Welcome to the May 2023 in partnership

Welcome to this month’s In Partnership. This month we publish the results from the inaugural Leadership Survey, which was launched in late 2022.

Focus
We publish the report from the groundbreaking Leadership Survey, which surveyed academics and professional service staff across the world on their experience of leadership in HE.

Dates for your diary
We look forward to all the upcoming member benefit events as well as our other programmes and events as we approach conference season.

Member benefits
We launch a new member project looking at academic leadership which aims to review institutional current and emerging practices with the intention of learning and sharing among our members.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
We launch a consultation with the sector to explore ways to more explicitly embed freedom of speech in the Advance HE Equality Charters and publish the Disabled Student Commitment by the Disabled Students’ Commission.

International Spotlight
We look forward to a series of round table events focusing on the challenges facing higher education in Ireland and publish a report on academic leadership in Australia and New Zealand.

New content and publications
We share news and content from Advance HE and across the sector.

As always we welcome your feedback. Please contact your Head of Membership or email memberships@advance-he.ac.uk with any ideas or content you would like featured.
Advance HE publishes its Leadership Survey results

The Advance HE Leadership Survey project for higher education was established to pose the question ‘What works for higher education leadership?’ with long-term objectives of generating a unique evidence base for leadership in HE and supporting organisations in designing, developing, and nurturing their leadership capacity.

To inform and shape the survey itself, Advance HE commissioned a comprehensive, year-long, scoping study, undertaken by an independent research team, with strong expertise in the field of higher education leadership at the Universities of Bristol and the University of the West of England. A separate literature review was also commissioned; as was a robust approach to global engagement via a series of roundtables. Our aim was to provide a strong, contemporary and conceptual basis for the survey, and to inform detailed survey design.

The survey report is based on responses from more than 530 leaders HE leaders from around the world at all levels of leadership experience. They were asked to respond through the perspective of their own leadership (‘Leading’) and their experience of leadership in their organisation (‘Being led’) – a deliberate comparison between how respondents see things as leaders and their experience as followers.

Among the key findings were:

- **Leadership attributes**: Leaders rated the level of their own skill and experience in all attributes to be much higher than the extent to which they felt leaders in general were supported and empowered to demonstrate those same attributes. For example, leaders rated themselves highly on including colleagues in decision-making (88%), but this is one of the lowest rated attributes from an institutional perspective, with less than 1 in 4 (39%) feeling all leaders are empowered to include colleagues in decision making.

- **Leadership in context**: Leaders rate their own understanding in many areas much higher than the understanding of leaders more generally in their organisation: Communications (Leading 91%, Being led 46%); Enabling change (87% and 40%); Team development (83% and 37%).

- **Time to reflect**: By far the majority of perspective those Leading (76%) and those Being led (77%) highlighted that ‘time to reflect on your leadership practice and impact’ was ‘very important’. However, when asked to score ‘I have time to reflect on my leadership role – daily’ only 11% and mid-level academics and 7% professional service agreed, in contrast to 32% of Executive level academics and 28% of dual role Academic and professional services roles.

- **Development opportunities**: 58% ‘definitely and mostly agree’ that they are provided opportunities to develop leadership skills and competencies; 42% of respondents did not agree (neutral or disagree).

- **Values**: When asked, ‘(Leading) To what extent do your institution’s values influence your approach to leadership?’, 35% of those working in institutions with a published set of values reported ‘very much’ and 47% ‘somewhat’; with 14% ‘not very’ and 5% ‘not at all.

Similarly, when asked, ‘(Being led) To what extent are your institution’s stated values reflected in the approach to leadership in the organisation?’ 22% reported ‘very much’; 49% ‘somewhat’; 21% ‘not very’ and 8% ‘not at all’

- **Effective Leadership Qualities**: Respondees were in broad agreement of the importance of a number of leadership qualities, with most seeing their own capabilities more positively than others from a being led perspective: Adaptable (Leading 53%, Being led, 10%); Collaborative (58% and 10%); Self-reflective (53% and 5%); Compassionate (58% and 9%).

