

2022/23

# ANNUAL REPORT

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Gordon McKenzie

**CHAIR OF EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Anthony McClaran

Vice Chancellor, St Mary's University, Twickenham

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# FOREWORD

GuildHE is a strong and powerful advocate for the distinction and diversity of the higher education sector, lobbying on our behalf, winning additional resources and supporting members in practical ways.

GuildHE has had an active and successful year championing the issues that our members care about. From highlighting the burden of regulation through our influential briefing series to demonstrating the impact of member knowledge exchange activity; and from challenging the reforms to teacher training, to influencing the development of the National Student Survey, we have continued to advocate on behalf of members.

We have championed the importance of the diversity of the sector, helping to secure continued QR funding for members, additional capital funding and funding for specialist performing arts institutions.

We have supported members with their TEF submissions through regular briefings on key issues and buddying members to comments on draft submissions; publishing data and case studies on how members are tackling the climate crisis; providing research on students' union governance and practical resources for them; and running a doctoral festival for PhD students. Our network meetings have been busier than ever, ensuring staff across your institution are able to access key information, feed in to consultation responses and share practice across institutions.

Our Annual Conference in 2022 was another excellent event, wonderfully hosted by York St John University, and gave opportunities for our members to meet and discuss issues and solutions, and hear from speakers, including Paul Blomfield MP, Professor Dame Jessica Corner (Research England), John Blake (OfS) and Hannah Sheehan (DfE). This event, alongside our quarterly Council meetings and fortnightly heads of institution online briefing, ensures that members are briefed on the key issues of the day.

I have pulled out just a few of the examples of the excellent work that GuildHE have been undertaking on your behalf and I hope you will read the rest of this report to explore these and other issues in much more detail.

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



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

*GuildHE's 60 members include universities, university colleges, further education colleges and specialist institutions, representing over 150,000 students*

# INTRODUCTION

This annual report shows how we have taken forward the priorities we identified last year in areas including equality and diversity, the skills pipeline for key industry sectors, the Teaching Excellence Framework and the disproportionate cost and burden of regulation. It shows how we have worked on issues of immediate concern for GuildHE members, like the first admissions cycle since 2020 where GCSE and A Level grades went back to the pre-pandemic approach, and areas where we are supporting members for the long term, like tackling the climate crisis.

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 and support our members including through a wide range of member networks. And it shows how our investment in improving our communications capacity is helping us better highlight the achievements of GuildHE members and the contributions they make to economic growth and to sustaining healthy, creative and vibrant local communities.

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

The report looks at our work with the government, including how we are contributing to the detailed policy design that is crucial to making a success of large scale reforms like the Lifelong Learning Entitlement. It also describes our major project, showing how higher education regulation could be reformed to be more effective, proportionate and accountable.

We provide detail on the work and support provided by GuildHE Research, including through the doctoral festival, our work on research integrity, shared services and through a number of events and workshops. We also cover the work of UKADIA in supporting specialist arts education including through strengthening our relationship with Creative UK and forging new collaborations with other creative higher education organisations.

Finally, we report on our work directly with students, including through supporting governance in students' unions, and our engagement with wider society.



**Gordon McKenzie**  
**Chief Executive**  
**GuildHE**

*GuildHE's 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*

# ANNUAL OVERVIEW

141

MEETINGS  
WITH  
GOVERNMENT

504

MEETINGS  
WITH  
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118

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FORTNIGHTLY  
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## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- GuildHE conducted a highly influential campaign highlighting the disproportionate costs and burden of regulation for smaller higher education institutions. This included the Regulation Briefing series, our call, with others, for a Parliamentary enquiry into the work of the Office for Students (OfS) and our evidence to the House of Lords Industry and Regulators' Committee enquiry.
- We commissioned and published research on the impact of knowledge exchange funding at member institutions, demonstrating the positive difference it makes to their local industries and communities. We set out recommendations for a fairer and more sustainable funding system to maximise the impact of smaller institutions on UK society and the economy.
- We built on our work demonstrating the robust quality and standards of UK higher education sector through our joint work on academic governance and assurance with AdvanceHE, the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) and Universities UK (UUK), running three round-table discussions, a dissemination event and blogging on the topic for the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI).
- We highlighted the importance of initial teacher training and the impact of the teacher supply shortage through our evidence to the House of Commons Education Select Committee, our joint Teacher Education Summit with UUK and in our role as secretariat of the UUK/GuildHE Teacher Education Advisory Group.
- We produced a report on how members are tackling the climate crisis, drawing together survey data from members and a number of practical case studies of how our universities and colleges have been responding to the challenge.
- We supported our members and their students' unions on the development of their TEF submissions, running briefing sessions and pairing institutions to consider their submissions.
- Successfully argued for the continuation of QR funding streams for Enhancing Research Culture and Participatory Research.
- We engaged closely with the review of the National Student Survey (NSS) responding to the OfS' consultation and influencing the discussions as part of the NSS Advisory Group.
- We published research and template materials to support students' unions to enhance their governance.



