

2021/22

ANNUAL REPORT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Gordon McKenzie

CHAIR OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

Anthony McClaran

Vice Chancellor, St Mary's University, Twickenham

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GuildHE is an officially recognised representative body for UK Higher Education, championing distinction and diversity in the sector. Our 60 members include universities, university colleges, further education colleges and specialist institutions, representing over 150,000 students. Member institutions include some major providers in professional subject areas including art, design and media, music and the performing arts; agriculture and food; education; business and law, theology, the built environment; health and sports.

FOREWORD

After the challenges and disruption of the pandemic, this year's report reflects a more positive outlook for GuildHE and its members, though some of the consequences of the lockdowns, such as gaps in learning and skills or mental health issues, remain. There are of course many other challenges, both ongoing and new, that providers have faced this past year, with the most recent being the cost of living crisis. Despite these challenges, GuildHE has had a successful year with significant achievements that benefit members and support standards in the wider higher education sector. Throughout, the GuildHE team has remained steadfast in its commitment to support its member institutions as they provide a high-quality higher education experience for students.



Anthony McClaran
Chair of GuildHE
 Vice Chancellor
 St Mary's University
 Twickenham

The highly effective GuildHE team has continued with fortnightly calls for Vice-Chancellors and other Heads of Institutions, providing briefings on new policy or regulatory initiatives and bringing in speakers including the Universities Minister, senior DfE and Home Office officials, and CEOs from OfS, QAA, AdvanceHE, OIA, Jisc, UCEA, and UUK International.

Two successful GuildHE conferences were held, one in-person in November at UCB Birmingham and a second online Spring Conference in May. The conferences provided excellent opportunities for our members to meet and discuss issues and solutions, and hear from speakers, including the Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan, and Skills Minister, Alex Burghart; outgoing OfS CEO Nicola Dandridge and her successor Susan Lapworth, and Research England's Executive Chair David Sweeney, as well as panel discussions on governance, student engagement, knowledge exchange, creating an anti-racist university and diversification of portfolios. We continue to engage and inform members of the policy and political debates through our communication mechanisms including policy briefings, fortnightly e-newsletters, Twitter, and our website and we now have a Senior Communications Officer to strengthen our communication activities for our members and to raise the media profile of GuildHE.

In the last year, we have worked with Universities UK to develop a Statement to bring about a new commitment from providers to return to pre-pandemic levels of degree outcomes. We have also worked with UUK and QAA to support the development of a new set of principles for external examining. As part of the AdvanceHE Advisory Group, the views of our members contributed to our feedback on the revised Professional Standards Framework and we have been involved in the Advisory Group for the review of the National Student Survey. For research, we secured knowledge exchange funding for eligible providers, enhancing the benefits they can bring to local businesses and communities, and the continuation of QR funding for Enhancing Research Culture and Participatory Research. We also published research into the lived-experience of ethnic minority postgraduate students at small and specialist providers.

However, there remains much to be done to ensure that students continue to get the most out of their higher education, in a sector that faces further changes in the policy and regulatory environment. There are many priorities for the forthcoming year including the continued work to influence government and regulatory stances on topics ranging from freedom of speech to climate change, and to work with the DfE, the OfS and others to find ways to reduce the regulatory burden, which bears particularly heavily on smaller institutions.

I hope that you find the report helpful and that if you would like further information about our work, or are interested in finding out more about membership, you will contact us.

INTRODUCTION

This annual report sets out the key issues that GuildHE has addressed over the last year. It begins by highlighting our key achievements, demonstrating successes in all areas of the GuildHE strategy, and then looks in more detail at our work across a series of themes.

It covers how we work with, support and communicate with our members as well as how we highlight their achievements and contributions to the economy and wider society. This year we have provided specific support in areas including governance and their equalities work as well as through a wide range of member networks.

As a representative body, GuildHE has responsibilities to the HE sector more widely and this report covers our activities in areas like free speech, fair admissions and academic standards as well as our work as a company member of many of the sector agencies.

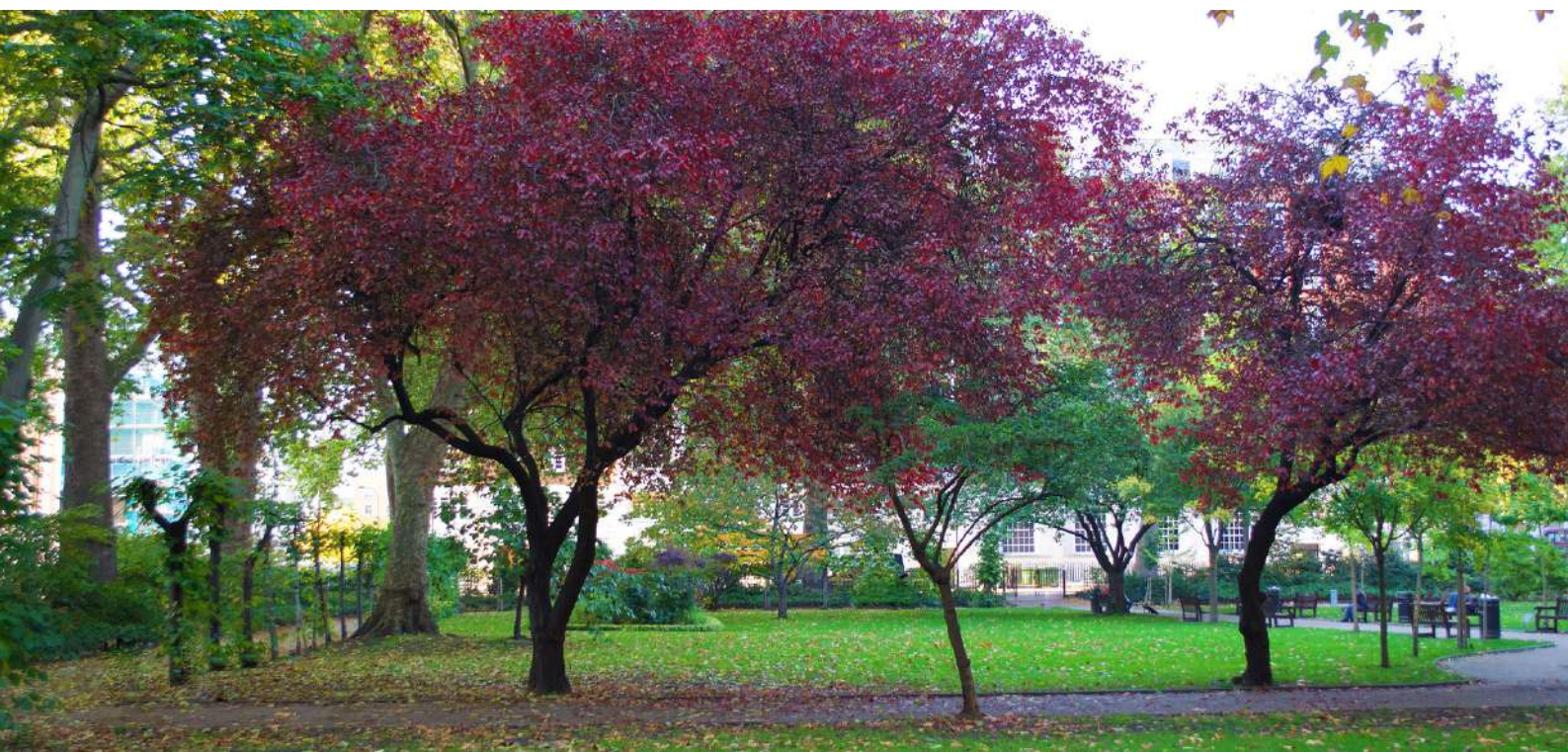
The report looks at our work with the government, covering areas like post-18 education reform, research and knowledge exchange policy, levelling up and how our members support economic growth and healthy and vibrant local communities. It also covers our work with the OfS and our arguments for proportionate, accountable and effective regulation of higher education.

