

AGM 2026 Minutes

Wednesday 28th January 2026, 09:30 – 12:30

Online via Teams

1. Welcome and Introduction - Reena Littlehales (RL), UK Chair

The meeting opened at 09:30 and members were welcomed to the HELOA 2026 AGM.

Voting

Primary Contacts and nominated proxies were eligible to vote via the Mi-Voice voting platform. The Association had 142 full member institutions and one third (47) of primary contacts/ appointed proxies were required in attendance to be quorate. 71 Primary contacts or their appointed proxies were present at the start of the meeting so the meeting could continue. Most decisions were taken by a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting and in the event of an equality of votes, the chair would either call for another vote or exercise their casting vote. Items 7a, 7b and 7c were decisions that amended the constitution so required a majority of 75% of the votes cast for the motion to be passed.

Motions

Each item would be introduced followed by an opportunity to ask questions or make comments in the chat or by raising a hand. A proposer and seconder would be sought before bringing it to a vote. Those proposing, seconding, or commenting were asked to provide their full name and institution, to be recorded in the minutes. For proposed amendments to the original proposal, a proposer and seconder would be sought. The amendment would be voted on before returning to a vote on the original proposal, which may have included the amendment or if it was changed significantly, there may have been no need to return to it.

Non-member attendees

Dawn McClintock, HELOA Office Manager and Louise Povey, HELOA Office Assistant representing the HELOA office and Matt MacDonald from Mi-Voice supporting the voting process.

2. Apologies for Absence - Alexandra Whitham (AW), UK Vice-Chair (Membership & Administration)

The Vice-Chair (Membership and Administration) Alexandra Whitham, Manchester Metropolitan University, received two formal apologies from member institutions who were unable to have a representative attend the meeting. The apologies will be circulated following the meeting.

3. Minutes of the AGM, 29th January 2025 - Reena Littlehales (RL), UK Chair

The Chair asked for comments, questions or amendments to the 2025 AGM Minutes. No comments or questions were received.

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| Proposer | Ben Kibble-Smith, Wrexham University |
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| Seconder | Ross Pickering, City St George's, University of London |
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The Chair invited the meeting to adopt the 2025 minutes as a true and accurate record. The minutes of the 2025 AGM were accepted as an accurate record - For: 83, Against: 0, Abstain: 4.

4. Reports

4.1 UK Committee Report - Reena Littlehales (RL), UK Chair

UK Committee Structure

A member vote in July 2025 approved the reduction of trustees to streamline roles and reduce costs. Although these changes were due to take effect at the 2026 AGM, the Vice-Chair (Communications) stepped down in August 2025, prompting an earlier adjustment. In September 2025, the Standing Orders were amended to allow a new Vice-Chair (Communications) to be appointed as a non-trustee. Trustees have been aligned with key operational areas and as a trial, a communications-linked trustee will present the communications report, with the non-trustee Vice-Chair (Communications) available to answer questions.

Business of the UK Committee

Four UK Committee meetings were held this year, two in person and two virtual, focusing on financial sustainability, membership survey outcomes, and reviewing the UKC structure. Significant work has been undertaken to streamline governance, strengthen administrative support, and plan for long-term financial sustainability, particularly as HELOA enters the final year of its current strategy. Over half of the strategy is rated green, with plans in place to progress remaining amber areas.

External Representation

Engagement with organisations such as Ofqual and UCAS has continued, including work on admissions consultations, qualifications, and new UCAS tools.

Volunteer Roles

Volunteer capacity remains a challenge across the sector, so steps have been taken to reduce burden, including making the HELOA office full time in February 2025.

Thanks

Thanks to members, the committees, volunteers over the past 8 years and the HELOA office for their support.

Questions/ Comments

- **Ross Pickering**, City St George's, University of London - Thank you for being a fantastic chair and steering the charity over the past few years.
- **Hannah Henry-Wake**, University of Leicester - Thanks so much Reena!
- **Jamie Graney**, University of Liverpool - Thanks Reena for all your work, excellent job done!
- **Becci Williams**, Nottingham Trent University - Thanks Reena, you're the best.

4.2 Partnerships Report - Raffaella Cuccia (RC), UK Vice-Chair (Partnerships)

Partnership Team

The partnerships team were introduced, including new appointments made since the AGM report, and Group Vice-Chairs were thanked for their support, who act as an extended team supporting partnership activity across the year.

