

in  
partnership

December 2023

in this issue...

Keeping our  
members updated  
with the latest from  
Advance HE

# Welcome to the December 2023 *in partnership*

Welcome to this month's In Partnership. As 2023 comes to a close, we look ahead to new grant opportunities coming in early 2024 and launch new videos on thought leadership and the impact of NTFS and CATE. Plus, look out for a new look In Partnership in 2024.

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We launch our new DVC Dialogues series, bringing together senior university leaders to explore the issues impacting their institutions. The first two episodes discuss AI in HE.		We publish the latest 'Equality in higher education: statistical reports' and publish the final article in our series of three long read leadership pieces on academic freedom and freedom of speech.	
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We look forward to the exciting programmes and events taking place in the next few weeks.		We look back on this year's Governance Conference and the opening keynote from Julia Gillard, former prime minister of Australia.	
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As always we welcome your feedback. Please contact your Head of Membership or email [memberships@advance-he.ac.uk](mailto:memberships@advance-he.ac.uk) with any ideas or content you would like featured.

# New thought leadership series launched

DVC Dialogues bring together Deputy Vice-Chancellors and other senior university leaders from across the globe to discuss the issues impacting their institutions, staff and students.

Created to respond to our members need to come together to discuss the key issues facing the sector, each episode teases out opinion on a different topic that is shaping practice, challenging leaders and impacting students and staff.

Throughout the series, you will hear from global university leaders who represent different parts of the wider sector across eight different episodes.

The series kicks off with two episodes exploring Generative AI. Thank you to Professor David Sadler, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education at the University of Western Australia and Professor Osama Khan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic at Aston University for joining us with an in-depth consideration of the current challenges and future opportunities.

The first episode discusses the sector's reaction to AI, and the immediate challenges the new technology has raised in their institutions, while the second explore what comes next for AI in the higher education sector, and how institutions can use the new technology whilst maintaining academic integrity.



[Watch the first two episodes:](#)



## DVC Dialogues

Episode One - AI: Current challenges



### **Generative AI: Beyond Assessment**

This member project for 2023-24 takes us beyond current debates on AI and assessment to consider in-depth other ways the technology will impact higher education and the communities they serve.

The big challenge for higher education concerning AI is not simply what changes it will bring but the speed at which it will happen. How can we prepare our students for the future of work and society in the age of AI, and how do we remain 'fit for purpose'?

We have seen considerable concentration on assessment in higher education over the last year, but we must widen the conversation. We need to focus on employability, and ensuring that our students can find jobs and giving them the skills to adapt to a quickly changing world.

[Find out more here](#)

## Dates for your diary

## Member benefit events

### Generative AI: Beyond Assessment – The Strategic Vision

**Thursday 14 December, 11:00am – 12:00pm**

These roundtables are invite-only. This session is for senior leaders from Deans upwards. If you have a person who may want to attend, please contact your membership contact.

### Leading Digital Transformation Roundtable 1

**Wednesday 17 January 2024 – 7:00 – 8:30am GMT**

Calling all leaders within Teaching and Learning – are you grappling with some of the challenges that digital change has brought to your institution? This roundtable will focus on best practices in leading digital change and highlight the impact of digital investment. This session is for senior leaders including PVCs/DVCs, Deans and Heads of School or department.

[Find out more](#)

### Supporting Inclusive Boards – What Have We Learned

**Thursday 18 January 2024 – 1:00 2:30pm**

Kim Ansell and Tesse Akpeki share challenges and learning from two Supporting Inclusive Boards programmes which have been part of our member benefit offers in the previous two years. They will ask what next and engage the audience in discussion groups to share learning and good practice.

[Find out more](#)

Advance HE members are also able to take advantage of a discount on all of our paid-for programmes, conferences and events and consultancy.

## Conferences + Events

### EDI Statistical Report Dissemination webinar

**Thursday 14 December, 09:30 – 10:30am GMT**

Open to all, this is an opportunity to learn more about the data from this year's report in detail.

