

HELOA Training Team Annual Report 2022

It's been another successful year for the HELOA Training Team with return to in person events following the Covid-19 pandemic. This report summarises our engagement across National events and gives an update on how the team have worked towards the current strategy aims.

HELOA Strategy Update

Our focus is to always ensure that training events provide our members with the opportunity to share best practice whilst being sector leading. We are consistently looking for ways to engage the wider membership and offer session delivery and case studies that highlight successes and challenges within the sector. We are pleased to report that we are successfully on track to meet the aims of the 2021-2023 Strategic plan as highlighted across this report with a strong and continued interest in the training provided. Working with the VC Memberships and Administration and HELOA Groups to track engagement across all the membership, rather than just attendance at National training events, we have engaged with **45%** of our membership. We continue to work across the association to consider how members engage across the entirety of HELOA's offering for the membership.

Last year, we successfully joined the CPD accreditation service and NPC's and PDC's run this year have received approval from the service. The team have come across a small administration issue however, in terms of processing the certifications and ensuring it's done in line with GDPR requirements and will be working with the organisation and HELOA Office to find a solution. Unfortunately, due to its breadth and differentiation for each delegate, it was complex to ensure a way in which National Conference could also be accredited for attending members, but we will continue to work with the CPD service to find a potential resolution for future conferences.

The team have continued to communicate with HELOA Partnerships and consider where we can further engage with HELOA's partners and sponsors. This year, we have again increased the number of attendees from external organisations at conferences and events and whilst some partners and sponsors were sadly unable to attend conference in January 2022 due to Covid-19, we have **10** organisations attending in January 2023. During the remainder of the strategy, the training team and partnerships will be considering how to increase the range of external sponsors and encourage wider attendance at PDC's and NPC's.

Sadly, it took us slightly longer to recruit for team members upon two terms coming to an end, which has impacted upon our ability to further scope a balance between physical and virtual training content, and this will be a priority for the upcoming year. We aim to hold at least one virtual PDC each year, however external factors hindered our ability to do so this year.

Training events - Membership Engagement

As highlighted earlier, over the past year we have engaged with **45%** of our membership through training events and have worked closely with VC Memberships and Administration to track and consider how members engage across the entirety of HELOA’s offering for the membership.

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 were incredibly proud to be one of the first large scale conferences to return to an in person offering despite the challenges of the pandemic. We were in line with all government guidelines and pleased to report no Covid cases following attendance at the event due to our testing requirements and Covid policy. In line with last year’s conference, we’re pleased to again say that each session included in our 2023 conference programme came from delegate ideas and feedback on our 2021/2022 evaluation forms. The sessions are incredibly varied, and we can see from bookings that attendance is quite evenly spread across the conference workshops.

This year the conference will be held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Whilst we have received some comments that it is further north, and difficult for some members to travel to, this has not deterred bookings and it is great to see a larger number of our Scottish members booking on due to proximity and reduced travel time and an increase in day delegates from several HELOA Groups. We see this as a fair positive to support members across our whole membership and will continue to champion fair venues across the UK for all events.

	2020	2022	2023
Delegates	251	231*	251 **Est 280
Feedback	93.2% rated the conference as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’	99.1% rated the conference as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’	To be confirmed
First conference attendees	37.6%	38.2%	55.8%**

**Bookings closed at 266 however we received 35 cancellations due to various Covid-19 circumstances*

***Bookings still open at time of writing*

We are so proud to see our evaluation rates remain at a high standard and an increase of first-time delegates, showing how sector wide our training is valued and seen as high standard.

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 on these topics but over the years, these conferences see a mix of attendance. This year we ran events focussing on Understanding T-Levels and Project Management. We intended to run a virtual event at the end of November looking at the current issue of Cost of Living for students yet were unable to confirm a programme and advertise with capacity quite stretched at this time of year. We are hoping to postpone this until February.

	2020 (3 Virtual events)	2021 events (2 virtual events & 1 physical)	2022 (2 physical events)
Delegates	234	205	160
Job level	19%	30%	20%
Feedback (Gd. Or Ex.)	91%	84%	86%

We decided that hybrid events would be unlikely, as it would be an unfair experience for virtual delegates who would be unable to engage with the wider room and speaker but will continue to consider virtual speakers if they are providing a specific insight and cannot make the set date. As indicated above, these events are designed around specific topics, and we'd like to hear more ideas from our members for sessions/topics and what you'd like to see in the future, particularly any sponsors or partners you'd like us to showcase that supports you in your day-to-day roles. We aim to run these in April, September and November but would also like feedback from members about when may be a good time if these do not fit into schedules.