Partners

HELOA continues to work with partners across three categories: strategic partners, supporters, and sponsors. Strong strategic relationships were highlighted with UCAS, including a new merged working group that will now meet quarterly to cover events, product development, and strategy, with updates cascaded to members. Ongoing collaboration was also noted with Find a University, the Student Loans Company, and The Student Room, who have contributed in a variety of ways across conferences, events, awards, insights and member communications.

Supporters

Supporters such as UniTasterDays, Zero Gravity, Save the Student, the Brilliant Club, and IDP Connect, many of who delivered sessions at national conference, supported the business expo, or shared insights through the Bulletin. Engagement with IDP Connect included participation in its advisory board and promotion of new tools such as the cost-of-living calculator for home students, supported by a member webinar.

Commercial

Commercial partners and sponsors were recognised as vital to HELOA's financial sustainability, particularly in supporting the National Conference. Both long-standing and new sponsors were involved this year. A new sponsored delegate scheme was introduced to help members attend conference despite financial pressures, with five places funded by UK University Search, Find a University and Logistica. Overall, partner income increased compared with the previous year, with 22 partners engaged.

We aim to continue with these partnerships in 2026 and explore new opportunities. Thanks to all the brilliant people I have worked with during my 3 year term with HELOA. It has required a lot of work and commitment, but it's also rewarding personally and professionally. It has helped to build a strong network and ultimately support the education sector and make a difference to many young people.

Questions/ Comments

- **Keir Robinson**, The University of Edinburgh - Congratulations to Raffi on her promotion.

4.3 Group Development Report - George Green (GG), UK Vice-Chair (Group Development)

Group Development Summary

Overall, the past year was positive and stable, despite some financial and sectoral challenges affecting certain groups more than others. Groups continued to deliver engaging and practical activities adapted to these challenges. Sessions that prioritise discussions and interactions consistently received strong feedback, particularly where members can take practical ideas back to their own roles, and group level activity really does do that.

Membership Engagement

Engagement varied across groups from 17% to 60%, reflecting factors such as group size, geography and funding, rather than differences in commitment or quality. A consistent theme

across all groups was a strong sense of belonging, with members valuing the shared purpose, positivity and reassurance provided by group participation. Interactive peer-led formats continue to be the most impactful with round table discussions and peer sharing sessions being the most consistently well attended and valued. Mentoring remains a strong area in some groups with feedback highlighting that it's increased confidence and professional development.

External Partners

There have been successful collaborations with external partners, including UCAS and Student Finance England, helping members respond to policy changes and sector developments.

Looking Ahead

Strategic adjustments may include regional collaborations and increased online or remote sessions to support engagement. Group-level activity continues to provide practical benefits to members and ensures their voices are represented in HELOA's work.

Questions/ Comments

- **Ali Clark**, University of Stirling - Great to see the improvements to the Group Development report and activity taking place in all regions.
- **Claire Forsman**, The University of Edinburgh - It's great to see the return of the group reports this year and good to see the range of activities taking place across the UK and interesting to see the range of membership numbers and level of engagement across different national and regional groups.
- **Andrew Jackson**, University of South Wales - On the group's report, can you explain the engagement tracker number please?
George Green, VC (Group Development) - The engagement percentage per group was calculated using the engagement tracker. It counts the number of unique members who attended at least one session during the year and divides that by the total number of people associated with the group. This approach provides a useful snapshot of overall engagement, reflecting that some members attend multiple sessions while others may only attend one.
- **Andrew Jackson**, University of South Wales - The group report notes that, "A wider discussion has begun between Group Chairs on the HELOA training strategy, and how both national and group-level can complement 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." Can you provide more detail on what consultation has taken place with the training team and which nations you are referring to in that statement?
George Green, VC (Group Development) - Discussions with Group Chairs over recent months highlighted the value of group-level meetings. Feedback from both chairs and the member survey emphasised that these meetings are highly accessible, inclusive, and cost-free, making them particularly valuable. Group chairs, being closer to members, can tailor sessions to local needs and provide practical insight that can inform national strategy and training. This group feedback will be collated and shared to help improve collaboration between group-level activity and the UK Committee's national offerings. All nations would be involved but it may come to light that not all nations need to change their group delivery in the immediate.
Reena Littlehales, UK Chair - Consultations occur through quarterly UK Committee meetings and separate quarterly meetings between Group Vice-Chairs (Training) and

the training team. These discussions focus on themes, sessions, and training events happening both nationally and at the group level.