[Find out more](#)

### Students as Co-creators Symposium 2024: 'What works?'

**31 January 2024 – Virtual**

[Find out more](#)

### Mental Wellbeing in HE Conference 2024: Better than rocket science! "Futureproofing" student and staff wellbeing

**15 May 2024, Horizon Leeds**

Call for proposals are open, deadline for submissions: 19 January 2024.

[Find out more](#)

## Programmes

### Inclusive Engagement (Series 1)

**10 January 2024 – 24 January 2024 – Virtual**

[Find out more](#)

### Diversifying Leadership Birmingham (20)

**15 January 2023 – 02 May 2023 – Hybrid (face-to-face venue tbc)**

[Find out more](#)

### Enhancing Programme Leadership 2

**18 January 2024 – 21 March 2024 – Virtual**

[Find out more](#)

# Member benefits and opportunities

## New 'Innovative Practice Grant' scheme to launch in 2024 for UK-based CBHE and SSI members

Advance HE's new Innovative Practice Grants are designed to support our Small, Specialist, Independent and College-Based HE members from within the UK in sharing good practice and impactful initiatives, through small grant funding for case studies.

Sharing good practice and learning from each other is a cornerstone of the *support* we provide for our member institutions. Through funding small case studies, our Innovative Practice Grants are an opportunity for our Small, Specialist, Independent and College-Based HE members to share success stories about higher education projects that have had a demonstrable impact on their staff or students.

Grants of £500 will be awarded to successful applicants from Advance HE Small, Specialist, independent and College-Based HE member institutions to provide short case studies of recent practice (750-1000 words) that align to one of three themes:

Applications will open in the new year and more information will appear in January's edition of In Partnership.

[Find out more and register your interest.](#)

 [Read more](#)

## What else is going in Member benefits

### AI Garage case studies

Explore the latest projects from across the global sector and submit your own. [Find out more here.](#)

### Leading Digital Transformation Roundtables

Two roundtable events running in January and February will bring together thought leaders in HE learning and teaching to explore best practices in leading digital change, review and discuss relevant outputs from the sector, discuss current strategic priorities, highlight the impact of digital investment, and explore the challenges and opportunities of talent recruitment. [Find out more](#)

### Envision-ED Tweetchat

You might have missed the Envision-ED Tweetchat on 29 November. Use the hashtag [#LTHEChat](#) to read up.

### NTFS/CATE Awards 2023

We created a video celebrating our award winners and the impact of the awards themselves on the wider sector. Thank you to everyone who participated.

[Watch now](#)



# Learning and Teaching

## Largest annual survey shines a light on satisfaction rates among postgraduate researchers in the sector

Advance HE report shows improvements in key elements of research culture though new evidence highlights the gap in the sense of belonging

Eight out of ten postgraduate researchers express overall satisfaction with their experience at their institution, says a report out today from Advance HE.

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2023 highlights a range of improvements in satisfaction in key measures of institutions' research culture.

However, overall satisfaction rates with the postgraduate research experience fell marginally from 80% in 2022 to 79% this year – reflecting that levels of satisfaction are trending lower from 82 per cent in 2013 to 79 per cent in 2023.

PRES is the largest annual survey of its kind in the sector and this year it drew from more than 37,000 responses from 105 institutions – including four in Australia.

It also showed:

- + Researchers working mostly or completely online were less satisfied than those who worked mostly or completely in-person.
- + Researchers from different ethnicities expressed differing levels of satisfaction, with White students the most satisfied in 2023 in comparison to 2019 when Asian students were the most satisfied.
- + The largest gaps in satisfaction between ethnicities focused around the opportunities provided for development activity with Black students a lot less likely to have been offered (or taken up) teaching experience and other development opportunities.

- + Researchers with a disability continued to be less satisfied with their overall experience.
- + Among those considering leaving, cost of living is an increasingly important factor in how they view their challenges.

