



ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA 2026

Day 1: Wednesday 21 October

- 12.00 PM - 12.45 PM** **Lunch for early arrival delegates**
- 12.45 PM - 2.00 PM** **Campus tours: equine, animal, agriculture, sport** (optional)
- 2.30 PM - 3.00 PM** **Check in at Leonardo Hotel, Cheltenham** (optional)
- 3.30 PM - 4.00 PM** **Delegate registration**

4.00 PM - 4.15 PM **Welcome from Hartpury University**
Professor Andy Collop, Vice-Chancellor, Executive Principal
and CEO, Hartpury University and Hartpury College

4.15 PM - 5.00 PM **Keynote with Q&A**
Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister of State for Skills
and Minister of State for Women and Equalities



5.15 PM - 6.30 PM **Equine demonstration and networking drinks reception**

6.45 PM - 8.45 PM **Conference dinner**



Coach transfers are available to and from the Leonardo Hotel, Cheltenham on Day 1 and Day 2 for delegates with pre-booked accommodation.

Day 2: Thursday 22 October

9.00 AM - 9.30 AM

GuildHE members' annual general meeting

Dr Brooke Storer-Church, Chief Executive Officer, GuildHE

Professor Ken Sloan, Chair of GuildHE and Vice Chancellor, Harper Adams University

9.45 AM - 10.00 AM

Chair's welcome message

Professor Ken Sloan, Chair of GuildHE and Vice Chancellor, Harper Adams University

10.00 AM - 10.40 AM

In conversation with Jonathan Simons

Jonathan Simons, Partner and Head of the Education Practice, Public First

Dr Brooke Storer-Church, Chief Executive Officer, GuildHE

10.45 AM - 11.30 AM

Keynote with Q&A

Professor Dame Jessica Corner DBE, Executive Chair, Research England, UKRI



11.35 AM - 12.35 PM

Breakout sessions

Choose from one of three sessions.

1

Higher education 2040: the future of higher education and financial sustainability

Ewan Robertson, Principal, Cairneagle Limited

2

What does good collaboration look like?

Professor Huw Morris, Honorary Professor of Tertiary Education, UCL Institute of Education

3

Data maturity in higher education

Jisc

12.35 PM - 1.35 PM

Lunch and networking

1.35 PM - 2.20 PM

Keynote with Q&A

Polly Payne, Chief Executive Officer, Office for Students



2.20 PM - 3.20 PM

Panel session: adaptive leadership – what is needed for a strategic response to sector transformation

John Blake, Director, the Post-18 Project

Jenny Tester, Senior Consultant, Gatenby Sanderson

More speakers to be announced!

3.30 PM - 4.30 PM

Breakout sessions

Choose from one of three sessions.

4

Freedom of speech: compliance, culture, and keeping your institutional identity

Joanna Forbes, Legal Director, Shakespeare Martineau

Paul Greatrix, Director of Higher Education Consultancy, Shakespeare Martineau

5

Speed executive coaching

Tessa Harrison, Director, Tessa Harrison Executive Coach Ltd

6

What is higher education for? Re-imagining the higher education sector

Sarah Cowan, Head of Policy (Higher Education and Research), British Academy

4.35 PM - 5.20 PM

Closing keynote: Future Jobs Roadmap – engaging with sector-wide initiatives for skills, employability and the future of higher education

Tom Lewis, Policy Adviser, Universities UK



5.00 PM - 5.30 PM

Conference wrap-up and closing remarks

Professor Ken Sloan, Chair of GuildHE and Vice Chancellor, Harper Adams University

5.30 PM

Annual Conference 2026 closes