Welcome to the November 2020
in partnership

In this month’s edition of In Partnership we focus on November’s member benefit theme of student retention and its related content and events. We also look at accreditation and equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as upcoming member events.

As always we welcome your feedback. Please contact your Head of Membership with any ideas or content you would like featured.
During our November Connect Benefit Series, we are examining the theme ‘Exceptional student retention: How to support and retain the Covid-19 generation in higher education’.

The wide-ranging impacts of Covid-19 have increased the risk of student non-continuation. Students’ accounts of their experience during lockdown and of their isolation on return to university and college remind us of the extraordinary challenges they face, and of how little we know of the consequences for students’ successful transition to higher education.

Institutions have worked quickly to create socially distanced campuses. Our November theme brings together what we already know of what works for student retention with new approaches emerging during the pandemic. Combining the old with the new may perhaps change forever how the sector works to support student success.

November’s outputs include a webinar on 26 Nov, video and a series of blogs. Find out more here

Connect Benefit Series – October – Delivering on EDI: the critical governance role

During October, our Connect Benefit Series covered the theme of ‘Delivering on EDI: the critical governance role’. Over the course of the month we discussed the need to drive diversity and inclusion within institutions and the crucial role governance has to play in this, both by modelling diversity and inclusion in the make-up and function of the board, and through enabling and challenging their institutions to make progress with and for their staff and students.

Outputs have included our ‘Diversity of HE Governing Bodies in the UK’ report and a Chatham House roundtable discussion exploring how Chairs can support their boards – through the assurance role – to effectively challenge EDI progress in their institutions. Outputs are open to all colleagues at Advance HE member institutions.

Find out more here

New survey on staff experiences of Covid-19 support and remote working

In Preparation for our Connect Benefit Series initiative in February 2021, Advance HE is conducting a survey of HE staff exploring the impact of Covid-19 responses and the shift to remote working. The survey hopes to identify the ways in which institutions have supported their staff, and the opportunities or barriers that the shift to remote working have presented.

The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Results will be presented at our Women in HE conference on 25 February 2021. Participate in the survey here
Learning and Teaching

Annual review of Advance HE accredited CPD schemes published

We’ve published the fifth annual review of our accredited continuing professional development (CPD) schemes. Kathryn Harrison-Graves, Director for Membership and Accreditation, discusses the key points of the report.

Since its introduction in 2014-15, this annual report has provided valuable insight into the operation of Advance HE accredited CPD schemes. As ever, I am grateful to Advance HE member institutions and the accredited programme leaders within them for providing the self-reflection that makes this report possible.

The report shows the maturity and increasing embeddedness of schemes with 88% of DVCs/PVCs reporting that Fellowship is now explicitly embedded within promotion criteria. This helps to promote a parity of esteem between education and research and offers career progression for education-focused staff. It is clear from the evidence provided by these senior leaders that accredited schemes and the Fellowships they award are integral in supporting institutions to deliver high-quality teaching and learning, with accredited CPD schemes being embedded in institutional policy and strategy.

I am delighted to see that engagement with Fellowship across the sector is continuing to grow, with a 7% increase from 2017-18. In this 2018-19 review we have tried, for the first time, to understand what institutions are doing to ensure their CPD schemes are inclusive and encourage diverse staff from across their organisations to seek professional recognition. Only 14% of institutions specifically referred to the support they provide to underrepresented groups to achieve Fellowship and, while I have witnessed first-hand some excellent examples of inclusive practice within accredited CPD schemes, this seems to be an area for consideration over the coming year.

I am also delighted to read that Senior and Principal Fellows continue to be drawn upon to deliver institutional teaching and learning initiatives. I hope that these experienced individuals can support institutions and colleagues through the changes to pedagogic practice that may be required in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is clear that workload pressures and resourcing remain an issue for many leaders of accredited schemes. This is likely to be an area under increasing scrutiny in the current context and the team at Advance HE will work with the sector over the coming months to ensure that process of accreditation does not unduly add to these pressures. Streamlined, effective processes that allow resources to be focused on supporting colleagues to enhance their practice needs to be our shared goal as we look towards the future.

My thanks again to the accredited scheme leaders for the thorough and thoughtful responses they provided within the institutional reviews submitted, and my particular thanks to Joanne Davies for her work in producing this comprehensive report. All of us at Advance HE look forward to continuing to work closely with our network and accredited institutions across the globe to provide impactful professional recognition for those who teach and support learning.

Advance HE accredits continuous professional development (CPD) programmes which are delivered by higher education providers both within the UK and internationally, aligning professional development to the UKPSF.

Find out more here

Flexible learning fundamentals

Dr. Faye Taylor, Principal Lecturer in e-Learning at Nottingham Trent University Business School, gives her thoughts on the fundamental techniques needed to make flexible and blended learning successful.