A new question this year explores 'Satisfaction with elements of Community'. This reveals relatively low scores and is one of the aspects that PGRs would most like to see changed or improved. The report shows 62% 'feel a sense of belonging at my institution' and only 57% 'feel part of a community of PGRs'. Female PGRs in particular were less likely to feel they were part of a community of PGRs.

Jonathan Neves, Head of Business Intelligence and Surveys at Advance HE, said, "The primary purpose of PRES is to offer insights that help drive enhancement, such as the now question on 'community' leading to evidence-informed change. I am delighted that so many UK institutions continue to take part so that they have data to help enhance their PGR offer. I am also very pleased to welcome institutions in Australia who have participated this year for the first time. They will now be in a position to benchmark their performance.

"It is positive to see nearly four out of five PGRs satisfied with their experience and there is encouraging feedback about research. But we should note that this is not for all groups. Institutions will also wish to explore why some – females and minority groups, in particular – are experiencing lower levels of satisfaction and at the same time to look at ways to address a gradual fall in satisfaction over time."



[Read the full report and summary here](#)

## Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

The Advance HE Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is the largest survey of its kind, and this year was the largest survey of taught postgraduate students since 2018 due to the disruption caused by Covid-19.

Nearly 84,000 taught postgraduate students from across 101 higher education institutions took part in the survey, which allows taught postgraduate students to give feedback about learning, teaching and other aspects of their courses, informing enhancement across the sector.

[Find out more](#)



## Planning on using the festive break to apply for a fellowship against the UKPSF 2011?

If you are preparing an application against the UKPSF 2011, you MUST submit this by [31 December 2023](#). You must ensure that your application only references UKPSF 2011 Dimensions and Descriptors. You can find relevant guidance documents and templates on [this web page](#).

## Accreditation Calibration Sessions

We are running a series of calibration sessions across each fellowship category for PSF 2023 in February and March 2024. Find out more and book via the Accredited Programme Leader Network (APLN): [Events | Advance HE Connect \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](#)

# Leadership and Management

## Leading with love: authenticity, vulnerability and compassion in contemporary HE

*Dr Jenny Lawrence, Director of the Oxford Brookes Centre for Academic Enhancement and Development, reflects on the rigours of compassionate leadership in HE and considers how the Global Leadership Framework might be useful to leaders in the Professional Services.*

Easing the tension between taking care of our teams' wellbeing and meeting the increasing demands of a fast-paced and competitive sector calls for compassionate leadership. In HE's prestige economy this presents a particular challenge for third space professionals. When research profiles trump educational leadership or professional service in power and esteem third space professionals must resolve to lead with love.

### Values

Working in HE was challenging before the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent economic and political tensions have only intensified the demands on the sector and those of us that work in HE. Leading a team of hard-working often depleted and so vulnerable colleagues can be isolating and emotionally demanding. Reminding ourselves of and remaining true to the purpose and values of HE, of the import role HE plays in social, cultural and political critique and, ultimately, progress for the common good, is comforting and gives strength to the isolated and equally depleted leader. Remaining true to the values of HE insists on values-driven leadership and applying the same critique to our practices, policies and processes as we expect our graduate citizens to apply to society.

### Kindness and compassion

Kindness and compassion are important in values-driven leadership (Denney, 2020). Yet caring for the individuals

that make up our teams, questioning the challenges they face and acting to improve their working situation isn't easy in the volatile context we find ourselves in. We are politically and financially squeezed, the policy landscape can seem contradictory and media scrutiny of HE is irresponsible if not unkind. Meeting external stakeholder performance and productivity expectations whilst promoting and protecting a diverse, depleted team is fraught with emotional and intellectual contradictions and logistical tension.

