

In Partnership



Keeping our members updated
with the latest from Advance HE



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Welcome to the Spring 2020 In Partnership

Along with the rest of the sector, Advance HE is adjusting to the challenging times in which we all find ourselves. We are determined to support our members by delivering as much as possible online and maintaining the best possible, flexible service. Our staff are well-versed and rehearsed in working remotely and our IT systems are robust.

We will be keeping you updated regularly with as many details as possible and will also be contacting members and individuals through our routine schedule of newsletters and emails.

For a full update on our services, please visit our [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) updates page for the latest information and advice](#).

Member benefits

During the 19-20 membership year we have introduced a significantly enhanced range of member benefits, available to all those who work for an [Advance HE member institution](#). We are also witnessing the most significant single event to impact on higher education (and society) since World War Two. Given this, we will be running a survey of members in the near future seeking your feedback on the benefits and services we provide, and what you need from us over the next 12 to 18 months. We intend to survey a cross section of colleagues from across institutions to reflect the audience engaging with our services and ensure that what we provide to members continues to evolve in line with your specific needs and the ongoing factors impacting the sector.

For the time being, we have had to make changes to our existing services. However, we are committed to ensuring Advance HE membership remains a source of support and contributes to your future success. If you have any questions about these changes please contact memberships@advance-he.ac.uk.

As for recent member benefits, we are delighted to announce that we have awarded our first ever batch of Good Practice Grants. This new funding stream, available to our members in the UK and Ireland, will allow our members to develop and promote the examples of good practice taking place in their institutions. We would like to congratulate all the winning submissions. We will be sharing more details with you over the coming months.

Another new member benefit for 19-20 is the Connect Event Series, comprising of free webinars and face-to-face events for members to learn together and network. The series aims to address key HE themes via a global collaborative approach from across the sector.

Over the past fortnight we have offered several webinars that link directly with challenges posed by COVID-19 (e.g. 'In the past 60 days' – lesson learned from colleagues in China). Recordings of these webinars can be found within our Advance HE Connect platform (which does require a log-in) through the following link: <https://connect.advance-he.ac.uk/topics/14710/events>

Upcoming webinars also include:

Dual role of the academic

24 April 2020

The fifth webinar of the Facing the Future series is entitled 'Dual Role of the Academic'. The objective is to provide thought-provoking, forward-looking ideas and to stimulate discussion on the balancing research and teaching. The webinar will look at different lenses of the dual role of the academic. Speakers will address the challenges of balancing research and teaching, 3rd space academics, industry experience vs academic career and professoriate: Leadership and management vs. research or teaching. [Secure your place](#)

Governing universities: Solutions for a dynamic world

29 May 2020

Informed by the findings of over 25 independent effectiveness reviews of universities operating across the globe and insights drawn from Advance HE's unique governance development programme this event will be of interest to Chairs and members of governing bodies and governance professionals alike. [Secure your place](#)

[Learn more about the full range of member benefits](#)

Member benefits

Governance Advance HE Connect member event

Culture - the key to good governance

30 April 2020

This event will now be delivered online

This Advance-HE member-only event will enable senior staff, secretaries, governors and Chairs from across the UK to consider how to deliver and maintain an effective boardroom culture as the key to good governance in higher education.

Attendees will:

- + gain the latest insights from Advance HE's analysis of its comprehensive dataset of governance effectiveness reviews with a particular focus on culture
- + consider the implications of the new CUC HE Code focus on culture
- + hear lessons learned from peers who have faced boardroom culture challenges
- + reflect on the Board – Executive dynamic
- + learn from peers about managing and evidencing effective culture and behaviours in practice.

AdvanceHE

Member

19-20

[Secure your place](#)

Let's Talk Value

More than 70 delegates attended Advance HE's recent Let's Talk Value Conference 2020 which explored ways that institutions can articulate value. One area explored was through integrated thinking and reporting – a strategic approach to communicating how an organisation uses all of its resources holistically to create value for stakeholders beyond a financial summary.