Since the initial lockdown in March, Universities and other HEIs have mobilised the creation of workstreams, groups and packets (whatever the preferred term) to invest substantial time and effort in the planning, contingency and re-planning of what might (or might not) lie ahead and how we should respond.

The community and creativity of colleagues across HE has been mobilised to develop a wide range of responses so that we can continue to deliver high quality education. These responses have been shaped through the outpouring of sets of principles and guidance designed to offer clarity on how we should go about continuing to offer that quality educational experience. However, these policies appear to be largely tailored towards a particular direction of travel eg principles we should follow if we are to migrate fully online, guidance for effectively blending students’ learning, guidance for effective hybrid teaching. Particularly during the initial stages of response, this guidance is particularly helpful.

But what of where we are now, and what appears to be, at the very least an uncertain year ahead? The threat of local and national lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus prompt us to think again of what our students’ experience should look like and how we should go about this...Read more
Learning and Teaching continued

Middle Eastern universities placing huge emphasis on teaching and learning excellence

A number of institutions in the region are undertaking teaching and learning development programmes and now have growing numbers of teaching Fellows.

Universities across the Middle East continue to place significant emphasis on pedagogical development and enhancement of teaching and learning quality by collaborating with Advance HE on a range of development programmes, leading to many more academics achieving Fellowship.

Institutions in the region see the value of Advance HE Fellowship in ensuring their teaching staff’s practice meets the standards required, aligned to Professional Standards Framework (PSF).

Teaching development

Sharjah Performing Arts Academy in the UAE is currently co-delivering a version of the Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (CLTHE) with Advance HE to a second cohort of staff. The co-delivery model is a precursor to Sharjah having their own Advance HE accredited programme in the future. Accreditation is given by Advance HE to institutions who can demonstrate alignment to the PSF and provides institutions with the ability to award Fellowships to their own staff.

In Bahrain, the Arab Open University (AOU) has recently become a member of Advance HE and staff have just completed the innovative Teaching Skills Masterclass Programme Online (TSMC). The TSMC is a flexible programme aimed at exposing staff to new approaches in teaching and learning in higher education. AOU Bahrain’s programme has been adapted to include a further day of training in order to introduce the participants to Fellowship. AOU currently has nine teaching Fellows including four Senior Fellows but hope this number will grow over time.

Advance HE is also currently delivering a CLTHE programme at Effat University in Saudi Arabia with a view to 30 participants going on to apply for Fellowship. The programme is being delivered online, a new and repurposed offer due to the global pandemic; recent feedback from a similar programme delivered in Thailand demonstrates the value and impact achieved in the online space.

Elsewhere in Saudi Arabia, Taif University completed their most recent cohort of the CLTHE programme in January 2020 and subsequently held a celebration event to recognise the growing number of teaching Fellows at the University. Taif has a longstanding relationship with Advance HE through several iterations of the CLTHE programme and there are now 67 Fellows across all categories at the institution, including one Principal Fellow.

Taif are also planning the delivery of a face-to-face leadership development programme in the future. The Covid-19 crisis has heightened the demand for resilient leaders in higher education and Advance HE’s work in delivering bespoke leadership programmes is highly valued by the international community.

Table: 2020-21 NTFS and CATE nominations

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>CLTHE Programme</th>
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<td>Effat University</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>CLTHE</td>
<td>30 participants going on to apply for Fellowship</td>
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<td>CLTHE</td>
<td>67 Fellows across all categories</td>
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<td>Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>CLTHE</td>
<td>60 staff currently applying for Fellowship</td>
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Recognisable impact

Also in Saudi Arabia, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (IAU) completed their first cohort of the CLTHE in February and are considering the pathway to accreditation. Similar to Sharjah, the programme is co-delivered with a view to becoming accredited in the future.

The impact of the programme was highly valued by the participants, with 100% agreeing that the programme raised their awareness of different approaches to teaching and that the programme enhanced their understanding of what makes an effective learning experience. The University now has 60 staff currently applying for Fellowship and Senior Fellowship following the programme.

Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University have also renewed their Advance HE membership this year and 53 of their staff recently signed up to an Advance HE webinar.

The focus on teaching and learning in the Middle East is grounded in the improved student outcomes and engagement that occurs when students are exposed to high quality teaching practices. Research undertaken by Walailak University (WU) in Thailand found that following Advance HE’s work with them on their own CLTHE programme, 93% of their staff were rated four or five stars by their students and student retention had risen by 30%.

The Covid-19 crisis has heightened the demand for resilient leaders in higher education and Advance HE’s work in delivering bespoke leadership programmes is highly valued by the international community.

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2020-21 NTFS and CATE nominations

Nominations for The National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) and the Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) are now open for 2020-21.

The awards showcase the outstanding impact of individuals and teams who teach or support learning in UK higher education, recognising their success and providing a platform to share the learning from their practice. Advance HE member institutions benefit from free access to these awards.

