HELOA

Awards 2027

Registered charity numbers: England & Wales (1182953) and Scotland (SC050285)

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HELOA Awards

Whether you work in student recruitment, outreach, widening access or marketing, **there is a HELOA award for you**!

HELOA Awards serve as a platform to recognise and celebrate the achievements of our members. They highlight Best Practice and allow colleagues across the sector to exchange knowledge on how best to assist students in making informed decisions that contribute positively to their academic and professional journeys.

The Awards not only acknowledge individual and collective efforts but they also foster a culture of excellence within the educational landscape.

HELOA Awards categories

- Commendations of Contribution
- Award for Best Practice in Widening Participation, Outreach, and Access
- Award for Best practice in Student Recruitment
- Award for Best Postgraduate Initiative
- Award for Best Undergraduate Initiative
- Award for Best Small or Low Budget Initiative
- Award for Best Community Impact (NEW for 2027!)

Commendations of Contribution

Commendations of Contribution are awarded to HELOA members who have made an exceptional contribution, either over the past year or over a longer timeframe, to enhancing best practice in student recruitment, outreach, widening access or marketing.

The judges want to know how individuals' actions and commitment enhanced student recruitment, outreach, widening access or marketing.

Any HELOA member can nominate someone for a Commendation of Contribution. The nominee must be a member or immediate former member of a full institution.

The nomination will be assessed against 6 categories:

1. Innovation - Assess the level of creativity, originality, or novel approaches demonstrated. Look for solutions that break new ground or introduce fresh perspectives to existing challenges.

2. Collaboration - Evaluate the degree to which the individual has collaborated with others to achieve the contribution. Consider their ability to work effectively in teams, share knowledge, and leverage diverse perspectives.

3. Leadership - Recognise individuals who have demonstrated effective leadership qualities, such as inspiring others, fostering collaboration, or guiding teams toward achieving shared goals.

4. Sustainability - Consider whether the contribution is sustainable over time and whether it promotes long-term positive outcomes without causing harm to the environment, stakeholders, or future generations.

5. Initiative - Recognise individuals who have taken proactive steps or shown initiative in identifying and addressing challenges, seizing opportunities, or driving positive change.

6. Adaptability - Recognise individuals who have demonstrated flexibility, adaptability, and agility in responding to changing circumstances or requirements while still making meaningful contributions.

Up to 500 words total per nomination

Award for Best Practice in Widening Participation, Outreach, and Access

Supported by

SAVE THE STUDENT!

This award celebrates projects that demonstrate best practice in increasing awareness of higher education amongst under-represented groups, supports progression to higher education, or encourages students from under-represented groups to apply and enrol for courses.

We are looking for a clearly defined campaign or activity aligned to the university's strategy to engage with its target audience. This category is open to undergraduate and postgraduate campaigns, with entries being scored on their success in accordance to how they have met their individual objectives.

Award details

Supported by

SAVE THE STUDENT!

What the judges want to know:

- The overall aim of your campaign
- SMART Objectives and overall budget for the project
- Details of your campaign, project, or activity
- How did data and insight inform your decisions?
- What was the impact and outcomes of the campaign?
- Why should you win?

Up to 1500 words total per nomination

Award for Best Practice in Student Recruitment

Sponsored by UK university search

This category is your opportunity to showcase what makes your student recruitment strategies stand out from the crowd. This can include your marketing, brand campaigns, events or anything else in the student recruitment space.

The judges would like to understand how your activities enhanced your target audiences' perception of the institution and communicated the essence of your brand and unique offer.

Award details

Sponsored by

UK university search

What the judges want to know:

- The overall aim of your campaign
- SMART Objectives and overall budget for the project
- Details of your campaign, project, or activity
- How did data and insight inform your decisions?
- What was the impact and outcomes of the campaign?
- Why should you win?

Up to 1500 words total per nomination

Award for Best Postgraduate Initiative

Sponsored by Find University A KEYSTONE COMPANY

This award recognises campaigns and activities that attract postgraduate students to apply and enrol for courses. We are looking for a clearly defined campaign aligned to the university's strategy to engage with its target audience, supported by a coordinated marketing campaign.

This category is open to postgraduate campaigns only, with entries being scored on their success in accordance to how they have met their individual objectives and their evidence of achieving a strong return on investment.

Award details

Sponsored by Find University
A KEYSTONE COMPANY

What the judges want to know:

- The overall aim of your campaign
- SMART Objectives and overall budget for the project
- Details of your campaign, project, or activity
- How did data and insight inform your decisions?
- What was the impact and outcomes of the campaign?
- Why should you win?

Up to 1500 words total per nomination

Award for Best Undergraduate Initiative

Supported by UCAS

This award recognises campaigns and activities that attract undergraduate students to apply and enrol for courses. We are looking for a clearly defined campaign aligned to the university's strategy to engage with its target audience, supported by a coordinated marketing campaign.

This category is open to undergraduate campaigns only, with entries being scored on their success in accordance to how they have met their individual objectives and their evidence of achieving a strong return on investment.

