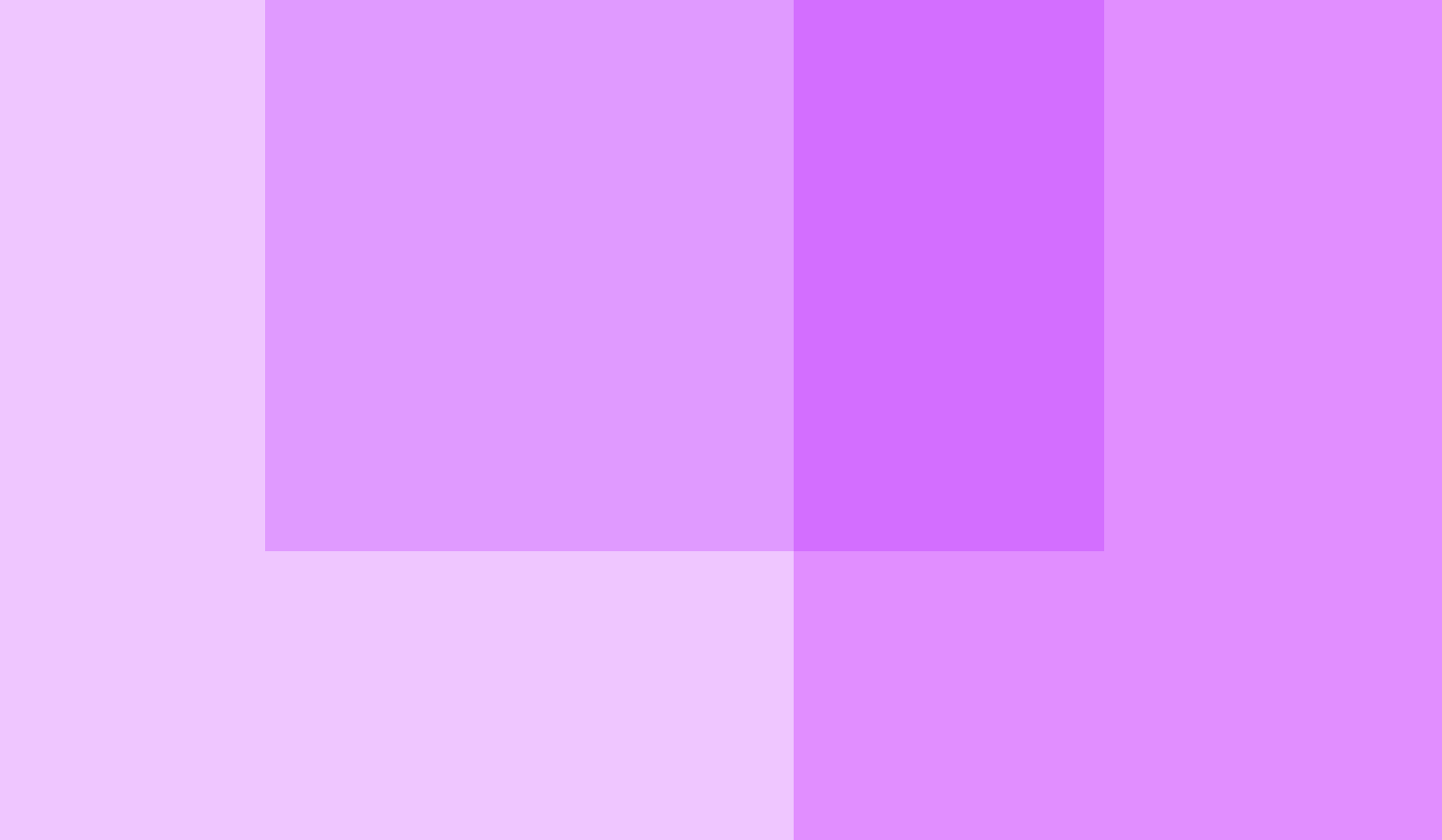


**INDEPENDENT
HIGHER
EDUCATION**

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

ihe.ac.uk



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

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Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2024 – a year that brought both remarkable opportunities and significant challenges for the independent higher education sector in the UK.

2024 was undoubtedly tumultuous. A General Election, a new Government, a changing regulatory, legislative and funding environment, and uncertainty about the future of international education created a complex landscape for our Members to navigate.

Yet, amid these challenges, we found many reasons for optimism.

This year saw the publication of our ambitious Manifesto for Higher Education, our blueprint for change, which set out our vision for transformation, growth and prosperity powered by independent providers.

We released the final report of our groundbreaking Academic Partnerships project, grew our membership by 17%, and expanded our policy-driven training and events programme.

We built productive relationships with the new Government and gained significant media coverage across national and sector press, growing our external profile and influence as we advocated for our Members' interests.

Our membership continues to flourish, with 13 new institutions joining our community in 2024. This growth reflects the increasing recognition of IHE as an influential voice for independent providers and a valued source of expertise, connection, and support.

As we look forward to 2025, we remain committed to championing the unique strengths of independent higher education providers, aligned to our core values of innovation, diversity, flexibility, collaboration and student focus. IHE Members are already leading the way in demonstrating what UK higher education can achieve. With the right policy and regulatory environment, they can do even more.

We extend thanks to our Members, whose engagement and expertise over the past year continue to strengthen our community and amplify our collective voice. This report offers a snapshot of what we have accomplished together and sets the foundation for even greater impact in the year ahead. We also thank all those we have collaborated with across the sector in 2024 – our collective efforts have helped drive positive change during a transformative year for higher education.