To support this year’s nominations, Advance HE, in collaboration with the Association of National Teaching Fellows (ANTF) and the CATE Winners’ Network (CATE-Net) are holding monthly ‘virtual roadshow’ webinars to support those interested in applying for NTFS and CATE awards. Find out more about NTFS nominations and roadshows and CATE nominations and roadshows.
Launch of the Collaborative Development Fund – New Challenges, New Solutions

Advance HE is dedicated to supporting innovation and enhancement through our membership, and provides funding to help enable this.

For the 2020-21 member benefit year, we are pleased to announce that funding will be available to our global membership base in the form of our Collaborative Development Fund, comprising of three projects:

+ developing flexible ecosystems for education that support student success where are we now what works and where next
+ the Board Diversity Practice Project - collating, understanding and sharing members’ practice to deliver on board diversity in Higher Education and Research Institutes
+ the reshaping of Higher Education and Research Institute strategy and culture pandemic perturbations evolution or revolution.

The collaborative projects aim to harness the knowledge, experience and innovative capabilities of our members in order to address current challenges within the HE sector. In his blog, Advance HE's Nick Skeet, Associate Director (Membership & Accreditation), explains how the Collaborative Development Fund will enable members to address emerging complex challenges through collaborative and generative approaches.

The Collaborative Development Fund is an Advance HE member benefit. We invite our members to apply to join these projects which will start in January 2021. The application deadline is 12:00 GMT 11 December 2020.

The importance placed on learning and teaching in the Middle East is exemplified by the number of teaching Fellows in the region. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are all in the top ten countries, outside the UK, for numbers of Fellows across all categories and this shows the value given to both high quality teaching and learning and Advance HE membership across the sector.

Fellowship demonstrates a personal and institutional commitment to professionalism in learning and teaching in higher education. Across four categories, from Associate to Principal, Fellowship provides individuals with recognition of their practice, impact and leadership of teaching and learning.

The Collaborative Development Fund is an Advance HE member benefit. We invite our members to apply to join these projects which will start in January 2021. The application deadline is 12:00 GMT 11 December 2020. Find out more here

Click here for more information on the Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, Advance HE’s flagship teacher development programme, modelled on programmes delivered globally including at institutions in the UK, Africa, Asia, Australasia and Europe.

Advance HE’s Senior and Principal Fellow Writing Retreats offer the rare opportunity of space and time to think via 1:1 peer coaching, enabling you to engage in critical reflection about your professional practice, influence and strategic leadership in HE. Find out more here
Leadership and Development

Reframing organisations, strategy and culture

Institutions, large and small, are today having to be strategically responsive to a multitude of external and internal factors, some of which can be forecast whilst others are hard if not impossible to predict. We believe to achieve success it is vital to consider strategy development and transforming culture alongside each other.

We have developed our support to encourage institutions to examine and reframe their organisational cultures to enable performance through staff expertise, supporting student success and aligning to shared strategies and goals. We can help you in the development of whole institution strategies to more tailored, thematic or cascaded strategies.

Doug Parkin, Principal Adviser for Leadership and Management at Advance HE explains our approach to reframing organisations in this video

NEW Strategic agility for senior leaders’ programme

Our new bespoke two-day programme will equip intact senior teams with the capabilities to undertake scenario planning work focused on current institutional challenges.

Working with your intact senior teams, our delivery will be tailored to your institution’s requirements. The programme is split across four modules. Our approach draws on our extensive experience supporting global higher education through multiple lenses.

Find out more
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Advance HE publishes the annual statistical reports on HE students and staff

Report author, Dr Natasha Codiroli Mcmaster, Advance HE Researcher (Quantitative), shares the headlines and explores one of the new features of the statistical reports – the data on students’ social background.

Measuring the gap: Social background data in Higher Education

Advance HE (and before it the Equality Challenge Unit) has published annual statistical reports on HE staff and students since 2005. The student reports detail differences in participation in HE, attainment, continuation and graduate destinations by students’ age, disability status, ethnicity and gender.

We have launched the 2020 report covering students studying in the academic year 2018-19. Headline findings include:

- **Age**: The proportion of mature students has fallen by 11.3% points since 2003-04
- **Disability**: The proportion of students who disclosed as disabled has more than doubled since 2003-04
- **Ethnicity**: The attainment gap between white and Black students was 22.6% points. If the current rate of progress continues, this gap won’t close until the academic year 2085-86.
- **Gender**: Women continue to make up the majority of HE students; 57.2% of students were women and 42.8% were men. This gap has widened since last year’s report.

Access the reports and infographics here

Here, I am going to focus on one of the new features of the statistical reports. For the first time, we have included data on students’ social background. Meanwhile, our Director of Knowledge, Innovation and Delivery, Gary Loke, has written a separate blog detailing findings about the attainment gaps, and lack of change over the last 15 years.