Award details

Supported by UCAS

What the judges want to know:

- The overall aim of your campaign
- SMART Objectives and overall budget for the project
- Details of your campaign, project, or activity
- How did data and insight inform your decisions?
- What was the impact and outcomes of the campaign?
- Why should you win?

Up to 1500 words total per nomination

Award for Best Small or Low Budget* Initiative

Sponsored by unifrog

Small and cost-effective can be impactful. This award gives you the opportunity to showcase highly focussed activities, where budget is tight, or you are working with a small cohort.

This category is open to undergraduate and postgraduate campaigns, with entries being scored on their success in accordance to how they have met their individual objectives.

Award details

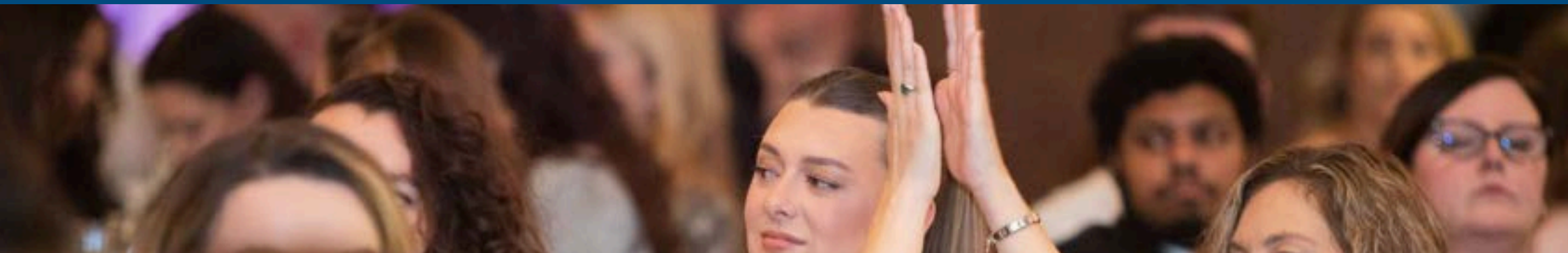
Sponsored by unifrog

What the judges want to know:

- The overall aim of your campaign.
- SMART Objectives and overall budget for the project.
- Details of your campaign, project, or actvity.
- How did data and insight inform your decisions?
- What was the impact and outcomes of the campaign?
- Why should you win?

Up to 1500 words total per nomination

**This award is about showcasing innovation and doing more with less. We have not given a numerical value as to what constitutes a small budget as this will vary from institution to institution. As part of your entry, please give us the context on the budget size.*



Award for Best Community Impact (NEW for 2027!)

Sponsored by Rad Brothers Ltd

This award recognises informal, non-workplace initiatives that strengthen connection, wellbeing, and community across HELOA. It celebrates the social, peer-led, and grassroots activity that builds a sense of belonging beyond formal roles and responsibilities, from social clubs and regional get-togethers to everyday acts of kindness that bring people together.

This category is open to all HELOA members and networks, with entries being scored on the strength of their contribution to community, connection, and support across the organisation.

Award details

Sponsored by

Rad Brothers Ltd

What the judges want to know:

- How the initiative or activity came about
- Details of the initiative, activity, or community contribution
- Who was involved and how people engaged
- Evidence of impact on community, wellbeing, or connection
- Testimonies or feedback from colleagues or participants
- How it supports a positive HELOA culture beyond formal work activity
- Why should you win?

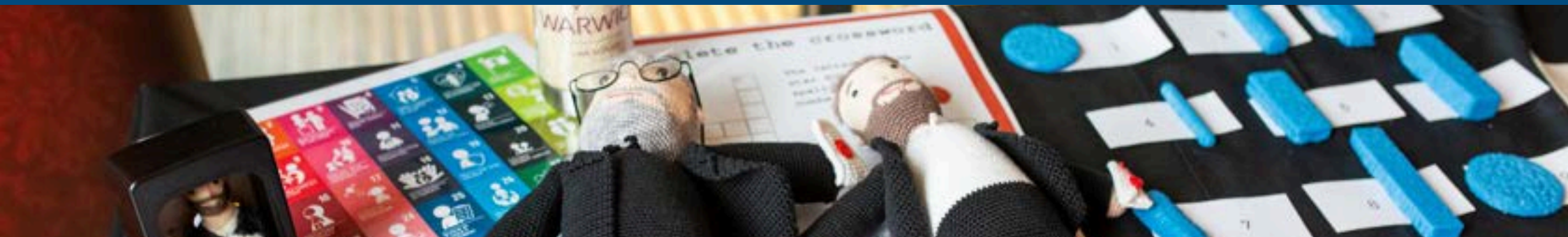
Up to 1500 words total per nomination

Entry Rules

Who can enter?
We welcome entries from all organisations which are members of HELOA and are offering further and/or higher education regardless of geographical location.

What do I need to do to enter?
You must submit entries online at www.heloa.ac.uk/awards/ by midday on Thursday 15 October 2026. Entries by any other means will not be accepted. Late entries will only be accepted with the discretion of HELOA Operational Group.