Alex Proudfoot
Chief Executive



James Pitman
Chair of the Board

Our Members

IHE represents a vibrant and diverse network of institutions and professionals, who teach students across a range of specialist courses through innovative delivery models and collaborative partnerships. As well as benefitting from national representation, our Members also support one another by sharing experiences, knowledge, advice, and practice.

2024 was a year of significant growth, reflecting the mounting interest from independent providers of higher education in being part of the IHE community.

FACTS & FIGURES

89 Members

13 new Members

17% membership increase

5 Launchpad subscribers

New Members in 2024



THE UNIVERSITY OF
BUCKINGHAM



The Institute
of Contemporary
Music Performance





It is a privilege for GIS to have been granted membership to IHE. As an important part of the UK's higher education sector, IHE provides a platform for collaboration and networking with like-minded institutions committed to student experience and maintaining the high-quality standards that the UK is known for. Being part of IHE will strengthen our position as a leading destination for sports education"

Sharona Friedman, President and CEO, Global Institute of Sport (GIS)



The bpf's membership of IHE will enhance our credibility and visibility within the higher education sector and assist us in improving in areas such as quality assurance, data handling, student experience, and both corporate and academic governance. We look forward to collaborating with the IHE staff team and we are excited about the opportunities for sharing best practice, knowledge exchange, and co-operative problem-solving with other IHE members."

Dr Wayne Full, Director of Academic and Strategic Development,
British Psychotherapy Foundation

Our comprehensive governance review last year set the bar for transparency, professionalism and accountability – not just for IHE, but as principles for our Members to uphold. All IHE membership applications are carefully reviewed and subject to approval by our Board. Our rigorous approach ensures that, while our Members are distinguished by their diversity, they are aligned in their commitment to quality and standards, and to putting our core values into practice.

During the second half of the year, we developed a new member recruitment strategy. One of our aims in 2025 is to grow IHE membership into the regions, aligned to our Manifesto proposals and the Government's objectives for skills development and economic growth across all parts of the UK. We are excited at the prospect of growing the IHE community further and the opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange that this will bring.

➤ [A full list of all IHE Members can be found on our website](#)

A manifesto for higher education

INDEPENDENT
HIGHER
EDUCATION

2024

Ahead of the 2024 General Election, we published IHE's **Manifesto for Higher Education**, our blueprint for change. Our manifesto sets out how independent higher education providers are ready to support a new vision for the UK, one which unlocks a fairer and more prosperous society, and a more resilient and agile economy.

The manifesto presents ten recommendations to Government, including a call for a commission on tertiary education, a commitment to flexible lifelong learning, an overhaul of the student finance model, and a streamlined approach to student visa requirements. It also signals our commitment, working alongside the very special institutions in our membership, to playing a part in powering economic growth.

Independent providers are ready:

To deliver real choice and innovation in a tertiary education system

To transform local opportunities as agile partners in growth

To support every student to succeed in reaching their potential

To promote the UK as a global hub for education and training

To power our leading industries with cutting-edge provision

We developed a strategic communications campaign for the Manifesto to promote its key messages, securing media coverage in national and sector press, including Times Higher Education and FE Week.

Our Manifesto featured examples of IHE Members who are already having an impact within their industries and local communities. We also published a series of supplementary case studies on our website to illustrate how, with the right policy conditions, independent providers can contribute to regional regeneration.

We drew on our Manifesto throughout the second half of 2024, incorporating our recommendations into external presentations and sharing our proposals in meetings with key stakeholders. This included engagement with representatives at the Department for Education (DfE) where we highlighted our proposals and the ways in which they address the five core themes that form part of DfE's plans for HE reform, which is expected in 2025.

The ambition we articulate in our Manifesto will be reflected in our new strategy for 2025 – 2030, which will set out our trajectory for the next five years.

➤ [Our Manifesto can be found on our website](#)

Policy, Advocacy and Representation

Policy is the beating heart of our work. Our team works with and for our Members, representing independent providers within the highest levels of Government, influencing policy development, providing high quality information and advice, delivering events and professional development opportunities, and supporting our specialist Networks and Forums.

FACTS & FIGURES

18 responses to consultations and calls for evidence

115 policy-led events

15 Networks and Forums



Policy spotlight

Academic partnerships

This year we released the final report from our Academic Partnerships project, the culmination of two years of research. The project's aims were to identify the ways in which academic partnerships are managed and regulated in the UK, and to gain a better understanding of perceptions of value, the risks, costs and work involved in creating and maintaining academic partnerships. To inform the research, we explored the experiences and perceptions of key stakeholders: teaching partners, awarding partners, and students.

To deliver the project, we partnered with Pinsent Masons LLP and formed a steering group of key sector stakeholders with representatives from the Association of Colleges (AoC), Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Universities UK (UUK) were also involved in the project in an advisory capacity.

In February, we published the first output from the project, which presented early data in relation to the size and scope of current partnerships and set out definitions for a proposed shared typology of partnership working. The final report, published in July, proposed areas of future work for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Pinsent Masons are delighted to have collaborated with IHE on this research into the state of academic partnerships within the UK higher education sector. Transparency in relation to the nature of these relationships has long been overdue. The insights provided from the research into sector-wide norms and practices will be of value to providers and awarding bodies alike.”