**Why social background, and why now?**

Interest in the relationship between young peoples’ social circumstances and access to HE is not new. The sector has undergone a number of expansions over the past three centuries, with admissions not only welcoming more and more students but also removing barriers that barred students from different genders, religions and backgrounds.

Even with the huge strides made since HE was only accessible to nobility, and the fact that over half of young people now attend university, large participation gaps remain between students based on characteristics such as the area they grew up, the type of school they attended or their parents’ income.

For example, there is a considerable gap in the progression rates for students from state schools who were and were not eligible for free school meals (FSMs). Specifically, Department for Education figures show that while 45.1% of state-educated students who were not eligible for FSMs entered HE by age 19, compared with only 26.3% of their peers who were eligible for FSMs. Similarly, the participation rate of students from more disadvantaged areas is much lower than for those living in more advantaged areas (eg by POLAR4 quintile). Most concerningly, progress seems to have stalled in recent years.

The Office for Students (OfS) was established in 2018 with the aim of significantly reducing these gaps, and HE institutions’ plans to widen their intake are now given increasing scrutiny in the form of mandatory access and participation plans.

**Trying to measure the unmeasurable?**

One of the reasons social background has not been included in previous Advance HE statistical reports is the difficulty in quantitatively measuring and defining it. Despite the plethora of rhetoric around widening participation in HE, it is often the case that two reports about unequal participation have very different definitions of social background. Many commentators referencing ‘disadvantaged youth’ are talking about the vast majority of us; about people who were state-educated or whose parents did not go to university. Even for those of us engaged with the literature around inequality, our current social circles often frame our references of relative advantage and disadvantage (in many professions it is indeed the case that the majority of staff were privately educated). The opposite is true for other commentators, who believe that someone is only disadvantaged if they are in severe and persistent poverty.

In the 2020 Advance HE statistical reports we have chosen to focus on three overarching indicators of social background:

- **Parental education** – Students were asked whether either of their parents had a HE qualification, or not.
- **TUNDRA and POLAR4** – These indicators are calculated rankings based on the postcode of students’ home address before entry to the course. TUNDRA (tracking underrepresentation by area) is an area-based measure of young participation in HE at age 18 or 19 for state-funded mainstream school students in England. POLAR4 is based on the combined participation rates of those who entered HE between the academic years 2009-10 and 2013-14 if they entered aged 18, or between 2010-11 and 2014-15 if they entered aged 19.
- **School type** – This is a marker for whether students attended a state or privately funded school or college pre-entry to HE.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continued

Despite this range of information available, there are a number of data quality issues to consider.

Generally, data availability for UK domiciled first degree undergraduate students was high, however quality reduced when looking at non-UK domiciled students and those studying other types of degrees. For this reason, data presented in the statistical report only include UK domiciled first degree undergraduate students. This is partly because much of this information is collected on UCAS applications. This has however limited our ability to provide confident insights into the social background of postgraduate and international students.

Data quality of these groups of students was relatively high for TUNDRA, POLAR4 and school type. However, there are several issues related to measures of background based on a young person's local area. In many areas, people struggling financially live side by side with extremely wealthy counterparts (and people somewhere in between the two). The area indicators are generally appropriate for overarching comparisons but tell us little about individuals. There is no way of knowing whether the student who attends HE from a low participation neighbourhood is relatively privileged. And while school type is strongly associated with academic success and access to influential professions, as noted above, over 90% of young people attend state schools, and there are huge variations in the backgrounds of these students.

Indicators of parental education have also been included. This measure is used widely in academic literature looking at the relationship between social background and educational outcomes. However, the indicator comes with its own set of problems. In the HESA records, parental education is reported by students, and many students reported that they do not know whether their parents have a HE qualification or not. By presenting a range of information, we have aimed to give users of the Advance HE statistical report control over which measure most suits their purposes and to make their own decisions about the pros and cons of each measure.

The state of the nation: current participation and attainment gaps in UK HE

Our analysis revealed that:

- Just under half of students (48.9%) had at least one parent with a HE qualification. For 44.3% of students, neither parent had a HE qualification, and 6.8% of students did not know their parents’ educational status.
- Around one in eight students were from areas with the lowest rates of participation in HE (12.4% and 12.1% for TUNDRA and POLAR4, respectively), and around three in ten were from areas with the highest rates of participation in HE (29.7% and 30.4%).
- Social stratification was not only present in who attends university overall, but also within specific degree types and subject areas.
- A higher proportion of students who had at least one parent with a higher education qualification studied full-time (compared to students whose parents did not have a HE qualification). Similarly, a higher proportion of students who attended a privately funded school pre-entry to HE studied full-time compared to students from state-funded schools or colleges. There was a more even spread of students across TUNDRA and POLAR4 quintiles in part-time degrees compared to full-time degrees.
- The subject areas with the highest proportions of ‘first generation’ HE students were subjects allied to medicine, combined subjects and education. Subjects with the lowest proportions of first-generation HE students were medicine & dentistry and veterinary science. Other subjects with notably lower proportions of students whose parents did not have a HE qualification were engineering & technology, mathematical sciences, physical sciences, historical & philosophical studies, and languages.