We provide detail on the work and support provided by GuildHE Research, including through Doctoral training and support, shared services and a range of events and workshops. We also cover the work of UKADIA in supporting specialist arts education including through a new, five year strategy and collaborative working with partners in the UK and Australia.

Finally, we report on our work directly with students and our engagement with wider society, particularly on the issue of sustainability.

Gordon McKenzie

CEO, GuildHE



ANNUAL OVERVIEW

127

MEETINGS
WITH
GOVERNMENT

394

MEETINGS
WITH
SECTOR
AGENCIES

72

DIRECT 1-1
MEMBER CALLS

31

SPEAKING
ENGAGEMENTS

55

POLICY
BRIEFINGS AND
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CONSULTATION
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22

MEMBER VISITS

58

SECTOR EVENTS
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14

FORTNIGHTLY
VC MEETINGS

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- GuildHE ran two successful conferences - the November in-person annual conference at UCB in Birmingham and then the online Spring Conference in May. Across the two conferences we heard from a wide range of speakers including Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan and Skills Minister Alex Burghart; OfS CEO and Interim CEO, Nicola Dandridge and Susan Lapworth, Research England Executive Chair as well as panel discussions on governance, student engagement, knowledge exchange, creating an anti-racist university and diversifying your portfolio.
- We continued to support members post-pandemic with regular fortnightly calls for heads of institution; bringing together speakers including Universities Minister, senior DfE and Home Office officials and the CEOs from OfS, QAA, AdvanceHE, OIA, Jisc, UCEA, UUK International.
- We supported the work our members do with local businesses and communities by securing a second year of knowledge exchange (KE) funding for providers who are eligible for but do not currently receive HEIF; of these awards in 2020-21 GuildHE members accounted for 74% of all monies allocated. We also supported the development of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat and Framework.
- GuildHE successfully argued for the continuation of the dedicated QR funding streams for Enhancing Research Culture and Participatory Research.
- We supported governance at member institutions through a report on effective university governance, informed by a members' survey, and also organised a series of four sessions exploring inclusive governance jointly with AdvanceHE and produced a HEPI policy note on academic governance.
- We produced a report on sustainability and tackling climate change and also organised a series of five sessions exploring different elements including leadership and governance, student engagement, teaching and learning, estates and operations and data and reporting run jointly with EAUC.
- We worked across the sector to maintain academic standards and help tackle the government narrative around "grade inflation" through our ongoing work with UUK and QAA including a new statement in June committing to returning to pre-pandemic levels of attainment, which received significant media coverage, and we also ran a project on external examining and developed principles on this.

- GuildHE led the sector's response to the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Market Review through our chairing and secretariat support of the Teacher Education Advisory Group (TEAG). This included regular meetings with the Review Team and DfE Officials, responding to the consultation and ongoing discussions with officials during the accreditation process.
- We coordinated a response on behalf of members on major government proposals for HE reform and the introduction of the lifelong loan entitlement (LLE). GuildHE has long argued for more flexible, credit-based funding to support student access to higher education and welcomed the LLE proposals. We also coordinated the responses to the OfS consultations on data in regulation and the future TEF exercise.
- We worked with the government, the OfS and others in the sector to ensure that changes to the admissions cycle work in the best interest of all students. This included offering persuasive arguments against PQA and effective collaboration with Universities UK on a new Code of Practice on Admissions.
- We responded to the review of the National Student Survey and engaged proactively during the year as part of the Advisory Group.
- GuildHE supported members to become anti-racist institutions providing briefing resources and action learning sets including on issues including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. We also launched a new action learning group specifically for our performance specialists.
- We published research into the lived experience of ethnic minority postgraduate students at smaller and specialist institutions, commissioned from the Institute of Community Studies and conducted by peer researchers drawn from GuildHE member institutions. The work has been profiled in sector press, and presented to sector conferences.
- GuildHE Research partnered with UKRI and Cancer Research UK on a significant project to explore the potential use of indicators for research integrity. The work has engaged individuals from across the UK research system and internationally, and will be taken forward by the new UK Committee on Research Integrity.
- Enabled the inception of a cross-institution PhD Students Peer Group Forum as a result of effective cohort building strategy via the GuildHE Research doctoral school.
- We have continued to challenge the disproportionate cost and burden of regulation for smaller institutions. This remains a major concern for members and while we are pleased to see some positive moves (such as changes made to the TEF timeline; reduced costs for access evaluation tools for small institutions; and the DfE taskforce on data burden) much more needs to be done. This will remain a priority for GuildHE.



