



Director's Report 2024

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GuildHE Research has continued to grow in reach, number, and influence throughout the 2023-2024 academic year. This report celebrates key achievements the consortium has made in the three areas of our mission:

- influencing research policy, such as sector approaches to Open Access;
- supporting research culture and strategy development, including working in partnership to showcase members expertise to the sector;
- and supporting our members through shared infrastructure and training, particularly through our sellout Doctoral Festival.

Peer to peer exchange remains central to fostering collegiality and grounding GuildHE's policy work in real-time challenges faced by our member institutions, and our achievements are underpinned by our work with our members and their generosity in sharing their expertise and insights. The consortium has met with colleagues from the British Council, UK Committee on Research Integrity, UK Research and Innovation, Universities UK, NACE, and Research England.

Our joint symposium with GuildHE's Knowledge Exchange, Innovation and Place Network that GHER held at the Wellcome Collection in March was a particular highlight. The event brought together experts from research and knowledge exchange, featuring the REF Director, Rebecca Fairbairn, and a workshop on designing the future of the research and innovation system from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE).

The Place: London Contemporary Dance School has joined GHER, extending our range of specialist institutions in the performing arts, This has brought our overall membership to 31 institutions, spanning agriculture, art and design, performing arts, sports science, health, humanities, and social sciences, and comprising institutions in both England and Wales.

Towards the end of the academic year GuildHE entered a period of change, with the departure of Gordon McKenzie as CEO, a great supporter of GHER. Dr Brooke Storer-Church joined as CEO in June, and has instigated a refreshed vision for GuildHE with sincere enthusiasm for its potential. GuildHE Research will be at the forefront of that, and we anticipate an exciting evolution of the consortium over the next twelve months.



Achieving Influence in Research Policy

Changes to REF2029 and Open Access policies

GuildHE has been active in the REF consultation process, providing feedback on consultations and advocating for the needs of our members such as improved data accuracy and timeliness, the increased bureaucracy of the process, and the impact of assessment on smaller research environments. This led directly to the reduction in the minimum number of impact case studies required per submission, a major win for our members.



GHER has achieved the removal of an open access requirement for longform publications and an extended implementation time frame. This will substantially reduce the financial and bureaucratic burden on institutions and address implications for the equity of the sector. GHER brought together GHER and UKADIA representatives with Conservatoires UK to meet with Research England and Jisc, resulting in a position paper further endorsed by the British Academy and the University of Oxford. Our efforts have contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by these members in implementing the policy,

GuildHE has successfully advocated for improvements to UKRI's Open Access policy, addressing concerns about guidance, funding, and equity. Our efforts have resulted in increased funding, clarified guidance, and a phased implementation process. We continue to advocate for addressing financial barriers and ensuring equitable access to Open Access for our members.

Recognition of diverse student experiences in UKRI's New Deal for Postgraduate Research Students

We have represented PGR students' interests in the development of UKRI's New Deal. With University Alliance we have championed the contribution of self-funded and part-time students to the wider ecology of R&D. This has led to specific actions promised by UKRI including:

- Recognition of diversity: including those with disabilities, care responsibilities, and unique modes of study.
- Funding flexibility: UKRI has adapted funding approaches to better support diverse research organisations.
- EDI-focused assessment: UKRI committed to assessing terms and conditions from an EDI perspective to ensure greater flexibility and support for part-time and distance-learner PGRs.
- International student support: UKRI has reviewed its support for international students and amended its training grant terms and conditions to allow them access to full UKRI studentships.



Supporting Research Culture and Strategy

Sector leadership in Research Integrity

GHER has put the needs of our members at the heart of decision making by being an active signatory to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. We are a key part of the team conducting the five-year review of the Concordat, bringing to bear our insights on research culture and the implementation of the Concordat, and ensuring members are engaged in the process.



Our collaborative work on indicators for research integrity has been developed by UKCORI and GHER has been part of the advisory board for this work. We were instrumental in convening a dedicated roundtable to explore how such indicators may operate for arts and humanities disciplines.

Working in partnership to showcase members' expertise in developing research communities

We have worked in partnership with the UK Council of Graduate Education to deliver a town hall on building postgraduate communities in smaller and specialist institutions. This featured three institutions and shared insights that were new to UKCGE's usual programme. Our joint webinar with CRAC Vitae highlighted the opportunities and challenges of implementing the Concordat to Support Researcher Development at smaller and specialist institutions. This was well attended with over 40 participants, recorded, and distributed to all Vitae members and to GHER members via YouTube.

Championing diversity and inclusion

GHER has worked with our PGR communities to co-create and launch a Global Majority PGR Network, as recommended in our commissioned peer-led research into the lived experience of minority ethnic students. Supported by culture and relationships coach Lou Chiu, the network held its inaugural meeting on 10 July 2024. The network has already connected with other sector initiatives working to support better access and success in PGR for marginalised groups, including the EDEPI project at Liverpool John Moores University.



Shared Infrastructure and Training

PhD Student Placement Pilot, Wellcome Collection



GHER is particularly proud to have begun a new initiative to pilot placements for self-funded and part-time PGR Students in cultural institutions. Working with the prestigious Wellcome Collection a student from University of Winchester has taken up a six month flexible placement, to conclude in early 2025. Our advocacy has contributed to the launch of research into the barriers faced by self-funded PGR students in the cultural sector

"In tandem with developing the pilot self-funded PhD student placement with GuildHE, Wellcome Collection has been able to develop an opportunity for a researcher to investigate the barriers to career development opportunities in the cultural sector faced by self-funded PhD students in arts, humanities and social sciences. Liaising closely with GuildHE staff and gaining feedback from GuildHE's PhD peer support network enabled Wellcome Collection to shape the goals and remit of this research work, which will in turn feed back into Wellcome Collection's future work with PhD students and will be shared more widely in the cultural sector." Elma Brenner, Wellcome Collection

GHER Doctoral Festival and developing our postgraduate researcher community

Our second GHER Doctoral Festival, held at University of Winchester in April, was a sellout. The event brought key organisations including the British Academy into contact with our members' impressive and committed doctoral candidates. The students had the opportunity to learn from a range of sector bodies and experts they would not normally have direct access to, such as the Wellcome Collection and the Knowledge Exchange Unit in Parliament.

"[The Doctoral Festival helped me feel] less alone in the PhD journey" DocFest Participant

" [I] took on board so much knowledge. It was a great experience to work with others in the same boat" DocFest Participant

Our PhD Peer Support Community continues to develop, with new PGR Coordinators from Bath Spa University and University of Winchester, and sustained monthly meetings to bring students together. Participation was stimulated through our annual engagement in Academic Writing Month (#AcWriMo2023), and an Academic Writing Virtual Retreat with Dr Helen Kara.



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