



**in
partnership**

Keeping our
members updated
with the latest from
Advance HE

December 2020

Welcome to the December 2020 *in partnership*

In this month's edition of In Partnership we focus on our December theme of 'Engaging learners: Any time? Any place? Anyhow?'. We also look at how best to support programme leaders in changing times, our project on tackling structural race inequality in UK higher education, the key findings from our 2020 student surveys, and upcoming programmes and events to support you.

As always we welcome your feedback. Please contact your Head of Membership with any ideas or content you would like featured.



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AdvanceHE



Connect Benefit Series



Connect Benefit Series November - Exceptional student retention: How to support and retain the Covid-19 generation in higher education.

November's Connect Benefit Series focused on student retention during the Covid-19 pandemic, exploring how student retention practices are adapting and changing to meet the needs of this exceptional cohort.

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 and through higher education.

Exceptional student retention: how to support and retain the Covid-19 generation in higher education

Watch the recording of our expert panel discuss the old and new challenges to student retention, adapted practice, obstacles to meaningful change across the sector, and how we work towards the solutions.

[Watch the webinar recording](#)

Student Voices Video

Self-filmed first and second year students talk about higher education: what they like and what they would change.

[Watch now](#)

All outputs for our November Member Benefit theme can be viewed online

[Access here](#)



Connect Benefit Series December - Engaging learners: Any time? Any place? Anyhow? Strategies and practice for delivering quality education in these challenging times

December's Connect Benefit Series follows the theme of student engagement. Students' sense of belonging is developed through engaging and socially constructed learning experiences; this is a challenge that is further emphasised on a physically distanced campus. Research shows that students engage better through active learning. At this time of immense change where the sector has had to respond to many challenges, not least the wholesale migration of programmes online or into hybrid approaches, ensuring the active involvement of students in the learning process is critical. However, how can we ensure that engagement with content remains 'optimal'? How can we support practical approaches? How do we ensure we offer low tech but high impact approaches that promote inclusivity for all?

During December we will explore a variety of pedagogic approaches required for quality inclusive and equitable higher education. Under this theme we will explore practical solutions to promote active learning and engagement for all students - whether online or face-to-face and ways in which teaching teams and their leadership can be supported.

Outputs for this theme include #52etc – a toolkit for student engagement which is accompanied by a thought piece, a webinar demonstrating the use of #52etc, Advance HE Connect Café Forum and a series of blogs.

[Find out more here](#)

International Spotlight

Dhofar University becomes Advance HE's newest Omani member with a focus on learning and teaching development

Omani institution is looking to take advantage of Advance HE Fellowship to improve teaching and learning practices.

Dhofar University (DU) has become Advance HE's fourth member institution in the Sultanate of Oman. The university, based in Salalah, has become an Advance HE member predominantly to develop their teaching and learning provision through the Fellowship scheme.

The institution is looking to enhance their teaching effectiveness by encouraging staff to apply for Fellowship in collaboration with their own Center of Teaching and Learning (CTL). The collaboration between DU and Advance HE will promote the development of learning and also help support and promote the continuous professional development of their staff through the reflective practices required during the Fellowship process.

Advance HE Fellow and Dean of the College of Engineering at Dhofar University, Dr. Israr Ul Hassan, is supporting teaching development at the institution and believes their new member status will have a big impact on DU going forwards. He said:



“ Dhofar University's collaboration with Advance HE will advance the university's goals and aspirations along with its vision, mission and core values. Our teaching faculty are already benefiting from the experience of applying for the fellowship and reflecting on their own practices, which has enabled them to provide a platform for a higher level of student learning”

Becoming an Advance HE member will continue our journey to offering quality education, promoting academic excellence, individual responsibility, continuous improvement and lifelong learning.”

Kristian Rumble, International Partnerships Manager at Advance HE said: “

“ We are delighted that Dhofar University have become our fourth member institution in Oman. Their commitment to high quality teaching and learning is clear and we are proud to be able to support them through schemes such as Fellowship.

“Our work throughout the region is synonymous with teaching excellence and this partnership is another indication of our commitment to developing higher education in Oman, the Middle East and throughout the world.”

DU was founded in 2004 and consists of four colleges (College of Commerce and Business Administration, College of Engineering, College of Arts and Applied Sciences, and the College of Law). It offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and is the only University in the region offering Diploma, Bachelor and Postgraduate programmes. They are the fourth member institution in Oman, following Majan University College, Middle East College and Military Technical College.

DU is ranked amongst the best universities in the QS ranking within the Arab region and ranked first for international faculty. It is accredited nationally and internationally by the OAAA and ASIC respectively.