WORKING WITH OUR MEMBERS



COMMUNICATION

In March 2022 we introduced a new post of Senior Communications Officer to the GuildHE team. Priority activities were defined including mapping our key communication tools including a new linkedin channel, planning communications activities, communicating impact, raising the media profile of GuildHE, standardising and strengthening the organisational positioning, professionalising the messaging and tone of communications, delivering timely, relevant content that engages member and prospective member audiences, and measuring and monitoring of performance.

GuildHE seeks to inform and engage with the political and policy debate through various mechanisms, including:

- **Policy briefings and government consultation responses.** Combined, our comprehensive Policy Update reports, consultation responses and members mailings totalled over 50.
- **GuildHE fortnightly e-newsletter** has undergone substantial improvements which have delivered increases in member interest and engagement. Improvements include refreshed branding and format, more engaging content and strong calls to action. In addition to providing information and comment on sector news, policy and events, the newsletter now provides a spotlight on member successes and strongly demonstrates how GuildHE brings value to members. Open rates increased from an average of 47% to 56% over the four months to July 2022, against a sector benchmark of 22.03%. Click to open rates - the key engagement measure - are steadily rising with an average of 13% in the four months to July 2022, increasing to 30% in July 2022 against a sector benchmark of 3.3%. The newsletter is currently received by more than 1,000 active subscribers, up 40% from the previous year.
- **GuildHE main twitter channel** has experienced significant growth in a number of key areas following the introduction of more planned activity and dynamic, engaging, shareable content. The channel now regularly amplifies GuildHE successes, sector activity and discussions using Senior Team quotes and features member success highlights. Follower numbers are steadily increasing and engagement with content rose from 0.6% in July 2021 to 3.8% in July 2022, against a benchmark rate of 0.071% for higher education and 0.054% for NGOs. Impressions/ reach increased from 2.3K in July 2021 to 8.4K in July 2022.

- **GuildHE media coverage and blogs.** Increased media activity and working with partner organisations has resulted in significant coverage, especially during the last six months. A joint statement on grade inflation with Universities UK featured in national press, including The Guardian, The Times, Times Radio, The Times Higher Education, The Independent, The Telegraph and The Financial Times. A policy note on governors and academic quality by Alex Bols featured in The Times Higher Education, as did a joint media release on external examiner principles with QAA and Universities UK. During the year there have been over 45 blogs and press articles combined.
- **GuildHE website.** We have begun the preliminary work to create a refreshed and more visible Members' Area of the website that clearly demonstrates the benefits and value of membership to HE organisations and individual staff, including introducing showcase testimonials. Events and network areas plus SEO will also be reviewed and improved.
- **Members survey.** Research will be commissioned in the form of a members survey to investigate to build understanding of their evolving needs, expectations and relationship with GuildHE.
- **Jiscmail email lists** continue to work well for member input into key policy discussions and consultations, plus general exchanges including those related to GuildHE's portfolio of specialist networks for senior managers in member institutions.

GOVERNANCE

Over the last year GuildHE has significantly increased our member support around effective governance. This has included:

- Undertaking a member survey on effective governance considering recruitment, induction, inclusion and other aspects of effective governance. The results from the survey were pulled together into a member briefing circulated in May
- We organised a joint project with AdvanceHE for members on Inclusive governance – over the four sessions for clerks of governing bodies we looked at different elements of inclusive governance, including a final session with Chairs of Nominations Committees. This group will become a new GuildHE network for clerks to governing bodies.
- We spoke at several AdvanceHE conferences for new governors and on academic governance. The latter presentation was then turned into a well-received HEPI Policy Note on academic governance which also received widespread coverage in the sector press including THE, Research Professional, FE News and University Business.
- We ran a project on governance in small students' unions, working with NUS and consultants to develop materials for members drawing on case studies from 7 smaller SUs. We will be publishing a report in September 2022.

FREE SPEECH AND EDI

Over the last year we have worked with AdvanceHE and Universities UK on a project around free speech. This has included:

- Five sector-wide round-table sessions looking at academic freedom, leadership and governance, HR issues, EDI and the impact on students' unions.
- The project will result in a number of outputs including a statement on free speech to be published in early September 2022
- We have also been involved in the AdvanceHE project to develop a holistic approach to accrediting EDI (building on Athena Swan and REC) as a member of the advisory group and organising a member round-table to consider the specific impacts on smaller institutions.

ANTI-RACISM

GuildHE continued to support members in understanding anti-racism and how this can contribute to EDI approaches. Our action learning groups continued and a new one was created specifically for our performance specialist members. We continued to update the microsite with new content and held a number of lunchtime learning sessions as well as new briefings on the experiences of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman, Boater communities. Most notably this year we have increased our capacity to talk with other external organisations aligned to our members who share our values in creating a more inclusive world (such as Creative UK, IEMA NSEAD, UNITE), and have been able to significantly influence the OfS new EDI strategy. We are also active participants in a new project at Advance HE which explores how we can develop a holistic approach to EDI charters to support a more coherent and more accessible approach to developing EDI strategies and charter marks to support more effective engagement from smaller universities.

We also commissioned and published research from the Institute for Community Studies into the lived experience of postgraduate research students from ethnic minorities at smaller and specialist universities. Working in partnership with the Institute, we recruited and trained 8 current postgraduate researchers in peer research methods. The researchers were then supported by the ICS to co-design the research and conduct interviews with PGR students from across the GuildHE members. The report was published in January, being picked up by Research Professional, Research Fortnight, University Business and WonkHE. GuildHE Research have presented the work to the Royal Society coordinated Science Policy network and were invited to a roundtable of learned societies to discuss diversity and inclusion in research training. The peer researchers have gone on to present the work at the UK Council for Graduate Education national conference, and compose articles for the Association for Research Managers and Administrators magazine.

Our work will continue into the next year both supporting members to take strategic action, and supporting individual staff and students to be more mindful citizens. We will also be moving away from just offering support, advice and guidance on race related EDI issues, but will create a new EDI network for members to discuss all aspects of inequalities and how to tackle societal injustices.

