

MOTION: Inquiry into the Partnership between Goldsmiths and RisePoint UK

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We note that...

- In Decembre 2025, Goldsmiths, University of London, entered into a **7-year contract** with RisePoint UK which intends to introduce online learning. ¹
- RisePoint is a major for-profit Online Programme Manager (OPM) Educational Technology (EdTech) company. It was founded as Academic Partnerships (AP) in 2007 by American education entrepreneur and conservative political donor Randy Best. Owned by **private equity** (PE) firm Vistria Group, AP's primary market has been regional public universities in the United States. After acquiring Wiley University Services in Decembre 2023 for \$150 million, AP rebranded in 2024 as RisePoint. ²

In the UK, AP was incorporated as WUNI UK Holdings Ltd in Decembre 2023 and rebranded as RisePoint UK in May 2024, with all but one officer residing in the US. ³ It has contracted with the Universities of Birmingham (since 2015, 2024 contract value £650+k ⁴) and Bath (since 2021) although no mention of the partnerships is found on these institutions' websites. The contract with Goldsmiths is its third in the UK.

- RisePoint is consistently rated poorly by its employees who flag **chaotic top-**

¹ <https://www.gold.ac.uk/news/2026/goldsmiths-online-learning>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Risepoint>

³ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/15331705>

⁴ <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/4719077e-a541-4f8e-bd36-3f7927a1c4fa?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

heavy management; regular layoffs of more senior employees in favour of cheaper hires; frequent team restructuring; tracking of bathroom and rest breaks; and constant uncertainty.⁵

- The **initial** 5 online programmes contracted by Goldsmiths to launch on 8 June 2026 are:⁶
 - Foundation in Computer Science
 - MSc/PGDip/PGCert Artificial Intelligence with Machine Learning
 - MSc/PGDip/PGCert Artificial Intelligence and Creative Practice
 - MA/PGDip/PGCert Children's Literature (Prof. Michael Rosen)
 - MA/MSc/PGDip/PGCert Psychology

These are in addition to online programmes in two subject areas (English since 1996, Computing since 2019) offered by Goldsmiths in partnership with the **University of London** whose staff manage all student administration, incl. enquiries, applications, registrations, and the dispatch of student materials.⁷

According to a personal phone communication on April 13 2026 between the Proposer and a RisePoint recruiter, a further 3 to 5 programmes are slated to subsequently launch. We note that the recruiter did not identify as a RisePoint employee, introducing themselves instead as 'Goldsmiths' until specifically challenged to name their employer.

- A Freedom of Information (FOI) request for copies of all contracts entered into by Goldsmiths with RisePoint UK Holdings Ltd was filed on 22 February 2026 with Goldsmiths Information Access (GIA) by the Proposer. GIA denied our FOI request on 27 March 2026 on '**commercial interest**' grounds.⁸
- As explained by Goldsmiths CFO/COO Imran Chughtai in a personal communication dated 18 March 2026, the executive responsible for online learning and the RisePoint partnership is **Vivienne Hurley** (Exec. Director Research & Social Innovation, Enterprise Office). As of this date, Vivienne Hurley has not responded to our request for comments.
- The growth of OPMs in their original market, the United States, has dramatically slowed since the pioneering early-tech UC Berkeley/Silicon Valley partnerships of the early 2000s because of rising student debt, greater

⁵ <https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/Reviews/Risepoint-Reviews-E454381.htm>

⁶ <https://www.gold.ac.uk/online-learning>

⁷ https://www.london.ac.uk/study/courses?filter_member_institution

⁸ https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bUPvQ6LW1HD-IVtqIFB7dIt_jhfCok-6WdViKc4epns

demand for accountability, a saturated market, and regulations first brought forth during the Biden administration under the leadership of Senator Elizabeth Warren which are now increasingly implemented at state legislative levels. As a result, OPMs are now turning to a **new market**: the UK.

- The nine OPMs operating thirty active partnerships in an increasingly competitive UK market, (“an area where people frequently conflate desired narratives with reality” according to HE market analyst Neil Mosley) are: Higher Ed Partners (34%), Boundless Learning, 2U, CEG Digital, RisePoint (9%), Kaplan Open Learning, FutureLearn, OES, and Skilled. Mosley also notes “an ongoing question about the **long-term viability** of the OPM business model” and flags RisePoint UK as “a company to watch in the next year or so”.⁹

We believe that...

- The contracting of OPMs by Higher Education (HE) institutions in the UK is an increasing form of **privatisation** (takeover) of public services that raises red flags in terms of the private sector’s **accountability** to the public at large.¹⁰
- Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) are not unusual in HE (on-campus retail and food services for instance) but contracts with OPMs directly impact these institutions’ primary mission of education and have the potential to disrupt **public trust** in that mission.
- Companies funded by PE are more likely to include problematic contract features and, as noted in studies, “often center **profit production** over other organizational goals”.¹¹
- In light of the current heated national debate on the soundness of a partnership between our NHS and American corporation Palantir, it is vital to scrutinise P3s between foreign companies and British HE institutions where issues of **national sovereignty** are no less salient than with other essential public services such as telecommunications, defense, health, energy and water, and transportation.
- Interim Vice-Chancellor David Oswell and CFO/COO Imran Chughtai signed-off on the contract without holding a proper and thorough consultation with stakeholders. This goes against the recommendation on **Strategy and Risk**

⁹ <https://www.neilmosley.com/blog/uk-higher-education-opm-market-a-review-of-trends-developments-and-key-players?rq=risepoint>

