

## HELOA Training Team Annual Report 2021

The focus in this Training AGM report is our new strategy for the next three years, our return to in person events over the past few months and our development of CPD accredited conferences. The report also highlights our engagement across all National training events, our improvements to events following delegate feedback and our plans for National conference venues in the future.

### HELOA Strategy

Following our successes in the 2018-2020 HELOA Strategy, we decided for the next three years to focus on how we can continue to offer sector-leading training and best practice sharing for our members. We will continue to develop and offer targeted events for specific levels of our membership, aim to engage with 40% of our individual membership and explore the balance between physical and virtual events post Covid-19.

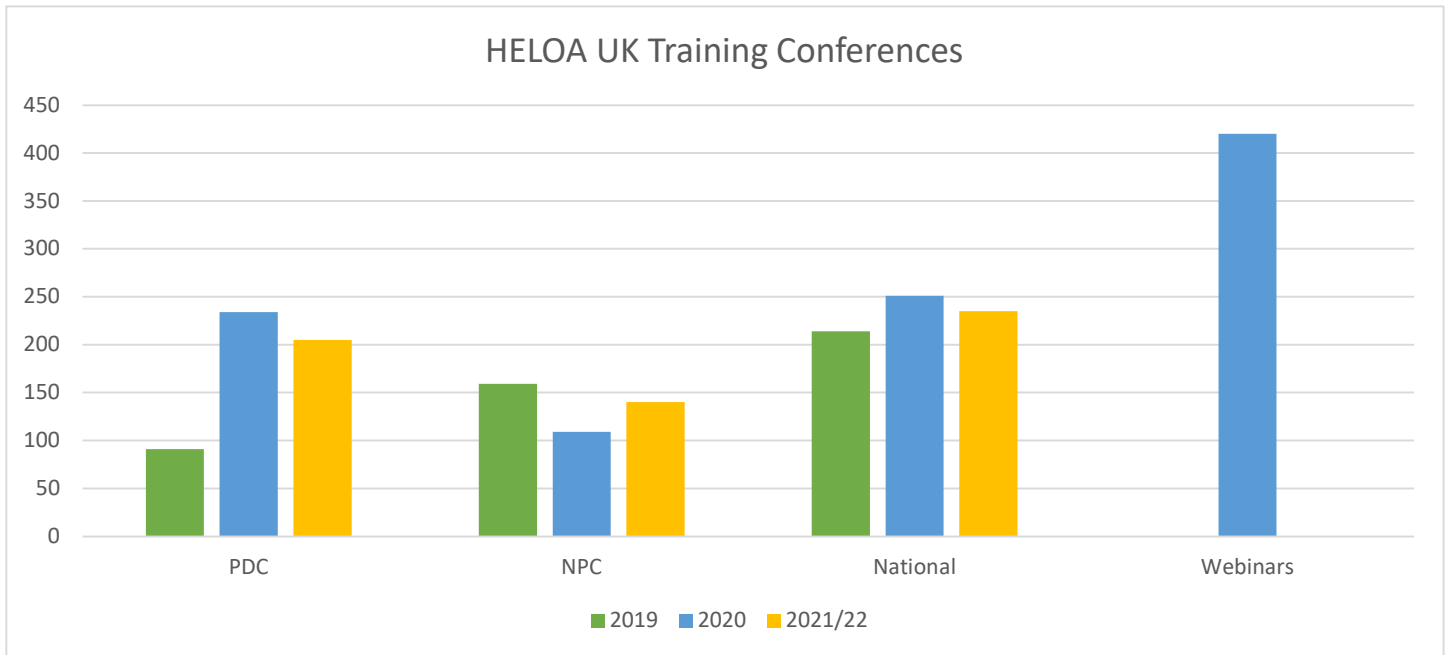
### CPD Accreditation

This year we were able to invest in purchasing a three-year HELOA membership to the CPD Certification Service. This was fully scoped out as part of the 2018-2020 strategy, however, was delayed in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We joined the association mid-year and focused on accrediting our first in person events. I am pleased to say that at the time of writing (November 2021), our NPC and PDC have received accreditation *in-principle* and will receive *final approval* once we have submitted materials and evaluation from the event. The intention is to also submit for accreditation of the National Conference. This is a great addition to the HELOA Training offer, and we're pleased to be able to provide this official CPD certification for our members - certificates will be provided to attendees shortly after the event.

