

GuildHE Strategy
to 2020



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.

As a formal representative body, the Government consults GuildHE on higher education policies. GuildHE promotes and maintains a distinctive, diverse and inclusive higher education sector in the UK, and articulates its benefits to students, employers and wider society.

GuildHE co-owns much of the sector’s infrastructure - the bodies that assure high quality teaching, provide accurate data on performance, promote equality, leadership, good governance and professional development, support effective workforce strategies and excellent information systems; support fair university admissions; and encourage effective transitions into employment.

Purpose

GuildHE’s primary purpose is to support its members to achieve their aims and objectives. GuildHE’s staff and members work in a close and collegial way to achieve this purpose and to do so efficiently and effectively. GuildHE operates in four main spheres:

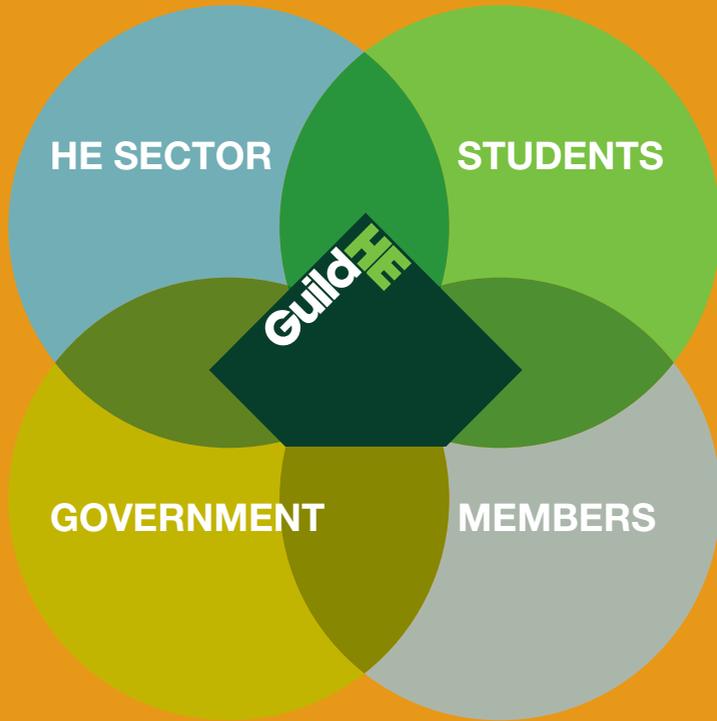
WITH MEMBERS: interacting through high quality political intelligence and briefing; direct support; and through networks that allow members and their staff to share and gain from each other’s experience and to shape and influence national policy positions.

WITH THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR: interacting through governance, co-ownership, and co-regulation. GuildHE nominates member Vice Chancellors and Principals to the governing bodies of the QAA, HESA, the Higher Education Academy, the Equality Challenge Unit, the OIA, JISC, Graduate Prospects, the Higher Education Careers Services Unit, the Universities and Colleges Employers Association, and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

WITH STUDENTS: interacting through consultation and joint work with members, their students, students’ unions and NUS to celebrate and promote student engagement in institutions.

WITH GOVERNMENT: interacting through lobbying, research and policy influence; by developing collective policy positions in response to consultations; and through co-regulation and sector reform.





Aims

Our strategic aims in these spheres are:

GuildHE MEMBERS: Provide an excellent service for our members.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR: Work with our members to support an effective infrastructure for UK higher education

STUDENTS: Promote excellent student engagement, experience and outcomes as the heart of a quality UK HE sector.

GOVERNMENT: Inform and influence UK higher education policy and practice.

We will only be able to meet these strategic aims if we use our resources effectively and are good at what we do. So there is an underpinning, fifth strategic aim:

Be an intelligent, flexible and responsive organisation.

By 2020, we want to see a sector that is more distinctive, more diverse, more inclusive and stronger as a result. The diversity of UK higher education nurtures innovation and creativity. It means more choice for students and for graduate employers and more opportunities to reach out to new learners. It encourages healthy competition, fresh approaches to research, different ways of engaging with business and industries and new ways of enriching the social, economic and cultural prosperity of life in the UK's communities and regions. Diversity is key to excellence.

These aims provide the overarching framework within which GuildHE's annual activities will be planned, and its effectiveness monitored.

Member institutions

GuildHE members are autonomous institutions, each with a distinctive mission and priorities. Together, they provide a dynamic and diverse contribution to UK higher education, nurturing innovation and creativity and providing more choice for students and for graduate employers.