¹⁰ <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/a-quick-guide-to-online-program-managers-opms/>

¹¹ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23780231231214952>

(#42) of the Council Governance Effectiveness Review (Halpin, 2025) that strategy be “aligned with the institution’s values, mission, and the expectations of its stakeholders – incl. students, staff, and external partners”.¹²

- This partnership is once again a case of Goldsmiths, in a time of great financial and cultural stress, committing, without proper analysis, to large-scale projects (ex: Enterprise Hub), damaging bank loan terms, expensive consultancy fees, and tech purchases of dubious value whose **failures** damage stakeholders and local communities’ trust.
- Specific **contract stipulations** that executives should scrutinise in forming new partnerships with OPMs include:
 - Renewal/Break-Out Clauses
 - Expansion Clauses
 - Bundling Loopholes
 - Payment Structures
 - Opacity
 - Marketing Requirements

In light of a large sample (161) of major OPM contracts reviewed in the US by non-profit research organisation The Century Foundation (TCF) between 2017 and 2020, it appears that AP/RisePoint has been particularly aggressive in requiring these stipulations to be exceptionally weighed in their favour.¹³

- **Renewal Clauses** in AP/RisePoint contracts were flagged by TCF as lengthier than industry norms (up to 12-month notice to cancel). Auto renewals and indefinite clauses are also frequent. **Break-Out Clauses** and Right-of-First-Refusals also “lock institutions into contracts for decades”.
- **Expansion** of programming (for-profit ‘creep’) can make it increasingly difficult for universities to break with an OPM, enforcing a sort of *university captivity*. TCF notes that “transitioning to another provider or moving services in-house may become increasingly complex”. “Universities may stick with an OPM even if the quality of services provided is low or diminishing over time.”¹⁰
- **Bundling Loopholes** allow OPMs to be involved in and profit from recruitment. Student data can be accessed and monetised across institutions. TCF also flags AP/RisePoint contracts for “an imbalance between OPM resources directed to recruitment versus services to support student success”.

¹² [https://www.gold.ac.uk/media/docs/gam/Council-Governance-Effectiveness-Review-\(PDF\).pdf](https://www.gold.ac.uk/media/docs/gam/Council-Governance-Effectiveness-Review-(PDF).pdf)

¹³ <https://github.com/HigherEdData/The-For-Profit-Side-of-Public-U>

- **Revenue-sharing** payment structures have controversially tended to incentivise increasing tuition cost and enrolment growth. We note however that RisePoint UK's marketing brochures state that their "two most common models are Fee-for-Persistence and Fee-for-Service". This cannot be verified without access to the contract. ¹⁴
 - **Opacity:** In a correspondence dated 2 April 2026 from the UK Minister of Education on behalf of Minister for Skills (Baroness Smith), we are reminded "universities are independent and autonomous institutions and are therefore responsible for their own governance, including the delivery of their courses". Without FOI recourse, P3 contracts remain opaque; in other words, **no accountability** of OPMs to the public purse and purpose. ¹⁵
 - **Marketing Requirements** of minimum budget spends.
- The UK offers OPMs a barely decade-old market with **potential for expansion** in light of the number of worldwide English speakers vying for British diplomas that remain prestigious and comparatively affordable. ¹⁶

More specifically, RisePoint UK identifies "**a clear hunger for UK education**" from students in Nigeria, Kenya, UAE, Canada, South Africa, and Ireland, countries that are targeted because of rising national incomes, greater debt-lading capacities ('participation' in global economy), and competitive global job markets. ¹⁷

Operating until recently in a context of relatively few legislative protections, this market is **fragile**: more price sensitive, more policy exposed, and far more graduate outcomes focused.

Moreover, the extent to which international **students can be misled** in terms of academic content, opportunity, student experience and support is understudied in the UK. ¹⁸

¹⁴ <https://risepoint.co.uk/services/>

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/apr/07/capitalism-endgame-private-equity-captured-nurseries-care-homes>

¹⁶ <https://www.highereducationinquirer.org/2025/01/risepoint-rise-and-fall-of-another-opm.html>

¹⁷ <https://risepoint.co.uk/insights/voice-of-the-online-learner-2025>

¹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2026/apr/07/brutal-reality-of-life-as-a-foreign-student-in-the-uk>

We resolve to mandate the Students' Union to campaign and lobby Goldsmiths, University of London, and other relevant stakeholders, to:

- Publish the **contract** in full.
- Publicly disclose any **conflicts of interest** between any person at Goldsmiths and RisePoint/RisePoint UK.
- Publish the **financial justifications** for entering into the contract.
- Clearly **disclose**, in information accessible to prospective students, who delivers and runs Goldsmiths' online programmes.
- Undertake, in partnership with the University of London, a **feasibility study** into expanding in-house online programmes. ¹⁹
- Publicly disclose whether RisePoint UK is registered with the **Office for Students (OfS)** as required by OfS' New Requirements for the Oversight of Subcontractual Arrangements effective 31 March 2026. ²⁰
- Publicly disclose Goldsmiths' position in regards to the Office for Students' statement that "a provider's **internal policies** are not sufficient to manage the risks associated with its subcontractual arrangements unless the provider implements those policies effectively in practice, and with appropriate capacity and resources". ²¹

¹⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dereknewton/2021/12/28/colleges-pull-away-from-the-for-profit-companies-that-run-online-programs>

²⁰ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/registering-with-the-ofs/subcontracting-or-validating-higher-education/lead-providers/>

²¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/d34onu13/consultation-outcomes-e10.pdf>

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