Gayle Ditchburn, Partner, Pinsent Masons

2024 saw renewed scrutiny of the complex area of franchised delivery following the publication in January of the National Audit Office (NAO) report *Investigation into student finance for study at franchised*

higher education providers. Against this backdrop, our work has contributed to an ongoing and united sector effort to enhance understanding of the management and governance of partnership provision, demonstrating our collective commitment to assuring risk and protecting students. Our project findings form part of a [comprehensive suite of sector body-led resources](#), including frameworks and guidance designed to support providers and promote continuous improvement. Our work in this area will continue into 2025, with further sector collaboration planned for early next year.

➤ [Both project reports can be found on our website](#)

Regulation for growth

It has long been our view that the priority of the Office for Students (OfS) should be to bring as many providers as possible within its regulatory reach and promote a regulatory culture that enables growth. Supporting IHE Members to work towards registration is a core part of our work.

In December, the OfS announced that it would be suspending applications for registration, Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) and University Title until August 2025. We issued an immediate response, urging the regulator to reverse its decision and to work with sector representatives to seek a different solution that would allow the resumption of critical regulatory processes. We highlighted the potentially catastrophic impact for our Members and other providers affected by the announcement, and students as key stakeholders. We were vocal in sharing our concerns that the decision stifles growth and could lead to indirect discrimination.

➤ [Our full response can be found on our website](#)

“Regulatory dysfunction has already placed significant financial strain on many providers, and more will now face the prospect of having wasted considerable staff resource and significant sums of money on preparing applications that will be out of date before they are allowed to submit them.”

Alex Proudfoot, IHE Chief Executive



Policy spotlight

Preparing for the new OfS E6 Condition: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

In July, the Office for Students (OfS) published its delayed response following a 2023 consultation into a proposed new condition of registration in relation to harassment and sexual misconduct. The response confirmed that the new E6 condition would be implemented in two phases, with a ban on non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in relation to allegations of harassment and sexual misconduct effective from 1 September 2024, and the full condition applied from August 2025.

This year, in collaboration with Members, we developed information and training designed to help providers make informed strategic decisions and ensure compliance with Condition E6. This work included

meetings with the regulator to discuss next steps ahead of implementation, engaging expert consultants to support this work, and gathering case studies and examples of good practice from Members.

A significant part of this activity was the development of a new information resource, shaped by Members and the only such resource created that specifically addresses the expectations placed on providers. We published *Approaches to addressing harassment and sexual misconduct* in October to support Members with the implementation of the new OfS condition, in particular the requirement to publish a single source of information detailing the steps that providers will take.

Our work in this area is sector-leading and will continue into 2025, with further training planned in advance of August and ongoing support developed for Members post-implementation.



Policy spotlight

Mental health support

A long-standing priority of IHE is to support Members in delivering effective mental health support to students, working with sector experts to develop bespoke programmes and advocating for flexible approaches which meet the needs of a diverse range of providers. This year we built on this work in a number of ways:

Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce (HEMHIT)

Through our seat on HEMHIT, we advocate for all types of providers, ensuring that their needs are considered in the development and delivery of sector-wide mental health initiatives. This year we worked with HEMHIT

to identify the ways in which transparency and accountability could be achieved for students and other stakeholders, regardless of whether an institution is a member of the University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) programme. Working with other sector bodies, we made several commitments to help advance the development of work to support smaller providers, which were included in the [HEMHIT second stage report](#), published in December.

Student Mental Health Evidence Hub – in partnership with Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO)

TASO ran tailored, bespoke training for our Members to help those working in student services roles familiarise themselves with the Student Mental Health Evidence Hub, exchange knowledge and current practice of mental health interventions, and enhance their understanding of the role of evaluation in their own setting.

Mental Health Strategy Training – in partnership with the Charlie Waller Trust

Following a successful pilot in 2023, we launched a second cohort for our mental health strategy training programme, developed exclusively for IHE by the Charlie Waller Trust. Members took part in a series of collaborative workshops designed to help them develop and test mental health strategies for their institution, bringing together the expertise of the Charlie Waller Trust and the experiences of our Members to build an ongoing community of practice and support.



Responding to consultations and calls for evidence

Responding to consultations and calls for evidence is one of many ways we ensure the views of independent providers are considered in policymaking and when regulatory changes are proposed. This year, our submissions covered topics including data collection, free speech, technical qualifications, models for quality and enhancement review, funding, and student support.

The following are examples of just some of the responses and evidence we submitted during 2024.

FEBRUARY AND JULY 2024

HESA Student record consultations

Our responses to two HESA consultations on proposals for changes to the Student record highlighted significant issues in the data model for our Members. We suggested specific actions to support a more efficient and less burdensome collection in the next academic year. As part of our response, we offered to facilitate a discussion between HESA and the IHE community to find a more permanent solution to representing non-traditional delivery models.

MARCH 2024

Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) consultation on strengthening technical education

The IfATE consultation in April strongly reflected IHE's views on the need for a diverse qualifications landscape and our contributions to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) working group. It proposed to expand the categories under which providers can apply for funding under the LLE to include Level 6, shorter courses, interdisciplinary courses and courses beyond current occupational maps. This is something we have repeatedly lobbied for and aligns with the recommendations in our Manifesto.

MARCH TO MAY 2024

Office for Students (OfS) consultations on freedom of speech

We consulted Members and worked with our Student Advisory Board (SAB) to inform our responses to three separate consultations. We challenged the OfS approach at all stages for ignoring the full diversity of higher education providers and students' union models that exist in the UK. We welcomed the new Government's announcement in July to pause and review the implementation of the Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act pending further consideration and review.