4.4 Communications Report - Raechelle Jackson, South East Group Chair (Comms linked Trustee)

Social Media

In 2025, HELOA achieved significant progress in social media, digital communications and member engagement. LinkedIn followers grew by 19% year-on-year, with an average post engagement rate of 10.5%, which is above the sector average of 8%. There have been an average of 23 engagements per post.

On Instagram, published posts increased by 51.8%, generating 17,232 views and a 196.9% increase in reach, showcasing experiential content from training events alongside promotional material. Facebook continued to serve as a member forum, with posts up 22% year-on-year and over 6,900 views, while X (formerly Twitter) is being phased out in line with sector trends.

Digital Communications

Digital communication improvements included updated membership pages for clarity and consistency, a comprehensive website brief following accessibility reviews and refreshed brand deployed across emails, social media and training events. Email bulletins achieved an average open rate of 47.2%, representing a 17.9% year-on-year improvement.

Looking Ahead

We aim to implement platform specific approaches informed by performance data which will include enhancing experiential content on Instagram and increase user generated content that places member experience at the forefront of social media.

Engaging a web developer using the approved brief to enhance the HELOA website and content management system, ensuring that it remains a valuable and accessible resource.

Thanks

The outgoing Vice-Chair (Communications), Hannah Goodwin, and the 2025 digital communications team, Adam Blackmore, Michael Long, and Niamh Gallagher were acknowledged for establishing a strong foundation to support more effective delivery and a greater communication impact in the coming year.

4.5 Membership and Administration Report - Alexandra Whitham, UK Vice-Chair (Membership & Administration)

Membership Numbers

Membership numbers in 2025 showed a slight decrease compared with the previous year. As of November, HELOA had just over 1,700 members across 149 institutions, with small reductions across full, associate and institutional categories, and minor variation across groups. Most areas experienced a slight decline, while Wales saw a small increase. The reduction highlights the feedback that we've had from members and mirrors the trends that we're seeing elsewhere across HELOA, like training activity. It is a reflection of the continued pressures of the higher education sector. Many institutions are reviewing their budgets and often limit spend on professional development. This decrease is also typical at the point in the year when

membership renewals are being assessed. Membership numbers often recover in the new year as teams and roles change.

Membership Engagement

Despite the slight reduction, member engagement remains strong, with groups providing professional development and networking opportunities that members continue to value. Associate membership has been strengthened by the appointment of James Kerr from the University of Buckingham, who has focused on understanding needs and ensuring associate members gain the most from their membership.

Membership Survey

A membership survey conducted in 2025 received 239 responses, showing that around 80% of respondents felt they received value from HELOA membership and nearly 85% reported institutional support for active participation. Survey results highlighted a preference for group-level activity, such as local events and peer networking, while also recognising the importance of larger scale opportunities where groups can come together to meet others.

There was strong understanding of the benefits of holding a role within HELOA, both personally and institutionally, which supports the association's sustainability. Two members were awarded National Conference places through a prize draw linked to the survey.

To maintain and improve engagement, we will continue to look at that feedback to identify where improvements can be made and how we can continue to make sure that membership is valuable and rewarding. We will also continue to evaluate this year's online AGM to make sure that it remains an accessible and effective forum.

Thanks

Acknowledgements were made to all members for their ongoing involvement, and to the HELOA office staff, whose behind-the-scenes work supports the association's achievements.

Questions/ Comments

- **North East Group** (received prior to AGM) - What is HELOA doing to tackle general disengagement and are there any policy changes to engage people who have left?
Alex Whitham, VC (Membership & Administration) - Membership engagement is an important focus and we know that engagement can be challenging. To support this we gather feedback from members when they leave. There is the option for institutions to complete a survey to provide feedback as to why they are reducing membership or cancelling membership. For the first time this year we have run a volunteer survey which George Green, Vice-Chair (Group Development) has put a lot of work into. Surveying both current and previous volunteers will help us to understand pressures and barriers to involvement that people might face and help us understand why members may choose to or not to come forward for posts. We will continue to use the membership survey data and run future surveys to understand what members value most and how we can focus this in our work. We have also been tracking membership trends for the past three years and are able to use this data to support membership engagement for example, free places at conferences.
Engagement is a key focus for the upcoming strategy, with plans to merge two operational roles to focus more directly on membership engagement. Overall, the

association is actively listening to members and taking practical steps to ensure membership remains engaging and valuable.