Fellowship demonstrates a personal and institutional commitment to professionalism in learning and teaching in higher education. Find out which category of Fellowship is the closest match to your current practice with the Fellowship Category Tool

[Find out more](#)

Are you thinking of applying for Senior or Principal Fellowship? Writing Retreats offer 1:1 peer coaching and expert analysis, the space and time to process and craft your narrative for your submission.

[Find out about our upcoming virtual retreats](#)

International Spotlight continued

Advance HE delivers leadership programme for administrative staff in India under bilateral India and UK government initiative

The programme is part of Phase Three of the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) which aims to drive internationalisation in the UK and India HE sectors.

Advance HE is currently delivering a Higher Education Leadership Development Programme for Administrators (HELDPA) to administrative staff at over 42 higher education institutions (HEIs) in India as part of the longstanding UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI).

UKIERI was established in 2006 to promote internationalisation in the HE sectors of India and the UK by focusing on three key aspects: institutional partnerships (for research and academics), student mobility, and leadership development (for academic leaders).

HELDPA, launched in November 2020, is aimed at capacity building for over 230 HE leaders to enhance the core knowledge and skills of middle and senior level administrative staff, in order to increase the leadership capacity and support systemic change in Indian HEIs. A key theme of the programme is inclusion, particularly for women, in leadership roles across higher education in India. It was originally planned to start in March 2020 but had to be delayed and adapted for online delivery due to the global pandemic.

The programme is now being delivered entirely online across a five-month period, in collaboration with University Grants Commission (UGC), aligned to focus areas outlined in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 which recently launched in India. It will incorporate teams of staff from the

participating HEIs undertaking work-based change projects, some of which are initiatives in direct response to the pandemic.

Speaking at the launch event in India earlier this year, Ramesh Pokhriyal, Minister of Education, said:

Speaking at the launch event in India earlier this year,

“The Higher Education Leadership Development Programme for administrators will be a step change towards institutional reforms in higher education in line with the Indian government’s commitment to improve the quality of education being imparted in the universities.

The programme will enable participants with a more global outlook which in turn supports the increasing collaboration between higher education systems both Indian and UK governments would like to see in the future.”

Ramesh Pokhriyal, Minister of Education, said:

“With an astute international partner like Advance HE, we plan to impart top-notch leadership and management skills to vice-chancellors, mid-senior level functionaries and academic administrators across HEIs in India. We are hopeful that this partnership will catalyse a more substantial transformation through which more and more HEIs will find their names on the top in global university ranking in the future.”

Andy Shenstone, Director of Business Development and Delivery at Advance HE said:

“We are delighted to support the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) in delivering this nationally important programme to strengthen leadership across the Indian Higher Education (HE) sector.

Helping the HE sector in India shape its own future and develop global links is paramount. We look forward to working closely with our partners at the Ministry of Education, the British Council and University Grants Commission to ensure effective delivery of this HE Leadership Development Programme for Administrators.”

Peer Mentoring Opportunity

Advance HE is currently delivering an Executive Leadership Programme for universities across Ireland. As part of the programme, we would like to pair participants with peers in similar roles in international higher education institutions, with the aim of sharing leadership practices and challenges. We would welcome expressions of interest from those in leadership positions, such as Heads of Departments, Deans, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Vice Presidents, Presidents and Vice Chancellors, to take part in peer mentoring for this programme.

Please complete this form as expression of interest in participation.

Learning and Teaching

New research on the impact of Accreditation

Advance HE commissioned the University of Plymouth Enterprise Ltd to conduct research assessing the impact of accreditation to award Fellowships in the context of the UKPSF. Kathryn Harrison-Graves, Director for Membership and Accreditation at Advance HE, discusses the importance of this research below.

The success of Advance HE's Fellowship scheme is evidenced by the growing numbers of Fellows globally; there are now almost 140,000 Fellows across 100 countries. Whilst there is an increasing evidence base around the value of Fellowship to the individual, there is little in the literature about the impact of Advance HE accreditation at an institutional level and the contribution that this is making to the professionalisation of teaching and learning in higher education.

As part of a full periodic review of our professional recognition services, Advance HE commissioned independent research into the impact that Advance HE accreditation and the resulting Fellowship is having within member institutions. This research carried out between February and August 2020, led by a team from the University of Plymouth, identifies many significant ways in which accreditation and Fellowship is influencing learning and teaching in institutions and the importance of Fellowship as an increasingly recognised global benchmark.