APRIL 2024

Department for Education (DfE) call for evidence on improving non-medical help for disabled students

Our response was informed by contributions from SAB Members. We argued that current arrangements – where students have an individual entitlement for non-medical

help (NMH) funded through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) – should remain in place, emphasising that this ensures students get the right support wherever they study. We shared concerns that a model of provider responsibility would disproportionately impact small providers like those in our membership.

IHE Student Advisory Board (SAB)

This year, we have been able to focus on extending the reach and impact of the SAB, the only national forum specifically for students from independent higher education providers. This has involved engaging SAB Members in policy work, supporting their

attendance at sector meetings, and creating opportunities for students to share feedback to inform our responses to consultations. We also expanded our student training, originally designed for SAB Members, inviting student representatives from across our member institutions to benefit from the programme. This has helped raise awareness of the SAB and the opportunities for more students to get involved in its work.





Case study

Amplifying the student voice

At the start of the year, we were interviewed as part of the independent review of the Office for Students (OfS), commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) and chaired by Sir David Behan. We raised several concerns, including poor efficiency caused by a large and undefined regulatory scope, a lack of accountability, and processes that simply do not work for small and independent providers.

We included students' voices at the centre of the conversation and supported SAB Members to offer their own insights by being interviewed directly. This was both empowering for students and useful for the review team to hear a rounded view from the IHE community.

Fit for the Future: Higher Education Regulation towards 2035 was published in July 2024 and reports the findings from the review along with 32 recommendations. Many of the findings reflect IHE's views, in particular poor communication with the sector, a lack of transparency, concerns around the timeliness of processes, and limited opportunities to hear a range of student perspectives. The review also highlighted a need to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach to regulation, which is something IHE has raised on several occasions.



We welcome the recommendation that the OfS should seek opportunities to involve students more directly in the governance of the OfS. We hope the OfS takes the opportunity to ensure that their student representation structures are more reflective of the breadth of students and study models than they have been in the past.”

Alex Proudfoot, IHE Chief Executive

Events and training

In 2024 we grew our events programme, increasing the number of policy-led events for Members by 40%. Delivered online and in-person, our events covered a broad range of topics, from legal and HR updates to sessions on immigration compliance, governance and leadership, data, consumer law, mental health, and digital skills.

Many of our events were led by or delivered in collaboration with IHE Supporters and Partners, including Advance HE, Eversheds

Sutherland, Jisc, and Shakespeare Martineau. We worked with Coole Insight and Counterculture LLP as part of ongoing work to support providers in building meaningful student engagement, with carefully curated sessions on ensuring effective student representation and exploring the different models of student associations.

We also hosted a new series of Member-led events on AI led by our Digital Education Forum. This is an area of rapidly growing interest which will be continued via a new Technology in Education Network in 2025.

Launchpad and consultancy

We developed our Launchpad repository of resources, with a series of carefully tailored sessions and training delivered to subscribers – providers who are new to the sector – to learn about different aspects of regulation and hear more from key sector bodies, including UCAS and QAA, on their areas of responsibility and focus.

In the latter half of the year, we began work on developing a suite of consultancy packages, mapping expertise and resources to areas of existing and emerging demand. We have continued to grow our portfolio of consultants who deliver timely support to Members, helping them to navigate the regulatory landscape and advance their institutional goals.

IHE Launchpad was very helpful and supportive. From the start, the IHE team could really understand our context, our environment, our institution. All members of the OMNES team have used some or all of the training that was available through webinars and talks. We valued the opportunity to network with other members – everybody is unique but we have shared concerns, shared challenges.”

Caroline Gautier, Director, OMNES Education London School

IHE have been really helpful in putting together bespoke consultancy support for us on subjects that we needed to know a lot more about very quickly. The great thing about working with IHE is that you develop a personal relationship. IHE know our journey and have been able to find the right specialists, who have given us the right amount of time and focus, which is much more effective and efficient.”

Maria Dunbar, CEO, Leiths Education

Networks and Forums

Our Networks and Forums serve as policy-led hubs of member interaction, offering collaborative spaces to exchange insights, address challenges, and offer mutual support across roles and specialisms.

In 2024, we conducted a full review of these groups. We considered member feedback, engagement data, current and future policy developments, regulatory changes, and strategic need to determine our future plans. Following this review, we committed to implementing a series of changes which will take effect from 2025.

Our reshaped Networks and Forums will form the foundation of a new online community platform for Members to be launched next year, helping to further enhance opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange.

IHE Networks from 2025

Data Network

Equality of Opportunity Network (EON)

Finance Network

Heads of Institution

Immigration Compliance Network (ICN)

International Education Network (IEN)

Quality Network

Student Services Network

Recruitment and Admissions Network

Technology in Education Network

IHE Forums from 2025

Creatives Forum

Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) Forum

Governance Forum

HR Forum

Three new Member-led groups – a Marketing Advisory Group, a Student Loans Sub-Group, and an Industry Partnerships Project Steering Group – will also be created to support specific activity planned for 2025.

We will also develop a new Teaching and Learning Symposium with a focus on the innovation and evaluation of new practice in teaching and learning.



Network spotlight

Immigration Compliance Network

Over the past year we have seen some quite significant changes in the world of higher education visa compliance: the way we work with agents and ever-increasing compliance and cost responsibilities flowing from UKVI, all combined with the broader financial challenges facing institutions. We have certainly had plenty to discuss at the meetings of the Immigration Compliance Network (ICN).

The topics for our roundtable discussions were carefully selected to provide relevant insights and for IHE Members to share experiences, often providing reassurance that we are all taking a similar approach in the way we are responding to developments.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, I feel proud as Co-Chair that ICN has stimulated a good level of discussion on a variety of important subjects. Next year is likely to throw up even more challenges as we await the much-anticipated Immigration White Paper.