+ Degree attainment was highest among students from more advantaged social backgrounds across all measures. 82.7% of students who had at least one parent with a higher education qualification received a first/2:1 compared to 76.7% of students with less-educated parents.

Closing the gaps?

Whether or not you believe HE should be accessible for everyone, huge benefits can be realised for young people who continue study post-18. The most obvious of these is the financial benefit associated with university study, but HE study also offers a broader range of career options to young people, more stability and protection against unemployment in times of uncertainty, not to mention potential social, overall wellbeing and health benefits.

Given these benefits, it is a wholly uncontroversial view that entry to HE should not be determined by a person’s background, their local area or their parents’ income. However, in recent years the pace of change in the profile of students attending HE has slowed...

Join the virtual insights event ‘The privilege of student success: ethnicity awarding gaps in higher education’ on 4 December 2020, presenting the most recent data on awarding gaps focusing on race, ethnicity and barriers to achieving equal academic outcomes. Find out more
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continued

Onboarding the REC Journey

Dr Sammy Li and Sheena Griffiths discuss the University of Birmingham’s journey on the Race Equality Charter.

The University of Birmingham was awarded the Race Equality Charter (REC) Bronze Award in June 2020. The announcement of the Bronze Award meant a great deal to the many individuals who made significant contributions during the preparation process.

The news came at the peak of the Black Lives Matter protests in the US, which grew to become one of the largest decentralised political and social movements for anti-discrimination globally that the world has ever seen. It was undoubtedly an awakening for many universities in the UK and abroad, as Birmingham’s Director of the Centre for Research on Race and Education, Professor of Education and Social Justice Kalwant Bhopal MBE said: “Sometimes we have to say things that can be uncomfortable, like highlighting the role of higher education in perpetuating inequality.” This is an excellent summary of the essence of the Race Equality Charter. There are systematic racial inequalities in the higher education sector, and we need to do better to tackle it.

It is not a trade secret that universities race to pursue league table rankings and award titles to signal differentiation and excellence. However, REC is not for the self-congratulatory. This charter mark is for demonstrating differentiation and excellence. However, REC is not for the league table rankings and award titles to signal

We commonly hear questions asking about the terms of reference for setting up a REC self-assessment team or the workload allocation for putting together an application. All these are very important considerations that must be discussed by each REC member institution. Yet, there would be no genuine cultural change if students and staff were not committed to making conversations about race a normal part of campus discourse. This has been the core from the start of our three-year preparation leading to the successful award application.

The impact of this activity can be seen in the development of the University’s Black History Month programme. We moved from a limited programme in 2016 that was based around exhibitions rather than discussing race in detail, to the much larger and more ambitious 2019 programme of 24 events, which was designed to engage both White and BAME individuals from across the University to discuss race openly and critically.

The conversation was further widened through our campus-wide consultation involving over 5,000 students and staff, which informed the development of Birmingham’s REC Action Plan. Moreover, we were also very aware of the need to increase the capacity and confidence of managers in recognising and responding to race-related grievances. We have started to address this through our Talking Confidently About Race workshop programme for senior managers. We are continuing to promote conversations about race and intersectionality through an upcoming Race Ahead programme for staff with student-facing responsibilities and an EDI online course for students.

Tackling racism on campus: Raising awareness and creating the conditions for confident conversations

‘Tackling racism on campus: Raising awareness and creating the conditions for confident conversations’ is an Advance HE Project funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and led by an expert group of EDI practitioners, academics, tertiary education staff and students. The aim of the project is to develop evidence-based resources to be used by Scottish universities and colleges as they respond the findings highlighted in the EHRC inquiry report.

The project has delivered a series of webinars with the sixth webinar in the series taking place on 27 November. The webinar is entitled ‘Tackling Racism on Campus: Decolonising the Institution’ and is free and open to all.

Find out more about the Race Equality Charter (REC) - encouraging and recognising commitment to improving the representation, progression and success of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff and students; and read more about our support for institutions in promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Black History Month 2020

Advance HE is committed to supporting the sector in improving the outcomes and experiences of Black students and staff. This Black History Month we welcomed a series of vlogs from Student Union representatives on why Black History Month is important and how the sector can make progress on race equality.

Watch the vlogs here
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion continued

Update on the transformation of Athena Swan

Dear colleagues,

As part of our regular communications on progress on Athena Swan reform, I wanted to write to you personally to provide an update on how Advance HE is working to transform Athena Swan. This is both in response to the independent review recommendations and also to meet your needs in this unique context; including most importantly how we will support your transition to the new Charter.

We are already seeing emerging evidence of the gendered impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women’s careers. The crisis has confirmed an even greater need for an impactful yet streamlined and reformed Athena Swan Charter to support your work on gender equality.