Alison Johns, Advance HE Chief Executive, said, “As this report reiterates, leadership is not the domain of ‘the few’, it is a core role of ‘the many’ in higher education and this report will help us at Advance HE and colleagues in the sector in our vital work to nurture, develop and encourage effective leadership at all levels, across the full range of diverse talents available.

We will ensure that the survey findings inform our own practice in working with leaders and institutions in the field of leadership and across all our expert domains whether that be education, EDI, or governance. Evidence is key in supporting this work. We are committed to running the survey again, expanding its reach and efficacy as an important landmark for developing leaders and a barometer of leadership in higher education, and we will continue this important work to explore ‘what works’ in higher education leadership.”

Read more and download the report here.
Dates for the diary

Member benefit events

**Good Campus Relations and Freedom of Speech**

Webinar – Building inclusive campus communities: Exploring good relations and freedom of speech – 15 June 2023 14.00-16.00 BST

Part of the Good Campus Relations and Freedom of Speech member project, this webinar aims to explore how HEIs can protect and promote diversity of thought, academic enquiry and freedom of expression whilst simultaneously fostering an environment of respect, support and inclusion for students and staff. Find out more and book your place.

**International Higher Education**


This practice-oriented session brings together a range of leaders to talk openly and frankly about the opportunities and the challenges that building international partnerships bring. Find out more.

**Governance Effectiveness Projects**

Academic Governance Dissemination Event – 25 May 2023 09.30 – 11.00 BST

In March, Advance HE, Universities UK, Guild HE, and the Committee of University Chairs held three roundtables with Governance professionals, Senate and Student representatives, and Chairs and Deputies of Audit and Risk Committees to examine approaches to academic governance and assurance. Find out more.
Dates for the diary

Conferences + Events

- Mental Wellbeing in HE Conference 2023: Putting theory into practice – Creating a whole university approach to student and staff wellbeing – 16 May 2023, Mercure Hotel, Manchester
  Find out more.
- Gender in HE Conference 2023 – 25 May 2023, Mercure Hotel, Bristol Holland House
  Find out more.
- Student Retention and Success Symposium 2023: The Cost of Student Poverty – 1 June 2023, The Studio, Leeds
  Find out more.
- Sustainability Conference 2023 – 7 June 2023, London
  Find out more.
- Flexible Learning Symposium 2023: Co-creating a flexible learning model – 14 June 2023, The Studio Leeds
  Find out more.
- Teaching and Learning Conference 2023 – 4-6 July 2023, Keele University
  Find out more.

Programmes

- Research Team Leadership 3 – 25-26 May 2023, Virtual
  Find out more.
- Inclusive Leadership 2 – 8-22 June 2023, Virtual
  Find out more.
- Fellowship Application Builder (FAB) June 2023 – 12 June – 24 July 2023, Virtual
  Find out more.
- Preparing for Senior Strategic Leadership 37 – 20-23 June 2023, Venue tbc
  Find out more.
The quality of leadership itself and it comes at a premium. Differentiating factors in organisational and team success is a struggle to thrive. Arguably, one of the biggest without successful leadership, organisations themselves underpin the realisation of that vision. Commitment to some commonly held principles that develop a shared vision of what good is and a emotional and a deeply moral level. It requires the sometimes thousands of people on both a rational, involving multilayered connectivity among tens, hundreds, or more. Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex relationship between people based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good.” Joanne Ciulla (Author & Educator)

Being a leader is much more than having a leadership title, suggests Joanne Ciulla. Leadership is interactive and involves multilayered connectivity among tens, hundreds, or even thousands of people on both a rational, emotional and a deeply moral level. It requires the development of a shared vision of what good is and a commitment to some commonly held principles that underpin the realisation of that vision.

Without successful leadership, organisations themselves struggle to thrive. Arguably, one of the biggest differentiating factors in organisational and team success is the quality of leadership itself and it comes at a premium.

Across all sectors, leadership “remains the No. 1 talent issue facing organizations around the world” (Schwartz et al., 2014).

The future of leadership in higher education is particularly relevant at this time where we find ourselves at a crossroads during a time of profound challenge and change. Our institutions require great leadership to plan, organise, coordinate, motivate and inspire in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Increasingly, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are seeking to identify effective, agile and multi-skilled approaches to deliver to enable and support academic leadership.