ICN will be there to promote discussion, share knowledge, and continue to extend support to IHE Members."

Rob Pennell, Sotheby's Institute of Art,
Co-Chair of the Immigration
Compliance Network (ICN)





International Strategy

2024 was a challenging year for international education as the sector was forced to navigate misleading press coverage, a significant reduction in international student recruitment, and uncertainty following a change of Government.

Our work focused on publicly challenging negative narratives, building relationships with the new Government and lobbying for changes to immigration rules and visa processes. We leveraged expertise in our Immigration Compliance Network and International Education Forum and worked collaboratively with the wider sector to promote the value of international education.

All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Students

IHE acts as the secretariat to the APPG for International Students, which was established in 2016 with our support. In line with parliamentary rules, the APPG was disbanded in May following the Dissolution of Parliament for the General Election.

While the work of the APPG was therefore somewhat limited during 2024, it served a valuable purpose in bringing stakeholders together to respond to emerging challenges in international education.

JANUARY – APRIL

Assessing the impact of new immigration rules

In February, the APPG held a private meeting for parliamentarians and key representatives from the education sector to discuss the challenges arising from hostile and inaccurate media reporting regarding international student recruitment practices.

At their Annual General Meeting (AGM) in March, the APPG discussed the current and future impact of declining international student recruitment on their part of the education sector and on the UK's global position.

In April the APPG hosted a roundtable on changes to immigration rules which came into effect at the start of the year, removing the right for students to bring dependants to the UK while they study. Universities and independent higher education providers spoke about the impact of the changes, which has led to a significant reduction in international student numbers for the January intake, and what action could be taken to reduce further impact.

OCTOBER

APPG is reconstituted

The APPG held its first formal meeting of the new parliament in October, with four Officers elected to the group including Abtisam Mohamed MP as new Co-Chair.



Abtisam Mohamed MP and Lord Bilimoria, Co-Chairs, APPG for International Students

The Inaugural General Meeting (IGM) was followed by a panel discussion on understanding the data behind international student numbers. Government departments and sector bodies contributed to the debate, including representatives from the Department for Education (DfE), the Home Office, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the British Council, and Jisc.

NOVEMBER

International Students' Day celebration

In November the APPG held its annual International Students Day in the House of Lords, hosted by APPG Officer Matt Western MP. Attendees heard from Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills, who reaffirmed the Government's commitment to supporting international students and highlighted post-study work pathways as a key tool for retaining global talent. The event celebrated the rich cultural tapestry and fresh perspectives that international students bring to our campuses and communities, with contributions from two international students who spoke about their experiences of studying in the UK.

DECEMBER

Facilitated discussion on net migration

APPG Co-Chairs Abtisam Mohamed and Lord Bilimoria met National Statistician Professor Sir Ian Diamond to discuss net migration figures and approaches to the collection and reporting of international student data by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Protecting the Graduate route – a unified sector stance

In March, the then Home Secretary, James Cleverly MP, commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to carry out a rapid review of the Graduate route, raising concerns about the visa's fitness for purpose. The committee, chaired by Professor Brian Bell, published a report in May which found no evidence of abuse and recommended retaining the Graduate route in its current form. We issued a public response to the report, welcoming the MAC's conclusion and strongly encouraging the Government to follow the recommendation that the Graduate route be retained.

➤ [You can read our full response to the MAC report on our website](#)

Over the following weeks, we joined forces with representative bodies and membership organisations from across the sector, including the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), British Universities International Liaison Officers (BUILA), and Universities UK International (UUKi), taking a unified stance to lobby on this issue. Shortly after the General Election, the new Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, confirmed that the Graduate route visa would remain, with no plans to restrict the route.

International Education Strategy (IES)

We engaged proactively with the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) as part of a review of the International Education Strategy, launched in September. We argued for the IES to be maintained and strengthened, with more nuanced targets, a focus on growth, and through regional collaboration.

In December, representatives from the IHE community were invited to a roundtable discussion co-hosted by DfE and DBT to discuss next steps in the development of the strategy. The priorities identified by our Members included: creating sub-sector strategies and KPIs specific to the needs of small and specialist institutions; placing more focus on diverse delivery models, including short courses and professional training; and capturing better data.

IHE will continue this work through our role on the Education Sector Advisory Group (ESAG), with an invitation to meet Ministers in 2025 to identify and further develop the key areas of focus.



Annual Conference

In November, we welcomed delegates to One Great George Street in Westminster for the IHE Annual Conference 2024, our flagship event and the only conference dedicated to independent higher education providers. 300 delegates attended over the course of the day and evening, making it our biggest conference on record and reflecting the value that this event holds for the IHE community, prospective Members, and our sector partners. The conference was future-focused and considered the opportunities ahead for independent providers in a new political landscape.

FACTS &
FIGURES

15+ sessions

50+ expert
speakers

300 delegates

“A fascinating day and another powerful reminder of how this diverse group of specialist providers offers something important for the UK sector”

Conference delegate



Conference highlights

Ministerial speech: Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills

The Minister outlined the Government's five key priorities for reform, which ask higher education providers to:

- Widen access and improve outcomes for disadvantaged students
- Make stronger contributions to economic growth
- Play a greater civic role in their communities
- Raise the bar on teaching standards
- Drive a sustained efficiency and reform programme

In her speech, the Minister was clear that sector diversity is an asset and that independent providers have an important role to play in delivering against the Government's priorities.