GuildHE members comprise multi-faculty institutions, often with particular specialisms; highly specialised subject-specific institutions; further education colleges providing higher education; and institutions with a particular ethos and focus, whether delivering part-time courses or celebrating their religious roots. Members include universities, university colleges, further education colleges and specialist institutions from both the HEFCE funded and private (“for profit” and “not for profit”) sectors. Many are global organisations engaged in significant partnerships, world leading research and successfully attracting talented international students.

Member institutions include some major providers in professional subject areas including art, design and media, music and the performing arts; agriculture and food; education; maritime; health and sports. 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 arts and crafts. These include specialist institutions and those founded by the churches.

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

AMBITION – members aspire to, and achieve, taught and research degree awarding powers and university or university college title. Or they want to establish themselves and grow - just as some have long histories, others were founded in the last twenty years.

Students

This diversity and dynamism plays an important part in the outstanding strength, reputation and international competitiveness of the UK higher education system as a whole. Analysis of the annual research survey for new undergraduate students, Higher Expectations, suggests that, in comparison with other university groupings, GuildHE students are independent, single minded and focused and are more likely to:

Search for a specific course and choose a university for that reason.

Explore assessment/teaching methods and be influenced by good teaching.

Be influenced by the application process and the communications they receive.

Rate their university experience to date as excellent.

Have had their course expectations met or exceeded.

GuildHE students expect responsive, informed, career relevant higher education. The HEPI 2015 Student Academic Experience Survey showed that GuildHE students were much more likely than students as a whole to rate “having relevant industry or professional experience” as the most important characteristic of teaching staff. Asked about the overall quality of their course, they were much more likely to be “very satisfied” and were also more likely to rate their teaching staff positively for giving feedback and putting a lot of time into commenting on their work.



Values and behaviours

GuildHE’s values and behaviours are those of its members.

Our:

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- Approach is welcoming, well informed and dynamic**
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- Values are ethical, inclusive, resilient and sustainable**
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- Behaviours are thoughtful, creative, collaborative, influential and with high impact for our size**
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- Voice is measured and distinctive**
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Priorities for GuildHE

Our priorities reflect the views of our members and our understanding of the wider policy and political landscape.

The views of our members

Members told us key priorities should be GuildHE’s engagement with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and how it can improve student outcomes and the future of the QAA framework. Reforming the Home Office visa system and highly trusted status was also key including lobbying to remove students from net migration targets.

They said we should reinforce the importance of diversity in the HE sector, particularly by reflecting the views of students about wanting genuine choice in the type, size and setting of institutions. They were concerned about government funding and the risk of further cuts to teaching grant in the Spending Review. Members said we should focus on regulation (and de-regulation), particularly how changes to the regulatory landscape can help promote diversity of the HE sector and treat different types of institutions consistently; and enhance the quality of student experiences and outcomes.

Members said we should take a pro-active and externally visible approach to reform and challenge.

The external landscape

There are a number of challenges and opportunities over the next five years for GuildHE and its members. The Government has set out an ambitious policy agenda in Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice to:

Introduce the TEF to create a fundamental shift in culture so that teaching has equal status with research and that students are well equipped to contribute to society and to enter the world of work. Recent industry or professional experience is a hallmark of the staff in many GuildHE member institutions.

Double the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university by 2020, compared to 2009 levels and see a 20% increase in the numbers of black and minority ethnic students. There is strong evidence that GuildHE members do particularly well at adding value to the life chances of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Continue to open up the higher education market to new providers and put in place a new regulatory framework.



Operational priorities

Government is also committed to:

Supporting 3 million apprenticeships by 2020 and introducing a levy on larger employers.

Reducing net migration by placing stricter conditions on visas, including for genuine international students.

The 2015 Spending Review made loans available to more part time and postgraduate students and protected science funding in real terms. But it required significant savings. Student maintenance grants were replaced by loans, as was some Innovate UK funding, and there were further cuts to HEFCE teaching grant. The value of the student loan repayment threshold has been frozen, hitting lower and middle earning graduates the hardest. Grants for nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students will be replaced with loans and the cap on places lifted.

Finally, continuing devolution increasingly differentiates the policy landscape for higher education institutions in the constituent countries of the UK.

Our priorities are:

Influencing the development of the TEF and decisions about the future of Quality Assurance.

Highlighting the importance of a diverse, internationally successful higher education sector.

Influencing thinking on the future regulation of higher education and the possible introduction of a HE Bill.

Making the case for the positive economic, cultural, social and “soft power” contribution international students make to the UK.

Making the case for a properly funded higher education system that allows diverse institutions to thrive.

Championing the role of higher education as close partners with industries delivering high quality, work relevant, high level skills and professional education.

Communications

GuildHE’s priorities will drive our communications strategy. GuildHE’s aims, ambitions 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 and a joint leader of official sector bodies.

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 which are key to the economy.

Demonstrating the importance and value of excellent research wherever it is found.



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