- **Andrew Cooper**, University of Liverpool - What are HELOA hoping to do to demonstrate the value of being part of HELOA, for those who are unsure HELOA is value for money, as by demonstrating this could help increase overall membership again?
Alex Whitham, VC (Membership & Administration) - Some of my previous points should highlight that. In addition, a focus of communications is organic content with members highlighting to other members what the value is, ensuring those who value their membership can share that with other members or potential members.
- **Reena Littlehales**, UK Chair - As we look to merge UK VC (Membership & Administration) and VC (Group Development) into Membership Engagement, this new role will have a particular focus on value in membership.
- **Rebekah Bacon**, University of Nottingham - You've mentioned that membership numbers for this year have been taken at the point in the year where we usually see a dip in numbers. For the previous year, are the membership numbers also taken from the report for the last AGM or are they the total over the whole of 2024-2025?
Alex Whitham, VC (Membership & Administration) - The numbers are compared directly with the previous AGM report, so from the previous November. There was a dip at the same point in the previous year also. It's just to highlight that this tends to be at the lowest point and then we will potentially see an influx again in the following year.
- **Jamie Graney**, University of Liverpool - Can we just highlight there's a discrepancy between the Finance report and the Membership report, whereby Finance report Strategic Priorities point 4 says 95% found value in their membership, whilst Membership report says 80.4% - thanks!
Alex Whitham, VC (Membership & Administration) - We will confirm those numbers.*

4.6 Governance & Policy Report - Amy Slater-McGill (ASM), UK Vice-Chair (Governance & Policy)

Charity Status

HELOA continues to operate as a registered charity in Scotland, England and Wales, with annual returns submitted in line with requirements. The OSCR (Scotland) return has been submitted and the Charity Commission (England and Wales) return is due by the end of January. While not currently registered as a charity in Northern Ireland, HELOA operates within Northern Ireland under Section 167 of the Charities Act. Registration options will be reviewed once the Northern Ireland Charity Commission's processes allow.

Elections & Appointments

During the year, significant governance developments took place with three national elections for UK Vice-Chair (Group Development), UK Vice Chair (Finance) and UK Chair. Six new trustees were elected as Group Chairs and four UK Committee members were appointed.

Policy Changes

Trustee numbers were reduced from 17 to 11 in line with Charity Commission guidance to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness, with changes approved by members in July 2025. A review of the Standing Orders was conducted to enhance accountability and clarify processes for removal of officers to ensure accountability to the UK Committee and members.

A formal social media policy is in development with the communications team.

Strategy

The 2024–2026 Strategy continues to be implemented and was reviewed during 2025. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) remains embedded across governance processes, including refined role descriptors along with the introduction of pre-election informational interviews for prospective trustees. To support this standardised interview, question templates and structured scoring systems were implemented.

Looking Ahead

Priorities for the incoming Vice-Chair (Governance) include:

- Refining election and appointment processes.
- Reviewing EDI progress and embedding priorities into the next strategy.
- Updating the Constitution in line with the revised Standing Orders.

4.7 Training Report - Emily Day (ED), UK Vice-Chair (Training)**National Events**

The Training Team has had a busy year, navigating sector-wide budget constraints that have impacted members' ability to attend events. In response, the team has adapted its delivery model to ensure events remain accessible and aligned with member needs. Despite these challenges, all conferences have maintained a high standard and continue to receive strong feedback. The 2026 National Conference is currently achieving a 97.6% "good" or "excellent" satisfaction rating, reflecting the team's commitment to responding to member feedback.

Continued Professional Development (CPD) Accreditation

All of the Professional Development, New Practitioners' and the Networking and Practitioners' Wellbeing Conferences have achieved CPD accreditation along with a North West & Northern Ireland group meeting and one further group accreditation submission pending.

Speakers

The team continues to prioritise increasing diversity of speakers across national and group level events and is encouraging members to submit expressions of interest to present, recognising this as an important professional development opportunity.

Looking Ahead

- The 2026 Professional Development Conference programme will include three online conferences and one in-person event, supporting accessibility and affordability.
- The New Practitioners' Conference will take place in person in May (Liverpool), with an additional online event in October.
- Contracts are confirmed for the 2027 and 2028 National Conferences, both to be held in Newcastle.
- Early Bird ticket options will be available again for the 2027 National Conference.