### Working with the HELOA Partnerships

Working closely with our Partnerships team is a key part of our targets, and we've continued to engage and connect with a wide variety of relevant sponsors and partners for our national training events. We aim to engage 20% of our individual membership with partners and sponsors from 2021-2023. This year, we hosted a PDC in partnership with SLC, Unibuddy sponsored and delivered a session at our virtual PDC in February and our physical PDC in November. At the time of writing, we'll have confirmed **12 partners and sponsors** who'll be joining us at National Conference in January, however we may see this increase due to the hard work of our partnerships team.

## Training events - Membership Engagement



### HELOA National Conference and AGM

The HELOA National Conference and AGM takes place in January each year and is the largest of the HELOA training events with sessions covering Student Recruitment, Widening Participation, Marketing and Professional Development. We made the decision in 2020 to postpone our 2021 event due to Covid-19 and held additional PDC events virtually instead. We are pleased to be holding our 2022 event at Carden Park Hotel and Golf in January and we're excited to see many of our members at the conference. This is a smaller venue in comparison to the Crowne Plaza, Stratford-upon Avon, however we do have exclusive use of the venue across the 3 days. Bookings opened in mid-October, and we received over 50 bookings on the first day. At the time of writing, we expect to close bookings early as we have filled all the full delegate spaces and can only take day delegate bookings currently.

HELOA is a member-led organisation and we're pleased to say that each session included in our 2022 conference programme came from delegate ideas and feedback on our 2020/2021 evaluation forms. The sessions are incredibly varied, and we can see from bookings that attendance is quite evenly spread across the conference workshops. In the evaluation section below, we have outlined some of the changes we have made for 2022 following feedback from our 2020 event.

	2019	2020	2022
<b>Delegates</b>	214	251	235* Est. 260

<b>Feedback</b>	90.3% rated the conference as 'good' or 'excellent'	93.2% rated the conference as 'good' or 'excellent'	To be confirmed
<b>First conference attendees</b>	35.3%	37.6%	34%*

\*(bookings still open at time of writing)

This year, the Training team continued our work with RedMeet, (an organisation who offer a free service to charitable associations, to find appropriate and high-quality venues at a low cost) to identify potential venues for National Conferences going forward. In previous years, the conference moved venues every 2 years, however there are few venues in a reasonable price range which offer all the facilities required for the event (large main room, 5/6 syndicate rooms for workshops and roughly 250 bedrooms). A proposal was taken to the UK Committee in September, and it was voted that the National Conference will move to a northern venue for 2023-2024 (Crowne Plaza, Newcastle) before moving to a southern venue for 2025 - 2026 (Crowne Plaza, Stratford-upon-Avon). If this model is successful, it may be repeated for future years.

### Professional Development Conference

The HELOA Professional Development Conferences are intended to be smaller, one-day conferences based around a specific topic that is relevant to our members. The events, due to their smaller nature, are intended to focus on networking and sharing best practice.

After making the decision to postpone 2021's National Conference, we decided offering additional one-day Professional Development Conferences, focussed on the wider session themes we'd offer at National, would be the best way to engage with members and provide accessible training. Our February PDC focused on Marketing, April on Supporting students (in partnership with SLC) and in November we hosted our first PDC in person since November 2019, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Nottingham discussing Events and Ambassadors.

	2019 (2 physical events)	2020 (3 Virtual events)	2021 events (2 virtual events & 1 physical)
<b>Delegates</b>	91	234	205
<b>Job level (Manager)</b>	15%	19%	30%
<b>Feedback (Gd. or Ex.)</b>	87.5%	91%	84%*

\*(with final evaluation incomplete at time of writing)

As mentioned above, over the next year we will explore the balance of physical and virtual events and intend to offer at least one virtual Professional Development Conference. We will also investigate the possibility of hybrid event delivery as it has been requested by our members.

#### New Practitioners Conference

The HELOA New Practitioners Conferences are run twice a year and are aimed at members that are new to the higher education sector and have been in their roles for less than six months. Members are provided with training on the broad skills needed within the sector across widening participation, marketing, and student recruitment roles.

Whilst we saw a small dip in attendance for our virtual conferences, the October NPC in 2021 was our first in person event in over 22 months, and we saw 85 delegates from across all 9 of our HELOA Groups. The feedback at the time of writing is incredibly positive and we are glad that we have been able to offer spaces for our members to network and share best practice.