Phil McNaul, Strategic Finance Consultant, Former FD – The University of Edinburgh, and Simon Day, acting COO, University of Winchester, share their tips for successful integrated thinking and reporting below:

- 1 Start early and make integrated thinking the priority – setting the institutional purpose. “Integrated thinking and reporting is not a year-end process...”
- 2 Make sure the senior team is fully on board and engaged; they are the leaders who can ensure that an integrated thinking approach is adopted
- 3 Bring in an independent person to support and encourage points one and two – look outside the sector for examples of narratives beyond the numbers and bottom line; look at how corporates are changing their narrative and putting ‘purpose before profit’
- 4 Think about your language - involve your marketing and communications team from the outset as they have the brand awareness and technical communication skills to develop a compelling narrative and design around the report
- 5 Develop a simple value proposition for your university; be as distinctive as you can but keep the message simple
- 6 Keep the report balanced (honest comments about positive and negative issues) and authentic – build trust with your stakeholders and think long-term. Don't let there be a gap between what you say and what you do
- 7 Be distinctive – celebrate the particular strengths of your university.

Phil McNaul said, “I'm absolutely convinced that the integrated thinking and reporting process strengthens the university proposition, cohesiveness and its relationship with its stakeholders. The process not only builds confidence, trust and authenticity, it supports a more sustainable and robust organisation for the future.

“We're starting to see a shift where integrated thinking and reporting is gaining real traction in the sector and I would commend the process for all institutions.”

Another highlight of the conference was the ‘Integrating sustainability strategy to demonstrate wider value’ panel which was streamed live as a webinar.

Finally, Professor Julia Buckingham, UUK President, [announced the development of a value framework](#), calling on government to broaden its definition of ‘value’ beyond a student's expected future salary alone and to recognise the benefits of studying for a degree.

[Watch the recording of the webinar](#)

If you want to improve your NSS scores...

From January to April each year the attention of UK universities turns to the National Student Survey (NSS), with institutions inevitably asking themselves, 'how do we improve our NSS scores?' And that, according to Andrew Grayson, Associate Professor School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University, is the wrong question.



From January to April each year the attention of UK universities turns to the National Student Survey (NSS). Across the entire HE sector final year students are urged to complete the 28 item questionnaire about their experiences of their undergraduate courses. Their responses feed into various metrics which in turn form the basis for an array of increasingly influential league tables. Moving upwards in those tables is an important measure of apparent success. Outcomes are often the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) of TWMs (Those Who Matter). So universities inevitably find themselves asking, 'how do we improve our NSS scores?' And that, of course, is the wrong question.

Asking the right question

Before we get onto what the right question might be, let's first take a look at another wrong one. Universities are legitimately concerned about the number of first class degrees that are currently being awarded. But if they ask, 'how do we decrease the number of first class degrees we award?' they will, again, be posing the wrong question. Degree outcomes are symptoms of assessment systems and resultant practices. And if you treat symptoms, you won't come up with sustainable cures. The correct question in this context is, 'how can we make our assessment infrastructures and practices better?' In other words, if you want to tackle grade inflation...don't aim to tackle grade inflation. Go in deep, and the cure is more likely to last.

To illustrate how this can work let's look at the recent values-driven approach to enhancing the assessment infrastructure at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). We took a forensic look at our structures and practices, and on that basis made various principled decisions. For example, we moved away from the arguably unfair and inflationary 0-100 scale that is widely used in educational assessment, and replaced it with a fairer, non-inflationary 0-16 scale. As a consequence of this and other decisions about core aspects of assessment practice, NTU ended the 2019 academic year with a drop (of 7 percentage points) in the number of firsts that were awarded. It turns out that enhancing fairness in the deep structure of an assessment system has many good and sustainable consequences, one of them being an appropriate profile of final awards.

Just as degree outcomes are a function of an assessment system, so NSS scores are a function of (among other things) the quality of teaching. Therefore, if you want to improve your NSS scores, aim to improve the teaching (or better still, the learning) that goes on. This might sound rather obvious. But metrics, which are a symptom of a thing, have a habit of getting used as a shorthand for talking about that thing. And before you know it they have, to all intents and purposes, become the thing itself. Ask an undergraduate psychology student about intelligence, for example. Chances are they'll tell you about IQ.