Thanks

Massive thanks to the training team, office staff and particularly Oliver Speke, who will be stepping down as the New Practitioners' Conference Manager following a transition and handover period and has been an amazing part of the team.

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| Proposer | Hannah McAvoy, University of Chester |
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| Seconded | Hannah Lockwood, University of Sheffield |
| The meeting was invited to adopt the reports of the UK Committee and UK groups as one. The reports were approved - For: 91, Against: 0, Abstain: 0 | |

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| 5. Election and Appointment of Officer Posts - Amy Slater-McGill (ASM), UK Vice-Chair (Governance & Policy) | |
| 5.1 Elected Officers and 5.2 Appointed Officers | |
| The elected and appointed officer's report was shared with the meeting. | |
| Questions/ Comments | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ross Pickering, City St George's, University of London - The report date should state 2025 and not 2024. <p>Alex Whitham, VC (Membership & Administration) - Thanks we will make that correction.</p> | |
| Proposer | Ross Pickering, City St George's, University of London |
| Seconded | Sarah Booth, University of Warwick |
| The meeting was invited to adopt the elected and appointed officers of the association. The officers were approved - For: 92, Against: 0, Abstain: 0. | |

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| 6. HELOA Office Report - Alexandra Whitham, UK Vice-Chair (Membership & Administration) - <i>updated from Reena Littlehales as stated on the agenda</i> | |
| Office Provision | |
| The HELOA office, based at Edge Hill University, is staffed by a full-time Office Manager and Office Assistant who provide a stable and supportive foundation for the association's work. The office plays a central role in supporting members and committees, managing membership and finances, coordinating training and events and ensuring compliance with governance and data protection responsibilities. The partnership with Edge Hill University continues to strengthen organisational capacity through access to IT and HR support. | |
| Office Hours | |
| Since February 2025, both office staff moved into full-time roles which enabled closer engagement across all areas of HELOA, following a review of workload and support needs. The shift has had a particularly positive impact on communications, finance, and governance, while also reducing organisational risk by embedding core operational activity within the office rather than relying solely on volunteer capacity. | |
| Key Developments | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications: A refresh of the HELOA website, including updated AGM, membership and conference pages; removal of outdated content; improved homepage functionality; and the introduction of integrated event calendars. • Finance: Additional support during the transition to a new Vice-Chair (Finance), including updated financial procedures, management of auditor queries, effective | |

invoicing and payments, and production of monthly financial reports to provide a clear oversight of the financial position.

- **Governance:** Review and updating of Standing Orders, policies, and privacy notices; coordination of election processes; introduction of trustee checks and continued alignment with Charity Commission and OSCR guidance; and strengthened GDPR processes, including a new privacy preferences form.
- **Compliance and Sustainability:** Careful costing of in-person meetings; promotion of lower impact travel; migration to Microsoft Teams and transition to a Google Non-Profit account to improve efficiency and sustainability.

Thanks

Sincere thanks to Dawn and Louise for their dedication and professionalism, and appreciation from committee and HELOA members for their ongoing contribution and commitment. The office also wish to give their thanks to all committee and HELOA members for their commitment and contribution to the success of HELOA.

Questions/ Comments

- **Ross Pickering**, City St George's, University of London - Thank you Dawn and Louise for all the work and support that you do - very much appreciated.

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| Proposer | Hilary Beck, Anglia Ruskin University |
| Seconder | Eleanor Wharfe, Manchester Metropolitan University |

The meeting was invited to approve the report of the HELOA office. The report was approved - For: 89, Against: 0, Abstain: 0.

7. HELOA UK Committee Structure - Reena Littlehailes (RL), UK Chair

UK Committee Structure Review

A comprehensive review of the UK Committee (UKC) structure, launched in December 2023 led by the Chair and Executive Committee centred on three key objectives:

- Reducing UKC operational costs
- Reviewing the number of trustees
- Evaluating how trustee and committee roles have evolved as HELOA has grown

As HELOA celebrates 35 years since its establishment in 1990, the association has grown significantly, from an informal professional network to a registered charity in England, Wales and Scotland with a substantial governance and operational structure. This growth prompted reflection on whether existing structures remained fit for purpose.