- We ran a well attended and interesting Annual Conference at York St John University, where we discussed the cost of living challenges for students, regulation, research and knowledge exchange and political priorities for higher education with speakers from the OfS, Research England, the DfE and with politicians and think tanks.
- We supported members with regular fortnightly VC calls covering a wide range of topics including political and policy developments, the state of the regulatory landscape, sector industrial regulations, social enterprise, international higher education and financial sustainability.
- We argued for greater sector involvement in developing the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), resulting in a new sector taskforce on the implementation of the LLE co-chaired by GuildHE. As part of the LLE we also helped secure a government commitment to credit based funding, something we've argued for many years.
- We helped secure additional OfS funding to support specialist performing arts institutions by demonstrating the value of these institutions to the sector, as well as its diversity and the higher costs involved in these forms of practice-based teaching. We also provided insights and comment in the development of the HEPI publication on small and specialist institutions.
- In recognition of its valuable partnership with UKRI and Cancer Research UK to explore Research Integrity Indicators, GuildHE Research was asked by the recently formed UK Committee on Research Integrity to advise on commissioned research into annual statements of research integrity.
- We supported our members to become anti-racist institutions and on wider aspects of EDI with regular briefings and speakers.
- We ran a well attended Doctoral Festival and enabled the inception of a cross-institution student-led PhD Students Peer Support Community.
- Through our work with the Future Research Assessment Programme, we achieved significant allowances for small units of assessment in the design of REF 2028, including the reduction of the minimum of impact case studies, and an emphasis on the recognising excellence in research wherever it is found.
- We supported members and the OfS on Degree Awarding Powers as the process was transitioned away from involving the QAA, arranging peer discussions, providing intelligence, and advising on the needs of institutions when refining the guidance provided.
- GuildHE ensured the regulator's new approach to Access and Participation Plans recognised the resources and expertise of smaller and specialist HEIs in its expectations of new commitments.
- We supported the development of the Knowledge Exchange Concordat and the Knowledge Exchange Framework.

# WORKING WITH OUR MEMBERS



# COMMUNICATION

The last 12 months have been a very busy time for GuildHE and communications work. We released a large number of reports and briefings as we inform and engage with political and policy debate, held a number of high profile events such as Council, our inaugural Doctoral Festival and EDI Symposium. We have partnered with THE twice to support education and marketing events.

The priorities have included harnessing and growing GuildHE's internal and external communication channels, communicating impact and the distinctive contribution of GuildHE members to teaching, research and wider society, plus a focus on recruitment and retention of members.

We have also strengthened and developed our organisational positioning and brand identity. We have updated our 'About us' description to capture the active and specific role GuildHE plays in the sector, 'championing distinction and diversity in the sector' and to include the 150,000 students we represent to demonstrate the breadth of our representation. The brand identity of both GuildHE and GuildHE Research has been developed to convey a vibrant organisation, refreshing the design of existing collateral and providing a 'series identity' to series of documents such as the GuildHE Regulation Briefings.

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

## **Policy briefings and government consultation responses.**

Combined, our comprehensive Policy Update reports, consultation responses and members mailings totalled over 50.

GuildHE has strongly advocated for regulatory improvement during the past year with a series of influential briefings that were part of our written submission to the House of Lords report into the work of the Office for Students. We also played a key role in the recent launch of the Creative Education Manifesto and launched our reports on 'Tackling the Climate Crisis' and 'Expertise in Action: the Real World Impact of Knowledge Exchange Funding', both focusing on the experiences of smaller and specialist universities and colleges.

We have created a number of anti-racism and EDI briefings for members, with wide ranging topics including Equality of Outcomes in the Workplace, Disabled Students, LGBT+ Students, and Knowledge Exchange.



**GuildHE fortnightly e-newsletter** continues to perform exceptionally well against sector benchmarks for open rates and engagement rates. We have introduced a new Parliamentary Update section to our regular content to ensure members are provided with the latest news in Government in an easy-to-view format. Strong calls to action for consultations and events have delivered quality feedback from members and good registration numbers.

We have launched a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion newsletter, featuring topics of interest, resources and events to both GuildHE and GuildHE Research members. The newsletter has also featured the Windrush 75th Anniversary and Black History Month UK whilst showcasing the contributions of members.

**GuildHE LinkedIn and GuildHE Research LinkedIn channels** have experienced significant growth using an overall communications strategy to increase followers and the introduction of more planned activity and dynamic, engaging, shareable content. GuildHE LinkedIn has experienced a 50% increase over the past year, with followers now reaching nearly 1,000 and the GuildHE Research LinkedIn has also grown significantly.