The value of values

We have a rule, in our large NTU Psychology department; that rule says, 'never chase the metrics'. It's one of our core values. It's a promise we make to colleagues that we will never do anything that is driven by the agenda of improving our NSS scores. Everything we decide to do is driven by the agenda of improving the deal we give our students and the deal we give each other. In fact the whole operation of teaching psychology at NTU is driven by a set of core values, such as these. We find that if you work at this deeper level, by developing a values-base – not a vacuous set of 'v a l u e s' that appear on every corporate mission statement, but a real set by which you live and work – there are benefits to all, further downstream. Including good NSS scores.

The thing about values is that, once you get buy-in, they can help carry teams of people along on even relatively complex paths. Academics can be a bolshie lot. If I stand in front of 100 lecturers and say, "we want to get better NSS scores, so we are going to do x and y", I guarantee that I'll have lost over half of them to dark chunterings about 'bloody league tables' before I've even started to say what x and y might be. If, on the other hand, I lead off with, "we want to get better at some of the things we do in our teaching, so we are going to...", I at least have their attention. Because the other thing about academics is that they are seriously invested in their students' learning. And they want to do their teaching as well as possible. Some outside the HE sector may be sceptical about that, but in my experience it's generally the case.

The value of metrics

Incidentally, all of this is not an attack on the NSS itself. It seems entirely reasonable to ask final year students, 'overall, are you satisfied with the quality of your course?' And the league tables that are put together on the basis of these and other metrics are one source of information that can support students in making informed choices about where they study. I have heard these tables described as 'toxic'. I contest that notion. My career in HE started at a time when this institution was known as Trent Poly, and the only thing that students had to go on in deciding where to study was the non-empirical 'metric' of 'reputation'. That never played out particularly well for us in those days. And that was entirely unfair. Nottingham Trent always has been a great place to study, and the foundations of the University's current success lie deep in the roots of our history as a polytechnic. So, to me, in this regard half decent metrics beat 'reputation' hands down, every time. Let's just not let them become the thing itself.

The Advance HE Surveys and Insights Conference 2020 takes place on 29 April at Sheffield Hallam University and is a great opportunity to discuss and debate strategies to increase student response rates and engagement.

**[Find out more about the
Surveys and Insights Conference 2020](#)**

Three burning platforms from the debate ‘who governs the governors?’

Victoria Holbrook, Head of Membership at Advance HE, reflects on the HEPI/Advance HE Parliamentary Breakfast Seminar on governance in higher education.

The sun shone through onto the cold Terrace Pavilion at the House of Commons as Advance HE and HEPI hosted ‘Challenging the Status Quo - who governs the governors?’ - a seminar intended to provoke our audience on the matter of good governance in higher education. Advance HE’s Andy Shenstone, Director of Business Development & Delivery chaired the panel made up of Chris Sayers (Chair of CUC), Monica Chadha (Vice-Chair, Queen Mary’s University) and Jacqui McKinlay (CEO of the Centre for Public Scrutiny). Each pondered the role of governing bodies in HE and elsewhere, the efforts made to ensure effectiveness and the obvious distance yet to travel. And we are far from being on the everlasting sunny uplands yet. So what burning platforms exist to create the change needed to get us there? Here are my three from the discussion:

Diversity is THE thing

Without improving the diversity of our governing bodies, we will fail to send the strongest of signals to our stakeholders that we care – and want to address – social mobility. We will fail to embrace the constructive and necessary challenge and culture that a range of thought perspectives and life experiences will bring to the top table. We will fail to maximise the impact of this ‘combination of difference’ upon the story about what HE is for and the power of what it can do for the economy and society. These are all things that we expect of others, and ever-increasingly, our stakeholders expect of us. It’s about ethics, sound business and trust.