Throughout 2024 and early 2025, proposals were developed, benchmarked against similar organisations and charities, and discussed extensively at UKC and trustee level. A dedicated trustee meeting in February 2025 focused on improving cost-effectiveness, clarifying accountability, and refocusing trustees on strategic oversight rather than operational delivery.

In May 2025, members were consulted ahead of a vote, resulting in approval to reduce trustee numbers from 17 to 11. This reflected recognition that some roles, particularly

communications, partnerships, training and membership are operational in nature and better aligned outside trustee accountability functions.

Governance Improvements

- Introduced an informational interview stage within the trustee election process to strengthen safeguarding and ensure clarity of role expectations
- Clarified the distinction between governance (accountability to members) and operational responsibilities
- Revised the Standing Orders

UK Committee Responsibilities

Over the past three to four years, significant streamlining has taken place, with much of the administrative workload previously undertaken by volunteers transitioning to the HELOA office. As a result, the operational demands of several committee roles have reduced considerably. This shift has informed the proposal to merge roles, ensuring that responsibilities reflect the current workload and enabling trustees to focus more strategically. Therefore, the following constitutional amendments are proposed:

- Merging Vice-Chair (Finance) and Vice-Chair (Governance and Policy) into Vice-Chair (Finance and Governance)
- Merging Vice-Chair (Group Development) and Vice-Chair (Membership Administration) into Vice-Chair (Membership Engagement)
- Renaming the Executive to the Operational Group to better reflect its function

Constitution Updates

As the constitution does not fully align with recently updated Standing Orders, a broader constitutional review will follow. Subject to approval of the proposed changes, a six-month Policy Project Manager will be appointed to support a full constitutional update, with revised documentation to be presented for member approval at the 2027 AGM.

Comments/ Questions

- **Andrew Jackson, University of South Wales** - On point 7c, can you clarify the membership of the proposed operational group and is the plan to only have one group rather than two as at present?
Reena Littlehales, UK Chair - There will remain one UK Committee, meeting quarterly with trustees responsible for strategic oversight and accountability to members. The current Executive roles (Chair, Finance, Governance and Policy, Membership Administration, Group Development, Partnerships, Training and Communications) will be restructured to form a new Operational Group with trustee status being removed from Membership & Administration, Group Development, Partnerships, Training and Communications. The Operational Group will focus on delivery and logistics (e.g. conferences and website development) and may meet more frequently. This change clarifies the distinction between governance and operations, creating a more streamlined and strategically focused structure.
- **Andrew Jackson, University of South Wales** - So, the group chairs as trustees, would not be part of the proposed group?
Reena Littlehales, UK Chair - Group Chairs will remain on the UK Committee. The Operational Group will focus on logistics and delivery and may meet more regularly depending on need, with frequency determined by the incoming Chair in consultation

with the group. Meetings will remain flexible, reflecting workload and operational demands.

Proposer Jamie Graney, University of Liverpool

Seconder Helena Hampson, University of Greater Manchester

As these decisions will amend the Constitution, they need to be passed by a 75% majority of votes cast.

7a. The meeting was invited to vote on the motion to merge the roles Vice-Chair (Finance) and Vice-Chair (Governance and Policy) into one role becoming Vice-Chair (Finance and Governance).

Motion passed by 98.9% - For: 91, Against: 1, Abstain: 2

7b. The meeting was invited to vote on the motion to merge the roles Vice-Chair (Group Development) and Vice-Chair (Membership and Administration) into one role becoming Vice-Chair (Membership Engagement).

Motion passed by 97.8% - For: 90, Against: 2, Abstain: 0

7c. The meeting was invited to vote on the motion to rename the UK Executive to the UK Operational Group.

Motion passed by 97.8% - For: 91, Against: 2, Abstain: 0

8. Officer Report and Financial Proposals - Clive Sheridan (CS) UK Vice-Chair (Finance)

Finance Team

The Vice-Chair (Finance) role was vacant for the first half of 2025. During this period, The UK Chair, along with office staff, managed the finance responsibilities.

Overview

At the start of the financial year, HELOA held reserves and an intact surplus of approximately £4,900. Attendance at training events and the National Conference has declined in recent years, impacting income. For the upcoming financial year, the focus will be on aligning costs with the expected reduction in memberships and event bookings. Measures to improve financial sustainability include reducing the New Practitioners' Conference from two in-person events to one, helping to reduce costs and prevent future losses.

