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June 2022

# The new generation learner

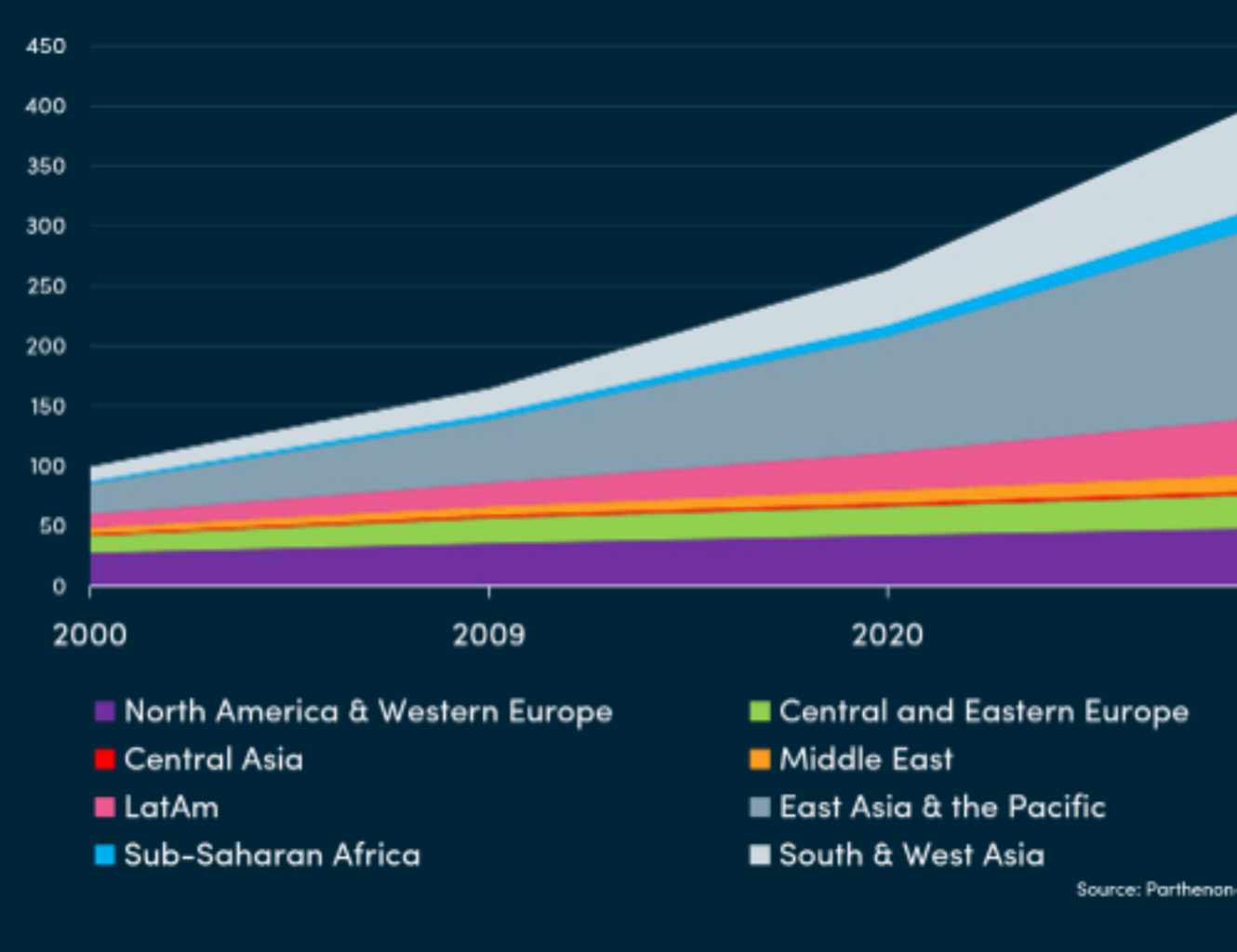


This e-bulletin discusses the latest trends in higher education and the rapid rise of online and distance learning. Backing this trend, Graphite has invested in Higher Ed Partners, a leading online programme manager partnering with universities globally to help them establish and manage online degree programmes.