**GuildHE Twitter (X) and GuildHE Research Twitter (X) channels** have remained fairly static in terms of growth and engagement, primarily due to changes at X and the migration of followers to other platforms, such as LinkedIn. GuildHE followers stand at 8,690.

**GuildHE media coverage and blogs.** Increased media activity, developing relationships with media, and working with partner organisations has resulted in significant coverage in both national and sector press. A sector call including GuildHE for an investigation into the OfS featured in national press including The Times, The Times Higher Education plus Wonkhe and Research Professional. GuildHE Chair Anthony McClaran gave evidence to the House of Lords industry Committee inquiry into the work of the OfS, which was streamed on Parliament Live and GuildHE CEO, Gordon McKenzie joined the EDSK think-tank podcast to explore the different ways that a future government could fund HE in England.

The GuildHE team has written five high profile HEPI blogs over the year. Topics include governing bodies and academic quality, the climate crisis, the impact of knowledge exchange at smaller and specialist institutions, lessons from Australia for the regulation of English higher education and an article by our Deputy CEO, Alex Bols featured in the HEPI Anniversary Collection, a major collection of contributions by leading figures in higher education. New outlets are also being used to gain a wider audience, for example the report 'Small and specialist approach to equality and diversity' was published via Emerald Fairer Publishing.

**GuildHE website.** We have refreshed our home page with stronger organisational positioning. Both the events and networks areas of the website have also been refreshed and improved, making it easy for members and prospective members to see the range of specialist network support and current meetings we offer. We have introduced a new 'Media Enquiries' section to increase visibility of this option and the opportunity for outlets to contact GuildHE media spokespeople. There are now dedicated spaces for a series of documents such as the GuildHE Regulation Briefings and the GuildHE Climate Change Report and associated case studies. Users, page views and sessions continue to grow steadily with current sessions increasing by 18% from the previous month.

**Members survey.** Research is being commissioned in the form of a members survey to investigate and build understanding of members' evolving needs, expectations, relationship with GuildHE and opinions on priorities.

**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.

# HE GOVERNANCE

This year's work on governance has focused particularly on academic governance but has also included speaking at a number of AdvanceHE sessions including on inclusive governance, training for new governors and their event for clerks and secretaries on academic governance. The May GuildHE Council meeting focused on good governance and brought together Chairs and Clerks from member institutions alongside their head of institution.

Building on the HEPI Policy Note on Academic Governance we published two follow-up blogs for HEPI on the topic and ran a series of events jointly with AdvanceHE, CUC and UUK - the three workshops were aimed at Audit Committee Chairs, Academic Board and Student representatives and clerks of governing bodies. This was brought together in a dissemination event and will result in a series of reflective questions that will be published in Autumn 2023. In addition, we spoke on academic governance at the Campaign for the Defence of British Universities conference, HW Fishers event for chair of Audit Committees and also a member board of governors.

A roundtable dinner discussion was held with members, hosted by Tom Kennie to discuss different elements of leadership, management and governance, prompting a number of meaningful discussions.

A report and various template materials were published on governance in smaller students' unions, jointly with the NUS Charity. This research report was based on interviews with students' union and institutional representatives on good governance in students' unions and resulted in a number of templates for job descriptions for students' union staff, agendas for meetings and other materials to support members.

# FREE SPEECH AND EDI

We published a joint statement on promoting academic freedom and free speech in October alongside Universities UK, AdvanceHE, Committee of University Chairs and the NUS Charity. This followed our joint project with AdvanceHE and Universities UK which included five sector-wide round-table sessions looking at academic freedom, leadership and governance, HR issues, EDI and the impact on students' unions.

We also lobbied around the Free Speech Act, spoke at a sector-wide conference and provided briefings and presentations for members around the implications of the Act including considering the legal perspectives at a Friday afternoon VC call with Smita Jamdar from Shakespeare Martineau.

As part of our EDI programme we also:

- Published 4 briefings for members on issues facing disabled students, LGBTQIA+ students, Equality of graduate outcomes, and EDI in knowledge Exchange.
- Launched the EDI network as a collaborative space for sharing knowledge and expertise and developed a new EDI newsletter and policy update.
- Worked with OfS on the development of their new approach to APPs and the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register, a new condition of registration on Harassment, and the Disabled Student Commission Institutional Commitment.
- Published two academic policy papers for Emerald Publishers on the GuildHE approach to EDI and first in family student experiences.
- Internally GuildHE staff are continuing with regular discussions about internal culture and how the values of our organisation are reflected in our work. EDI is now part of all staff's work plan in some way - either connecting with sector activity within their particular policy expertise or delivering outputs directly to members.