Communication is critical

If we don’t tell our stories better, why should people care about what we do? If we don’t attempt to engage our stakeholders in meaningful, tailored and proactive ways, how can we make informed decisions and build a community of advocates? Transparency and visibility should be normal, not exceptional, as we seek to ensure a governance culture of success. This helps us demonstrate our impact, showcase our value and engender trust.

Trust is our social contract

Trust and confidence came up time and time again today. This is what allows higher education institutions to be fundamentally autonomous – it’s our social contract with stakeholders, not least the state. If it breaks, we surely undermine the foundation upon which we operate. An inspired reference to Erasmus as orchestrating the populist platform for the abolition of the monasteries by Henry VIII perfectly emphasised the frailty of the environment in which we operate. We cannot afford to only preach to the converted.

So, what now? None of this is new. But the urgency to act has never been greater. Boldness; a bit of risk-taking perhaps; a commitment to striving for better and holding ourselves to account. Strategic choices to be made about how to act, where to invest, who to recruit, whether to pay – we can no longer ignore these questions as too hard to solve.

As both a member of a governing body and an Advance HE staffer, I will strive to do better. To influence change and challenge the norm – where it needs it - as much as I can. What about you?

Find out more about our governance services such as the [Governor Development Programme](#) and [governance effectiveness reviews](#)

Normalising discourse about race and racism at the University of Cambridge

Following the Bronze awarded to the University of Cambridge in the latest round of the Race Equality Charter, Equality and Diversity Consultant Dr Joanna Jasiewicz and Senior Equality and Diversity Consultant Dr Miriam Lynn, share their reflections on the University's journey towards normalising the discourse about race and racism.

In September 2016, the University of Cambridge became a member of the Race Equality Charter (REC). The REC self-assessment process invited us to embark on a journey of unearthing uncomfortable findings and starting difficult conversations within the institution.

The University received the Bronze award three years later in November 2019. We are aware that the award is a recognition of [our action plan](#) and that we still have lots to do. We are taking actions to embed institutional change, addressing racism and normalising the discourse about race. Through this programme of change, we are determined to improve the support for, sense of belonging and experience of BAME students and staff, increase BAME representation particularly at higher levels, and drive diverse recruitment and student admission. This work has been driven by exceptional BAME staff and students including but not exclusively Mónica Moreno Figueroa, Kamal Munir, Kusam Leal, Arathi Sriprakash, Sharon Walker, and Janet Ramdeo, and continues to be supported by their expertise and commitment.

This blog post describes the approach that helped us in the REC submission journey and beyond. The strategy involves encouraging open recognition that the University is not free from [structural racism](#) that still permeates cultures of organisations around the world. This approach also includes creating opportunities for conversations about race, and shifting the institutional focus from initiatives to 'help' BAME staff and students adjust to the institution and its (at times) traditional norms and culture, to actions that educate white people about race, and encourage them to take leadership in challenging racism.

Internal research in preparation towards the REC submission brought some results that were uncomfortable and perhaps surprising to many. We saw that some of the University's departments and faculties have very low proportions of BAME staff and students, and our qualitative analysis revealed that feelings of isolation, limited sense of belonging, and hyper-visibility were common for BAME staff and student respondents. We realised that the University has a high ethnicity non-disclosure rate, and our consultations indicated that while some BAME staff do not feel confident to reveal their racial identity, white people often think that 'race' is something that only BAME people have, and hence they do not feel it necessary to disclose.

It has become clear that the University needs to be open about these pressing issues to be able to address them in a meaningful way. This involves being honest about race and racism in the University's communications, at internal events and in [public statements](#). Our Vice-Chancellor speaks openly about this in the public statement on the [Race Equality at Cambridge](#) website: "Racism is unacceptable. It undermines societies, it divides communities, and it prevents people from coming together with a shared purpose. It affects our staff and students by engendering feelings of isolation and dejection."

[Read the blog in full](#)

Universities and colleges embedding sustainability to encourage positive change

Advance HE is proud to be a partner of the Green Gown Awards which put a spotlight on the innovative and inspiring sustainability work taking place in universities and colleges to create a brighter future for their students.