It is widely known that the global demand for higher education is rising rapidly. Higher education enrolment is forecast to grow from 250 million students in 2020 to around 400 million by 2030, reaching approximately 590 million in 2040. As this new population of learners enrolls in higher education, they bring with them characteristics and demands that distinguish them from their predecessors. They are likely to be determined, driven achievers who are drawn to higher education to improve their employment and earnings prospects. They are increasingly likely to be digitally native, seek on-demand content and expect a personalised learning pathway, delivered asynchronously via a seamless tech platform.

The traditional method of higher education delivery can cope neither with the forecast rise in enrolment nor with the expectations of the new generation learner. According to the market intelligence firm, Holon IQ, in 2020, spend on online degrees made up less than 2% of the total higher education market. This is projected to double to \$74bn by 2025. The pandemic pushed online learning on to the main stage and there are reasons for this trend to accelerate further.

## Global Higher Education Enrolment, 2000–2030 (in millions)

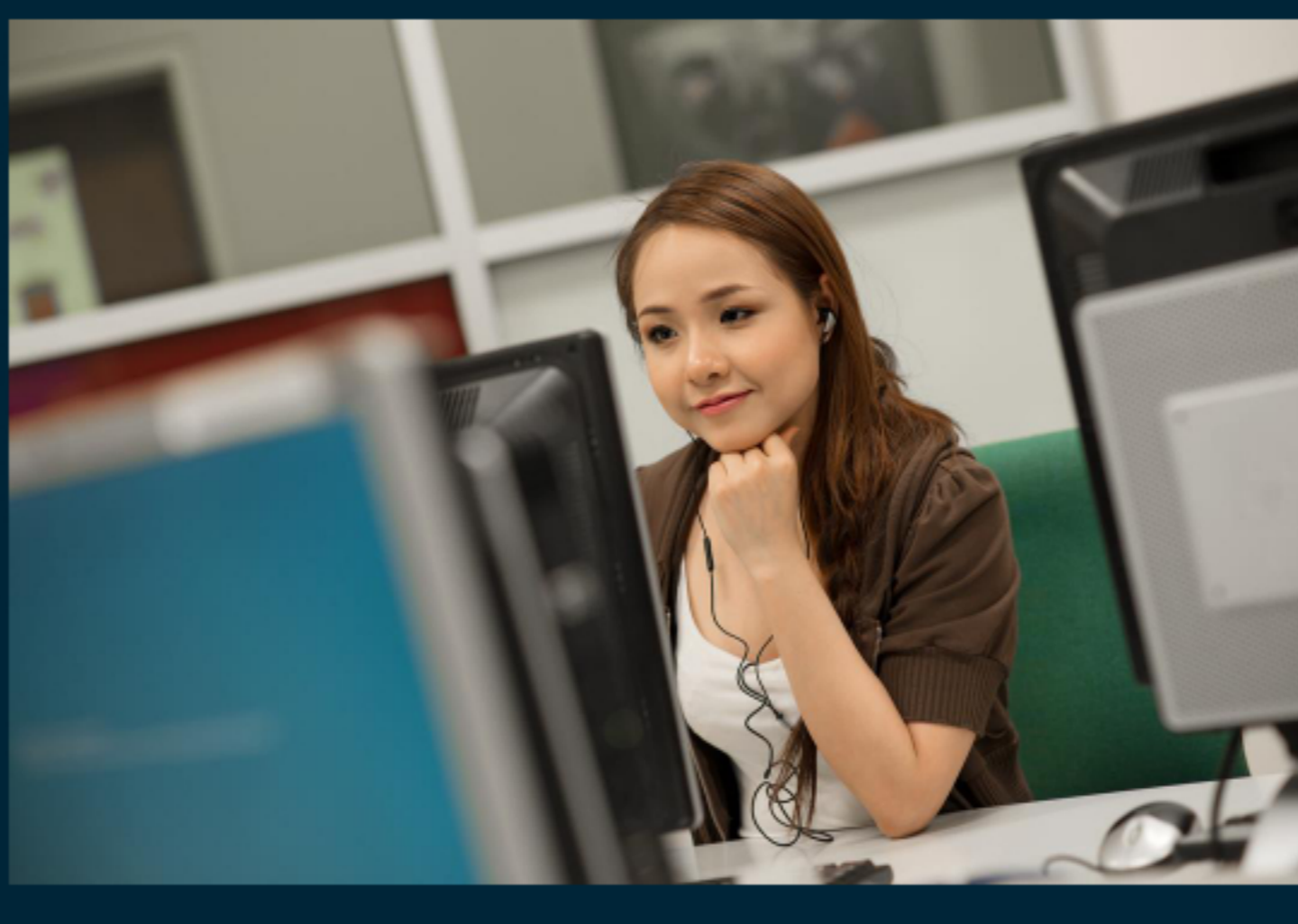


### Flexibility

The demographic of those looking to enter higher education has changed in recent years, with a far greater number of 'in-work' and older applicants looking to access education on more flexible terms. Online programmes typically carry lower costs – not only offering significant savings on tuition fees but also on associated expenses like transport, accommodation, textbooks, and childcare. In addition, one of the key benefits of the remote learning model is the ability for learners to pace and personalise their learning to suit their individual needs. This concept of flexible learning, enabled by content which is digitalised, tagged, classified and on-demand, combined with 24/7 support, allows learners to schedule their studies around health, work or family commitments, and even across time zones.

### Promoting enhanced inclusion

Broad access to higher education is a powerful tool in improving diversity and inclusion in the workforce and in society more generally. However, traditional campus-based programmes can be inaccessible for many, as a result of economic, geographic or social factors. The dismantling of campus-access barriers, accelerated by the pandemic, has in fact served to enhance rather than diminish the potential for