

# **Alt-HE: A Manifesto for Collaboration**

## **Introduction**

Higher education in the UK is undergoing sustained pressure—financially, structurally, and intellectually. While critique of the current system is now widespread, viable alternatives remain fragmented, under-documented, and weakly connected.

Alt-HE is an initiative to address this gap.

We are establishing a platform to support critical inquiry, structured knowledge, and collaborative practice focused on alternative models of higher education.

This document sets out the purpose, approach, and invitation to collaborate.

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## **The Problem**

The contemporary higher education system is expected to fulfil multiple, often conflicting roles:

- credentialing and labour market signalling
- knowledge production
- social mobility
- civic and regional development

In practice, this has led to:

- increasing financial strain across institutions
- standardisation of provision
- narrowing definitions of educational value
- limited space for experimentation

Although these challenges are widely recognised, responses tend to remain within existing institutional and policy frameworks.

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## **The Gap**

Alongside mainstream provision, there is a growing landscape of:

- experimental institutions
- cooperative and community-led models

- alternative credentialing approaches
- hybrid and informal learning environments

However, these developments are:

- dispersed and inconsistently documented
- rarely analysed in a comparative or systematic way
- weakly connected to one another
- largely absent from mainstream policy discourse

There is currently no shared infrastructure to:

- map this landscape
  - assess its potential
  - support collaboration among those involved
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## **Our Proposition**

Alt-HE is intended as a **platform for critique, knowledge, and practice** centred on alternative higher education.

It brings together three core functions:

### **1. Critical Analysis**

We publish and commission work that examines the assumptions and limitations of current higher education models.

The aim is not critique for its own sake, but to create conceptual space for alternative approaches.

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### **2. Structured Knowledge Base**

We are developing a cumulative, structured repository of:

- alternative institutional models
- case studies and experiments
- conceptual frameworks
- comparative analyses

This knowledge base is intended to function as a shared resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

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### **3. Community of Practice**

We seek to convene individuals and groups who are:

- developing alternative models
- researching higher education systems
- interested in participating in new forms of learning

This community will support:

- exchange of ideas
  - collaborative exploration
  - development of practical initiatives
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### **How We Work**

Alt-HE is guided by the following principles:

- **Independence**  
We are not aligned with any single institution or sector body.
  - **Clarity and rigour**  
Contributions should be grounded in evidence, clear reasoning, and relevance.
  - **Structured knowledge**  
We prioritise organisation, synthesis, and cumulative understanding over fragmented publication.
  - **Openness with curation**  
Participation is encouraged, but editorial standards are maintained.
  - **Iteration**  
The platform will evolve in response to emerging work and contributions.
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### **What We Are Not**

Alt-HE is not:

- a university or alternative provider

- a lobbying or campaigning organisation
- a consultancy

Our role is to support understanding, connection, and development—not to represent or replace existing institutions.

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### **Our Ambition**

Over time, Alt-HE aims to become:

- a trusted reference point for alternative higher education models
- a forum for serious, independent discourse
- a catalyst for collaboration and experimentation

Success will be measured by whether:

- alternative models become more visible and intelligible
  - connections between initiatives strengthen
  - new forms of provision emerge with greater coherence
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### **Invitation to Collaborate**

We are seeking collaborators who wish to contribute to one or more of the following:

- Writing and editorial contributions
- Development of the knowledge base
- Identification and documentation of case studies
- Participation in discussions and working groups
- Strategic input into the development of the platform

Alt-HE is conceived as a shared endeavour.

It will only be meaningful if it is collectively shaped by those engaged in rethinking and developing higher education.

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### **Contact**

If you are interested in contributing or collaborating, please get in touch:

[Insert contact email / link]

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**Alt-HE**

*A platform for alternative higher education*