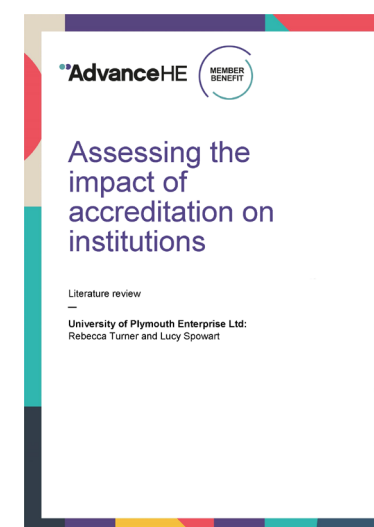
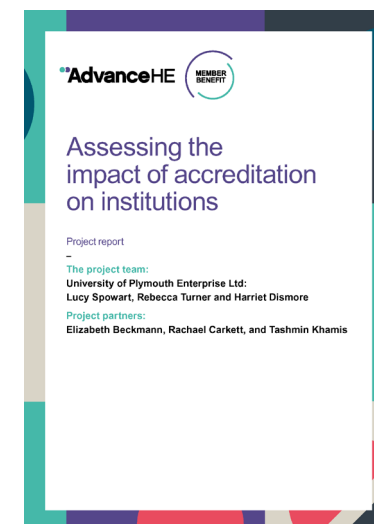
Member institutions applying for accreditation report that learning and teaching is a key strategic priority, underpinned by the professional development, recognition and reward of all staff that teach and support learning. This research report identifies the positive impact of accreditation on the wider institutional culture in key areas, such as in raising the profile of learning and teaching,

encouraging cross-institutional collaboration, underpinning career progression for education-focused staff, developing effective educational practices and stimulating engagement in professional development and scholarship. Data also indicates that the impact of institutional accreditation is reflected in changes to institutional strategies and policies around learning and teaching.

We are of course delighted to see the impact that accreditation is having identified through independent research and we hope that our member institutions will engage in the webinars with the Research Team to hear more about their work and the findings.

As well as confirming that accreditation is having a positive impact in institutions, the report also makes several recommendations for consideration by Advance HE which will inform a stream of work over the coming year. We welcome these recommendations and the opportunity to further develop and enhance our service.

When we commissioned this research we were unaware that a global pandemic was imminent; we would like to thank the research team for completing this work during that period and to thank the many staff and students in accredited member institutions that engaged in this research and provided such valuable insight at an extremely challenging time.



[Access the report and literature review](#)

Learning and Teaching continued

A brief encounter...leads to Associate Fellowships

When Helen met Sally...while sharing a table at an event, Helen Yewdall from an NHS Foundation Trust was introduced to Fellowship for clinical practice educators by Advance HE's Professor Sally Bradley.

Sally: Sharing a table at York St John University graduation lunch back in 2018 led to a conversation with Helen Yewdall, Cross Professional Clinical Development Team Lead at Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust. Helen was looking for some stimulating CPD activity for her practice educators and immediately I thought about Fellowships, something I had discussed with colleagues at the NET Conference and with colleagues in health.

This was the start of a journey and many email exchanges to create a small pilot project that would ultimately lead to Associate Fellowship. What would be the value of Fellowship for clinical educators? How much would it cost the NHS Trust? Was this value for money, and worth the time invested in creating a reflective account of practice?

Eventually, three willing volunteers stepped forward: two physiotherapists and an occupational therapist, all working with students from York St John University and Sheffield Hallam University. We spent a morning together exploring how they worked with students, creating the best environment in which the students could learn, how they planned the learning pathways with the students, and importantly, how they knew their approach was successful and efficient.

They shared the CPD which they gained from both universities and how they recognised the academic requirements alongside their own professional practice within their field. The conversations were lively and stimulating. And then the challenge...writing it down and reflecting.

Helen-Yewdall: I had no idea who this joyous, enthusiastic lady was when I first was sat next to Sally at the York St John graduation but out of a shared enthusiasm for recognising great practice in teaching at the clinical 'coal face', we ended up plotting to achieve something that might just put clinical educators in Northern Lincolnshire on the map.

As a division we feel it is essential to recognise the achievement of our staff and the opportunity Sally presented me was too good to miss! It is too often said "it's just what we do - we aren't anything special" however, every clinician remembers that one educator that really impacted them.

Our educators are essential to shaping the workforce of the future and they are shaping everyone's future experience of healthcare. Achieving Associate Fellowship status really acknowledges the creativity, dedication and skill which goes into delivering great learning opportunities.

Occupational Therapist Emma Robinson says, "It's nice to be recognised for the difference you make. We used to get paid for taking students and though this is not what motivated us it was recognition of our skills and experience, the opportunity to be recognised in a different way is great.

"There is something hugely rewarding in growing the next generation of Therapists. However, to have recognition in the form of achieving Associate Fellowship from Advance HE is really something we are proud of."

Physiotherapists Hollie Iggleden and Michelle Fowler said, "It's been a really positive experience being recognised for the many years of high quality mentorship of students. We always have good feedback from students but this time it is nice to be recognised on a more formal platform."