### Honesty

Honest communication between individuals, teams and leaders is crucial: does everyone involved understand what we're doing and why? What can be realistically achieved and when? When under duress it's easy to misremember, misunderstand or just miss important communications. How might we ensure that having issued a message, written a strategy or constructed an operational plan, our mission and capacity is fully understood? To continually revisit, revise and remind ourselves and our teams of our mission means, as leaders, accepting a little dejavu in every meeting.

Being open about the challenges we, as leaders, face in balancing what must vs what can be done speaks of authenticity and is, I think, at the heart of good leadership. It is in authenticity that we inspire the trust of our communities: both the teams we serve and the senates or councils we answered to.

### Authenticity

Authentic leadership brings our whole selves into the professional frame. The murky mechanisms of unconscious bias, however, makes a mess of meritocracy in the academy: our personal characteristics and, for professional service staff, position in HE's esteem economy, might temper our standing and interrupt our power to protect our teams and so potentially compromise our confidence. As a working class,

disabled woman I have, at times, been tempted to adopt a more assertive leadership style, hide my walking aid and deny the difficulties these things present. This would be denying an epistemic privileged useful to my role: I am radically open to the many ways a diverse workforce might effectively serve a learning community. However, it is difficult to support a fragile and exhausted team if we are feeling a bit that way ourselves.

### Vulnerability

A question to consider then is how far can we, should we, lead with vulnerability? Is it possible to lead with vulnerability at the same time strength and dignity? Wiser scholars than I make the case for this, acknowledging it takes great courage in practice (Brene Brown is popular for good reason).

### Love

Kindness with compassion, honesty, trust and authenticity: this sounds like leading with love. Love is a verb, it is something that we do. It is defined by mutual learning, acceptance, personal respect and professional regard. Isn't this the kind of relation we want to see in the work place?

[Read more](#)



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

## Equality in higher education: statistical reports 2023

Higher education staff and student reports present the data sets for the 2022-23 academic year.

Key headlines:

- + student mental health conditions are the fastest growing disability which is also mirrored in staff data
- + more than half of undergraduates and postgraduate research students are female, and there is evidence to suggest that this is slowly contributing to improved representation of female professors and Heads of Institution
- + narrowing of the ethnicity degree awarding gap has not been sustained, returning to pre-pandemic levels
- + the proportion of first degree undergraduates awarded a first or 2:1 has decreased
- + there has been a significant fall in the number of EU students in UK HE.

The 2023 equality statistical reports published today (15 November), cover staff and student data for the academic year 2021-22.

Advance HE has published the 16th year of national staff and student equality data to highlight opportunities and challenges regarding the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in UK higher education.

The two reports present a snapshot of staff and students' age, disability, ethnicity and sex, as well as a range of intersectional data to show how various identity characteristics interact in their relation to differential outcomes.

This year there are data to evidence that:

- + Since 2012/13, the proportion of students disclosing a mental health condition has increased from 1.1% of all students to 4.6% in 2021/22. This is by far the most rapidly increasing population of disabled students (compared with the rates of growth for other impairment types) and is mirrored in the proportion of staff disclosing a mental health condition (from 0.3% in 2012/13 to 1.1% in 2021/22).
- + Female representation amongst first degree undergraduate students (56.6%) and postgraduate researchers (51.3%) has continued to increase and there is evidence that this has contributed to small but noteworthy improvements in the representation of female academic staff (47.9%) and professors (29.7%), both of which are at a record high. Encouragingly, this trend appears to extend to female representation amongst Heads of Institutions, doubling from 35 women in 2012/13 (20.1%) to 70 women in 2021/22 (32.7%).
- + The narrowing of the ethnicity degree awarding gap from 10.8 percentage points to 9.0 percentage points between 2019/20 and 2020/21 has reversed – with the gap between the proportions of Black, Asian and minority ethnic qualifiers and White qualifiers awarded a 'good degree' returning to 10.7 percentage points in 2021/22.
- + While the population of students enrolled in UK HE continues to increase year-on-year, the growth recorded in 2021/22 is driven primarily by an increase in non-EU students in other undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. This contrasts a significant fall in the number of EU students in UK HE, falling from 151,310 students to 118,860 students (a reduction of 21.4%).