# EVENTS AND NETWORKS

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022

The December GuildHE Annual Conference, hosted by York St John University brought together members to discuss key issues including a lively discussion on regulation, insightful session on political priorities, the challenges of the cost of living crisis and heard about the priorities from the new Research England Executive Chair, Professor Dame Jessica Corner.

## GUILDHE COUNCIL

GuildHE Council brings together the heads of member institutions who, during 2022/23, were able to hear from a wide range of interesting and informative speakers. The September Council hearing from NUS, the student cost of living crisis and sector priorities from the OIA, AdvanceHE and UUK International. In January we heard from the OfS and UCAS as well as considering questions of financial sustainability and in May the Council meeting focused on university governance bringing together Chairs of governing bodies and Clerks which heard from OfS CEO, Susan Lapworth, Labour HE spokesperson Matt Western and a panel of governance specialists.

## NETWORK MEETINGS

60 network meetings took place this year, with an increase in engagement and diversity of external speakers. There has also been a continued success in facilitating face to face meetings which has supported collaborative working across institutions.

## FRIDAY AFTERNOON VC CALLS

Our fortnightly Friday afternoon, online calls for head of member institution have continued hearing from a wide range of speakers and organisations including: QAA, NUS TEQSA, UCEA, UCAS, AdvanceHE, UUK International, WhatUni Student Choice Awards data, Shakespeare Martineau and the Social Enterprise Mark.

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

The GuildHE CEO and senior staff have this year provided keynote speeches and panel contributions at several national events including:

- AdvanceHE PVC Network
- Academic Governance sessions run jointly by AdvanceHE, UUK, CUC and GuildHE
- QAA International Quality Agencies Network
- Campaign for the Defence of British Universities Academic Governance Conference
- HW Fisher event for chairs of Audit Committees
- WHEF Conference on Quality and Grade Inflation
- QAA 25th Anniversary Conference on grade inflation
- HESPA Annual Conference on grade inflation
- WHEF Conference on free speech
- Inside Government Conference on TEF
- AdvanceHE conference for new governors
- AdvanceHE conference on academic governance
- UCAS Teachers and Advisers Conference
- HELOA conference opening address
- Research Culture and Practice Forum





# WORKING WITH UK GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT



## DFE

### POST-18 FUNDING REVIEW

Government has now responded to the review of HE funding first published in 2019. As part of this response we engaged with DfE to provide evidence on the financial sustainability of the sector and investment in the student experience (including supporting students through the cost of living crisis). We continue to lobby for a reinstated student maintenance grant for the poorest students.

### ADMISSIONS POLICY

This year was the first admissions cycle since 2020 where GCSE and A Level grades went back to the pre-pandemic approach. We engaged with ofqual on the communication of this and the impact this might have on university recruitment practices. There was also engagement with UCAS on a review to Teacher References and applicant Personal Statements. As part of the UCAS 'Journey to a Million' policy programme, GuildHE had an essay published on the way in which smaller institutions might respond to increased demand. We have also engaged in a new programme of work at DfE on increasing the number of care-experienced students to access higher education.

### SKILLS POLICY

The Lifelong Learning Bill is currently going through parliament which will create a credit based approach to student finance. We have been working with DfE to support the

development of policies which implement this bill, including co-chairing a new taskforce on LLE implementation within HE. We have been continuously engaging with IfATE and DfE on the rollout of HTQs and Higher level/Degree Apprenticeships and have started a new skills network for members to engage in conversations on policy and share practice.

## HOME OFFICE

Regular meetings with the Home Office have taken place, as part of their Education Advisory Group and sub-groups discussing various elements of the visa system including questions around the maintenance review, increasing the health surcharge and ETAs.

We have reinvigorated our International Network with a new chair and run several meetings to feed into these discussions and other topics such as the Turing Scheme (outward student mobility scheme), emerging international student recruitment markets, risk management, due diligence, international agents and strategy.





# POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## COST OF LIVING REPORT

In March, The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Students published their inquiry into the impact of the cost of living crisis on students, GuildHE submitted evidence on behalf of members. The inquiry was led by Paul Blomfield, MP for Sheffield Central, with whom GuildHE have an established relationship.

GuildHE used evidence provided by members focusing on estate planning, accommodation, and student support to show how members responded to rising costs.

The report concluded that most students are facing significant financial pressures, with some groups particularly hard hit, which put academic outcomes and participation in the extracurricular activities at risk. The report concluded that immediate financial assistance, through increased hardship funding and restoring maintenance loan entitlements are needed to help the entire student body.