[Find out more](#)

Extracurricular activities: 'just another thing to think about'?

Following their publication, "It's Just Another Thing to Think About": encouraging students' engagement in extracurricular activities', Dr Jill Dickinson, Teri-Lisa Griffiths and Alex Bredice from Sheffield Hallam University, discuss the challenges presented by the increasingly blended HE environment.

Extracurricular activities: the values of, and barriers to, engagement

The increased commodification of the HE sector has resulted in a focus on student employability. Key stakeholders (including HEIs, student unions, and employers) often promote the value of engagement with extracurricular activities as a means for developing students' transferable skills and graduate employment opportunities (see, for example, Watson (2011)). Yet, students may be faced with barriers that inhibit their involvement, including a lack of available time or financial resources. There are already concerns about the number of students who rely on part-time work to fund their courses and/or who may be juggling caring responsibilities alongside their studies.

Our research

Against this backdrop, a staff/student research team invited students from a post-1992 HEI (from all courses and at all levels of their studies) to share their perceptions of extracurricular activities through focus group discussions. The team defined extracurricular activities as 'any activities that students may undertake outside of their formal studies'. The findings revealed participants' perceptions that there are various potential benefits, barriers and harms that can result from engagement with extracurricular activities. Whilst extracurricular activities can provide opportunities for developing transferable skills, building confidence and socialising, students may be restricted from participation by a number of factors, including cultural expectations and low

Learning and Teaching continued

confidence levels. Opportunities to engage with extracurricular activities are also perceived to induce feelings of stress which are presented against a backdrop of well-documented concerns about HE students' mental health.

HEIs' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged both Russell Group and post-1992 HEIs to explore opportunities for providing blended learning experiences (see, for example the University of Durham and Sheffield Hallam University). As pointed out by the HEPI, the student experience is much broader than the studies that underpin it. They reveal how HEIs have also encouraged students to become involved with extracurricular activities through a number of virtual mechanisms, including a sports tracking app and an online students' union.

Whilst these measures have been put in place by way of a response to the UK Government's guidance on the Covid-19 pandemic, they also present opportunities for minimising some of the issues presented by previous engagement with extracurricular activities. Students who may have previously experienced issues as a result of their commute, for example, may now have more time to explore the programmes of extracurricular activities on offer. In a similar vein, the minimisation of travel costs may mean that students are more financially able to participate in extracurricular activities.

Conversely, the move to more virtual extracurricular activities has the potential to exacerbate existing issues around HE students' wellbeing. There are already well-documented concerns about the mismatch between the demand for student mental health care and the budgets being made available. Since the arrival of the pandemic, figures from the Office of National Statistics Opinion and Lifestyle Survey reveal how: 63% of the UK general public

felt 'worried about the future', 56% were stressed or anxious, and 49% felt bored. In response, Universities UK have launched a campaign, #2020MADEUS to boost school-leavers' confidence in pursuing their aspirations to study HE courses. Whilst the focus has, understandably, been on those affected by the issues surrounding the calculation of this year's A-level results, it is important not to lose sight of those students who may be returning to university. There will be particular pressures for those who are returning to simultaneously complete their final year and secure graduate employment within an uncertain economic environment.

Recommendation for future research

In developing their strategic and operational responses, HEIs are tasked with striking an appropriate balance between a number of factors, including the health and safety of staff and students, tuition fees, and a competitive HE market. We suggest that the current environment presents an opportunity for the development of a longitudinal study. This research could focus on both the provision of, and engagement with, extracurricular activities, during the Covid-19 pandemic. It could explore the perceptions of key stakeholder groups, including HEIs, students and employers, over a period of time. The findings could then inform the design and promotion of extracurricular programmes to support all students with their personal and professional development within the challenging HE environment and graduate recruitment sector.



Co-curricular activities: much more than an added extra

Laith Jaafar, Hannah Prestwich and Nicholas Scarlett from Sheffield Hallam University Students' Union share their experiences of extra-curricular activities, in particular, what has been achieved during the Covid-19 pandemic.

[Read their blog](#)

Direct applications for Fellowship – fee changes in April 2021

From 1 April 2021, there will be an increase to the fees of direct applications for Fellowship. This is the first Fellowship fee increase in over seven years and reflects the increased costs we have been able to absorb until now.

We have produced [FAQs](#) that provide further information to support any initial questions that you may have.

If you have any further questions about the Fellowship fee changes, please contact your Head of Membership.

Leadership and Development

How can we support programme leaders during a pandemic?

Dr Catriona Bell shares her reflections on how an Academic Leadership Programme has helped to support Scottish Programme leaders during Covid-19. The programme team applied their key learning from this to develop a new online leadership programme that can offer support and development to programme leaders going forwards.