	2019 (2 physical events)	2020 (2 Virtual events)	2021 (1 virtual and 1 physical)
<b>Delegates</b>	159	109	140
<b>Feedback (Gd. or Ex.)</b>	95.9%	97%	99%

Next year we will look more closely at the conference programme and explore the option of adding some session choices for delegates that may be more specific/relevant to certain roles. This is something that has been requested in our evaluation forms but hasn't always been possible due to our venues/number of delegates attending.

#### Webinars

In 2020 we hosted a wide range of webinars for members, and they proved popular with members. Unfortunately, during 2021, we were unable to run webinars due to staffing changes in the team and our increased workload when organising our physical events. We are looking into capacity across the team and would like to potentially host 3 webinars in 2022 at convenient times of the year - feedback and suggestions of topics are welcomed.

## Training events - Evaluation

Conference evaluation is incredibly important to the team as we know that our members change over time as do their interests and CPD needs. As mentioned above, we worked hard this year to offer a National Conference programme that is entirely made of sessions suggested by our members, and we are very grateful to the range of speakers who offer sessions and opportunities to share best practice with other members.

Whenever the team receives constructive comments, we look carefully at where changes can be made to improve the member experience. Some members would like more networking and longer events and others prefer snappy presentations/information and an overall shorter conference. We will always read every comment received in our evaluation forms and strive to improve every training opportunity we offer. Following some queries and requests from members in the past few months, the training team will be working closely with our new Vice Chair for Governance and Policy to ensure we have suitable EDI requirements in place for our events. We work hard to make each event accessible for the wide range of our members but are always willing to continually improve where possible.

Some improvements for the 2022 National Conference:

You said...	we did!
Conference is full on with little downtime	We have added a wellness hour and reduced workshop sessions to 1 hour to include longer breaks in the programme.
More flexibility changing sessions	Sessions are on a first come first serve basis, but our 2022 venue has larger rooms which has allowed for increased capacities in each session
Explain how important sponsors are to conference <b>and</b> Allow more time between sessions to speak to sponsors	We have added a sponsors' section to our FAQ on the website & scheduled a business exhibition into the programme. We've also changed to a different type of conference competition to encourage natural conversations with sponsors.
Day delegate package isn't value for money	Day delegate rates changed for Thursday and Friday to reflect differences in programme
Less paper in packs	We now use recycled paper for any sheets into delegate packs and requested to exclude partner/sponsor inserts

Next year we'd like to potentially open the conversation more widely with our members and ask for more qualitative feedback, particularly around certain topics so we can have a two-way dialogue on how to improve training events going forward. This may be via the HELOA Facebook page or some ad-hoc drop-in virtual sessions.

### **Training events - Budget**

The Training team makes every effort to ensure each conference is run at a low-cost to benefit the charity and our members. Our current pricing structure is great value for money and any profit made is invested directly back into the association for our members. An example of this is the addition of formal accredited certification to our conferences where possible. We work closely with RedMeet, an organisation who offer a free service to charitable associations, to find appropriate and high-quality venues at a low cost. We have located our next 2 National Conference venues (as mentioned above) and secured very affordable rates - we expect very minimal increases to HELOA Training costs (and these will only be in line with inflation). We have also invested in external speakers to provide additional expertise sessions for our members, and these have been well received.

### **Training Team thanks**

Our events and successes are not possible without the hard work of our fantastic volunteer Conference Managers. I'd like to thank Andrew Cooper for his hard work running Professional Development Conferences for the past two years and we wish him the best of luck in his new role as Vice Chair for Memberships and Administration. We welcomed Amie Richardson to the team as our new PDC Manager and she ran her first successful event in November. My thanks also to:

- Emily Day, Conference Manager (National Conference, Membership Liaison)
- Emma Thomason, Conference Manager (New Practitioners' Conference)
- Jonas Rae, Conference Manager (National Conference, Venue Liaison)

And as always, thank you to Dawn and Louise in the HELOA Office as they are incredible at helping us bring our events to life, prepping all the physical elements we need and to the rest of the UK Committee for delivering sessions when needed, offering ideas, and supporting the National training events when they can. It's been great to work with you again this year.

**Reena Kaur, HELOA UK Vice Chair (Training)**

**November 2021**