Groups

Group meetings formats are currently a mix of online and in-person. On average, groups have underspent their budgets by around 50% over the past few years. Financial reviews are ongoing to identify ways to reduce costs further, while continuing to support CPD accreditation for events.

Income & Expenditure

HELOA's main income comes from membership fees, training events, and sponsorships for the National Conference, while key expenditures include group events, operational costs, and the HELOA office team, as well as website, communications, and marketing.

The office team's full-time contracts have been extended for 18 months, aligning contract reviews with the financial year in September/October. Annual reviews will ensure continued financial viability before confirming ongoing full-time funding.

Financial Stability

Trustees are responsible for maintaining the risk management register and ensuring HELOA's financial stability. In recent years, financial pressures have increased due to sector-wide budget constraints, reduced CPD funding, lower membership income and declining attendance at training events. Income is primarily generated from the Professional Development and New Practitioners' Conferences, with group meetings supported by reinvested funds. The National Conference has historically run at a loss, partially offset by partners and sponsors, but this model is no longer sustainable. To manage risk, HELOA has signed a flexible two-year contract with the Crowne Plaza in Newcastle to help control costs for future conferences. The contract includes flexibility to reduce the number of rooms if attendance is lower than expected meaning HELOA only pays for what is needed, helping to limit financial risk. We will be offering an Early Bird rate for the conference to support member's attendance and budgets.

HELOA has moved its Google accounts to a charity Google account, eliminating previous subscription costs. The online meeting platform has also shifted from Zoom to Microsoft Teams, which offers better value for money. Additionally, the banking arrangements with Barclays are under review to find a solution that is more efficient and better suited to a charity's needs.

The UK Committee will continue meeting four times a year, two in person and two online, with this being reviewed annually for financial sustainability.

Questions/ Comments

- **University of Leicester** (received prior to the AGM) - Could you clarify what the next steps are regarding HELOA's financial stability, forecasting, and the overall sustainability of the charity moving forward?
Clive Sheridan, VC (Finance) - Membership fees are being continually reviewed, and the next academic year's fees will be assessed to align with upcoming budgets.
- **Andrew Jackson**, University of South Wales - Update on Strategic priorities, point 2, can this be reworded as it's meaning is unclear? "National Level Partnerships" - does this refer to England or UK wide, and the phrasing "especially in the Scotland and Wales nations where access to Higher Education and engagement carries in comparison to the England counterparts." is confusing and does not accurately represent the devolved competency for higher education to these national governments.
Clive Sheridan, VC (Finance) - This can be reviewed and updated as necessary.
Reena Littlehales, UK Chair - Most partnerships are UK wide, but there are a few specific to Scotland, and partnerships in Wales are being explored so this can be updated to ensure clarity. **
- **Ben Kibble-Smith**, Wrexham University - How will finance dictate the strategy moving forwards?
Clive Sheridan, VC (Finance) - When developing the new strategy, financial considerations will be a significant role.

Reena Littlehales, UK Chair - From a financial perspective, delivery against this year's strategy is currently rated green overall. The sole red rating relates to the proposed investment in professional development for UK committee members. This was carefully considered and in light of ongoing sector-wide financial pressures, a decision was made not to proceed with this expenditure to ensure that financial resources remain focused on maintaining the charity's long term financial sustainability.

- **Andrew Jackson**, University of South Wales - There is a typo in the word finance in Clive's job title.

Alex Whitham, Manchester Metropolitan University - This has been noted and will be corrected. ***

- **Dr Sally Middleton**, University of Aberdeen - Has it been considered running the national conference every second year and area conferences in the interim year?

Emily Day, VC (Training) - Running the national conference every year provides a financial advantage as we sign a minimum two-year contract with hotels, which secures discounted rates. Moving to every two years would likely reduce the ability to negotiate discounts.

Wales and Scotland run their own biennial conferences which are free for members to attend, with attendees usually covering only accommodation and catering. These conferences are financially supported through national event sponsorship so without this each year, it would impact group activity.

Attempting to alternate between a national conference one year and multiple area conferences the next would present capacity challenges, particularly alongside existing commitments such as PDCs and NPCs. Area conferences could also detract from the group activity.

Holding an annual conference also supports member engagement as institutions often rotate attendees, enabling different members to participate and share learning within their institutions. Conference materials, including slides and notes, will be made available on the website by the end of February to support this.