Amanda Aldercotte, Head of Knowledge and Research at Advance HE, said,

- “ This year's report highlights the need for the sector to harness existing data sources to inform how we support a growing population of staff and students with mental health concerns and address the persistent ethnicity degree awarding gap.
- “ We have the opportunity to draw insights from these statistics and use this information to reshape practice and ensure that everyone's journey is one of belonging and success.”

Read Amanda's blog, [How do we turn data into insights?](#), exploring how the sector can extract value from these annual statistical reports.

(There are infographic images available for this – depending on space, could we use in the order of the article).

[The full Students statistical report 2023 and Staff statistical report for 2023, along with a full set of infographics are available here](#)

### Freedom of Speech, Academic Freedom, EDI in higher education: Squaring the circle

In the third of our three-part series on academic freedom, freedom of speech and EDI, Professor David Ruebain, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Culture, Equality and Inclusion, University of Sussex, discusses the boundaries of 'free speech and its cousin, academic freedom'.

[Read the full piece](#)

# Governance

## Effective dialogue, diversity, data and challenge characterise the debate at our governance conference

Julia Gillard, Chair of Wellcome, and former prime minister of Australia, delivers the first keynote at our Governance Conference 2023: Navigating policy, politics and people.

Delegates with a range of governance responsibilities including, Chairs, governance professionals, students and lay governors, along with other senior leaders, attended Advance HE annual governance conference in London today (23 November).

Keynote speakers included Julia Gillard, Chair of Wellcome, and former prime minister of Australia, who spoke about governance principles of transparency, humility, networking and engagement. She drew on her experiences in Australian politics and in her current role with Wellcome.

Talking about ‘hope’ in a troubled world, she reminded delegates of the contribution of higher education and why their role as governors is so vital: “I think we can still find it (hope) in the very institutions that you in this room represent and to which you devote your hard work, thoughtfulness, and creativity.

“Each of you is connected to a place where the future is being made, where lives are being expanded, with the leaders, innovators, creators, carers, peers, activists, builders, and the list goes on, are being educated with new ideas with the capacity to transform human society, in ways big and small...”

In her keynote, Jane Hamilton, Chair of the Committee of University Chairs, challenged delegates to think about the culture of their Boards, constructive challenge and the data available to them to enable effective dialogue. Similarly, Susan Lapworth, CEO – Office for Students, in her address, discussed the Board’s role to protect the student interest through effective management of risk in the areas of [quality, financial sustainability and public funding](#).

Beyond the keynotes, delegates engaged in panel discussions and workshops focussed on the conference themes of policy, politics and people.

Dr Colette Fletcher, Advance HE Head of Consultancy and Governance said, “It’s such a privilege to bring together an audience like this for our annual governance conference. It is unique in that it’s the only conference solely related to higher education governance. It’s also one of those rare opportunities to get the great range of people involved in governance – Chairs, governance professionals, lay governors, and, increasingly, students – to get together to discuss the key issues and challenges in governance today.”

Herriot Watt University Student Governor, Connel Greenhorn, said, “It’s been fantastic to network with so many people and to hear from so many keynotes about what’s happening at sector level and I will be taking that back to the student that I represent.”

Pat Younge, Chair of Cardiff University Board, said, “Sessions like today are really important because you get to hear what’s happening elsewhere in the sector – we’re a wide and diverse sector, so anybody who thinks they have got the ‘best’ solution is probably mistaken...I have really learned a lot in the sessions we’ve heard this morning.”

A detailed report of the event will follow.



[Read more](#)



### Don’t miss out on Supporting Inclusive Boards: What Have We Learned

Following two successful years of the Supporting Inclusive Boards Programme, we consolidate the learnings and findings ready to share with a wider audience. Join the workshop on Thursday 18 January. Book your place. [Book your place](#)



# Spotlight on...

## New Chair of Advance HE's Board appointed

[Professor Mark E. Smith](#), President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southampton has been appointed Chair of Advance HE's Board.