## OFFICE FOR STUDENTS

A Westminster Hall debate on the Office for Students, secured by Labour MP Emma Hardy in April discussed the need for effective regulation. Emma Hardy referenced GuildHE's first regulation briefing in the debate and the burden placed on smaller providers, how the OfS' approach is targeted towards larger institutions and how they have not adopted their approach for smaller institutions. This follows GuildHE's release of five regulation briefings in the context of the Industry and Regulators Committee Inquiry into the work of the Office for Students. The inquiry followed a joint letter from GuildHE, University Alliance, Russell Group and Million Plus. Chair of GuildHE, Anthony McClaran gave evidence to the inquiry, drawing on his experiences from when he served as CEO of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in Australia.



## PARTY CONFERENCES

GuildHE attended both Party Conferences, holding a joint dinner with Million Plus at the Labour Party Conference with Matt Western, Shadow Minister for Higher Education. Topics at the dinner included international students, the retraining of adults, students with part time jobs, value for money, and the impact of higher education outside of graduate jobs.

GuildHE, alongside University Alliance held an event at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) in support of the #ArtsEssential Creative Education Manifesto during the Labour Party Conference. The manifesto was written by the Creative Education Coalition – a group of organisations from the higher education and creative sectors who joined forces due to a shared concern about the future of the creative talent pipeline. The event had over 100 attendees, with GuildHE board members, and LIPA Chief Executive and Principal Sean McNamara speaking to guests on the importance of the creative arts.

## GENERAL ELECTION

Prior to January 28th 2025, a general election will be held. GuildHE is busy engaging with politicians and political parties ahead of their manifesto development processes. As part of the lead up to the election, GuildHE will work on a series of mini manifestos, focussing on areas specific to our members.

The strategy sets out GuildHE's priorities and actions ahead of the next General Election. The manifesto will focus on key asks from the future government. Higher Education plays an essential role in developing people, equipping them with knowledge, skills, curiosity and creativity and equipping them for the changing world of work and GuildHE's manifesto will reflect that.





# GUILDHE RESEARCH

GuildHE Research is the research consortium for smaller and specialist universities and colleges in the UK. The consortium had 32 members in 2022/23. 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 John has attended senior sector meetings on behalf of the consortium, representing GHER in the UKRI Task and Finish Group on Horizon, on the British Council HEI Sector Group, the JISC Open Access Negotiating Group, and as an Ambassador for the Association of Commonwealth Universities; along with his team at Bath Spa, he played a pivotal role at the inaugural Doctoral Festival.

## STRATEGIC AND POLICY SUPPORT

The consortium has continued to provide members with support on key policy drivers. Research Integrity is central to that work, demonstrated by our role as a signatory to the Concordat, our contribution to the Research Culture and Practice Forum, and advising on the UK Committee for Research Integrity commissioned research into institutional annual statements on integrity. GuildHE Research also played an advisory role for the Concordats and Agreements Review, and raised the profile of trusted research agendas with members. Importantly the consortium has continued to deliver a sub group on Research Degree Awarding Powers, supporting members through significant change in the quality assessment processes, raising issues with the Office for Students, and working to progress institutions' applications through peer exchange and intelligence gathering. In addition our work on Research Culture helped identify useful insights which were shared with the sector through the Good Practice Exchange for Research Culture.

The consortium advocated for members' interests on research funding and assessment. Ongoing engagements with the Future Research assessment Programme team led directly to changes



seen in the expectation of the next assessment exercise, REF 2028. GuildHE staff supported members' applications to the second round of the Expanding Excellence in England (E3) funding competition, providing additional briefings and workshops, and liaising with Research England on common challenges.

Regular meetings with Research England, UKRI, the Royal Society, NCCPE and others underpin this work, allowing GuildHE staff to raise issues arising from the consortium and provide feedback.

## EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

The following key events were held for members:

- Quarterly Research Leads meetings featuring speakers from NCCPE, Ethical Journalism Network, UUK, and UKRI;
- Research Culture Cafes for ECRs, Principal Investigators, Research Leads and PGRS;
- Trusted Research and the National Security and Intelligence Legislation - Research Collaboration and Advise Teams, Department for Science Innovation and Technology
- Outputs Repository Training;
- Expanding Excellence in England Roundtable;
- Three meetings of the Research Degree Awarding Powers subgroup, including sessions with the OfS;
- An introduction to the Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).

GuildHE Research was also featured in the following public events:

- UKRIO Webinar - Research Culture - Environments and Accountability
- Session on Supporting Research Integrity at the Research Culture and Practice Forum, a joint initiative by the Concordats to support Research Integrity and Career Development of Researchers.

## DOCTORAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT

GuildHE Research used 2022-2023 to reflect on and refresh its offer for postgraduate research students and early career researchers. The consortium expanded the student initiated and student-led peer cohort that had built up over the period of Covid-19 by formalising it as the GuildHE Research PhD Peer Support Community and using targeted communications to open up the community to any postgraduate research student across the consortium. Supported by online platforms - Jiscmail and Slack - the community grew from c.30 to over 130 students. Monthly sessions continued to be organised and led by student volunteers Abbie Cairns, a doctoral candidate at Norwich University of the Arts, and Philly Iglehart, doctoral candidate and Impact Officer at Marjon University Plymouth. Topics covered included thesis writing, research methods, research impact, record keeping, and careers after completion.

The inaugural GuildHE Research Doctoral Festival was held at Corsham Court, Bath Spa University, on the 24-25 April 2023. 29 doctoral students from 13 institutions participated in the Festival, with speakers from the Campaign for Science and Engineering, Wellcome Collection, National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement, and the Knowledge Exchange Unit at Parliament. Colleagues specialising in impact, ethics, and researcher development at Bath Spa University also gave presentations, and alumni from member institutions were invited back to give the reflections on their experiences post-PhD. In the GHER spirit of collegiality and collaboration opportunities to converse and network ran throughout the event, with all speakers staying to facilitate group discussions.

To support the ongoing development of our provision for doctoral students GuildHE Research has convened a working group of members. The group act as a touchstone for decision making

and help the team devise appropriate content and feedback on processes so that we optimise participation. The working group includes:

Abbie Cairns, PhD Candidate, Norwich University of the Arts; Jennifer Wright, Academic Practice Developer (Research), University of Law; Prof Debby Cotton, Director of Academic Practice, Marjon University Plymouth; Prof Jane Williams, Head of Research, Hartpury University; Philly Ricketts, Impact Officer and PhD Candidate, Marjon University Plymouth; Dr Lee Miller, Head of Postgraduate Research, Falmouth University.

## SHARED SERVICES

The services offered to members are: a Research Outputs Repository, managed by CoSector; an Impact Tracker, supplied by Hive (formerly Vertigo Ventures); an online PGR Training Programme, managed by University of East Anglia; and the Researcher Development Framework Planner, supplied by Vitae.

Three institutions joined the repository in 2022-2023 - UCEM, University of Law, and Northeastern University London, taking overall numbers to 16. Co-Sector continue to deliver a very cost-effective service for the consortium and provided a training session plus training materials within the year.

GuildHE Research is also exploring the possibility of a Research Data Repository with CoSector which can interoperate with our outputs repository, and would provide members with a shared space for open research data, in the anticipation of inclusion of research data in funders' open access requirements.



# 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 we recruited two new members, University for the Creative Arts and the Winchester School of Art and developed our international relationships with Australian arts associations. We are also developing our relationship with the Federation of Drama Schools.

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 a continued strengthening of our relationship with Creative UK, and ACE to emphasise the importance of specialist institutions to the arts talent pipeline. We have also authored a joint creative education coalition manifesto with other HE arts providers (including University Alliance, CHEAD, CVAN and London Higher) to provide a narrative as to why creative education at all levels is important to invest in. Our conversations on funding have resulted in additional funds being made available by the OfS for specialist arts providers to develop their offer to students.

UKADIA members have continued to collaborate in Access and Participation, with a joint Teacher CPD programme fully operational across UKADIA members. UKADIA have also commissioned a report on where creative graduates find employment and strengthening engagement members have with alumni. This will be published in December 2023.

Speakers at our Board have included Nicola Di Luzio, Deputy Director of the Social Mobility Commission and Evelyn Wilson Co-Founder/Director, TCCE (The Culture Capital Exchange) and Co-Director, NCACE (National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange).





# 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

Over the last year GuildHE has run a major project on regulation and regulatory burden with a series of briefings covering regulatory duplication, legal dimensions, regulating in the student interest, world-class regulation as well as published blogs on data burden. This was overseen by the GuildHE member advisory group.

We wrote, alongside the Russell Group, Million Plus and the University Alliance to Parliament to call for an Inquiry into the OfS and following the establishment of the House of Lords Industry Regulators Committee Inquiry, gave both written and oral evidence with our Chair.

We spoke on regulation and regulatory burden at the AdvanceHE PVC network in November and following a session at the QAA international quality agencies network we also spoke in a staff meeting at QQI Ireland. GuildHE have regular meetings with the various OfS staff to discuss these and other issues.

