

IHE Annual Conference 2026

Programme

Wednesday 18 November 2026 | RCP London

TIME	CONFERENCE PROGRAMME
09.00-10.00	Registration, refreshments and exhibition <i>Reception – Ground floor</i> <i>Osler & Long – First floor</i>
10.00-10.10	Welcome <i>Sharona Friedman, Chair of the Board, Independent Higher Education</i> <i>Technology One, Conference Partner</i> Room: <i>Wolfson Theatre, ground floor</i>
10.10-10.25	Chief Executive's address <i>Alex Proudfoot, Chief Executive, Independent Higher Education</i> Room: <i>Wolfson Theatre, ground floor</i>
10.25-10.55	Plenary 1 <i>Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills</i> Room: <i>Wolfson Theatre, ground floor</i>
10.55-11.25	Plenary 2 <i>Ruth Hannant and Polly Payne, Chief Executives, Office for Students</i>

Room: <i>Wolfson Theatre</i>	
11.25-11.55	Refreshments, networking and exhibition
11.55-12.25	Plenary 3 Oceans between us: Higher education in a parted world <i>Peter Hendy, Chief Executive Officer, Independent Higher Education Australia</i>
12.25-13.15	Plenary 4 Putting a premium on opportunity: Fees, fairness and the new graduate future Speakers: <i>Professor Kathryn Mitchell CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of Derby; Professor Lynette Ryals OBE, Vice-Chancellor, University of Buckingham; Imran Tahir, Senior Economist, Institute for Fiscal Studies</i>
13.15-14.15	Lunch, networking and exhibition <i>Osler & Long – First floor</i>
14.15-15.05	Breakout session 1 (<i>select one to attend</i>)
	1A – What does Westminster think of us? Politics and independent higher education providers Room: <i>Wolfson Theatre, ground floor</i>
	1B – Financial sustainability: Navigating risk and strategic choices Speakers: <i>Lil Bremermann-Richard, Group Chief Executive Officer, Oxford International; Will Dent, Head of Financial Analysis, Office for Students; Joanne Roxburgh, Director, OMNES Education</i> Room: <i>Dorchester Library, first floor</i>
	1C – Flexibility by design: Building a system for lifelong learning Speakers: <i>Professor Wendy Finlay BSc (Hons) PGCert PhD FAHEP, Pro Vice Chancellor - Education and Students, University of the Built</i>

	<i>Environment; Michelle Smyth, Head of Government & External Affairs, The Open University</i> Room: <i>Linacre & Sloane, ground floor</i>
	1D – Fair recruitment and admissions: Balancing access and responsibility Speakers: <i>Naomi Abayasekara, Policy Officer, Universities UK; Nick Miller, Chief Commercial Officer, QA Higher Education</i> Room: <i>Council Chamber, ground floor</i>
15.05-15.35	Refreshments, networking and exhibition
15.35-16.25	Breakout session 2 <i>(select one to attend)</i>
	2A – What does TEF really tell us about quality? Speakers: <i>Professor Paul Ashwin, Professor of Higher Education and Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Arts, Humanities, Management and Social Sciences, Lancaster University; Dr Ailsa Crum, Independent Consultant; David Kernohan, Deputy Editor, Wonkhe</i> Room: <i>Wolfson Theatre, ground floor</i>
	2B – Student sponsorship, compliance and good practice: Insights from UKVI Speakers: <i>Ronnie McAulay, Business Manager, Work, Study, Family & Ukraine Services, Home Office; Jack Rose, Study Service Manager, Work, Study, Marriage & Citizenship, Home Office</i> Room: <i>Linacre & Sloane, ground floor</i>
	2C – Higher education for a changing workforce: Rethinking reskilling Speakers: <i>Bishan Chapman, Former member of the IHE Student Advisory Board (2025/26) and graduate of the University of the Built Environment; Professor Ian Palmer, Principal, Escape Studios; Nimmi Patel, Associate Director – Skills & Talent Policy, techUK</i>

	Room: <i>Dorchester Library, first floor</i>
	2D – Supporting disabled students: Are providers ready for what’s next? Speakers: <i>Rebecca Bouckley, Student Support and Engagement Manager, Tavistock Education and Training; Suzanne Carrie, Head of Equality and Welfare, Office for Students; James Coe, Senior Partner and Director, Counterculture Partnership LLP; Dr Peter Kay, Associate Dean of Academic Engagement and Partnerships, ASU London</i> Room: <i>Council Chamber, ground floor</i>
16.30-17.10	Plenary 5 The student voice: Perceptions of higher education in an age of choice Speakers: <i>George Hastings, Co-Host, Get There One Day Podcast; Aaliyah Likuluta, Founder, LiyahTalks, Speaker and Youth Voice Advocate; Sophie Scott, Vice Apprentice Chair, South East Apprenticeship Ambassador Network; Alice Stapleton, Career Change Coach & Coach Supervisor; Charlie Wasley, Co-Host, Get There One Day Podcast</i> Room: <i>Wolfson Theatre, ground floor</i>
17.10-17.30	Closing remarks Room: <i>Wolfson Theatre, ground floor</i>
17.30-20.00	Drinks reception IHE Awards 2026 Room: <i>Dorchester Library, first floor</i>

Programme correct at the time of publication and subject to change. For further information, visit the [IHE Annual Conference 2026 webpage](#).