



Gold Sponsor

IHE Annual Conference 2023 agenda

09:00 **Registration, refreshments and exhibition**

10:00 – 10:10 **Welcome**
James Pitman, Chair of the Board, Independent Higher Education

10:10 – 10:20 **Chief Executive's address**
Alex Proudfoot, Chief Executive, Independent Higher Education

10:20 – 10:50 **The Labour vision for higher education**

Shadow Minister for Higher Education Matt Western will set out his views on the higher education sector, from regulation to student choice. As the MP for an area alive with creative industries, he has a unique perspective on the value of specialist providers across the UK. As Labour HQ gears up for the approaching general election, the Shadow Minister will give us a rare insight into the party's plans for a more strategic and sustainable model of tertiary education.

10:50 – 11:30 **Flexible funding for a lifelong learning system**

Tertiary education funding comes from many pockets: students, taxpayers, employers and third sector organisations. 'Who pays?' is a question rippling with political, economic and moral dimensions, but first demands another: 'what are we paying for?'. As our lives and careers extend longer, and as technology demands even more learning than it promises to support, can our funding system keep pace? Can educators innovate? Do employers have the right incentives to invest? And what does the general public think of it all? Threading the policy needle through value for money, student choice and persistent skills shortages, our panel will consider how to create a flexible tertiary funding system which delivers for all those who contribute and all who will benefit.

11:30 – 12:00 **Refreshments, networking and exhibition**

12:00 – 13:00 The risk and opportunity of regulating in the student interest

The challenge for any regulator keen to promote the student interest is that there is no single 'student' to listen to, and no simple definition of success. The complexity of supporting such diverse and individual needs, ambitions, and circumstances is something higher education providers face on a daily basis, and does not easily fit into a single regulatory mould. IHE's student board member Peter Sharpe will sit down with one of the sector's most respected leaders Mary Stuart CBE to explore what strategies might work, before shifting the spotlight onto the Office for Students, as we hear how the two OfS Directors most responsible for promoting student success are grappling with this very challenge.

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch, networking and exhibition

14:00 – 14:50 Breakout sessions

1A Building sustainable independent higher education

Independent higher education providers are in a unique position to support sustainability with invaluable links to industries and communities, teaching staff with broad expertise and strong student communities. This session will explore how even the smallest and most specialist higher education provider can play a vital part in meeting the global challenge of climate change: from empowering students as change makers in their careers and communities, to designing collaborations between those who learn, teach and do that have the power to transform the industries of tomorrow.

1B A local skills revolution: how IHE members can create opportunities across the country

The government's local skills strategy is increasingly focused on shorter learning opportunities, lifelong and retraining provision, and the match between the skills provided and the jobs needed locally. All are areas where IHE providers excel. Bringing together local skills leaders, IHE members working with local councils and those with the data on student outcomes, this session will look at practical approaches to supporting local skills ambitions.

1C Meaningful student engagement

Our panel will explore how effectively embedding student contributions in the heart of institutional procedures can positively impact on institutional goals. Student representation has become a core feature across regulation – from quality assurance to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to access and participation – but every HE provider must find their unique model. This session will consider meaningful methods for engaging students to not just deliver a better student experience but drive change within the organisation that reflects the unique student body of IHE providers. Our session will include examples

of engaging students to create more student-friendly and equitable policies, and how students can be at the heart of your evaluation of ideas for change. We will hear from experts in evaluation, student wellbeing, student voice, and student co-production to support institutional strategies.

1D Assessing quality and Degree Awarding Powers within OfS

The Office for Students have begun their work to deliver independent quality assessments in-house, moving away from an external designated quality body. In this session we will hear from the OfS on their plans to deliver assessments of quality for those at the registration stage, and assessments on Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs), including initial assessments, new DAPs, and those moving from time-limited DAPS, for those taking that next stage of their journey.

15:00 – 15:30 Refreshments, networking and exhibition

15:30 – 16:20 Breakout sessions

2A Strategies for growth: from start-up to world-leading

In a highly regulated environment it can be difficult for small and start-up providers to find their place, and demonstrate their own unique excellence in teaching, research, innovation and collaboration. Excellence frameworks, funding models and specialist provider support are all focused on being able to achieve and articulate the impact of the provider on students, graduates, industry and community. Join experts working with and in small and specialist higher education providers to explore the strategies that deliver genuine local, national and international reputations for excellence and support sustainable growth for the future.

2B AI: preparing for the future

The World Economic Forum expects AI to replace 85 million jobs by 2025, and create 97 million new ones. While education providers grapple with the impact of AI on their own staff, systems and processes, they must also re-examine their curriculums to ensure the skills they are delivering will be part of the jobs for the future. Inherent in this challenge are the many ethical implications of AI, for our students now, and for our graduates as they join industry. Our panel brings together experts from across education to explore the challenges faced by higher education in preparing both students and our curriculums for a future that is not that far from reality.

2C Towards an international student employability strategy

In July the APPG for International Students, for which IHE provides the Secretariat, launched their report on the impact of the Graduate Visa. It called for a national strategy to support international student employability. Supported by UKCISA and the International Student

Employability Group, this session will explore if such a strategy is possible and what it should include, from the perspective of students, employers, providers and experts in student employability.

2D Creating conditions for success: the role of independent providers in closing the gaps

This session will consider how we can narrow and eliminate gaps in award and student outcomes for students. It will explore what we can do as a sector, with examples from members exploring this in their contexts. With scrutiny from the regulator in England putting a spotlight on areas of the highest risk at a sector level, all providers need to prepare for an eventuality where assessments of quality then drill down into the specifics of their own data. Our panel will look at the lessons all providers can take from the work that has been done so far in addressing the gaps that appear. This could be in ethnicity awarding gaps or other contextually significant outcomes issues – whether drawn from qualitative or quantitative data. The panel will consider not only how to identify who is at risk, but how to intervene.

16:30 – 16:50 Ministerial address: extending the ladder of opportunity to all

Robert Halfon MP, Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, will speak directly to the IHE conference on the Government's continuing reform agenda, his personal passions and priorities for the future of skills, the promise of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, and the importance of a sustainable and international tertiary education sector in this pre-recorded speech.

16:50 – 17:30 IHE at 15: the past, present and future of higher education policy

As IHE celebrates our 15th anniversary as a membership organisation and representative body, our Chief Executive Alex Proudfoot sits down with Jo Johnson, who was Universities Minister in 2015-18, and Nick Hillman, who was Chief of Staff to the previous Minister David Willetts in 2010-14, to reflect on the journey that IHE and its members have been on in that time. As two of the most influential figures during 8 years that changed everything for the independent sector, Jo and Nick will offer unique perspectives on how we got here, their expert take on the policy debates of today, and where the next 15 years might take us.

17:30 – 17:40 Closing remarks

James Pitman, Chair of the Board, Independent Higher Education

17:45 – 20:00 15th anniversary celebration and IHE Awards 2023