“The diversity of our world-leading higher education system is a real strength. By recognising and celebrating the impact of education providers of different shapes and sizes, we can help prospective students find the opportunities that are right for them.”

Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith

➤ [A video and full transcript of the Minister's speech can be found on our website](#)





Conference highlights

Fit for an uncertain future: reimagining regulation

Prefaced by a conversation between Alex Proudfoot, IHE Chief Executive, and Philippa Pickford, Director of Regulation at the Office for Students (OfS), a panel of experts explored the future of higher education regulation with a focus on financial sustainability, supporting new models of delivery, building trust between providers and the regulator, and the value of involving students in policy making. The discussion emphasised resilience, collaboration, and using regulation as a tool for growth and transformation.



Another excellent Independent Higher Education conference. Fantastic speakers and a general sense of optimism arising from the agility of the IHE community"

Conference delegate

Global strategies to drive local growth: building new links between education and trade

This plenary session began with an address from Professor Sir Steve Smith, UK Government International Education Champion, who reaffirmed his commitment to collaboration with our Members on developing the International Education Strategy. A panel of experts then discussed strategies for how higher education can collaborate in growth sectors like the creative industries to position the UK as a global hub for talent and innovation. Panel members included representatives from the Department of Business and Trade (DBT) and Creative UK.

The Student of 2030

Chaired by Jake Howarth, a student and Vice Chair of our Student Advisory Board (SAB), this session explored the future needs of students and society. Discussion focused on how higher education providers could adapt to prepare students for an AI-driven future and emphasised the importance of placing the student voice at the heart of innovation.

➤ [A full write up of conference highlights can be found on our website](#)

The 2025 IHE Annual Conference will be held on Wednesday 26 November 2025 at the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) in London.



IHE Awards

The IHE Awards celebrate the breadth of IHE Member activity and the quality and value of the education our Members provide. 2024 was another record-breaking year for submissions, with 60 nominations received in total across eight categories, recognising both institutional and individual efforts to drive excellence in our sector.

FACTS &
FIGURES

60 nominations

24 shortlisted
Members

10 winners

NEW FOR
2024



WINNER
**EMPOWERING
STUDENT VOICE**



Sponsored by:



WINNER
**INSPIRING
COURSE**



Sponsored by:



WINNER
**TECHNOLOGY
ENHANCED
LEARNING**



Supported by:

Perlego



WINNER
**SUPPORTING
STUDENT
SUCCESS**



Sponsored by:



WINNER
**OUTSTANDING
COLLABORATION**



THE UNIVERSITY OF
BUCKINGHAM

Sponsored by:





WINNER
**ADVANCING
INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION**



Supported by:



WINNER
**SUPPORTING
STAFF
WELLBEING**



Sponsored by:



WINNER
**RISING
STAR**

Chris Baynard-Smith
Maria Jackson



WINNER
**OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION
TO THE IHE COMMUNITY
(PROVIDER)**

**ROYAL ACADEMY
OF DANCE**



WINNER
**OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION
TO THE IHE COMMUNITY
(INDIVIDUAL)**

Lizzie Terry

> [More information about the winning initiatives and our awards winners can be found on our website](#)



Awards spotlight

ESCP Business School: inaugural winners of the Empowering Student Voice Award 2024

ESCP Business School won the Empowering Student Voice Award for their exceptional commitment to embedding student participation and leadership throughout the institution.

At ESCP, students are recognised as the largest stakeholder group and are meaningfully involved in decision-making at all levels. Through roles such as elected programme representatives and student ambassadors, students actively contribute to shaping policies, services, and curricula. The student union, AGORA, ensures that voices from all six ESCP campuses – Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris, Turin, and Warsaw – are heard, with students participating in senior management meetings to influence cross-campus strategy.

ESCP's dedication to fostering leadership extends beyond governance structures. Student ambassadors take on roles that impact various aspects of student life, from careers and marketing to wellbeing and events. This approach ensures diverse representation and leadership opportunities for students beyond traditional academic settings.

Students also co-create key initiatives and services, including the design of a dedicated student wing with spaces tailored to diverse needs, from conference rooms to collaborative booths. ESCP's Student Experience department further supports student-led projects, ensuring that student input drives meaningful change.

Judges praised ESCP Business School for their holistic approach to empowering students, noting the clear commitment to cultivating leadership skills in academic and non-academic settings. They highlighted the institution's efforts to involve students in global policy discussions and its grassroots, student-driven approach to shaping policy and initiatives. The collaborative and equitable model at ESCP sets a benchmark for embedding student voices in institutional decision-making.



External Relations

In 2024 we focused on delivering the objectives of our new communications strategy: raising our profile, expanding our network of external stakeholders, and communicating our impact. This strategic approach has paid dividends, enabling us to be proactive, bold in our thinking, and influential when reacting to sector developments.

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|--------------------|
| FACTS & FIGURES | 10 press releases or public responses issued | 32 individual pieces of coverage in national or sector press | 10 blogs published |
| | 15 invitations to speak at events | 96% increase in LinkedIn followers | |

IHE’s views matter

2024 began with challenging media stories relating to franchised delivery and international student recruitment. We were approached for comment by national and sector press and able to utilise several channels to communicate our key messages swiftly.

In May, on the day the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) published its report following the rapid review of the Graduate route, IHE Chief Executive, Alex Proudfoot, went head-to-head with Nigel Farage in a live televised interview on GB News. During the course of the discussion, Alex highlighted the wide-ranging local and national benefits international students bring to the UK and drew on robust evidence to correct false assumptions on the pathways leading to permanent residency.

