

Student Advisory Board - Terms of Reference

About Independent Higher Education

Independent Higher Education is the UK membership organisation and national representative body for independent providers of higher education, professional training and pathways.

We represent leading private universities, alternative providers, embedded colleges and creative institutes across the private and not-for-profit higher education sector.

In 2021 we appointed our first Independent Student Board Member to ensure our decision making is always in the best interests of students at member institutions. Since then, we have also established a Student Advisory Board (SAB).

Purpose

The Student Advisory Board (SAB) exists to:

1. Provide student feedback and perspectives to the Independent Higher Education (IHE) Board and wider team, to inform policy and decision-making;
2. Give students at IHE member institutions a national voice;
3. Support and inform the IHE Student Board Member, bringing perspectives from across IHE's diverse members and student body;
4. Provide feedback on a range of issues and consultations as requested by IHE, the Office for Students (OfS) or Department for Education (DfE);
5. Lead on and co-create projects and initiatives in the interests of IHE member students; and to
6. Offer development and networking opportunities for IHE student representatives and governors.

Membership

7. The SAB will comprise at least eight members, all of whom are current students at an IHE member institution (with the exception of the Chair, who may have completed their studies up to 24 months prior). Members are likely to hold representative positions such as student governor within their own institutions, but this is not a requirement. There is no maximum membership for the SAB. This will be reviewed annually.

8. SAB members will be recruited by IHE through an open recruitment process, advertised to all IHE member institutions. Consideration will be given to ensuring a diverse Advisory Board in terms of type of institution, subject of study, mode of study and student demographics.
9. The term of office is for one academic year, or when the Board member ceases to be a student at an IHE member institution, whichever is earlier. Continuing students may be appointed for further terms, subject to the approval of the SAB Chair and IHE staff.

Meetings

10. The SAB will normally meet four times per year.
11. As the SAB is advisory, there is no formal quorum, however meetings should be scheduled to maximise attendance and members should prioritise SAB meetings as far as they are able to.
12. The SAB will ordinarily be chaired by the IHE Student Board member. At the first SAB meeting of the academic year, the SAB will appoint at least two Vice Chairs who will deputise as necessary and may lead on aspects of the SAB's work. This process will be determined by IHE staff and the SAB Chair. In the absence of the Chair or Vice Chairs, the SAB will be chaired by a member of IHE staff.
13. The SAB Chair will be supported to draft and structure agendas by IHE or a partner/supporter of IHE. Secretarial support will also be provided to the SAB Chair, including support to follow up any actions between meetings.
14. Members of IHE staff will be in attendance to provide updates and expert guidance. IHE and IHE's partners/supporters may lead agenda items but have no voting or decision making powers.
15. Guest speakers or observers may be invited to attend at the Chair and IHE's discretion, but have no voting or decision making powers.
16. Minutes of the SAB meetings will be reported to the IHE Board, and the SAB Chair will share any relevant updates or decisions with the Board as the student member.

Responsibilities

17. To help IHE to understand, and take account of, the interests of students (short, medium, and long term) in its policy development and decisions.
18. To receive updates from IHE's Board via the SAB Chair, and to provide feedback and reports to the Board following each SAB meeting.

19. To provide student input into consultations and policy development as requested by IHE, OfS, DfE or others as appropriate.
20. To support the SAB Chair (IHE student Board member) to effectively represent students at IHE member institutions by providing feedback from across IHE's diverse membership.
21. To lead on and co-create projects and initiatives in the interests of IHE students, and to act as the collective voice of students at IHE member institutions. Any project or collective statement must be approved by the SAB Chair, who is accountable to the IHE Board. Any proposals requiring additional resource must be approved by the IHE Board.
22. To write a letter to the incoming SAB at the end of each academic year, reflecting on members' experiences and offering advice to the new SAB members.

Duties of IHE

23. IHE commits to the following, including through delivering these duties as part of an arrangement with a partner/supporter of IHE:
 - a. Providing appropriate resource, support, training, advice and guidance to the SAB to ensure that informed discussion and decision-making can take place.
 - b. Providing secretarial support and guidance to the SAB, as well as offering SAB members development opportunities including training and networking during their time in office.
 - c. IHE commits to demonstrating to the SAB how it is responding to its advice and recommendations.
 - d. Providing the SAB Chair (IHE student Board member) with an external mentor to support them in their role.
 - e. Providing references for any SAB member on request.