Alison Johns, Chief Executive of Advance HE, said, "I am delighted that Professor Mark Smith is to become Chair of our Board. Mark is a highly experienced and well-respected leader in our sector. He has an outstanding academic record.

“As we embark on the development of our new strategy to 2030, he will lead the Board's guidance and critical inquiry of our plans, influencing and shaping our work with our members and the sector in the coming years. Our Executive leadership team looks forward to welcoming Mark to Advance HE and working with him, alongside the rest of the Board. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Helen Langton who has been interim Chair since the retirement in the summer of Professor Stephen Marston.”

Professor Smith said, "It's a great privilege to be appointed Chair of Advance HE's Board. Over the past five years, Advance HE has firmly established itself as a key contributor to the sector's success.

“Advance HE plays a vital role as a convenor and in the development of people in our sector. It offers value through insights that evidence change; it initiates and shares good practice in leadership, in governance and in teaching & learning; and it supports the efforts to recognise all the talent in our institutions so everyone has the opportunity to benefit and excel in higher education, whether as a student or as a member of staff.

“Advance HE is now looking at an exciting period of growth, particularly internationally, and I'm very much looking forward to contributing to this development.”

**Professor Smith takes up his role on 2 January 2024. More information about Advance HE's governance is [here](#).**



We are proud to have a distinctive role helping higher education and research be the best it can be, founded on a deep-rooted partnership with the sector.

We share the values of the sector and understand its unique culture and how this varies within local contexts. Through our convening role and our track record supporting leadership and effective governance, tackling inequalities and in enhancing teaching and learning, our membership continues to grow as does our reach and impact. This is testament to how we use our in depth understanding of HE practice and research, as well as our network of global associates to work in partnership with people, providers and systems around the world to understand contexts and challenges, and provide solutions. Your needs are always at the heart of what we do.

**Find out more about Advance HE's 2021-24 Strategy [here](#).**

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# new content + publications

## Prior learning experience, study expectations of A-Level and BTEC students on entry to university and the impact of Covid19

This report, authored by Dr. Michelle Morgan and published by the OIE, investigates and compares the prior learning experiences, impact of Covid19 and expectations of A-Level and BTEC students on entry to university across two surveys undertaken between 2019 and 2021.

The participating UK-based institutions were the Universities of Bournemouth (2019), Leeds Beckett and East London (2021). Data was collected via the pre-arrival academic questionnaire.

[Find out more](#)

## Freedom of Speech, Academic Freedom, EDI in higher education: Squaring the circle

In the third of our three-part series on academic freedom, freedom of speech and EDI, Professor David Ruebain, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Culture, Equality and Inclusion, University of Sussex, discusses the boundaries of 'free speech and its cousin, academic freedom'.

[Find out more](#)

## Study benchmarks the experience of higher degree by research students in Australia

Report published by Advance HE will provide an important benchmark which the sector can use to track progress in delivering the best possible experience for its student.

[Find out more](#)



## University of Nottingham first university to achieve Athena Swan Gold

First university to achieve Gold award for promoting and improving gender equality in HE.

[Find out more](#)

## Achievements in UK HE staff development recognised at the Developing Excellent Practice Awards sponsored by Advance HE

Winners announced for the 2023 Staff Development Forum Developing Excellent Practice Awards, sponsored by Advance HE.

[Find out more](#)



## Navigating the challenges posed by digital transformation

John Sumpter, Senior Consultant Education, introduces Advance HE's new 'Leading Digital Transformation Change Impact Programme (CHiP)', designed to support participating institutions stay at the forefront of digital innovation in education.

[Find out more](#)

## Athena Swan Ireland awards 2023

More than 30 departments or institutions recognised for their work in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

[Find out more](#)

