

Group Development Annual Report 2025

Prepared for members and the Charity Commission

This report provides an overview of activity, engagement, and achievements across HELOA groups in the academic year 2024-2025.

UK Vice-Chair Group Development Summary

2024-2025 has been a year of continued growth, collaboration, and innovation across our groups. Group Chairs have led their committees with enthusiasm, delivering valuable sessions and maintaining strong member engagement. The combined efforts of groups have contributed to a thriving HELOA community focused on professional development and shared best practice.

Overview of Group Development

Across the groups, we have seen sustained engagement, the welcoming of new committee members, and an increased focus on meaningful professional development. Groups have shared best practice and delivered sessions tailored to members' needs. Feedback from Group Chairs tells us that members value the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with peers rather than simply receiving updates, with particular a reference to interactive formats being most impactful. They also reported that training that helps members apply new skills directly in their work (e.g., using data, student engagement, outreach) is especially appreciated, and that members gain reassurance and innovation from seeing common challenges addressed in different ways, indicating peer benchmarking is a motivating factor. Group Chairs reference that a great benefit to members of being part of HELOA and attending group-level activity is the feeling of belonging, positivity, and shared purpose continue to be major contributors to engagement.

Group Highlights

London Group	
Group Chair	Ross Pickering
2024-25 Group Chair	George Green
Number of Members	306
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	70
Member Engagement attending 1< (%)	22%

Key Highlights:

1. Full Committee in Place: With a new Group Chair and Vice-Chair (Training) hitting the ground running, we now have a complete five-member committee, enabling us to run our planned events: two in-person and at least one virtual per year.
2. Online Engagement Up: Attendance at our online Training and Development Day rose by a third, from 30 in 2024 to 43 in 2025, showing strong engagement despite a challenging climate.
3. Growing Membership: Two new institutions joined HELOA London in August 2025. We will explore ways to involve them fully so they can maximize their membership benefits.

Most insightful takeaways and moments of best practice:

The Learning to Love Data session and Parents Panel were well received by members.

Member Quote: "Thank you HELOA London for being such great colleagues over the past couple of years. I've really valued your experience, expertise and friendship, especially with all the travelling that we do. There is a real strength in having lovely people around you despite not working at the same institutions".

Midlands Group	
Group Chair	Becci Williams
2024-25 Group Chair	Becci Williams
Number of Members	252
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	58
Member Engagement attending 1< (%)	19%

Key Highlights:

1. Our September training day was a big success, with a lively progression panel sparking great discussions that continued into the networking lunch - breaking down barriers between institutions and members.
2. We relaunched the Midlands mentoring programme, pairing 12 members, with feedback highlighting the sense of community and support it provides.
3. Our member survey at the start of the year guided improvements: more discussion time, slightly shorter days for easier travel, and new sessions and workshops now scheduled across the year.

Most insightful takeaways and best practice:

Our round table discussions are always insightful and highly valued, fostering best-practice sharing and connections. This year, we've focused on making sessions welcoming and useful. The 'You Said, We Did' survey follow-up helped tailor meetings to member needs, making them more accessible and engaging.

Member Quote: "The Midlands are a really great bunch of people with creativity and brilliant ideas. The training days attract a wide range of expertise and a real community feel."

Anglia Group	
Group Chair	Lucy Nottingham
2024-25 Group Chair	Clive Sheridan
Number of Members	62
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	30
Member Engagement attending 1< (%)	29%

Key Highlights:

1. HELOA Anglia had the most attendance to the December 2024 meeting where 17 made it from 6/7 member institutions to the in-person meeting with speakers from UniTasterDays, SLC and Datafiltr supporting their roles. This meeting had good feedback overall.
2. Had a small meeting in February with UK Committee updates and sharing best practice. This was an adaptive change and was welcomed by members.

Most insightful takeaways and best practice:

In the December 2024 in person meeting, the floor was opened about how Anglia members wanted their meetings. It was decided that the members wanted to continue with the same way we hold our meetings which is all online with December to continue being in person. We found that meetings were better at a central location and thank you to the University of Cambridge for hosting the December 2025 in person meeting.

Wales Group	
Group Chair	Ben Kibble-Smith
2024-25 Group Chair	Llinos Williams
Number of Members	100
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	48
Member Engagement attending 1< (%)	50%

Key Highlights:

1. September Meeting: Featured a panel of experts with nearly 100 years of combined clearing experience, offering valuable insights and predictions on future clearing trends.
2. UCAS Working Group: A new collaboration with UCAS to address Wales's declining HE participation rates. Named representatives from member institutions will work with UCAS on school and college engagement, events, and promotion.
3. Mentoring Scheme: Officially launched with strong mentor participation; recruitment of new mentees is ongoing and off to a positive start.

Most insightful takeaway and best practice:

Strong enthusiasm across the group to explore new approaches for Wales UCAS events. With UCAS's insights and support, this is a key opportunity to shape future decisions and improve student outcomes. UCAS attended two meetings in response to concerns over event attendance.

Scotland Group	
Group Chair	Vicky Bannerman
2024-25 Group Chair	Vicky Bannerman
Number of Members	136
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	108
Member Engagement attending 1+ sessions (%)	72%

Key Highlights:

1. SHELOA Conference (May 2025): We hosted the biannual SHELOA Conference, a two-day CPD-accredited training event attended by 78 members from 17 of our 18 institutions. The programme included three plenary sessions and 8 webinars featuring both external and member speakers. Eleven institutions contributed to sessions, sharing best practice across Scotland. Feedback from attendees was excellent.
2. Teacher and Adviser Webinars: We delivered a series of three webinars for teachers and advisers, outlining changes to Personal Statements for the 2026 admissions cycle. Representatives from all Scottish HEIs provided institutional updates across the sessions. A total of 84 participants registered to attend.
3. Mentoring Scheme: Now in its sixth year, our mentoring scheme pairs 10 HELOA Scotland members with colleagues from other institutions to share experience and career guidance. Mentees particularly value connecting with peers beyond their own organisations.