EVENTS & NETWORKS

Annual and Spring Conference

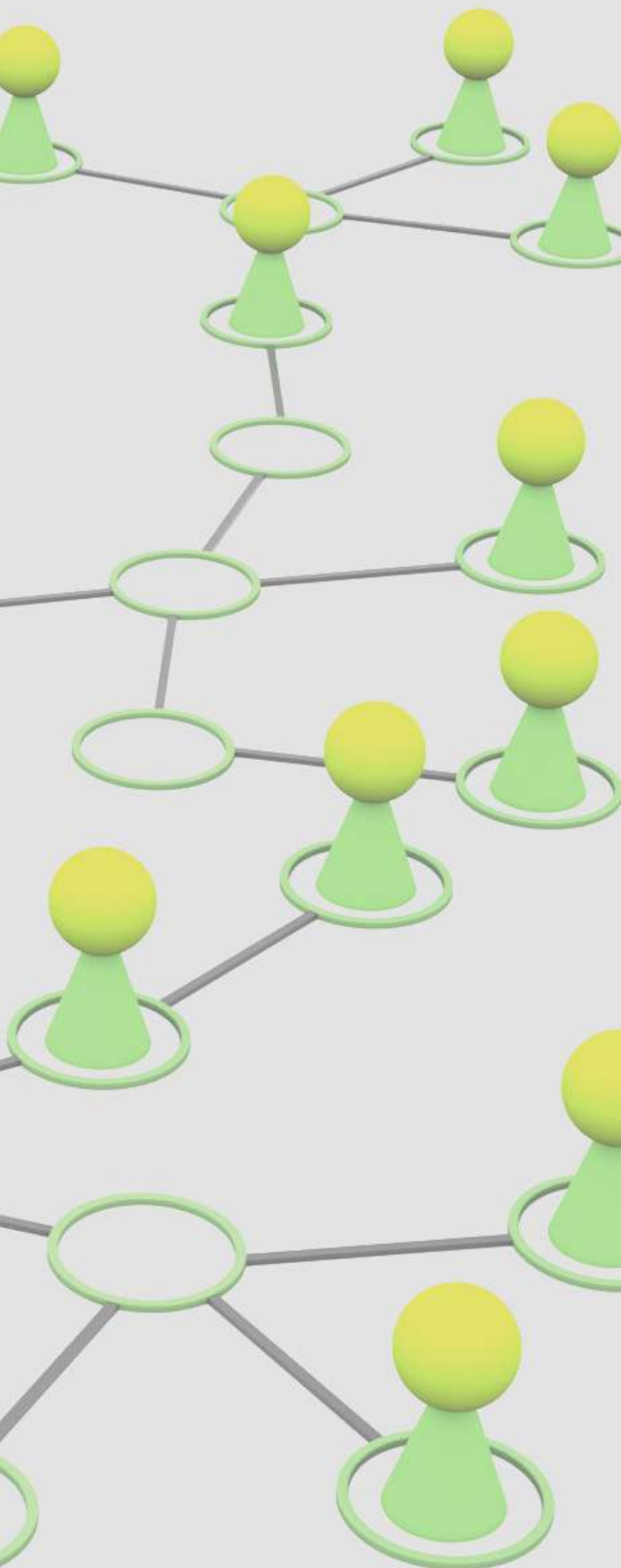
This year GuildHE organised two major member conferences during the year, one physical in November and one virtual in May. Across the two conferences we heard from a wide range of speakers including Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan and Skills Minister Alex Burghart; OfS CEO and Interim CEO, Nicola Dandridge and Susan Lapworth, Research England Executive Chair as well as panel discussions on governance, student engagement, knowledge exchange, creating an anti-racist university and diversifying your portfolio.

GUILDHE COUNCIL

GuildHE Council brings together the heads of member institutions who, during 2021/22, we were able to hear from Raj Jethwa, Chief Executive, UCEA; Anne Spinali, Director, Higher Education Reform and Funding, DfE; John Blake, Director of Fair Access and Participation, Office for Students and were joined by Michael Clark, Senior Policy Adviser, Rachel Tyrrell, Associate Director of Knowledge Exchange and Ellen Bamford, Head of KE Data and Evidence from UKRI.

NETWORK MEETINGS

56 Network meetings took place this year and in addition to the usual array of network meetings, there have been 2 action learning groups who have met quarterly relating to the [anti-racism project](#).



SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Although our speaking opportunities continued to be reduced, the GuildHE CEO and senior staff have this year provided keynote speeches and panel contributions at several national events including:

- WHEF Conference on Quality and Grade Inflation
- WHEF Conference on International Students
- Inside Government Conference on TEF
- International Higher Education Forum
- AdvanceHE conference for new governors
- AdvanceHE conference on academic governance
- SRHE International Annual Conference
- Landex annual conference
- Villiers Park Webinar on Widening Participation
- WHEF on KE and Regional Universities
- NCCPE workshop on KE
- R&D Impact Conference
- Research Culture and Practice Forum



WORKING WITH UK GOVERN GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT



HMT SPENDING REVIEW & LEVELLING UP

GuildHE submitted a response to the three-year Government Spending Review in November 2021.

The response to Augar is covered below. On R&D, we were pleased to see that the £22bn investment and 2.4% public and private investment target were recommitted to even if they were over a longer timespan. SR21 confirmed a point that GuildHE has long argued for: "Investment in research, development and innovation can play a critical part in levelling up by boosting business productivity, resulting in higher wages for workers, and spreading investment across the UK. The government will ensure that an increased share of the record increase in government spending on research, development and innovation over the SR is invested outside London, the South East and the East of England. The government will set out plans for doing this in the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper."

The Levelling Up White Paper also confirmed this commitment although it did not go into excessive detail. The White Paper also referenced the importance of higher education in delivering degree apprentices and in the role of universities as anchor institutions for their places.

GuildHE produced briefings on key levelling up initiatives and provided regular updates on funding opportunities related to levelling up throughout the year. Further activity to influence government policy and funding interventions in this area will continue in 2022/23.