In light of this, as HE/FE finds itself once again at the nexus of profound change, we invite your collaboration in this research which will enable us to deepen our collective understanding and expectations of academic leadership across the sector.

Advance HE, in collaboration with Universities Human Resources (UHR), is looking to hold a cross-sector conversation about academic leadership, exploring both where we are now and where we might want to be in the future.

In referencing academic leadership, we mean to include everyone involved in leading teaching, learning and research including any hybrid of these functions. Inevitably, many questions will arise from these parameters which we will seek to address and clarify as we progress our research.

We would like to both learn and share among our members more about the multiple approaches in the sector to identifying, developing, supporting and retaining academic leaders. We believe it would be valuable to explore some of the following questions across a variety of institutions:

What do we mean by leadership? Do we have a shared frame of reference for leadership within our institution? And across our sector? How does context shape our leadership requirements? Do we make a distinction between leadership and management? If not, should we? What are the aspects of academic leadership that require our particular attention right now? What do we mean when we speak of talent? Are we endeavouring to build a talent pipeline for academic leadership? If so, how? Where do we encounter constraints and limitations to our endeavours? How might we overcome these?

The objectives of this research project will be to gather examples of steps that institutions, large or small, are taking to develop sustainable leadership among their academic cadre and to clearly articulate both the opportunities and challenges involved.

There are interesting and critical debates to be had. To what extent and in what mix is leadership ‘a person, a position, a process, a dynamic set of relationships or a fluid interplay of social influence’ (Grint et al., 2016)? Critical to our understanding will also be the need to explore the impact of wider organisational and external systems on leadership behaviours.

And what of the position of current academic leaders themselves? Those who find themselves in the hot seat of leadership responsibility may sometimes feel ill-equipped for the burdens and pressures that come with it.

Academic staff who hold leadership positions work in environments of high stakes, high visibility and high expectations. They must balance tensions between competition and collaboration, often even within a single institution.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Sector consultation about Equality Charters and Freedom of Speech

Advance HE is opening a consultation to explore how freedom of speech and academic freedom can be more explicitly embedded in the Athena Swan and Race Equality Charters.

Advance HE will hold a series of roundtable discussions and invite responses to a stakeholder survey. The insights will inform Advance HE’s approach to supporting members in their use of the Charters to promote inclusive institutions, complementing our consultation on the legal obligations of the Charters in meeting regulatory requirements.

David Bass, Advance HE Director of EDI, said, “Freedom of speech and academic freedom are core values in higher education. Equality Charters complement these values as they help promote the voices of all, including those who may have previously lacked the opportunity to engage. It’s really important that this mutually supporting relationship is explicit and reinforced in the EDI Charters.

“We look forward to welcoming Vice-Chancellors, university administrators, Charters and EDI practitioners, and other colleagues who have oversight and responsibility for their institution’s EDI and freedom of speech activity.”

The roundtables follow our work with Universities UK and GuildHE last year which led to a joint sector statement and commitment by UUK, GuildHE, Advance HE, the National Union of Students (NUS) and CUC (Committee of University Chairs) on promoting academic freedom and freedom of speech, shared in December 2022.

Disabled Student Commitment launched

Calls for the higher education sector to make the step-change required to create a more inclusive environment are set out in the Disabled Student Commitment.

Developed by the Disabled Students’ Commission, the independent and strategic group funded by the Office for Students, the Commitment aims to secure an enhanced and improved experience for disabled students within higher education.

Professor Geoff Layer, chair of the Disabled Students’ Commission, said, “We have developed this Commitment because disabled students have told us they want communication, consistency, certainty and choice.

“The Commitment is a call to the sector and sector bodies to make the step-change required to create a more inclusive environment.”

Prof Layer said the Commission was asking providers to work in partnership with their disabled students on a statement of commitment which should be updated annually and published on their website, alongside a logo of the Disabled Student Commitment so that disabled students and applicants have confidence in the system, allowing them to get on with their education.

He said, “We need to create a sense of belonging in which students are able to focus on what they went into higher education for, and not spend untold hours fighting their way through the system.” Read more here.