We would strongly advise that you make your entry before the closing day. HELOA reserve the right to extend the entry deadline in exceptional circumstances.



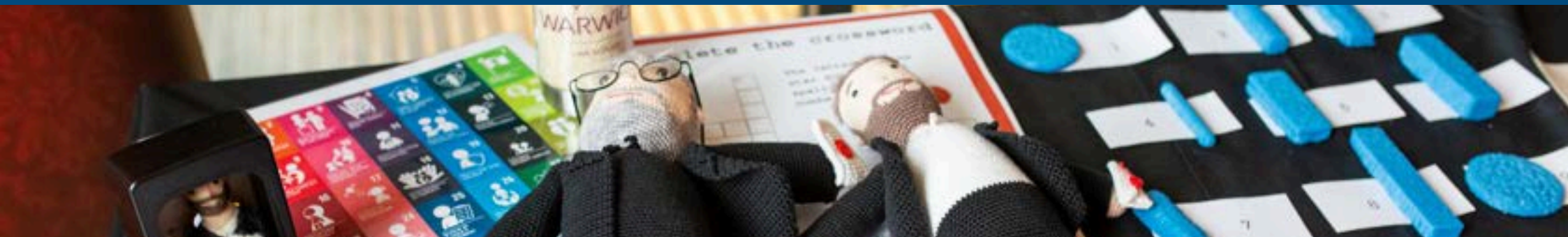
Entry Rules

Specifications

For all categories, you must upload your entry as a PDF document (which can include illustrations and/or links to the work) and attach a high-resolution logo of your institution. The submission should not exceed the specified word limit for each award category.

Judges will be looking for and giving a score for creativity across all categories. Please ensure that any objectives you list are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Based.

The judges will be particularly looking for demonstration of sector-leading innovation, strong consideration of sustainability, and evidence of how equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility have been considered.



Entry Rules

What time period would my work have had to run in?
Your entries must be based on publications/materials/projects that are both recent (live within the past 12-18 months) and also fully evaluated.

Supporting materials
To support your entry, for any of the categories you may also submit JPEG/PDF copies of any relevant creative works

Word counts
A total word count limit has been set for each award category and must be adhered to.

Entry Rules

Entry fee
There is no fee or charge for making submissions to the awards.

Judging process
Each category will be shortlisted by a panel of judges and the shortlisted submissions will be notified by the 30 October 2026, with the full shortlist published on the HELOA website. At this time you may be asked to provide additional information.

The shortlisted entries for the Award for Best Practice in Widening Participation, Outreach and Access and Best Practice in Student Recruitment award will be required to *attend* the HELOA National Conference and *present* their project to the attendees. Member institutions will then cast their vote for the winners. This will be one vote per institution in attendance.

Entry Rules

The winners of the Award for Best Postgraduate Initiative, Award for Best Undergraduate Initiative, Award for Best Small or Low Budget Initiative and the Award for Best Community Impact will be determined by the judging panel.

All winners will be announced at the HELOA Awards Dinner taking place in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne on Thursday 14 January 2027, all shortlisted institutions will be invited to attend. Please note, if you are not already attending the conference, charges will apply.

FAQs

- **Can my institution enter more than one project into the same category?**
  Yes, you may enter any number of categories and make more than one entry in the same category where appropriate.

- **Can the same entry be entered into more than one category?**
  Submitting the same entry into more than one category is also allowed. However, each entry must be tailored to the category's specific criteria.

- **My institution is not a HELOA Member, can I still enter?**
  Your institution must be a member of HELOA to enter the awards, if your organisation wishes to join HELOA please contact office@heloa.ac.uk

FAQs

- **My institution is based outside of the UK, can I still enter?**
  No, the HELOA awards are only open to members of the organisation. HELOA membership is for institutions that have a UK-based campus.

- **How can I submit my work?**
  You must submit entries online at www.heloa.ac.uk/awards/ before midday on Thursday 15 October 2026. For all categories, you must upload your entry as a PDF document (which can include illustrations and/or links to the work) and attach a high-resolution logo of your institution.

- **What is the max file size that can be uploaded to the online entry form?**
  You can upload up to 6 files to the online entry system, including a high resolution logo for your institution and your PDF entry. The maximum size of the total number of uploaded files is 50mb.

FAQs

- **Is there a cost to attend the gala dinner?**
  If your institution is not already attending the conference and gala dinner your institution would need to buy seats. We will let you know at the shortlisting stage if this applies to your institution.

- **Do I need to be a member to attend the conference and gala dinner?**
  No, you do not need to be a member of HELOA to attend the conference and gala dinner. For questions on prices for members and non-members, please contact training@heloa.ac.uk.

- **How many words can I submit for a commendation of contribution?**
  You can submit up to 500 words.

Key Dates

- Entries open - Thursday 3 September 2026
- Entries close - midday Thursday 15 October 2026
- Judging panels - week commencing 19 October 2026
- Shortlist published on Website and LinkedIn - week commencing 2 November 2026
- Shortlist published in bulletin - 12 November 2026
- Winners Announced at Awards Dinner - Thursday 14 January 2027

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