far greater cultural inclusion in higher education, by throwing open the doors to a broader pool of learners. To facilitate maximum accessibility, it is important that online programme designers consider a number of key issues – pace, delivery method, multiple language options, audio and video format, early intervention and tailored support to cater to a diverse set of learner needs.



### Relevance to the workplace

In parallel, the world of work is changing. In a recent study by the World Economic Forum almost half of businesses surveyed were planning to reduce their workforce. That reflects their investment in technology solutions. Of course, new jobs will be created along the way as the world of work evolves, with particular acceleration seen in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing, genetics and biotechnology where innovation is rife. However, roles in these areas are expected to require much greater integration with machines and technology and will therefore require a far more inter-disciplinary approach than we experience today. As such, universities know they need to develop their offering continuously to facilitate the shift to a more 'skills-based' economy. It is likely that higher education will evolve to become a lifelong pathway, with cycles of learning and re-learning becoming more prevalent, and a module-based 'unbundling' of curricula helping nurture multidisciplinary skills.

### Higher Ed Partners

As a leading online programme manager, HEP partners with universities to assist them in launching and managing a portfolio of online degree programmes, structured under long-term revenue sharing contracts. Today, HEP has over 30 signed university partners across the UK, Continental Europe, South America and Africa, and has several thousand enrolled students.

### Taking universities online



[Watch video](#)

HEP believes that affordable, high-quality higher education builds fairer and more equitable societies, unlocks the potential of individuals, helps harmonise skills with the needs of the workplace, and helps transform employability rates to deliver a thriving global economy.

For further information and articles on the future of online higher education, please visit the [HEP blog](#).

[Future of Jobs 2020 - article](#)

**CONTACT**  
Graphite Capital  
7 Air Street, London, W1B 5AD  
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7825 5300  
Email: [info@graphitecapital.com](mailto:info@graphitecapital.com)  
[www.graphitecapital.com](http://www.graphitecapital.com)