DFE

POST-18 FUNDING REVIEW

The UK government has still not provided a full response to the Post-18 Funding review, instead putting out additional consultations on the roll out of LLE, Student Number Controls, Minimum Eligibility Requirements, Foundation Years, Level 4 and 5 reform and the introduction of a national scholarship scheme. GuildHE have therefore submitted evidence and case studies from member institutions on the impact and opportunities in these specific policy areas and have been continually engaged in discussions with DfE and the wider sector on the policies that have arisen from these Augar recommendations.

As part of our work on funding, we have been engaged in ongoing discussions on the funding module for both universities and students - ensuring that smaller and specialist HEIs are able to continue to operate within the new regulatory and financial landscape and are championed as providers of excellence.

For students we are working with members and undertaking research to ensure that they have adequate financial support to enable an effective learning experience at university and continue to call for the reintroduction of maintenance grants for poorer students. We are also putting pressure on DfE to move more quickly in the design of the National Scholarship Scheme.

We argue that since graduate level skills benefit businesses and wider society as well as individuals, the costs should be spread fairly among government, learners and employers. This includes a change to the way in which the Levy Funding might be better utilised, and the roll out of the LLE must not saddle students with debt that employers should ordinarily be paying for through their CPD budget.

We continue to argue that because higher education fulfils a broad range of economic, cultural, social and intellectual purposes then judgments about value needed to be formed by the views of students and wider society as well as by the government.

And we highlighted the important contribution of GuildHE members and other higher education institutions to high-level technical and professional education as well as academic excellence.

We are continuing to lobby the DfE to ensure that smaller and specialist institutions and higher cost subjects are funded adequately, and have been working with the OfS on the roll out of the Specialist Institution Funding grant. We were able to secure changes that meant that financial turnover is included in the analysis of financial need, meaning institutions with less additional financial resources will get more of the funding.

We have also been successful in ensuring the LLE offers full credit based funding across the whole system This will help students step into and out of education at a pace that suits them and supports lifelong learning. We also call for policy to address the historic under-funding of further education.

ADMISSIONS AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE POLICY

This year we have been working with DfE, OfS and UCAS and Universities UK on ensuring that changes to the admissions cycle work in the best interest of all students. To this end we were able offer persuasive and coherent arguments to government to stop the PQA rollout and instead collaborate with Universities UK on a new Code of Practice on Admissions in order to stop the spread of conditional unconditional offer making and other less ethical recruitment practices. We continue to work with the OfS on the thinking around regulating in this area of policy in future.

We have developed our relationships with the student experience teams at DfE and have continued to work with them on the sector's response to the mental health crisis, dealing with harassment on campus, accommodation and access and participation. We have participated in a number of ministerial roundtables about these issues, as well as a symposium on antisemitism.

We were also involved in a ministerial taskforce on developing more transparency data for prospective students. This work builds on DiscoverUni and CMA requirements to show applicants the retention and onward progression stats for specific courses. We were able to secure a less bureaucratic approach to this ministerial priority and a fluid timeline for implementation.

SKILLS POLICY

GuildHE has been working closely with DfE, the ESFA and IfATE on the development of the Government's skills reform programme including new Level 4 and 5 qualifications and degree level apprenticeships. This included responding to the technical consultation on Degree Apprenticeships. We are also relationship building with the new Unit for Future Skills.

GuildHE also signed up to the campaign to protect funding for BTECs organised by the Association of Sixth Form Colleges. This campaign successfully ensured that funding was retained for BTECs in the short-term and has continued to gain traction with the potential for longer term success.

We have also collaborated with the ResPublica Lifelong Learning Commission chaired by Chris Skidmore MP which aims to identify policy initiatives that will help meet this government's objectives in better enabling educational opportunities for mature learners, and a more coherent approach to skills training. As part of this work we are championing GuildHE members and celebrating the work they do in the technical education space, their approach to regional growth and regeneration, and their commitment to social mobility and lifelong learning.



HOME OFFICE

GuildHE is a member of the Education Sector Advisory Group which met monthly during 2021/22 discussing different elements of the new points based Immigration System and student and graduate routes within that. The meetings included regular policy updates from Home Office officials as well as discussions surrounding what a future immigration system might look like and how it can best support government ambitions for educational exports.

IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT AND TRADE DEALS

GuildHE continued to be an active member of the BEIS/DfE High Level Stakeholder Working Group which provides strategic input to Ministers on the issues for higher education and research arising from the UK's exit from the EU. This included working with UUKi on sector wide priorities for research and movement.

GuildHE worked with UUKi to influence the development of several UK Government Trade Deals. This involved ensuring that members' had the opportunity to feed into the Department for International Trade's workshops on the Trade Deal asks as they were being developed (for example, the Chapter on Education as part of the draft India Trade Deal).

GUILDHE RESEARCH

GuildHE Research is the research consortium for smaller and specialist universities and colleges in the UK. The consortium had 30 members in 2021/22, with two new members joining (New College of the Humanities and Arts University Bournemouth). Professor John Strachan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) and Dean of Graduate College at Bath Spa University continued as Director of GuildHE Research. Along with chairing the Research Leads meetings he attended senior sector meetings on behalf of the consortium.

STRATEGIC AND POLICY SUPPORT

Four Research Leads meetings were held in 2021-22, keeping members abreast of the key policy developments and giving them a chance to raise any concerns and share progress made. Key bodies and other organisations were invited from the sector, including UKRI, Research England, Young Foundation, UK Reproducibility Network, and Universities UK. March 2022 was also the first hybrid meeting held since January 2020, giving colleagues to network in person and invite new members after a long time.

We also continued to provide opportunities of one-to-one conversations with the members, to keep them up to date about the work being done and hear directly from them on the opportunities and challenges coming their way. These conversations continue to provide great value for us and members alike, enhancing our lobbying efforts and engagement with policy makers. They also help find patterns of common opportunities and challenges, giving GuildHE Research the opportunity to link them up where applicable.

EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

This year, members received additional funding from Research England as part of QR allocations. These were to be deployed on two themes - Enhancing Research Culture and Participatory Research. GuildHE Research set up an activity support package for members to make use of the fund. The activity package has been signed up by ten members, and included the following workshops: 'Peer Research and Participatory Research Methodologies' by Institute for Community Studies; 'Leaders in Solidarity' by Lou Chiu; 'Resilient Leadership' by Matt Verrell; 'Participatory Research and Supporting Community Research Partnerships' by NCCPE. The support package will continue in the autumn of 2022 with a series of Research Culture Cafes which will bring together researchers and support staff in conversation.



DOCTORAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT

GuildHE Research expanded its suite of services offered to postgraduate researchers in 2021-22. Our annual Doctoral Summer School was held on 6-7 September attended by 32 students from 13 member universities. The school was delivered online with speakers from NCCPE, Matt Verrell, the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST), and Diversiunity. All participants were invited to join the previously set up jiscmail list for GuildHE Research Doctoral students to stimulate peer-to-peer exchange and enhanced communications from GuildHE Research.

This year, two of the summer school participants got in touch with GuildHE Research to seek ways for continued peer support and networking after a good experience from the summer school. GuildHE Research supported the two PhD students, Philly Iglehart from Plymouth Marjon University and Abbie Cairns from Norwich University of the Arts to initiate and maintain an informal peer support network. To support this network, GuildHE started a dedicated zoom account, a google drive, a slack channel, and a padlet account to allow for peer engagement and exchange of resources. Under the leadership of Abbie and Philly, the group was opened to all summer school participants and other GuildHE Research Doctoral students, and monthly sessions were held on a number of topics such as qualitative research, quantitative research, methodology, literature review etc. The group also held bi-monthly informal socials online. This group continues to grow organically and has proved beneficial for cross disciplinary and cross institutional networking for students amongst members where PhD student numbers may be limited.

GuildHE Research also held a Doctoral Spring School for the second time in May 2022. The Spring School was initiated in 2020 to support continued engagement during the pandemic. It proved to be a useful resource for the participants who were able to not only keep in touch, but hear from additional speakers and attend other useful workshops. The 2022 Doctoral Spring School had speakers from UK Reproducibility Network and UK Research Integrity Office and Plymouth Marjon University.

The Spring School also saw participants deliver sessions, representing the true diversity of Doctoral students at GuildHE Research Institutions, who tend to be more part-time and often have significant prior academic and industry experience. All speakers and participants were offered the chance to attend virtually or in person with the initial aim to provide a hybrid delivery. However, most of the participants and speakers chose to attend the school remotely and a decision was made to hold the school in a completely virtual format.

For the second year in a row, a well appreciated academic writing workshop was carried out by Helen Kara, an independent researcher, speaker and writer. Along with the other activities. GuildHE Research also took part in the Academic Writing Month again held on Twitter in November every year. During November 2021, our team offered continued online engagement, shared resources and held writing together sessions on twitter. The month ended with a virtual writing retreat open to all GuildHE Research PGR students.

SHARED SERVICES

We continue to offer a range of services to our members, including an online postgraduate training course delivered by colleagues at the University of East Anglia, an impact tracker by Vertigo Ventures which assists in developing impact narratives for the REF, and the Research Development Framework planner by Vitae.

We have expanded the number of institutions making use of our Research Outputs Repository to 13, and worked with our supplier Co-Sector on adapting to changes as developments take place and providing training support. We continue to support repository managers via a dedicated Jiscmail forum and through the support desk at Co-Sector.

Along with the shared services already in place, we continue to explore with members and suppliers additional services as the need arises. In the last year, this included exploring options for a data repository service. However, due to our main option closing its data repository service, the search has been started anew.

UKADIA

The United Kingdom Arts and Design Institutions Association (UKADIA) is a group of specialist arts and design institutions from across the UK's higher and further education sectors.

This year UKADIA has developed a new five year strategy which focuses on issues of social justice, community building, research and Innovation and support specialist arts institutions through a post- covid world. We have also forged new relationships with the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools and the Australian Council for the Deans and Directors of Creative Arts and welcomed new members to the board.

We have continued to work collaboratively with other sector arts organisations to continually advocate for the importance of the arts to the UK economy and the health and wellbeing of its citizens. This includes Creative England, NSEAD, CVAN and ACE to emphasise the importance of specialist institutions to the arts talent pipeline.

UKADIA members have continued to collaborate in Access and Participation, with a joint Teacher CPD programme fully operational across UKADIA members.

Speakers at our Board have included Professor Christopher Smith, Executive Chair, AHRC and Darren Henley, CEO ACE exploring research funding for specialist institutions and the wider art policy landscape. From our discussions with Chris we were able to secure an AHRC funding pot specifically for creative specialist institutions.



WORKING WITH THE HE SECTOR



SECTOR AGENCIES

As a Company Member of many of the sector agencies (AdvanceHE, QAA, HESA, UCEA, Jisc and HECSU) we appoint nominees and observers to their Boards and work closely with them to understand better the needs of the higher education sector and to undertake collaborative work.

REGULATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS

We have responded to a number of OfS consultations about the regulatory framework and TEF which have implications for the way in which quality assurance is managed in English HE. The move to a data led approach in the regulatory framework has led to more work being undertaken at GuildHE to support members with their data analysis capacity, as well as challenging the data methodologies and minimum publication thresholds.

The OfS have consulted on and introduced a new condition of registration (B3) based on minimum numerical thresholds for three student outcome metrics: Continuation; Completion; and Progression to managerial and professional employment or higher-level study. We were able to lobby for ensuring that as well as the numerical threshold a provider's context is also included in the analysis of whether a provider meets regulatory conditions. The OfS recognises the challenge of statistical significance of data in small providers and so the presentation of the indicators would also describe the "statistical uncertainty associated with each indicator value". They also confirmed that they are not proposing to set baselines for salary data, a point on which GuildHE have vigorously lobbied on since the introduction of the LEO dataset so this is a welcome point.

This year we have also been actively engaged in consultations in the future of the TEF. We were satisfied that many of our comments about the burden and scope of the TEF were picked up through the independent review recommendations and the subsequent redesign of the exercise. We therefore highlighted our main challenges related to the proposed timeline of implementation, the phraseology of the 'Requires Improvement' judgement, and issues we continually raise around the validity of the data. We were able to secure a change to the timetable for the institutional and student submission, which will mean a higher quality exercise, and are awaiting the OfS response to the way in which TEF panels will use data in their judgements. TEF will also form part of the new approach to regulation and quality in that it is seen as an enhancement exercise by the regulator.