- **Jamie Graney, University of Liverpool** - Regarding the Report discrepancies for clarity, I think the 'Neutral' people have been added in to the Finance report, rather than those who 'Agree' or 'Strongly' agree - I think that'd get you to 95%.

Alex Whitham, Manchester Metropolitan University - Thanks for clarifying the discrepancy. *

8.1 Completed Accounts for the 2024/2025 Financial Year

Accounts were shared with the AGM reports.

8.2 Membership costs for 2026/27

Membership fees were adjusted in line with CPI increases (3.8% for this year), effective September 2027, ensuring value for money.

8.3 Proposed Budget for 2026/27

The proposed budget reflects income and expenditure allocations, with cost reductions in certain areas to maintain viability.

8.4 Proposed Auditor

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| Accounting will continue to be managed by the charity's long-standing external accountants, Bick Accountants. | |
| Proposer | Hannah Lockwood, University of Sheffield |
| Seconder | Rebecca Oliver, Bournemouth University |
| The meeting was invited to adopt the financial reports of the association. The reports were accepted - For: 94, Against: 0, Abstain: 1. | |

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| 9. Honorary Membership - Alexandra Whitham, UK UK Vice-Chair (Membership & Administration) | |
| <p>Honorary Membership</p> <p>Honorary membership is for individuals who are no longer eligible for HELOA membership through an institution and are unlikely to be in the future but have previously supported the association in achieving its aims and objectives. This could be through long service or exceptional contributions that they've made.</p> <p>Nominations</p> <p>Ahead of the AGM, there is an opportunity for members to nominate someone they feel meets the criteria that can then be considered for approval at AGM. This year we're delighted to have received an honorary nomination for Helena Ziegler, nominated by Ali Clarke, the University of Stirling.</p> <p>Questions/ Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keir Robinson, The University of Edinburgh - Thank you to Ali for submitting this nomination. | |
| Proposer | Vicky Bannerman, University of Strathclyde |
| Seconder | Claire Forsman, University of Edinburgh |
| The meeting was invited to approve the honorary membership. The nomination was accepted - For: 87, Against: 0, Abstain: 2. | |

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| 10. AOB - Reena Littlehales (RL), UK Chair | |
| <p>No official business was received within 28 days notice of the meeting and no other business was raised at the meeting.</p> <p>It has been an absolute privilege to serve as Chair for the past three years. During that time, I have learned so much and have greatly valued the opportunity to meet and work with so many members across the UK. I am genuinely delighted to be handing over to Keir Robinson from the University of Edinburgh as the incoming Chair. I had the pleasure of seeing Keir in person last week and have already passed on the ceremonial gavel, even if I cannot mark the moment again today.</p> | |

Finally, thank you to everyone who continues to be involved in the association, for attending the AGM, and for contributing your questions and reflections. Your engagement and commitment are what enable the association to grow and move forward.

11. Date and Venue of 2027 AGM - Reena Littlehailes (RL), UK Chair

The AGM will likely continue to be held online, reflecting consistent member feedback that the current format is accessible and works well. However, member feedback following this AGM will be reviewed to ensure the format remains appropriate. A feedback form will be circulated, and members are encouraged to take a few minutes to complete it.

Further details regarding the date and format of the 2027 AGM will be confirmed shortly and members should also note that the 2027 National Conference will take place from 13–15 January 2027.

No comments or questions were received.

The meeting was called to a close at 11:45.

Please note that 71 primary contact/ proxies had registered their attendance at the start of the meeting but the total number of voting codes used was 99. Voting totals are those finalised by Mi-Voice.

*Dawn McClintock
HELOA Office Manager*

* In the Completed Accounts for the 2024/2025 Financial Year, neutral responses were included in the total percentage of members who reported receiving value from their HELOA membership which impacted the calculation. The confirmed percentage of members who found value in their HELOA membership was 80.4%. This update will not be reflected in the Completed Accounts for the 2024/2025 Financial Year as it would entail considerable additional audit work and costs for both HELOA and the auditors.

** Further clarification will be provided on national and group level partnerships in the new 2027-2030 strategy that is currently being developed. This clarification will not be reflected in the Completed Accounts for the 2024/2025 Financial Year as it would entail considerable additional audit work and costs for both HELOA and the auditors.

*** The spelling error in Clive Sheridan's title of Vice-Chair Finance will remain unchanged in the Completed Accounts for the 2024/2025 Financial Year. Correcting this at this stage would require additional audit work and costs for both HELOA and the auditors.