As leaders and EDI practitioners in the sector, you have experienced and witnessed first-hand the impact and great potential of the Charter. As the Charter evolved, its processes and implementation also increased to what became unacceptable levels. On taking up the mantle of Chief Exec of Advance HE, I heard your feedback and concerns about the burden, consistency and reliability of our processes. My first act was to commission the independent review of Athena Swan with the intention of “reducing burden, retaining rigour.” I and Advance HE are totally committed to achieving that goal, whilst managing the changes sensitively and in the most supportive way we can for you, recognising the huge pressures you are under right now.

More than ever, we need a Charter that is low on bureaucracy and high on impact. The recent announcement of the discontinuation of the link between National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funding and Athena Swan has understandably been seen as a blow by many. With worries and concerns that gender equality will fall off the priority list, I think it is important to note that this link, which definitely acted as catalyst for Athena Swan, did so much for extending the reach of the Charter and its impact into and across all areas and disciplines of higher education and research. While the funding link affected approximately 30 institutions hosting medical research and clinicians, we now have a community of more than 900 award-holders across a range of disciplines from more than 160 institutions. After nine years of embedding positive change, I believe that a well-evidenced commitment to EDI is now a more enduring and credible approach than compliance. What’s clear is that the Athena Swan Charter remains an unrivalled framework for supporting your gender equality work, and through our reforms of the Charter, we want to make Athena Swan the best it can be.

Beginning the reform of Athena Swan

The independent review reported earlier this year and provides the platform for reforms required to the Charter. It presents a raft of recommendations for how we can achieve the goal of reducing burden whilst retaining rigour and thereby improve the sector’s confidence in its gender equality charter.

Despite the challenges and disruptions of Covid-19 this year, I am delighted that Advance HE has already implemented a number of specific changes recommended by the independent review. Most critically, we have created a simple, streamlined process for existing award-holders to extend their awards. This allows all our Athena Swan applicants to choose whether they wish to apply for their next award under the existing framework, or to postpone their application until the new Charter is in place with no negative consequences for their existing awards. Other changes include:

- From the April 2020 round onwards, the five-year award period will begin from the date on which the result is communicated to the applicant, rather than from the date of submission as previously. We have also committed to undertaking an audit of our historical records which, when complete, will allow us to make this change retrospectively for existing awards.
- The prerequisites for universities seeking to apply for a Silver or Gold university-level award have been changed, such that these applicants are no longer required to hold departmental Silver or Gold awards in order to be eligible.
- A streamlined renewal process is available for use by applicants from the November 2020 round onward which focuses on progress made against the previous action plan.

Building better, together

Finally, I’d like to share my personal thanks to all colleagues working to progress gender equality in your departments, institutions, research institutes and more broadly in the sector. Athena Swan is your Charter, and we want you to have a voice in its transformation so improvements can be made that allow you to get on with the work that matters – advancing gender equality in your institutions. Although many of us are distanced from our teams and colleagues working in a manner that is out of the ordinary, we are together in our efforts to improve the sector for everyone.

Alison Johns, CEO, Advance HE
Governance

Student voices help shape governance at the University of Edinburgh

Andrew Wilson shares perspectives from his time as a Student Member on the University of Edinburgh’s governing body.

Totalling over 43,000, students at the University of Edinburgh are significant stakeholders in their institution. As a result of this, their voices and experiences are all the more important in shaping the strategy, direction and ambitions of their University now and for the future. This ever-important task is the responsibility of Student Members on the University governing body, the importance of which I most definitely did not contemplate when I ran for election as a Students’ Association President. However, I quickly found my feet, with a Court meeting in my first week of taking up office, and throughout the year gained a useful insight, helping to shape the levelling up of the University estate, improving student experience and the response to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

All eyes on the student

One of the great privileges from my experience as a University Court member was that the Students’ Association President was afforded a report as part of the regular business of meetings. Not only was this a great benefit for the student voice, I felt that it would often transform the dynamic of meetings and was useful in grounding Court members in the experiences of their key stakeholders, the students. The subsequent conversations generated by my report were productive and wide-ranging and crucially, centred discussions on the real challenges facing students. The inclusion of such a report led me to appreciate the value in which the University Court held the Students’ Association and hearing from the experiences of their students.

An unlikely bond

The diversity of thought and experiences within the membership of university governing bodies is extremely vast with members from a large variety of sectors and organisations. Whilst I came into those meetings with a few years of my Undergraduate degree under my belt, others came in with years of experience at executive level of multi-million-pound organisations, sounds daunting right? Yet, our shared ambition for excellence for the University community transcended those experiences and allowed us to appreciate and value each and every contribution. I came away counting my new critical and strategic thinking skills but knowing that my articulation of the student experience allowed others in the room to think differently about where the University was at and where it needed to get to.

