics at the University of Cambridge, is appointed chairman of the University Grants Committee (UGC), responsible for public funding of universities.
- 1985 A working group is established, chaired by George Overend (the master of Birkbeck and chair of the Senate Committee of Extra-Mural Studies) to consider future options for the University of London's Department of Extra-Mural Studies. According to Richard Clarke, the group met only a few times (the deliberations inclining towards a merger with Birkbeck) when Birkbeck itself suffered a major financial crisis.
- Bedford College merges with Royal Holloway College, another constituent college of the University of London.
- 1986 British universities undergo their first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), a process conceived by Swinnerton-Dyer to reveal the allocation of funding to each UK university and to link the figures explicitly to research performance during a period of budgetary restrictions.
- The UGC attempts to restructure the funding of part-time students, resulting in a financial crisis for Birkbeck. It declared that a part-time student was equivalent to 0.5 of a full-time student (previously, a part-time student had been equivalent to 0.8 of a full-time student). According to Joanna Bourke, this took £2.5 million from Birkbeck's annual budget of £10 million. An impartial review by Deloitte Haskins & Sells concluded that Birkbeck was not responsible for its financial crisis. The UGC allowed Birkbeck to recruit an extra 300 students and offered a supplementary grant of £600,000 for 1986-87. But these were temporary measures only deferring the financial consequences of the part-time equivalence factor.
- October:** Birkbeck appoints an emergency committee, chaired by Sir Barney Hayhoe MP, a college governor, to restructure the college following the financial crisis.
- 1987 George Overend retires as master of Birkbeck and is succeeded by Tessa Blackstone (1987-97).

February: The Hayhoe Report, titled 'Birkbeck College: A New Structure. The Report of the Committee on Restructuring the College. February 1987', is published. It endorses the proposal that the University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies (DEMS) should become part of Birkbeck, as one of its new resource centres.

10 March: The Academic Policy Board of DEMS responds to the Hayhoe Report, after a meeting on 20 February 1987, welcoming its recommendation that the department should be incorporated within Birkbeck College.

19 November: The *Marylebone Mercury* reports that Birkbeck is considering cutting its departments of biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and statistics due to the cut in its funding. 'The closure of the departments is the most radical option suggested by the management consultant division of Deloitte Haskins and Sells. Others include increasing student numbers and fees, reducing staff-student ratio and lobbying for more funding.'

The Department of Classics is cut at Birkbeck.

1988 **15 January:** The Report of the Working Party of the University of London, Birkbeck College, and the Department of Extra-Mural Studies recommends that DEMS is incorporated into Birkbeck.

29 July: The Education Reform Act is given royal assent. The Act abolished academic tenure for academics appointed on or after 20 November 1987; and abolished the University Grants Committee, replacing it with the Universities Funding Council (UFC) which was directly responsible to Parliament. It also enabled schools to opt out of local control.

August: The University of London DEMS becomes a resource centre of Birkbeck College and is renamed the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies (CEMS). In doing so, according to Joanna Bourke, Birkbeck adds 18,000 extra-mural students to its cohort of 6000.

David Armstrong is appointed director of the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies, responsible for its academic integration with Birkbeck College, and for its expansion with the aid of enlarged UFC/Higher Education Funding grants. He had previously been deputy director of the University of London's Department of Extra-Mural Studies, responsible for the negotiations with the university on the amalgamation of the Extension and Tutorial sections, and work preparatory to the incorporation of DEMS into Birkbeck.

1992 **The distinction between universities and polytechnics is abolished.**

- 1990s In the mid-1990s the Conservative government insists on formal assessment of learning outcomes as a condition of financial support. Public funding is cut for courses that did not result in a qualification.
- Financial support for traditional extra-mural provision is also increasingly integrated into the mainstream budget of its respective institution, in a practice known as 'mainstreaming'.
- 1995 Birkbeck is authorized to confer degrees of the University of London on its students and to appoint and confer titles of professor, reader, and teacher of the university.
- David Armstrong retires as director of CEMS and is succeeded temporarily (1996) by Kathy Adler.
- 1997 Tony Legge becomes acting director of CEMS (1997–99).
- Tessa Blackstone leaves her position as master of Birkbeck to take up a position with the new Labour government. From May to December 1997, Richard J. Evans is acting master of Birkbeck.
- 1998 [–2002] Timothy M. M. O'Shea is master of Birkbeck.
- 1999 The Centre for Extra-Mural Studies at Birkbeck becomes the Faculty of Continuing Education (FCE).
- Tom Schuller becomes director of FCE.
- 2002 Birkbeck College is renamed Birkbeck, University of London.
- October–December: Francis Ames-Lewis is acting master of Birkbeck.
- David Latchman is appointed master of Birkbeck.
- 2004 John Annette becomes dean of FCE.
- 2007 The Faculty of Continuing Education becomes the Faculty of Lifelong Learning (FLL).
- The introduction of the Equivalent or Lower Qualification (ELQ), a new criterion for government funding of part-time students, made a significant number of Birkbeck degree and continuing education students ineligible. No student who was already in possession of a qualification at an equivalent (or higher) level than that at which they wished to study met the criteria for government subsidy. This austerity measure removed swathes of funding from Birkbeck and the Open University, both of which catered for mature part-time students.
- The streamlining of the college and the integration of FLL are reported in the Birkbeck College Annual Report 2006–07, following a paragraph on the

effect of ELQ on the college as a whole. However, figures here of part-time full-time equivalents (FTEs) for FLL students are high and rising, as are those for undergraduates and postgraduates. It is notable that FLL part-time FTEs (11,720) are higher than the total for the rest of the faculties (7300), though their funding per FTE may differ.

- 2008 Introduction of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), implemented in the UK as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). All awards were referenced to a series of levels and carried a credit rating in the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS).

An Internal Strategic Review by Grant Thornton commissioned by the college recommends academic and financial restructuring to ensure the future of Birkbeck in the HE sector in the aftermath of the ELQ funding cuts.

- 2009 At the end of the 2008–09 academic year, the college is restructured: departments and their faculties are regrouped into Super Faculties, except for the Faculty of Lifelong Learning (FLL) and its outreach programme of teaching, which are abolished, and its full-time staff assimilated into cognate departments and faculties.
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