It's been a very tough year for programme leaders (as well as many other colleagues). They are critical stakeholders in the Student Experience, the key translators of institutional policy into practice, and they are frequently the 'Chief Firefighter' for a degree programme team. The buck stops with them in terms of both student facing issues and the quality of degree programme – and tensions between these responsibilities are likely to be greater than ever in this peri-Covid world. At this point in the semester, after nine months of running at 'full tilt', many programme leaders may be feeling exhausted and looking for support during what may have been one of the most challenging periods in their careers.

I have been fortunate to work with two outstanding colleagues and a fantastic cohort of participants on our Scottish Academic Leadership Programme (SALP) during 2020. Our programme started as planned in January 2020 with monthly face-to-face sessions for programme leaders from across our Scottish member institutions, and we had everything neatly planned out for six monthly modules. However, like most colleagues, our best laid plans needed a serious rethink in March when the full impact of Covid-19 became apparent.

At that point, we weren't certain whether SALP participants would have either the time or the bandwidth to continue to

engage with the programme, as they were obviously engrossed in moving their own degree programmes online and supporting both their students and their programme teams. We therefore canvassed their opinion, 'would they like the programme to continue, and if so, what format would work best for them?' The resounding response was 'yes', and that a combination of asynchronous and synchronous content was preferred (with no synchronous content in July to allow for very well deserved annual leave).

My co-facilitators Pauline Hanesworth (from Scotland's Rural College) and Angela Vickerstaff (from Nottingham Trent University) and I therefore undertook a rapid online pivot of the programme, and we relaunched the remaining four online modules between May and August 2020.

The learning curve throughout this process was a steep but rewarding one, and SALP participants were extremely generous with their feedback and reflections on the programme. One of the key benefits that they identified was the element of peer support that SALP and participants offered them, enabling them to share common challenges and solutions at a time of crisis, and many commented that the cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary network was critical to this success.

They also commented that SALP provided opportunities to:

- + 'lift their heads', to look beyond their programme, their institution and their daily Covid 'firefighting' challenges
- + engage with an online programme as participants, with several commenting that this helped to give them a 'Student Perspective' of online learning
- + focus on their own professional development and approaches to leadership

- + develop skills and understanding of leadership styles to help them work with senior colleagues – influencing without authority (at a time of crisis) was a key theme
- + consider and discuss new approaches to embedding 'Students as Partners' approaches into their programme design, delivery and evaluation (which was now more important than ever).

Furthermore, recent discussions with senior leaders in our member institutions have identified the need to provide support for Programme leaders, particularly during these challenging times. To date, however, key barriers to engaging with leadership programmes have included budget and time away from their campus and programme. The SALP team has therefore taken key learning from our experience with pivoting SALP online to design a flexible, accessible and cost effective online leadership programme which is called Enhancing Programme leadership and launches in January 2021.

We have also considered approaches adopted in our other leadership programmes such as the Aurora programme, and hope that institutions may be able to send a cohort of their programme leaders on this new programme with the aim of developing a critical mass of expertise which can then be brought back to their institution to help to establish or develop a Programme leaders Network. Institutions may also like to consider identifying a programme leader sponsor or champion, to support the development of their institutional network, and to feed into support and succession planning for their programme leaders.

We therefore hope that this programme will provide an opportunity for colleagues to lift their heads from their daily firefighting, to compare notes with colleagues from other institutions, and develop a new network (both for ideas and support) to help sustain them through the rest of the 20-21 academic year and beyond.

Enhancing Programme leadership starts on 14 January 2021. [Find out more and book your place](#)

Focus on structural race inequality

Our work

Advance HE has conducted a range of work on Race Equality and tackling racism in the UK. We have also supported contextualised projects in other countries.

[Find out more about our work](#)

Tackling racial harassment in higher education

Advance HE welcomes UUK's recent guidance document as an important step in supporting the sector in its work to address racial harassment that persists in higher education communities.

[Find out more](#)

Race, the curriculum and leadership

Professor Paul Miller has joined Advance HE as new strategic adviser for race, culture and leadership to initiate our renewed focus for addressing racial inequality. Here, Professor Miller shares his thoughts on creating diversity in the curriculum and the role leaders in HE can play to address systemic race inequalities

[Read more](#)



Tackling structural race inequality in UK higher education

Gary Loke, Director of Knowledge, Innovation and Delivery at Advance HE, introduces a renewed focus on tackling racial inequality with activities, discussions, tools and resources to support our members in understanding and addressing structural race inequalities in all aspects of higher education.