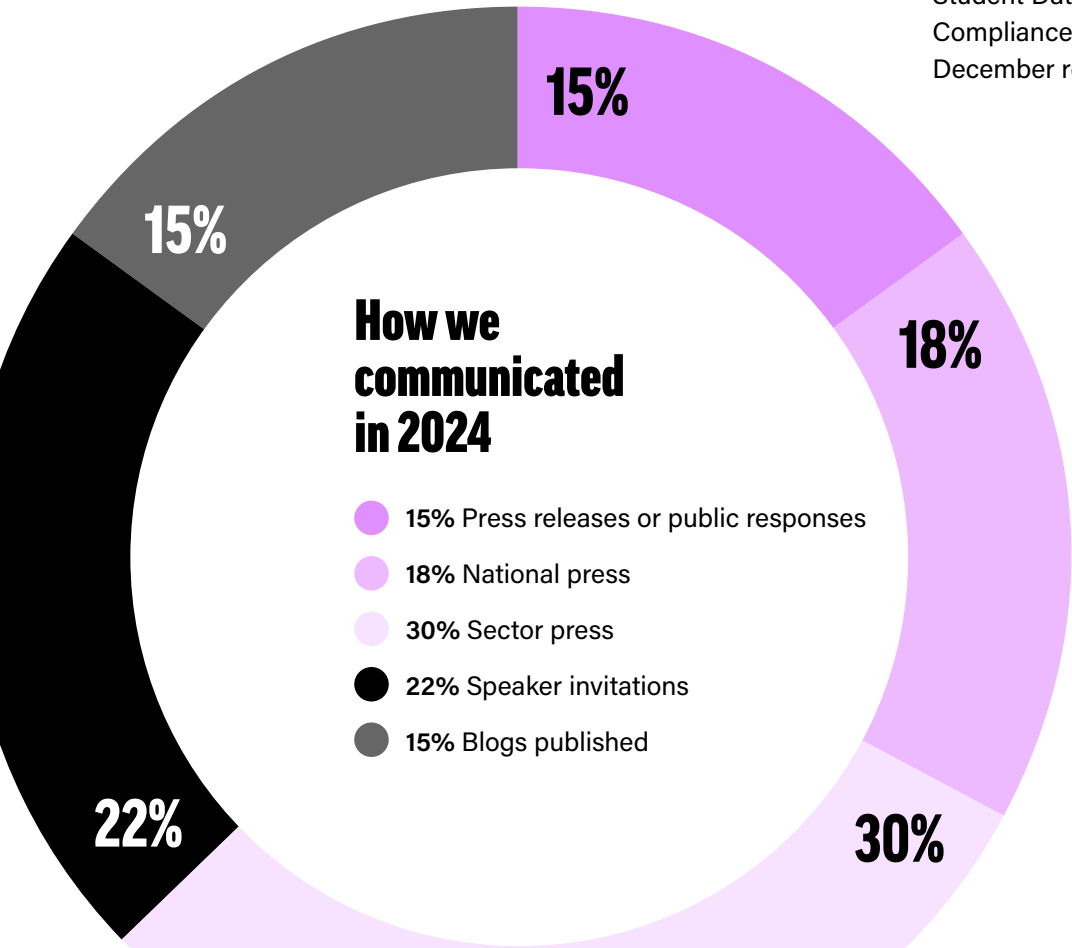
By the summer, we had launched our General Election manifesto. Within a week of the election, our Chief Executive was invited to a welcome reception hosted by the Department for Education (DfE) to meet the new Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, and the Minister for Skills, Jacqui Smith.

From June to September alone, IHE representatives were invited to speak at external events to share expertise in areas including franchised provision, data, lifelong learning, the future of tertiary education, and international student recruitment.

The year ended with the unexpected announcement from the Office for Students (OfS) to temporarily suspend applications for registration, Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs), and University Title. Several national media outlets approached us for comment. We published an immediate public response, conveying our disappointment, highlighting the impact of the decision on our Members, and calling on the OfS to reverse its decision. We either authored or were mentioned in six media articles and think pieces in the first three days after the announcement.

Enhancing member engagement – developing an online communication platform

In the second half of 2024, we began work to develop our new online community, designed to help us engage more effectively with our Members, and to facilitate direct communication between our Members – a vital next step in our communications strategy as we continue to grow. The platform was tested by our Student Services Network, Student Data Forum, and Immigration Compliance Network in November and December ready for launch in 2025.



2024 media highlights

APRIL

Department for Education (DfE) announcement delaying the roll-out of LLE

[Published a response on our website](#)

[Quoted in FE Week](#)

MAY

Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review of the Graduate route

[Quoted in The Guardian](#)

[Debated Nigel Farage on GB News](#)

JUNE

Manifesto coverage

[Created a dedicated area of our website with a distinct brand identity](#)

[Opinion pieces published in Times Higher Education and FE Week](#)

[Covered by HEPI, Wonkhe, The PIE News and Research Professional News](#)

DECEMBER

Office for Students (OfS) suspension of registration and Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs)

[Published a response on our website](#)

[Quoted in Times Higher Education and FE Week](#)

[Opinion piece published by Wonkhe](#)





Partners and Supporters

A primary focus throughout 2024 was growing our community of partners and supporters, nurturing these crucial relationships, and maximising the benefits these connections bring to our membership.

Our strategic collaborations with IHE Partners and Supporters represent a significant asset to both IHE and our Members, not least in the opportunities generated to develop tailored support for independent providers. Over the course of the year, we facilitated introductions, collaborated on the development of bespoke learning opportunities, and created opportunities to share expert insights at online and in-person events.