Representative vs. Governor

As one of the few elected members on the 23-strong University Court, I would typically have to anticipate challenging scenarios that sometimes put my role as a representative at odds with my obligations as a governor. In my experience though, I came to understand that usually what is good for the University will also benefit students, but more importantly, what is often good for students, is extremely beneficial for our Universities. It is in these situations that the training I received from Advance HE at the New Scottish Governors event was most useful, allowing me to navigate and appreciate where my voice could be most powerful as well as acknowledging my responsibilities...

Our Governor Development Programme (GDP) supports Governors and governance professionals in HE. Find out more

Reflecting on the ‘Diversity of governors in higher education’ report

In this video, Simonetta Manfredi, Professor in Equality and Diversity Management and Director of the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice, Oxford Brookes University discusses the findings and EDI implications of Advance HE’s report ‘Diversity of governors in higher education’.

Transforming Governance for a new normal - Governance Conference 2020

In this video, Aaron Porter, Associate Director (Governance) at Advance HE, introduces the key themes for this year’s virtual Governance Conference, ‘Transforming Governance for a new normal’, on 20 November. We are also pleased to share that delegates of Advance HE member institutions will receive £50 off their overall booking cost when booking with a Chair of the Board.
**International Spotlight**

**‘SMART’ Programme supports Fellowship at Thai open university**

Accredited programme at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) leads academic staff towards Associate Fellowship and assures quality of Teaching and Learning at the institution.

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Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in Thailand have been accredited to run their own Fellowship programme, which supports staff towards recognition as Associate Fellows.

The Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University Model for Academic Recognition of Teaching (SMART) Programme is grounded in the Professional Standards Framework (PSF) and is seen by STOU as a mechanism for its staff to deliver teaching and learning support to their students more confidently and effectively.

Advance HE began working with STOU in 2018 by supporting a group of its staff to achieve Fellowship. This resulted in the Chairman of STOU Council, Prof Wichit Srisa-an, becoming the first Principal Fellow in Thailand, along with eight Fellows and six Fellows. Following the accreditation of the SMART Programme many more are expected to follow, and show a commitment to high quality learning and teaching across the institution.

Principal Fellowship compliments Professor Dr Wichit Srisa-an’s 16 honorary doctorates and numerous national and international awards which recognise his contribution to the development of education. For these achievements, he is known in Thailand as the “Father of Distance Education” and “Father of Thai Cooperative Education”.

Advance HE accreditation is recognition that the SMART Programme aligns with the PSF, and ensures that participants have shown the necessary capabilities and qualities to achieve Associate Fellowship status. The SMART Programme has been specifically designed with distance learning in mind, showing that the PSF can be applied successfully to distance and blended learning settings.

Ian Hall, Head of Membership (International) at Advance HE said:

> The SMART Programme demonstrates STOU’s commitment to quality learning and teaching and we are delighted to support that through accreditation of the programme. It’s great to see the PSF being used to support staff in a distance learning context in Thailand.”

Professor Dr Wichit Srisa-an said:

> The SMART Programme aims to make our already smart STOU staff SMARTer when they teach and support the learning of our students.”

STOU was officially established by Royal Charter in 1978 as Thailand’s eleventh state university, and was created to provide Thai people with increased education opportunities, beginning with three schools of study: educational studies, liberal arts, and management science. Today the university has 12 schools of study with undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programmes.

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**International Spotlight**

Advance HE accredits continuous professional development (CPD) programmes which are delivered by higher education providers both within the UK and internationally, aligning professional development to the UKPSF. **Find out more here**
Decolonising DMU: creating transformational change

The Black Lives Matter movement has significantly increased the focus to deliver the decolonisation of higher education. In light of this, De Montfort University (DMU) shares its thoughts on its transformational project called Decolonising DMU.

Read more

Entrepreneurship and sustainability: is there a need for a new harmonised approach?

Entrepreneurship is being seen as a solution to the global sustainability challenge. Here Professor David Kirby considers the issues and advocates the need for a new more harmonious approach to entrepreneurship.

Read more

New guidance for HEIs on how to support staff during menopause published by Advance HE

Athena Swan participants can access new guidance on how to support HE staff through the menopause.

Find out more

New video series launched exploring Black male voices in HE

Introducing a new series of video resources with a focus on structural race inequalities.

Find out more

From student to Board: responsibility, accountability and decision making

Kim Ansell and Alastair Work look at the benefits of a holistic approach to delivering outcomes, from student to Board, based on a culture review in a scientific university community.

Read more

Athena Swan - why we do it at UCL

Professor Sara Mole reflects on 12 years of the University College London Medical Research Council Laboratory for Molecular Cell Biology (MRC LMCB) engagement with Athena Swan.