The events of 2020 have at times made me pause and reflect. Earlier this year, I [wrote a piece](#) for Wonkhe which reflected on when I first started working on addressing degree awarding gaps in the UK. That was back in 2008. I reflect even further, to when I worked for a rural race equality organisation (which was also one of the independent racist incident reporting centres set up after the MacPherson enquiry).

I was exposed to the many faces of racism. There was the personal overt racism, such as the racist abuse at the many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)-owned restaurants we worked with. There was the institutional/systemic, such as the recruitment practices of the public service organisations we worked; over-crowded English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses because colleges were paid for each student in the class, rather than the quality of education provided.

All of this was located within the microcosm of what we inhabited: rural England, with its tradition, history and culture; the norms of doing certain things in specific ways. This included an annual bonfire celebration, which was a major festivity (and tourist attraction), and one year, there was an uncomfortable blackface as part of the parade, which nobody batted an eyelid about. It is within these structures that racism exist – where personal and institutional racism are compounded by systemic privilege that therefore allows race inequality to perpetuate.

In a [separate blog](#), Professor Paul Miller, who joins us to initiate a renewed focus on addressing racial inequality, writes “education is the seed and flower of development”.



Many of the people I worked with back then were indeed the fully grown plant of higher education. They were the healthcare professionals, the police inspectors, the local politicians, and had been through the higher education system.

Higher education has a critical role to play in addressing structural racism, through really understanding the lived experience, through making our curriculum and education reflect the society we are, and the society we want to be.

In today's context, Covid-19 has once again laid bare structural inequalities in [health](#), [housing](#) and [education](#) and the Black Live Matters movement presses for urgent change. There are many challenges ahead, and I am pleased our Advance HE portfolio of work has focused on addressing race and racism at different levels, through personal learning on our [race equality training](#), addressing structures and culture through the [Race Equality Charter \(REC\)](#) and through our bespoke consultancy for institutions.

At the same time, we all have much to continue to learn, and I see the need for a renewed focus to support our member institutions to understand and address structural racism. The renewed focus will see a number of outputs throughout the year. We will have pieces exploring data and storytelling, lived experience and identity, examining how we have sticky, but much needed, brave and honest conversations about race, and engaging senior leaders into action. We look forward to working with our member community to co-create our continuous learning to dismantle structural race inequality in higher education.

Governance

From student to Board: risk and retention

In our recent report [Governing well, with and beyond Covid-19: Governance briefing 2020-21](#) we recommended that governing bodies and executive teams ask themselves, “How is our governing body navigating the governance/management boundary, especially on matters of risk, strategy and transformation?” Kim Ansell does a deeper dive to consider how universities can put in place a long term risk strategy and manage critical risks in the short term.

In recent weeks the media headlines and commentators have spoken of a looming student engagement and wellbeing crisis, with serious implications for retention. At the same time, most governing bodies are breathing a virtual sigh of relief in the recent round of governance meetings as student numbers have held up well, particularly UK undergraduate intakes. But what do governors and executive teams need to do now to ensure that the increased risk of student non-continuation continues to be managed, and that they have a holistic and long term approach to strategic risk, as life in HE continues to be complex and ever changing.

Students are having a university experience that is very different from their expectations, with constraints to their social interactions, and limited social networks, as well as managing their engagement in online learning for the most part. At the same time as students try to manage their expectations, most governing bodies and particularly finance committees will have scrutinised the interim financial returns submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) on 30 October 2020, providing information on their 2020-year end positions and their forecasts for 2021. These two things are highly interconnected.

While there are not specific performance measures for student and key stakeholder perceptions of value for money from the OfS, it is highly likely that students will, at the end of their first term, be reflecting on their experience so far and whether they have had value for money. They will reflect on having spent far more of their time than expected (in many cases all), looking at a screen and trying to understand why it matters for them to keep going.

For governing bodies and executive teams, the short term actions are to understand/mitigate and understand/prepare.

Understand and Mitigate

Boards and Executive teams need to be assuring themselves that they are articulating value to students, helping them understand ‘why’ they should continue and establishing a vision that it is worth continuing. Perhaps a little obvious, but:

- + Checking in with students to understand current thinking, anything from pulse surveys to focus groups, in order to have a clear understanding of the percentage of students considering leaving. I heard of at least one university that has a telephone campaign with students
- + Ask, check and communicate. What is in place to help students who are struggling to cope and might otherwise slip away under the radar, particularly those who are not in university accommodation and therefore slightly closer or visible. What can we do to support international students to be comfortable staying, (as they often would), over the Christmas break, rather than risk them returning home and not coming back?
- + Consider what can realistically and credibly be offered to students to secure student returns in the next term.