Most insightful takeaways and best practice:

HELOA Scotland produces an annual Open Day poster listing all member institutions' dates and links. Distributed to schools and available online, it's a valued resource for teachers.

Member Quote: "The value of working with and getting to know other institutions and members better - sharing knowledge and problem sharing and solving. I feel like I've learned a lot from being a HELOA member, grown in confidence in my career and in general sector knowledge through engaging in meetings, conferences, mentor schemes and webinars."

South East Group	
Group Chair	Raechelle Jackson
2024-25 Group Chair	Raechelle Jackson
Number of Members	224
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	50
Member Engagement attending 1< (%)	21%

Key highlights:

1. The new Vice-Chair for Training has made an immediate impact, introducing fresh session ideas and strengthening collaboration with members across groups.
2. Networking opportunities have increased, helping members connect on a more personal as well as professional level.
3. The February conference saw the fewest drop-outs to date, reflecting strong timing, an engaging programme, and participation from universities that had not previously attended.

Member quote: "Really useful - some of the most helpful HELOA sessions I have been to. Thank you for organising."

South West Group	
Group Chair	Jen Lewis
2024-25 Group Chair	Charlie Smith
Number of Members	153
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	39
Member Engagement attending 1< (%)	20%

Key highlights:

- New Chair and Vice-Chair (Membership and Communication) elected this year with lots of fresh ideas about the future of the group.
- Group started gathering feedback about relaunching the group mentoring scheme, which continues to be developed by the committee.

Most useful takeaway and best practice:

Stacey-May Fox from Student Finance England shared useful insights about the new Lifelong Learning Fund at our May meeting.

Member Quote: "I really enjoyed how discussion focussed this meeting was. It gave me the opportunity to speak to people more than at other, more lecture-focussed meetings."

North East, Yorkshire and the Humber Group	
Current Group Chair	David Metcalfe
2024-25 Group Chair	Kelsey Blemings
Number of Members	231
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	51
Member Engagement attending 1< (%)	17%

Key Highlights:

1. Full Committee in Place: With new committee members joining the team, we are able to run our planned events with fresh ideas brought to the forefront of our programmes.
2. We consistently have strong attendance at our group-level meetings, noting our September training day as particularly well-attended.

Most insightful takeaways and best practice:

Members have found group discussions on a variety of key topics useful to share best practice and support the development of members and delivery of their work.

Member Quote: "It's great to see other universities and hear how we all do things. A problem shared makes us all feel supported."

North West and Northern Ireland Group	
Group Chair	Ellie Collins
2024-25 Group Chair	Ellie Collins
Number of Members	241
Number attending at least 1 group session in the 2024-25 academic year	104
Member Engagement attending 1 < (%)	37%

Key Highlights:

1. NW & NI Mentoring: The process has been streamlined, with sign-ups now limited to twice a year. We currently have around 19 active mentor-mentee pairings.
2. New Practitioners' Blogs: The New Practitioners' Guide has been refreshed as a series of easily shareable and regularly updatable blog posts on our website.
3. CPD Accreditation: December's meeting has been accredited for Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Most insightful takeaways and best practice:

- Peer-to-Peer sessions allow colleagues to share work-related challenges and receive feedback and advice from fellow members.
- "Say HELOA to" is an informal online questionnaire where members can submit responses that are shared with the group, providing a fun way to get to know one another and learn about different roles within the organisation.

Member Quote: "One thing I think some members sometimes forget about the value of these meetings, is how much they lift your mood and make you feel good seeing everyone again - I'll confess I'd been feeling pretty low recently with workload and changes etc., but came away from the day so much happier and excited for the year. Definitely can't put a price on that."

Participation & Impact

Future Outlook – Priorities for 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, Group Chairs have identified priorities aimed at strengthening engagement, enhancing collaboration, and ensuring members continue to benefit from professional development opportunities at both group and national levels. They have provided feedback to inform the strategy for training at both levels, with consideration of sustainability. Furthermore, they have expressed the enhancement of group level opportunities and prioritising this over national level training.

Appendix: Data Summary

Group	Chair	Members 2024-25	Attending more than 1 group level meeting	Engagement (%)
Greater London	Ross Pickering	306	70	22%
Midlands	Becci Williams	252	58	19%
Anglia	Lucy Nottingham	62	30	29%
South West	Jen Lewis	153	39	20%
Wales	Ben Kibble-Smith	100	48	50%
Scotland	Vicky Bannerman	136	108	72%
South East	Rachelle Jackson	224	39	20%
North West	Ellie Collins	241	104	37%
North East	David Metcalfe	231	51	17%

Context

Engagement varies widely, from 17% (North East) to 72% (Scotland). This could be due to a number of factors, with Wales and Scotland having nuanced differences when it comes to funding for example. Wales and Scotland also hold their biennial conferences, which tend to attract higher attendance due to their less frequent scheduling and greater capacity.

Closing Statement

HELOA's groups remain the heart of the HELOA community. Through dedicated group-level committees and active members, the organisation continues to be a space for collaboration, innovation, and mutual support. A wider discussion has begun between Group Chairs on the HELOA training strategy, and how both national and group-level can compliment each other and achieve the broader mission of HELOA in providing training for professionals in student recruitment and outreach whilst maintaining the sustainability of the charity.

George Green

Vice-Chair (Group Development)

November 2025