Read more

Masked Out? The implication of using face masks for deaf students in HE

The recent publication by the Disabled Students’ Commission (DSC), Three Months to Make a Difference, explored the inevitable challenges with making campuses Covid-19 secure. Martin McLean, Post-14 Policy Lead at the National Deaf Children’s Society, discusses the issue face coverings can cause for the UK’s 5,500 deaf students in higher education.

Read more

Diversity of governors in higher education

This report details the diversity characteristics of UK HEI governors using the enhanced HESA records for the academic year 2018/19.

Download
# Dates for the diary

## Conferences + Events

### Gender Based Violence in the Curriculum
16 November 2020 - Webinar
In a letter on 6 April 2020, the #EmilyTest campaign, endorsed by key GBV support agencies, called on the sector to take 8 key actions related to domestic and sexual violence experienced by students. Our GBV project, funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), aims to support Scottish universities and colleges to effectively develop their response to gender based violence and utilise the resources and projects focused on the issue. This is the first in a series of three webinars which explores various aspects of GBV in Scotland’s universities and colleges form one strand of this short-life project.

Find out more and secure your place

### Leading Race Equality in Higher Education
2 December 2020 - Virtual
This course has been designed to support individuals who are leading race equality work in their institutions to strengthen their understanding of race equality and develop the skills for effective culture change. It introduces participants to key concepts within the field of race equality with the aim of improving knowledge and understanding about race and racism within a safe and reflective space.

Secure your place

### Women in HE Conference 2021
25 February 2021 - Virtual
This conference will consider the key challenges in achieving step change across HE in relation to all gender equality issues through practical exploration of the known and hidden challenges across a range of intersectional themes relating to women in HE.

Secure your place

### Staff Development Forum (SDF) Festival
23 to 27 November 2020 – Virtual
We’d like to invite you to be part of the leading event “Facing the storm, navigating together” that brings the learning and development professionals together. Devised to be interactive, challenging and human-centred, this online one-week Festival offers the opportunity to meet colleagues digitally as well as finding together responses to the big questions we are all facing at the end of an unprecedented year.

Book now

### Challenging privilege and the ‘danger of the single story’
10 February 2021 - Virtual
This workshop aims to deepen understanding of the barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion that exist in higher education through an examination of how majority group privilege reinforces structural and cultural inequalities. Participants will explore how privilege operates and unpick common ‘stories’ about equality in Higher Education.

Book now

### STEM Conference 2021
19 May 2021 - Virtual
The 2021 STEM conference will provide an opportunity to reflect on, learn from, and further progress our responses to the COVID-19 crisis, to ensure that our approaches to STEM education are more resilient, effective and inclusive and to identify the new opportunities that have arisen from the pandemic.

Secure your place

Find out more about conferences and events
### Dates for the diary

#### Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GDP: Governance Professionals in HE Programme</strong></td>
<td>2 December 2020</td>
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<td>A practical programme specifically designed for Clerks, Secretaries and staff in the professional support teams who play a central role in the academic and corporate governance of institutions. Delivered digitally with three one-day modules and two action learning sets held over five months, the next cohort starts on 2 December 2020.</td>
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<td><strong>Research Team Leadership in Changing Times</strong></td>
<td>27 January 2021</td>
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<td>Research Team Leadership in Changing Times is designed to develop the skills of research team leaders by providing a pragmatic framework to equip them with the skills to lead with confidence in an increasingly challenging research context. The programme offers a variety of solutions and approaches to team building and gaining co-operation from colleagues, using techniques to enhance team equality, diversity, depth and clarity.</td>
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<td><strong>Enhancing Programme Leadership</strong></td>
<td>14 January 2021</td>
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<td>Enhancing Programme Leadership is a new online programme designed to develop the skills and capabilities of leaders of teaching and learning in their institution at a time when they may be new to leadership, or looking to gain confidence in their leadership skills.</td>
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<td><strong>New to Online Teaching 2</strong></td>
<td>18 January 2021</td>
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<td>New to Online Teaching is aimed at nurturing and developing contemporary professional learning, with a particular focus on online pedagogies and digital delivery within fully virtual or hybrid teaching spaces.</td>
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<td><strong>Diversifying Leadership</strong></td>
<td>26 January 2021</td>
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<td>The Diversifying Leadership programme is designed to support early-career academics and professional services staff from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds who are about to take their first steps into a leadership role. It explores themes of power and influence, demystifying leadership, cultural identity and cultural capital, increasing your visibility and authentic leadership and features leadership stories from high-profile HE leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Top Management Programme 47</strong></td>
<td>April and October 2021</td>
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<td>Applications now open for the 47th cohort of our Top Management Programme for Higher Education (TMP HE). TMP HE continues to go from strength to strength, with an increasingly diverse and talented pool of applicants and regular international attendees bringing fresh insights and perspectives about operating in the global HE world.</td>
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<td>The deadline for applications is 5pm on Friday 26 February 2020. Those from senior teams interested in applying for the programme can find out more about TMP HE and download an application pack.</td>
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**Find out more about conferences and events**