Understand and Prepare

While financial risk is clear, there are other risks – for example the risk that students who continue will have their experience impacted by the need for tutors to re-plan work, particularly group work, project work or collaborative assignments. In addition, the reputational risk that poor retention might have as an indicator of university performance is an important factor. (Of course this depends on what your key performance indicators are).

Governing bodies (particularly finance committees) also need to consider their reserves position, their investment in estates and study spaces and whether they are getting value for money from them in the same way as currently or in a different way. They might then model this, to understand and prepare for the impact on the university or college strategy. These questions might be helpful:

- + What information do we have to understand the likely retention situation from January 2021 and where are the gaps? What other information do we need or can we get access to quickly?
- + What is the worst case scenario and have we stress tested this to understand the impact on financial sustainability and impact on the university strategy?
- + Are we currently reviewing our estates strategy and investments, and how will the governing body have oversight to consider the impact to sustainability of the university and its future strategy. AUDE (The Association of University Directors of Estates) spoke of this in their recent annual conference.

 [Read more](#)

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

[Find out more](#)

Student Surveys 2020

Positive trends for the postgraduate taught experience despite challenges in 2020

More than 40,000 postgraduates participated in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2020, reporting both before and during lockdown.

Key findings include:

- + 79% of postgraduates were satisfied with their taught experience compared with 82% in 2019.
- + the main areas of concern of postgraduates who referenced lockdown were 'organisation' (14%), 'resources' (14%) and teaching (12%)
- + respondents who declared a physical disability actually found their taught experience in lockdown positive, particularly around assessment
- + postgraduates in 'definite agreement' that the course is 'running smoothly' has improved from 31% in 2014 to 34% in 2020.

UK undergraduates record better engagement with staff during Covid-19

Advance HE's UK Engagement Survey (UKES) 2020 shows evidence that students working with staff increased during lockdown. UKES provides evidenced based insights to help the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Key findings include:

- + 89% of students reported finding their course challenging
- + students responding during lockdown are 2% less likely to have considered leaving their course
- + a significantly greater proportion of students are spending time devoted to caring, from 26% in 2019 to 31% in 2020, and 45% specifically during the lockdown period
- + BAME students reported engagement levels of 71%, while White students reported 66%.

Postgraduate researchers more satisfied with HE experience during lockdown than before Covid-19

Advance HE's annual survey on the postgraduate research experience highlights high satisfaction overall.

Key findings include:

- + 80% of PGRs are satisfied with their overall research degree experience
- + top motivations for taking a research degree programme are interest in the subject (35%) and to improve academic career prospects (27%)
- + 80% of PGRs feel prepared for their future career
- + only three in five (60%) are satisfied with the research culture at their institution.

 [Download PTES 2020](#)

POSTGRADUATE
TAUGHT EXPERIENCE
SURVEY

 [Download UKES 2020](#)

UK
ENGAGEMENT
SURVEY

 [Download PRES 2020](#)

POSTGRADUATE
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
SURVEY

We are currently inviting proposals for Surveys and Insights Conference 2021: Adapting to challenging times that consider themes such as 'Measuring the quality of learning' and 'Supporting students'. The deadline for submissions is 28 January 2021.

[Find out more](#)

new content + publications



#52Cards

We've launched a new toolkit for Advance HE members to support and develop teaching practice and enhance student engagement.

[Read more](#)

Retaining students during Covid-19: responding to the challenges

John Fairhurst considers the need to adapt support services to cope with Covid-19 and describes Bloomsbury Institute's response to the challenge of ensuring students have ready access to the support they need.

[Read more](#)

Flexible, life-long learning: where are we now, what works and where next?

Dr Kay Hack, Advance HE Principal Adviser (Learning and Teaching), explains a new Collaborative Development Fund project that aims to review capacity for flexible provision.

[Read more](#)

Dyson Institute uses innovative teaching model to develop students' employability

Programme set up by technology firm's owner James Dyson embeds workplace training in their degree apprenticeship programme.

[Find out more](#)



Making external examining fit for the future

Dr Lia Blaj-Ward, senior lecturer at Nottingham Trent University, points to 'the emphasis on the importance of calibration across the sector' as the highlight of Advance HE's external examiner course.

[Find out more](#)



First Emirati in UAE to be awarded Principal Fellowship

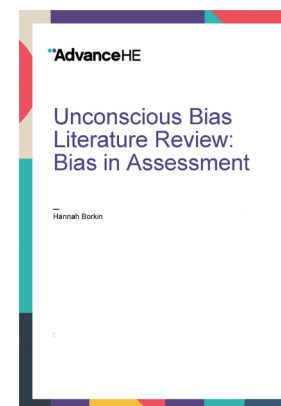
The President of Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), a Strategic Advance HE Member in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Dr. Abdullatif Muhammad Al Shamsi, has been awarded Principal Fellowship.

