

Strategy
2025

Guild



About GuildHE



GuildHE is an official voice for UK higher education, especially for universities and colleges with a tradition of learning, research and innovation in industries and professions.

GuildHE Research is the research consortium for smaller and specialist higher education institutions. It promotes and advocates the recognition and support of excellent research wherever it is found.

GuildHE advocates for specialist arts education through its UKADIA network (United Kingdom Art and Design Institutions Association)

Vision

For GuildHE to be the advocate of choice for smaller and specialist higher education institutions. Our members will be acknowledged as a crucial part of a diverse higher education sector that drives cultural, social and economic development throughout the UK

By 2025 we want to see our members and the wider HE sector providing the skills, practical research and innovation that industries and individuals need in the changing world of work as well as enriching all our lives by nurturing creativity, critical thinking, scholarship and free expression. They will be outward looking institutions, environmentally responsible and a source of civic pride, helping the community to flourish and connecting their place to the rest of the world. We want students to have real choice of excellent teaching in a diverse range of learning environments whenever in life they want to access it. We believe diversity is the key to excellence. Our vision supports these goals – as an influential advocate for our members we will be constantly arguing for government policies that recognise higher education’s diverse strengths, fund it fairly and sustainably in return for proper scrutiny and hold it to account for its contribution to wide societal values not narrow economic returns.

Mission

GuildHE members focus on the provision of excellent teaching and research and an outstanding student experience; they provide diversity of choice of where and how to learn, including in specialist and smaller academic communities; and they undertake practical research and innovation for real-world impact. **Our mission therefore is to support our members to achieve their objectives and champion their unique and essential contributions to the UK’s diverse higher education sector.**

Values



We share the values of our members – ethical, inclusive and creative. We care about social justice and sustainability. We know higher education is transformative for individuals, beneficial to industry, local communities and wider society and believe it is a good thing in its own right.

Our values inform the way we work. We are thoughtful, creative, collaborative and dynamic. We are focused on providing value for our members. We ensure we are well informed and strive to be influential. We are supportive of each other, invest in our skills and engage with our members and wider society. We encourage our staff to volunteer and aim to be sustainable.



How we work

Our Members

GuildHE members are universities, university colleges and other institutions, each with a distinctive mission and priorities. They work closely with industries and professions and include major providers in technical and professional subject areas such as art, design and media, music and the performing arts; agriculture, food and the natural environment; the built environment; education; law; health and sports. Many are global organisations engaged in significant partnerships and producing locally relevant and world leading research. They are successful, attracting talented overseas students and staff.

Members are diverse but will often share specialist mission, subject focus or key characteristics, including:

History

members include a number of older institutions with their roots in Victorian philanthropy and commitment to education and crafts. These include specialist institutions and those founded by the churches.

Attitude

a “service” tradition of higher education that expects to support individuals, industry and society and is responsive, vocational, innovating and open.

Ambition

members aspire to, and achieve, high quality teaching and improved research performance, taught and research degree awarding powers and university or university college title.

Together, they provide a dynamic and diverse contribution to UK higher education and research, nurturing innovation and providing more choice for students. They play an important part in the outstanding strength, reputation and international competitiveness of the UK higher education system as a whole.



Students

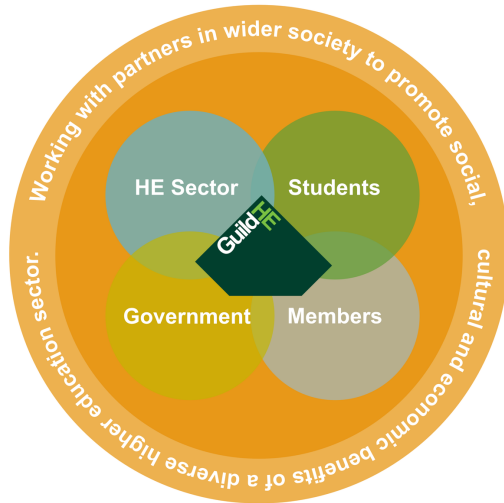
GuildHE institutions increase student choice and support both personal and professional development:

- Smaller institutions create supportive and inclusive communities that help students to flourish and develop meaningful relationships.
- Church foundation universities offer a distinctive educational experience, grounded in ethical principles that can be transformative for their students.
- Specialist institutions stand out positively on many aspects of student experience, including assessment, feedback, motivating students to do their best work and value for money.*

GuildHE believes in the principle of engaging students in the decisions that affect their experience. We will work with students' unions from our members and with the NUS to conduct research, develop and promote policies that improve the experience of students, and highlight the benefits of studying in smaller and specialist institutions.