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. Following feedback from previous conferences, this year we trialled breakout sessions on day one of the event providing delegates with some choice and deeper insight around Student Recruitment and Widening Participation topics. These have received great feedback and will remain in the conference programme moving forward; however, we continue to encourage colleagues and delegates to learn about the wider sector when attending as the conference aims to provide that initial overview rather than specific insight into smaller areas/roles within the HE sector. We also continue to stress booking early as the conference books/fills up each year.

	2020 (2 virtual events)	2021 (1 virtual and 1 physical event)	2022 (2 physical events)
Delegates	109	140	178
Feedback*	97%	99%	100%**

*Q: The conference has helped build my sector knowledge by providing an opportunity to share best practice and network

**Excluding November 2022 which had not occurred at time of writing

We are conscious that over the past few years, the event has been held at The Met Hotel in Leeds, and whilst this is a relatively central venue of the UK we are keen to move the conference for fairness across all groups. As will be further highlighted in the budget section, one reason we have remained in this venue is due to the venue having a significantly cheaper cost in comparison to other quotes. Therefore, it is expected that the NPC delegate fee will need to increase next year to cover the costs- we will always try to look at the most cost-effective options and ensure the sessions and programme remain the best value for money.

Online training

In the 2021 - 2023 strategy, we outlined that we would consider the option of further online training or potentially on-demand content to suit the needs of members. Similar to last year, with staffing changes across the team and wider UKC and an increased workload organising physical events and in our day-to-day roles, this has been an area we've been unable to develop. This will be an area of development for the new VC Training with input from members on how this could work best and what content is most wanted in an online format.

Training events - Evaluation

Each event we run asks members to complete a short online evaluation form as we are aware that the CPD and interests of members will consistently develop or change. On average, across all events, around 50% of attendees complete the evaluations and we read each constructive comment to ensure we can improve delegate experience where possible. Below are a few examples of what you said and what we did in return.

You said...	we did!
EDI of conferences and events	Hosted a forum/feedback session with VC governance to hear member feedback Working closely with EMBED (our EDI consultants) and HELOA EDI Manager to implement future feedback
More time at conference	We did explore an earlier start but felt it added more travel pressure to delegates. In addition to wellness hour, we have now introduced the option for a free session which allows delegates to catch-up on any work calls or emails if required
PG sessions and input	We have reached out to further networks to add more PG sessions to conference and along with Partnerships are in conversation with FAU to develop our offering for PG colleagues
Improve experience for lone/first time delegates	Wording changed on booking from and introducing group lanyards and group badges at National Conference to visually help people identify networks and colleagues from their HELOA Group

Training events - Budget

As always, every effort is made to ensure conferences are as low-cost as possible whilst remaining a benefit to members and the charity. This year, we worked closely with the HELOA Executive and VC Finance to bid for money from the HELOA surplus to run a free PDC for our members which engaged over 140 members across the membership. This was a successful event with a varied programme for all members and saw delegates from all 9 HELOA groups and range of job levels. Whilst we have secured our National Conference venues ahead of time and are likely to avoid increased costs (although in line with inflation) we are unable to do this for NPC and PDC venues as the events fluctuate a bit more. Therefore, we highlight that members should expect an increase in costs, particularly as the quotes we received this Autumn are roughly 30 - 40% higher for our usual conference packages. 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) means we have a professional insight into reasonable and expected costs rather than inflated and over-priced venues that are low quality. We will continue to work hard to ensure increases in price are minimal and the quality of our training remain to the highest standard.

Training Team thanks

My past three years in the VC Training post have been more challenging than anticipated but I would not change it, as I have grown immensely in this role and have appreciated working with such a great team. After the successful National Conference earlier this year, the team said goodbye to Emily Day as Conference Manager but were delighted to welcome Sarah Tomkins into the role. We were happy to have Jonas Rae continue in his post as Venue Liaison Conference Manager providing a depth of expertise. Amie Richardson has thrived in her role as PDC Manager offering a great range of events and amazing feedback and I am excited to see the next events she develops. Finally, a thank you to Emma Thomason who began her role as NPC manager in incredibly challenging circumstances in March 2020 but confidently delivered our first virtual events and our first in-person event after 22 months. Emma steps down after National conference and we thank her for continued determination whilst in post.

The Training Team is not complete without Dawn and Louise from the HELOA Office who constantly provide additional support to the team when events get busy and keep us on track with meticulous task lists and reminders. In addition, the UK Committee, who are always helpful in commenting on programme drafts, offering ideas and supporting events when needed. I'm grateful that I'll continue to work with you all in my next post.

Reena Kaur
HELOA UK Vice-Chair (Training)
November 2022