We responded to OfS consultations including:

- Investigation Fees consultation and met several times with the OfS on this issue.
- NSS Consultation and sat on their Advisory Group
- Harassment and Misconduct
- Access and Participation Plans
- Specialist Provider Funding Methodology



# 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 DQB activity** – we have met with the OfS on several occasions to discuss their principles for bringing DQB activity in-house and pulled together the GuildHE response to the DfE DQB consultation.
- **OfS Consultations** – we responded to the OfS's NSS consultation in August and arranged several member round-table discussions as well as attending the OfS NSS Advisory Group. We also had several meetings and commented on the draft of the new OfS DAPs guidance.
- **Grade Inflation** – we spoke at several conferences on grade inflation. Including, as part of the QAA's 25th Anniversary, HESPA's (HE Strategic Planners Association) annual conference, a Westminster HE Forum conference on quality and an Inside Government Conference on B3.
- **UUK/QAA/GuildHE Statement on UK-wide and internal quality processes** – following the initial publishing, deletion and then re-working and publishing of the UK regulators statement on UK-wide quality processes, we have been working with UUK and QAA to develop a more holistic statement on UK-wide approaches to quality incorporating the institution-level processes, this was published in September 2023.
- **UUK/AdvanceHE/CUC/GuildHE academic governance work** – we have taken forward our work on grade inflation this year by focusing on enhancing academic governance.
- **QAA International Students Guidance** – we were part of the QAA Advisory Group on updating their International Student Guidance and writing large parts of the introductory session which was published in March.

- **Professional Standards Framework review** – we were a member of the AdvanceHE advisory group on revising the Professional Standards Framework, which was launched in January, feeding in views of members and ensured the joint copyright of GuildHE (along with AdvanceHE and UUK of this key piece of sector infrastructure).
- We also held regular well-attended meetings for the GuildHE Quality Managers Network meetings and DAP Network meetings.

## DATA FUTURES AND THE DESIGNATED DATA BODY

HESA has now formally merged with JISC and JISC has now become the Designated Data Body. This year Data Futures has been operationalised for the first time and we have been working with members to understand the new processes and coding manuals.

We have been working with members through our Regulatory briefings to champion a streamlined approach to data collection across the sector as there is currently a lot of regulatory data burden and overlap in the current approach. To this end we provided evidence to the Secretary of State on data burden and have lobbied for the reintroduction of the ministerial taskforce on tertiary data.

## ACCESS, ADMISSIONS, THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND STUDENT SUPPORT

The Office for Students this year consulted on a new approach to Access and Participation regulation. We responded to the consultation and were involved in the development of the Equality of Opportunities Risk Register. We supported members to understand the new requirements for APP, which now focuses more on evaluation and student success (rather than just outreach and access) and have developed relationships with the OfS funded WhatWorks? Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO). We lobbied successfully for the regulator's approach to recognise the resources of smaller and specialist providers when reviewing new APP plans. Through our UKADIA WP subgroup, we have ensured that there is continued collaborative WP activity to support school teacher CPD, and this programme meets the new APP requirements.

We have also been supporting joint education sector lobbying on the defunding of BTECs - the #protectstudentchoice campaign. Members recruit many students with BTEC and other qualifications other than A-Levels and so this is an important campaign for us due to the concerns with the replacement T Level qualifications and the potential knock on impact on equality and diversity.

This year student experience issues have included the rise in the cost of living, a consultation on the new condition of registration on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct, a sector response to student drug use, monitoring the impact of the renters reform bill on student housing and working collaboratively with the DfE Student Support Champion Prof. Edward Peck.

Through our networks and policy briefings, there has been supported collaboration and practice sharing between our members, especially around external support for misconduct investigations and mental health/wellbeing practice.

## UKRI / RESEARCH ENGLAND

### KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FUNDING

GuildHE commissioned independent HE researcher, James Ransom, to conduct research into the impact of knowledge exchange funding for GuildHE members that do not receive Higher Education Investment Funding (HEIF) from Research England. Since 2011, smaller, specialist and practice-led institutions have not received flexible, formula funding for knowledge exchange activities. In 2021, as a result of implementing government efforts to 'build back better' after the pandemic, Research England provided around £200,000 of funding per institution for knowledge exchange. We took this opportunity to collect case studies on the impact of this funding, conduct an experimental analysis of the impact of adjusting the HEIF formula to student numbers as a proxy for size. This demonstrated that rather than 'effectiveness' being recognised in the funding formula, it was often the size of the institution. Smaller institutions have fewer students, and therefore less resource across many university functions, especially their knowledge exchange, innovation and civic missions. The report follows the previous year's Building the Jigsaw report on place-based knowledge exchange interaction and GuildHE institutions value to levelling up and tackling regional inequality.

The report, *Expertise in Action*, was published alongside a blog on the Higher Education Policy Institute's (HEPI) website as part of the launch. GuildHE continues to meet with Research England and UKRI on the subject of sustainably funding knowledge exchange and innovation at smaller, specialist and practice-led universities as part of the recommendations in the report.

## CONTRIBUTING TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

GuildHE Research has been actively engaged in sector groups, helping to shape policies and bring fresh perspectives to funders who value the insights on smaller and specialist universities and emergent research environments. The groups include:

- UKRI Forum for Tackling Bullying and Harassment
- UKRI Open Access Policy Implementation Group
- Universities UK Group for the Review of Research Bureaucracy
- New Deal for Postgraduate Research Students Providers and Funders Group.