Universities and colleges are embedding sustainability in academic courses and activities to encourage future generations to make a positive change.

From Perth College, which is targeting employability in outdoor activities, to the London Institute of Banking and Finance, which has launched a project aimed at underrepresented student populations to increase diversity within the banking and finance industry, the initiatives being undertaken by institutions to help secure a sustainable future are increasingly varied. The Green Gown Awards celebrate the best in sustainability initiatives from universities and colleges across the UK and Ireland - and among the winners were institutions that are developing courses to ensure future graduates are able to put sustainability at the heart of their agendas.

Leading the way in this area is the University of Bristol, winner of the Next Generation Learning and Skills Green Gown Award. The University runs the Sustainable Futures online course which has been taken by over 5,700 people, including over 2,000 students at the University of Bristol. It uses video case studies of people making a difference in diverse ways - including homelessness and housing, microplastics and the circular economy, food waste and sewage to energy. Feedback from participants shows that the course has motivated many to change their behaviour, to engage more in communities and volunteer, to consider sustainability related career paths, and to take more care of their own wellbeing.

Also developing a future skills sustainability course is the University of the Arts London, London College of Fashion, which was highly commended in the Next Generation Learning and Skills Green Gown Award category. It runs Better Lives - a dynamic blended unit (offering a mix of online and face-to-face learning) delivered to 1,826 first year undergraduate students and involving 58 members of staff at London College of Fashion.

Newly developed for 2018/19, the unit embeds sustainability, diversity, and social responsibility into the thinking and creative practice of its students. They work as a collective to consider how they can become change makers in their respective disciplines which spans across fashion business, design and development and media and communication.

At a time when institutions are facing mounting pressure to enable and empower young people to better tackle global issues to ensure they have a better tomorrow, it is heartening to see Finalists from the Green Gown Awards embracing schemes and courses that have a positive impact.

You can find out more about our Finalists' projects by reading the [Green Gown Award case studies](#).

[Apply for this year's Awards](#)

Alumni flourish after taking part in Advance HE's longest running bespoke programme

The Academic Leadership Programme (ALP) is our longest running collaborative project and nearly 300 academics have taken part over the past 14 years. Alumni of the programme have thrived in their roles and in some cases have become Heads of Faculties and Pro-vice Chancellors.



We are proud to celebrate this unique partnership between Newcastle and Durham. For us, it is less about the numbers we've had on the programme over the years and more about the positive impact the programme has on individuals and their schools and faculties."

Lynne Howlett, Assistant Director in Leadership Development
Newcastle University



The co-creation of the programme has positively impacted upon the learning experience for the delegates who hugely value the opportunity to work with colleagues from Newcastle.

"ALP has also led to Durham and Newcastle introducing a number of significant leadership development initiatives, for example Women in Academia and Masterclasses, thereby enabling more colleagues to benefit from this collaborative approach."

Sophie Sowerby, Head of Organisation Development
Durham University



One of the most important aspects of the programme's success is the special tripartite partnership. The steering group is strongly informed by feedback from participants and takes into consideration the current climate in the sector and at the two universities. It meets three times during each cohort to review progress and agree future direction.

"All three parties share a passion for innovation in leadership development, and a commitment to providing an experience that has impact on the ways in which academic leaders deliver results."

Professor John Ramsden, Key Associate and Programme Director
Advance HE

[Find out more](#)

New content and publications

Using forum theatre to help students with job interviews

Jacqueline McManus and Catherine Taylor from the University of West London share their successful adaptation of a radical form of theatre as a way of helping students in job interviews.

[Read more](#)

The use of Visualisation Technology for venepuncture and cannulation

A speaker from the 2019 Advance HE NET Conference, Thobekile Ncube, Lecturer at Middlesex University, shares her thoughts on Infrared Visualisation Technology for third-year nursing students to enhance their knowledge and skills in venepuncture and cannulation.

[Read more](#)

Creating conditions for student success

Dr Gurnam Singh reflects on winning his National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) award in 2009, and the opportunity it gave him to 'push the boundaries' of teaching excellence.