GuildHE will continue to discuss these key issues including around the numerical thresholds for B3 and additional measures for the wider value of higher education. We will also engage in the implementation of these proposals and monitor the ongoing burden of these and other regulatory changes.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

As ever, quality assurance has been a major area of policy change and activity for GuildHE over the past year. This has included:

- **OfS Quality and Standards Consultations** – during the last year the OfS have been actively consulting on revising their B3 Condition and GuildHE responded to both the Autumn phase 1 consultation and also the Spring phase 2 consultation.
- **Universities UK/GuildHE Statement on Grade Inflation** – we worked with Universities UK to develop a statement and new commitment from providers about returning to pre-pandemic levels of attainment. The statement in early July 2022 received significant national media interest.
- **Developed new principles for External Examining** – we helped establish a new project with Universities UK and QAA to review external examining, and we sat on the advisory group to develop a new set of principles which will be supported by QAA guidance.
- **Review of the National Student Survey** – we have been involved in the Advisory Group on reviewing the National Student Survey and responded to the consultation led by the OfS on behalf of the funding and regulatory bodies including and arranging several member round-table discussions.
- **Professional Standards Framework review** – as part of the AdvanceHE advisory group on revising the Professional Standards Framework we have fed in views of members, including organising a member round-table, and ensured the joint copyright of GuildHE (along with AdvanceHE and Universities UK of this key piece of sector infrastructure).

DATA FUTURES AND THE DESIGNATED DATA BODY

GuildHE has continued to work with HESA in their role as the Designated Data Body (DDB). We have worked with HESA and JISC as they progressed merger discussions to ensure the new organisation has appropriate governance and the capacity to carry out the DDB role and provides value for money for HE institutions.

We have represented members' views on the new data requirements set out by the OfS, and are supporting members in understanding how the new approach to how data relates to the OfS regulatory duties. We are also developing our relationships with JISC and the OfS to ensure that members have the skills and resources required to move towards a data driven quality approach. Data futures continues to be piloted and a new approach to the timeline and process for data submission is currently being finalised.

We have made representations on changes that need to be made to the graduate outcomes data, SOC and SIC codes and the analysis of graduate outcomes data across the sector as this is where much of the complexity occurs around judging 'good outcomes'. We also continue to work with industries like the creative sector to better understand graduates.

ACCESS, ADMISSIONS AND STUDENT SUPPORT

Our Widening Participation network has been working hard to engage with policy initiatives relating to access and attainment. Principally the focus has centred around the changes to the APP processes in light of a new Director of Fair Access at the OfS. We have been able to meet with him as well as his wider team to ensure that there is an understanding of the different approaches smaller, specialist, rural and coastal HEIs may need to take in improving access and success measures. The new focus on school engagement and independent evaluation of access work has become key talking points, and we will continue to work with the OfS and others to ensure we are able to deliver what is required with the resources we have. To this end we were able to negotiate an approach for our members to ensure that the APP variation request process was not overly burdensome.

We have also strengthened our relationships with TASO - as the organisation who supports the sector with evidence based what works dissemination. After years of lobbying by GuildHE the cost of HEAT for small/specialist institutions has also been reduced. This will mean that our members will have more data to measure their impact and will be able to go into 2022 with more information in order to meet the OfS expectations on evaluation.

The Admissions & Recruitment Network remains a valued forum for supporting and informing GuildHE's institutions on recruitment and admissions issues and policy in the midst of a more competitive environment, and serves to put GuildHE's recruitment and admissions-facing staff in direct contact with UCAS. It has met on three occasions this year. We have also been working more closely with UCAS to ensure changes to their platform do not adversely affect small and specialist institutions. GuildHE institutions are continuing to recruit at a steady pace. GuildHE members are represented on the UCAS Board and Council.

We were active members on the Ministerial Transparency Working Group which met to create new guidance on ensuring statistics related to retention and onward progression of students were easily accessible to prospective students.

On mental health we have continued to work with Universities UK on the development of a partnership approach between universities and the NHS to increase the capacity for clinical mental health support across England, as well as work on creating suicide safer universities. We are also working collaboratively with Student Minds on the development of resources and disseminating their work to students. We have been actively engaged with the new DfE 'Student Support Champion' and have produced evidence and insight into the small/specialist approach to student services including wellbeing, academic support and clinical mental health needs.

We are also collaborating with Universities UK on a new project related to student drug use. This project brings together academic experts, policy staff and student support practitioners to better understand the use of drugs in our universities and its impact on students' physical and mental health.

We have also collaborated with Universities UK on new sector guidance in relation to supporting students who have experienced harassment. This is linked to our ongoing influencing work within the OfS on their statement of expectations on harassment and this being the previous HE minister's priority policy area. We are currently working with the GuildHE student support network to broker an investigation sharing service to ensure independence in student and staff complaints of this nature.

UKRI / RESEARCH ENGLAND

OPEN ACCESS REVIEW

GuildHE Research has been actively engaging with UKRI with regards to their open access policy revision, release and implementation. GuildHE Research supports the move to open access and equitable access and publishing pathways to articles and monographs.

In order to support equitable structures of open access publishing and accessing funding for small and specialist members, GuildHE actively engaged with UKRI on open access block grant funding. GuildHE provided evidence to UKRI that the previously set threshold of £10,000 was high for small and specialist universities whose publishing needs were lower than research intensive universities and the cost structures were also different. It was also pointed out that research capacity for such institutions can change significantly between REF cycles. Based on the evidence provided, UKRI revised the threshold of the UKRI open access block grant to £5000.

GuildHE Research has also been a part of the JISC negotiation strategy group for Read and Publish arrangements. In 2021, GuildHE Research along with mission groups and other stakeholders rejected one of the proposals submitted by Elsevier as it failed to meet the objectives set out by the sector. The joint stance by the UK HE sector influenced a final proposal from Elsevier that agreed to meet the objectives set out by the negotiation group which was later accepted. Professor John Strachan has agreed to continue to be a part of the group, representing the interests of the small and specialists.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The Knowledge Exchange agenda proved busy for GuildHE in 2021/22. Research England introduced new funding for smaller providers who do not receive HEIF and the results of the KE Concordat were released in Autumn 2022. In addition, Research England launched a review of knowledge exchange and HESA restarted its review of HE-BCI.