FACTS &
FIGURES

25 Partners and Supporters

9 new relationships established

Our Partners and Supporters in 2024



> [You can read more about our Partners and Supporters on our website](#)

Higher education providers face mounting challenges, balancing rising expectations from students and regulators with growing operational costs that often outpace income. Our partnership with IHE has allowed us to deepen our understanding of the sector's needs and provide tailored advice through topical webinars and in-person workshops. Together, we can empower institutions with expert insights and targeted support. By addressing financial pressures, we aim to help build a happier, healthier, and more sustainable future for higher education."

Tanya Birnie, Head of Corporate Advice & Payroll, Harding Hub



It has been fantastic to see our partnership with IHE continue to gain momentum. From developing joint activities and collaborating on sector priorities, through to presenting and participating at IHE events, the ability to engage directly with IHE Members – to share knowledge and exchange insights – has been invaluable. Through Jisc joining forces with IHE on a number of existing and new initiatives, together we can strengthen our support for IHE Members, whether it's improving the student experience or enhancing their digital infrastructure."

Val Keay, Marketing Business Partner, Jisc



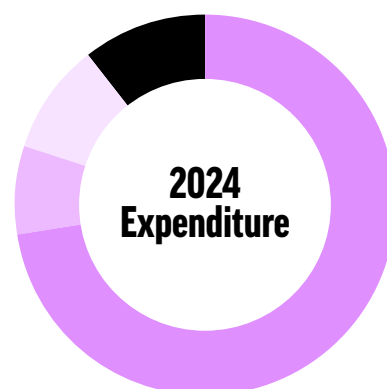
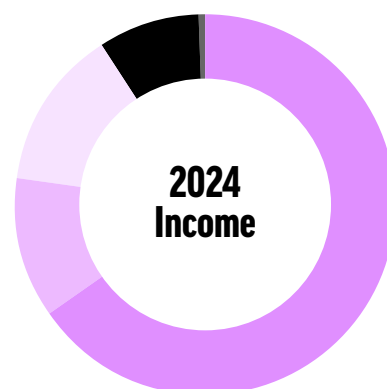
Financial Review

Consolidated income and expenditure for the year and our position at the end of the year are summarised in the tables below.

| Income | 2024 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| IHE member subscriptions | £425,222.39 | £367,475.44 |
| Consultancy and development | £78,178.41 | £97,886.28 |
| Events | £88,808.99 | £62,365.23 |
| Commercial partnerships | £55,643.34 | £22,546.67 |
| Interest on reserves | £3,530.14 | - |
| Total income | £651,383.27 | £550,273.62 |

| Expenditure | 2024 | 2023 |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Staff costs | £471,188.13 | £384,098.74 |
| Consultancy costs | £49,989.90 | £60,586.92 |
| Events costs | £61,050.38 | £44,657.09 |
| Operational costs | £67,070.12 | £67,299.24 |
| Total expenditure | £649,298.53 | £556,641.99 |

| | | |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Margin | £2,084.74 | -£6,368.37 |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|



Staff Team

Senior Leadership



Alex Proudfoot
Chief Executive



Gemma Green
Director of External Relations



Joy Elliott-Bowman
Director of Policy and Development



Natalie Kubicki
Director of Operations

Policy



Angela Halston
Senior Policy and Engagement Officer



Ellen Engstrom
Senior Policy and Engagement Officer
(from March 2024)



Sophie McCarthy
Policy and Engagement Officer
(up to July 2024)



Uroosa Syed
Policy and Engagement Officer
(from August 2024)

External Relations



Anna Gibbs
Communications and Marketing Officer
(up to May 2024)



Georgina Jeronymides-Norie
Communications and Marketing Manager
(from September 2024)



Jane Southgate
Head of Partnerships



Michaela Hopkins
Head of Membership and Services

Operations



Penny Tzivitz
Events and Operations Officer

Board of Directors



James Pitman
Chair
Study Group



Professor Phil Deans
Vice-Chair
Richmond American
University London



Colin Castelino
Honorary Treasurer
Le Cordon Bleu



Andrew Boggs
Independent
Board Member
Royal Holloway,
University of London



Peter Sharpe
Independent Student
Board Member
College of Legal
Practice



Claire O'Leary
Member
College of Medicine
and Dentistry



David Howell
Member
MetFilm School
(up to 31 July 2024)



Dr Janet Rose
Member
Norland College



Marion Lowe
Member
S P Jain London
School of
Management
(from 1 August 2024)



Rachel Nicholson
Member
Academy of Live
Technology



Roxanne Stockwell
co-opted Member
(up to 31 July 2024)



Sharona Friedman
Member
Global Institute
of Sport



Steffan Davies
Member
AD Education UK
(from 1 August 2024)

Steffan Davies and Marion Lowe were appointed to the Board from 1 August 2024. Former Chair, Roxanne Stockwell, was co-opted to the Board for an additional year to ensure a smooth handover to our new Chair, James Pitman.

David Howell stepped down on 31 July 2024 after completing a full two terms (six years) on the Board. We thank David for his long service and dedication to supporting IHE's development during a period of significant change.



Serving on the IHE Board has been a true privilege. It's been inspiring to witness and contribute to IHE's growth over the last six years, a testament to the strength and relevance of our collective voice. I've especially valued the Board and Executive's ambition and shared commitment to championing independent providers and enhancing student choice across UK higher education."

David Howell, IHE Board Member 2018–2024



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HIGHER
EDUCATION**

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