[Read more](#)

Aurorans inspired by rugby star Maggie Alphonsi

Maggie Alphonsi, MBE and Rugby World Cup winner, gave a keynote speech on leadership to the delight of Aurora delegates



[Read more](#)

Leading change in external examining

Dr Geoff Stoakes, Special Adviser, Advance HE and Dr Erica Morris, Academic Associate, Advance HE, look at a new survey and national guidance for higher education providers on protecting the value of UK degrees, and how the Degree Standards project has been leading change in external examiner practice.

[Read more](#)

Dates for your diary

We are seeking to maintain as much of our programmes and events activity as possible in the coming months. Where possible, we will be moving our programmes and events online. We will aim to reschedule as much as we can if this is not possible. Please refer to the [webpages](#) of the individual programmes or events pages for more information and updates. If you have already booked your place at an event, you will be notified of any changes.

Leading with Humanity - The Leadership Summit 2020

10 June 2020

This event will now take place online

The Leadership Summit will bring together sector leaders and leadership thought leaders, providing a thought-provoking environment to explore contemporary challenges and differing perspectives of leadership with peers across the sector. [Secure your place](#)

PVC Network Meeting

13-14 May 2020

This event will now take place online

The Pro Vice-Chancellors, Vice-Principals and Deputy Vice-Chancellors (PVC) Network meets twice a year, the network is invitation only and allows you to listen to keynote presentations relating to sector developments, discuss topics and strategy in a Chatham House Rules environment, and network with strategic leaders across the sector. [Secure your place](#)

Employability Symposium 2020: Breaking the mould

This event is being rescheduled for 15 September 2020 York

The Employability Symposium 2020 wants to explore how HE providers are focusing on the shifts in current and focus on graduate level outcomes by the OfS: to work in new ways, to collaborate, to provide fuller foundations for continuous learning and ultimately to provide a long-term commitment to ensuring students succeed and maximise their chances of chosen progression, in particular towards employment. [Secure your place](#)

Student Retention and Success Symposium: Examining the role of mental wellbeing in the curriculum and university

This event is being rescheduled for 16 September 2020 York

The theme of this year's Student Retention and Success Symposium is mental wellbeing in the curriculum and university. We are delighted to announce that Dr Michelle Morgan will deliver an opening keynote on the day. Michelle is extensively published in the area of supporting student diversity and improving the student learning experience at undergraduate and postgraduate taught level in, through and out of the student study journey. [Secure your place](#)

Dates for your diary

Programmes

All upcoming programmes may be affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Whilst booking will remain open for programmes, upcoming modules may be rescheduled for later in the year. [Please refer to our COVID-19 updates page for more information and updates.](#)

Senior Women's Leadership Development Programme

Booking deadline: 14 April 2020

Advance HE's Senior Women's Leadership Development Programme (formerly Leadership Matters) is one of our women-only programmes designed specifically for women in senior positions in HE to help them take the next step up or extend their role, profile and impact. It aims to create more gender parity in senior leadership within higher education.

Gill Ball, formerly the Director of Finance at the University of Birmingham and a member of the University Executive Board, presents the finance sections of the Senior Women's Leadership Development Programme (SWLDP). In this [blog](#), Gill explains her career path and why finance is a key component of the SWLDP. [Find out more about the programme](#)

Research Team Leadership

Booking deadline: 30 April 2020

The programme allows participants to reflect upon their personal vision for their research career in terms of the role of a Research Team Leader. They will review what it means to take on a team leadership role, how to engage in team working and team building, and practice relevant key leadership skills such as listening. [Book your place](#)

Strategic Leadership Programme

Booking deadline: 21 April 2020

The programme develops the practical tools and insight required to successfully lead within a senior team, working collaboratively across and outside the organisation. It will prepare you for the necessary step-change in thinking required when aiming for the Senior Management Team in the near future. Book

For more information and updates on all forthcoming conferences, programmes and events please visit:
www.advance-he.ac.uk/programmes-events