22 out of 30 of the new KE Fund institutions were GuildHE or GuildHE Research members. In addition, there were 10 GuildHE and/or GuildHE Research members in receipt of mainstream HEIF. Combined with our HEIF receivers, there were now 32 members receiving KE funding for the academic year.

GuildHE developed a programme of work to support members receiving this new funding. This included workshops on HE-BCI and particular KE topics and the introduction of two Action Learning Sets. One-to-one conversations with individual members were also undertaken to help interpret the funding guidance and provide advice.

GuildHE continued to enable the rollout of the development year of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat with Universities UK and Research England; the Policy Manager for knowledge exchange sits on the Operational Group. This involved supporting the delivery of the review and evaluation of institutional Action Plans and in contributing to the overall evaluation of the development year.

GuildHE continued regular engagement with Research England's KE team, including hosting them at meetings of the Innovation, Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange Network. In addition, GuildHE facilitated a workshop for the first of the Research England Review of KE for GuildHE institutional leaders.

Finally, GuildHE continued to convene an informal sector group of other organisations interested in knowledge exchange, including Universities UK, ARMA, PraxisAuril, NCCPE, TCCE, CBI and NCUB amongst others. This group aims to share promising practice and to join KE support and provision across the sector.



WORKING WITH STUDENTS



Student engagement is one of the key values of GuildHE members and is prioritised in our strategic plan. Over the last year this has included strengthening our SU network as well as communicating the importance of student engagement through blogs, conference speeches and our lobbying activity. We have a student representative observe our executive board meetings, one of the few representative university groups to do so. We have also been working with Students' Union development consultants to ensure our unions have access to the best support available.

SU NETWORK

GuildHE have provided ongoing networking opportunities for students unions this year, and have connected them to students union development experts. We have worked with NUS to ensure that small and specialist unions have access to ongoing support and advice, and the SU network has received all policy update papers to support their understanding of the HE sector. We have had contact with various sabbatical officers giving them specific support during this difficult time.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

GuildHE has been continuing to provide advice and guidance to the OfS on their Student Engagement Strategy, and have representation on the OfS Student Panel.

RESEARCH INTO STUDENTS' UNION GOVERNANCE

We have worked jointly with NUS Charity to undertake research into governance in small and specialist students' union to support the development of our member students' unions. This report will be published in Autumn 2022.

ENGAGING WITH WIDER SOCIETY



TEACHER EDUCATION

Initial Teacher Education has been a major priority over the past year following the Government's Review of the ITT Market and then their consultation on the outcomes. GuildHE provides the secretariat of the joint UniversitiesUK/GuildHE Teacher Education Advisory Group, organising five meetings to discuss issues relating to this key area of member activity, including an extra-ordinary one to discuss the outcomes of the first round of accreditation. The meetings also heard from key relevant organisations DfE and OfSTED and discussed a number of key issues including recruitment, placements and the new OfSTED framework. This included:

- Responding to the DfE's Market Review Consultation on behalf of TEAG in Summer 2021, including strong engagement from Vice Chancellors across GuildHE and Universities UK members.
- Writing a [joint blog with the TEAG Chair](#) for Wonkhe in August.
- We had regular engagement with DfE officials throughout the year and wrote to the Minister following the outcomes of the first round of accreditation and liaising closely with Universities UK on the messaging.
- We also attended and also fed into a round-table on mental health advice for students on placements which will result in guidance to be published soon.

CLIMATE COMMISSION FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Following helping establish the Climate Commission in 2019 with EAUC, AoC and Universities UK and the focus on the Autumn COP26 in Glasgow the GuildHE engagement with this topic over the last year has shifted to supporting members. This included:

- Running a member survey and pulling together the results into a report for members which we launched at the September Council meeting.
- We then used the results of the survey to develop and launch a programme of events for members with EAUC discussing key elements of sustainability and bringing together member case studies. These six sessions brought together key staff within member institutions to discuss leadership and governance, student engagement, teaching and learning, estates and operations and data and reporting.
- There was GuildHE representation to each of the different groups helping develop the DfE [Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy](#).
- We established a joint Climate Action Group with UUK for heads of institutions to drive our engagement with climate issues with four members represented on the group.
- We are currently engaging with EAUC and BUFDG on creating a standardised approach to carbon reporting.
- We also held fortnightly meetings with the advisory group to ensure join-up of activities across GuildHE, UUK, AoC and EAUC.

PRIORITIES FOR 22/23



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- Influencing government's decisions on higher education funding with the aim of ensuring fair and sustainable funding for quality teaching and for students directly
- Discuss with DfE, the OfS and others on ways to reduce regulatory burden and set out a vision of regulation founded on the principles of co-regulation, institutional autonomy and risk
- Engaging in the review of Access and Participation Plans and supporting members to develop their practice and collaborate in national activities
- Support members (and their students' unions) in their engagement with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)
- Influencing government's future policies on international students and staff
- Better understand the graduate outcomes of students who study creative subjects
- Working with partners in key industry sectors including the creative economy and food and agriculture and teacher education to demonstrate the importance of specialist institutions to the future skills pipeline
- Supporting members to strengthen their EDI activities, and in collaboration with external organisations share good practice and frameworks for action
- Develop members' capacity in student support services

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

The Trustees have reviewed the activities of the Charity in the light of the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit. The Trustees are satisfied that GuildHE's activities are for the public benefit. GuildHE provides public benefit to those planning to undertake, those undertaking and those with an interest in the outcomes of UK higher education as a consequence of the assistance it gives its members institutions. Through the direct advice, information and comment it provides into the public domain and into policy frameworks, it informs the public debate and raises public awareness of a range of educational and other professionally-based issues at subject level. By supporting the heads of institutions, it enables them to lead their charitable and educational organisations more effectively. As a consequence GuildHE has an impact on the delivery of higher education through good practice exchange and advice on policy. The organisations that GuildHE members lead provide a range of higher education opportunities to students from the UK and abroad; and they have public benefit impacts on the cultural, social and intellectual development of their communities.

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