[Read more](#)

Locating bias in higher education marking practices

Introducing the first in a mini-series of literature reviews on bias in higher education, Hannah Borkin, mixed-methods researcher at Advance HE, shares some of the findings on the prevalence of bias in assessment and marking practices.

[Find out more](#)



Covid-19 and reconceptualising the opportunities for learning and engagement at Wrexham Glyndŵr University

Dr Sue Horder describes the rapid action taken at Wrexham Glyndŵr University to ensure effective student support under Covid-19.

[Read more](#)

Academic privilege, teaching through bias and the impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities

Introducing the second video in our series exploring the Black male voice in higher education with Nathan Ghann.

[Read more](#)



Dates for the diary

Conferences + Events

Writing retreats

Following a flexible format to cater to the needs of those attending, our Principal and Senior Fellow Writing Retreats (WR) involve group discussions and 1:1 expert advice and guidance about completing your fellowship application. Find out more about our upcoming [Senior Fellow Retreat on 18 December 2020](#) and our [Principal Fellow Retreat on 26 January 2021](#).

Call for papers

Advance HE has a range of events where we encourage colleagues to submit papers and join us to present their work to peers from across the globe. As well as providing a chance to share your work, share ideas and inspire fellow higher education colleagues, taking part in an Advance HE event provides an invaluable opportunity for professional and personal development. Find out more about our current open calls for the [Mental Wellbeing and Staff in HE Symposium](#), [Teaching and Learning Conference 2021](#) and the [Surveys and Insights Conference 2021](#).

Innovation in Teaching Practice: Balancing tensions: Identifying impactful and effective pedagogic practices for a volatile post COVID-19 world 1

20 January 2021 - Virtual

As the pandemic is set to continue into the next academic year, the expected 'stop-go' approach to lockdown will require creativity and flexibility to ensure that students can access the experiential learning they need, expect and deserve.

This workshop has been created to provide practical support in an interactive way to assist you with implementing policy and new innovative teaching practice developments at module, programme, departmental or faculty level.

[Secure your place](#)

STEM Conference 2021: Rethinking STEM Higher Education

28 January 2021 - Virtual

We are pleased to share that we will be joined by Dr Andrew Garrard, Deputy Head of the Department for Multidisciplinary Engineering Education, University of Sheffield, as a keynote speaker at STEM Conference 2021 on 28 January 2021. View our full programme to find out more.

[Secure your place](#)

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](#)

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](#)

 [Find out more about conferences and events](#)

Dates for the diary

Programmes

Enhancing Programme Leadership

Starts 14 January 2021

In response to feedback from the sector, we have designed this affordable and easily accessible programme to support those working in programme leadership roles.

[Find out more](#)

New to Teaching

Starts 18 January 2021

The programme models approaches and activities which can be taken into HE teaching, positioning the participant as a learner in online spaces and inviting them to reflect critically on the experiences in order to enhance their own teaching practices.

[Find out more](#)

Leading Virtual and Disconnected Teams

Starts 9 February 2021

Given the the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has added to the complexity of true leadership, Leading Virtual and Disconnected Teams has been designed in response to these challenging times. It has been developed to support colleagues to take stock of their team or departmental leadership and review their approach to influencing in a virtual world.

[Find out more](#)

Research Team Leadership in Changing Times

Starts 27 January 2021

As a participant on this programme, you will discover how to build and lead a research team, run effective research team meetings, support individual researchers and develop your role as a team leader; thus enhancing your capability as a research leader and developing your career potential. Particular attention will be given to the demands of accomplishing this in a virtual environment and through periods of uncertainty.

[Find out more](#)

Spotlight Series for Senior Strategic Leaders

28 January 2021, 4 March and 30 March

The Spotlight Series has been designed to be three short, half-day, impactful online workshops, as stimulus for development and collective engagement. Each online workshop will focus on one of three topical core challenge areas: strategic, complex change and digital.

[Find out more](#)

Leading Departments

Starts 21 April 2021

Leading Departments is a development programme designed to engage, support and develop new Heads of Department to meet the operational challenges of leading and managing academic or support teams. With a practical hands-on approach to learning new skills and behaviours a core feature of the programme is a continuous and progressing simulation, which allows participants to experience the realities of leadership as a Head of Department or School in a risk-free environment.

[Find out more](#)

Top Management Programme 47

April and October 2021

As a leader operating in a top-tier role within your HE institution, this programme provides you with a unique development opportunity. Considering leadership at a system level from both a national and international dimension, this programme will challenge and inspire you to develop new and beneficial insights for strategic leadership

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.

[Find out more](#)



[Find out more about conferences and events](#)