GuildHE has been represented by both GuildHE staff and colleagues from member institutions, including Hartpury University, Harper Adams University, Marjon University Plymouth, Bath Spa University, and Falmouth University, raising the profile and visibility of institutions and their expertise.

# 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 researched governance in students' unions and provided practical support and advice on student TEF submissions. We are looking to reinstate a student representative to sit as an observer on our executive board.

## 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.

## STUDENTS' UNION GOVERNANCE

We published a report and various template materials on governance in smaller students' unions jointly with the NUS Charity. This research report was based on interviews with students' union and institutional representatives on good governance in students' unions and also resulted in a number of templates for job descriptions for students' union staff, agendas for meetings and other materials to support members.

## 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. As part of our regulation series we published a specific report on the student voice in regulation.

## POLICY HANDBOOK

Once again GuildHE refreshed the Policy Handbook for new SU officers to help them better understand the HE landscape. This publication has been very well received, and institutions have also found it a helpful induction tool for new staff, both within our membership and beyond.

# 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. This included submitting written evidence to the House of Commons Education Committee Inquiry into Teacher Recruitment. GuildHE provides the secretariat of the joint UniversitiesUK/GuildHE Teacher Education Advisory Group, organising a number of meetings including a wider Teacher Education Summit in June. The meetings also heard from key relevant organisations DfE, OfSTED and NFER and discussed a number of key issues including recruitment, placements and the new OfSTED framework.

## CLIMATE COMMISSION FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Over the last year GuildHE has surveyed members on their activity relating to tackling the Climate Crisis, repeating the survey from 2021 and providing helpful data on progress over the last 18 months.

This data was published alongside a number of member case studies in a report in the Spring and was accompanied by a HEPI blog from the Chair and good social media engagement. We jointly run the Climate Action Group with UUK and also continue to regularly meet with EAUC, AoC and Universities UK to discuss joint areas of work.

# PRIORITIES FOR 23/24



# PRIORITIES FOR 23/24

In 2023/24 GuildHE's work will be themed around six priority areas:

- General Election
- Institutional financial sustainability
- Regulation
- Students
- Research and Knowledge Exchange/Places
- Member-focused

## GENERAL ELECTION

*“to showcase the value of higher education to the UK and influence political parties ahead of the next General Election”*

- Showcasing the distinctive contribution of GuildHE institutions to teaching, research and wider society including through the TEF outcomes
- Develop a GuildHE Manifesto for the Future of UK higher education with mini-manifestos on (a) creative education, (b) teacher education, (c) LLE, skills, technical education and apprenticeships and (d) place to demonstrate the importance of specialist institutions to the future skills pipeline
- Demonstrate that UK higher education is well led and governed, able to identify and address areas of concern e.g. free speech, grade inflation and academic governance, franchise provision and the climate crisis

## STUDENTS

*“to support students enter and succeed in GuildHE institutions”*

- Campaign to ensure a fairer student financial support system
- Supporting transitions to higher education and student wellbeing and mental health provision in member institutions
- Supporting members develop more inclusive campuses

## INSTITUTIONAL FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

*“to champion a stable and sustainable HE sector highlighting the potential impact of the current financial settlement”*

- Influencing government's decisions on higher education funding with the aim of ensuring fair and sustainable funding for quality teaching response
- Influencing government's future policies on international students and staff
- Ensuring a financially sustainable approach to reforms of intermediate technical and professional qualifications and the development of degree apprenticeships

## REGULATION

*“to argue for a regulatory system that is fit for purpose that supports institutions to succeed”*

- Making the case for a new regulatory relationship with the OfS and other regulators, influencing the Cabinet Office's Public Bodies Review
- Explore the regulatory implications of a Tertiary sector or a more radical devolution settlement.
- Support members with the delivery of their regulatory activity (such as APPs) and engage with the development of new regulatory conditions.



## RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

*“to showcase the impact of research in smaller and specialist institutions”*

- Engaging with the levelling-up agenda, policies on “place” and relevant research, knowledge exchange and skills funding discussions with the aim of ensuring the contribution of smaller institutions to local growth is recognised and fairly funded
- Publish research into the impact of smaller and specialist institutions into their local economic impact
- Supporting institutions on research and developing an inclusive research culture and the development of REF2028

## MEMBER-FOCUSED

*“to understand our members and focus on their priorities”*

- Undertake member research to identify current strengths and areas of development of GuildHE activity
- Develop an enhanced member benefit system so that members can track their own engagement with activities and their value
- Elevate national understanding of the impact our members make through our enhanced communications strategy.

## 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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