Our Aims

GuildHE works in five main spheres:



Our **members**: by providing high quality political intelligence and briefing; direct support; and through networks that allow members and their staff to share and gain from each other's experience and to shape and influence national policy positions.

UK governments and Parliaments: through lobbying, research and policy influence. We talk to Ministers, MPs and officials using evidence to demonstrate the distinctive contribution our members make to teaching, research and innovation.

The **higher education sector**: through governance, co-regulation and campaigns. We represent our members' role in assuring the quality, reputation and efficiency of UK higher education.

Students: through consultation and joint work with members, their students, students' unions and the NUS to celebrate and promote the student interest.

Partners in wider society: targeting key charities, industry bodies and learned societies to make common cause in promoting the social, cultural and economic benefits of a diverse higher education sector.

Our Priorities

External landscape

The external political and policy landscape is highly uncertain and volatile and is likely to remain so during the lifetime of this strategy. Our yearly priorities will be driven in part by this changing sector landscape.

Despite the uncertainty there are clear challenges and opportunities for higher education institutions:

- Ensuring **sustainable funding** for quality higher education and a fair deal for students and graduates in the face of competing demands on public spending.
- Helping **improve UK productivity** and addressing regional economic imbalances through skills, research and knowledge exchange.
- Providing **educational opportunities** for a growing population of young people and for adults seeking to develop their knowledge and skills, thereby **contributing to greater social justice**.
- Demonstrating the **quality and impact of their research** through REF 2021 and the Government's longer term commitment to increase total research and development expenditure to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.
- Responding to the emerging climate crisis, finding solutions to aid both the UK and the rest of the world and **ensuring UK HE is taking a lead on environmentally sustainable initiatives**.
- **Supporting the country's global ambitions** by attracting international students, skilled staff and inward investment, supporting home students to spend time studying abroad and bolstering the UK's soft power.
- Making a **positive civic, social and cultural contribution** locally and regionally.
- Maintaining sound governance of autonomous institutions, demonstrating leadership and **improving public trust of universities** in a new and developing regulatory environment.

We decide our operational priorities by talking to our members. We keep them up to date by reviewing them every year in light of the external landscape. Our current key priorities are:

Influencing government's response to the review of post-18 education in England and subsequent decisions on higher education funding in the next Spending Review with the aim of **ensuring fair and sustainable funding for quality teaching**

Engaging with the **reform of intermediate technical and professional qualifications** and the development of degree apprenticeships

Engaging with the OfS, the designated quality and data bodies, and the review and development of the Teaching Excellence Framework to **challenge regulatory burdens and costs**

Engaging with policies to address geographical inequalities in the UK and with 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

Supporting institutions on **research** and the development of REF2021

Supporting transitions to higher education and **student wellbeing** at member institutions

Work with our members to encourage sector wide responses to **sustainability and the climate emergency**

Supporting members in the lead-up to **Brexit day** and beyond and influencing government's future policies on **international students and staff**

Supporting the development of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)

Showcasing the **distinctive contribution of GuildHE institutions** to teaching, research and wider society including, for example, through economic impact reports and our support for the Teachers Education Advisory Group

Working with **partners in key industry sectors** including the creative economy and food and agriculture to demonstrate the **importance of specialist institutions to the future skills pipeline**

Developing our capacity to **share knowledge and good practice** in relation to **widening participation** and attainment and supporting members to collaborate in national activities

GuildHE's priorities will drive our communications strategy. GuildHE's purpose, visions and activities will be communicated effectively to both internal and external audiences so we are recognised and valued as:

- An official voice for UK higher education, company member of sector agencies and a leader of sector wide initiatives.
- Authoritative, influential and highly visible.
- Committed to a diverse UK higher education sector as key to its outstanding quality.
- A champion for higher education as a driver of social mobility.
- Having expert knowledge in the delivery of high-level skills in industries and professions that are key to the economy.
- Demonstrating the importance and value of excellent research wherever it is found.



Communication

Measuring Success

We will measure our success through:

What our members say about GuildHE and how they engage with us. We will use annual member surveys and evaluate member engagement with events and networks.

How we have contributed to creating and sustaining a policy environment that:

- Maintains the diversity of the higher education sector;
 - Allows autonomous institutions to thrive;
 - Addresses policies and practices that unfairly limit the contribution smaller and specialist institutions make to teaching, research and knowledge exchange; and
 - Is fair to students and graduates.
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Evidence of successful engagement by GuildHE with students and our partners in wider society, including through joint projects and campaigns

How GuildHE and our members have contributed to the work of sector agencies and sector led initiatives to maintain, enhance and promote the quality and reputation of UK higher education.

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