De Montfort University is the first higher education institution recognised with a Race Equality Charter Silver Award

De Montfort University (DMU) has become the first higher education institution in the UK to achieve a Silver Award through the Race Equality Charter.

An independent panel of assessors in the higher education sector found that DMU had made a significant impact in addressing inequality and promoting race equality across the whole institution. The panel also concluded that DMU had shown strong leadership in promoting the principles of the Race Equality Charter and cited examples of initiatives it had delivered that had brought a transformational change for its Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and students. These included developing strong engagement with staff, students, departments and local communities to create a truly inclusive environment. Read more here.

Find out more and register your interest in joining the consultation here.

Read more here.
Roundtable events explore big issues facing Irish Higher Education sector

Advance HE offers members the chance to get updates from subject experts in series of live, online events.

Advance HE is to host a series of round table events focusing on the challenges facing Higher Education in Ireland.

The online meetings will be open to Advance HE members and are being convened by Advance HE’s Head of Membership in Ireland, Tonya Watts.

“The Higher Education sector faces challenges on a range of fronts,” she said.

“The purpose of these events is to give our members updates from Advance HE’s subject experts on some of the key issues, such as the Higher Education Authority Bill and Gender Pay Gap reporting, and to listen to our members’ feedback and their views about where they feel we should most target our support.

“Advance HE is a sector-led charity and our role is to help Higher Education institutions and professionals across the globe to be the best they can be.

“That means giving academics and Higher Education professionals impactful opportunities for learning, both from our own experts and from each other. We will be listening carefully to members’ concerns and developing packages of support and learning in response.”

Tonya will be hosting this series of four Roundtables on key themes in late May:

+ Teaching and Learning Roundtable – Friday 19 May 2023, 12 noon to 1.30pm – Register Here
+ Leadership Roundtable – Monday 22 May, 10am to 11.30am – Register Here
+ EDI Roundtable – Monday 22 May, 2pm to 3.30pm – Register Here
+ Governance Roundtable – Tuesday 23 May, 10am to 11.30am – Register Here

For more information please contact Tonya Watts, Head of Membership for Ireland.

Leadership and management development: what do the Australian and New Zealand Higher Education sectors want and need?

Following conversations with 20 respondents in a variety of roles across 18 organisations, this report provides a brief overview of leadership and management and its development in the higher education (HE) sector in Australia and New Zealand.

The conversations highlight opportunities for developing leadership and management to address the ongoing concerns of the sector around sustainability – fiscal, social and most urgently, of workforce, specifically the need to engage and energise wearied and jaded staff; and create more equitable, culturally welcoming workplaces.

A range of leadership and management development topics and capability areas are suggested. These aim to bring academics and professionals closer in their understanding, language and approaches to leading and managing complex, multi-faceted universities that both achieve social good and are good businesses.

Download the report here:
Academic governance in the ultra-intelligent university
Elizabeth Cleaver and John Sumpter challenge you to reflect on your academic governance purposes, processes, structures, terms of reference and support.

How to boost engagement to offer the ‘best possible experience’ to students
More than 140 academics and HE staff explored ways of making campuses more attractive to students at Advance HE’s first-ever in-person Student Engagement Conference.

Mental wellbeing in HE: translating strategy into action
Advance HE’s Mental Wellbeing in HE Conference returns for a third year, continuing the important discussion around issues of mental wellbeing across all aspects of higher education.

The green campus: supporting institutions to make meaningful progress in sustainability
Smita Jamdar, Partner and Head of Education at Shakespeare Martineau, discusses why supporting Advance HE’s inaugural Sustainability Conference is an obvious step for a leading full-service UK law firm.

Prioritising positive mental health and wellbeing in higher education
Ahead of the Advance HE 2023 Mental Wellbeing in HE Conference, Professor Bridgette Bewick shares her thoughts on why it’s more important than ever that we put theory into practice and commit to a whole university approach to student and staff wellbeing.

The power of reflective diaries as an evaluation tool
Dr Hannah Griffin-James says, “reflective practice is an essential part of professional training, as it facilitates the linking between theory and practice and empowers learners to seek reasons behind their practices and beliefs.”

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