

**SRHE** *Society for Research  
into Higher Education*

**STRATEGIC  
PLAN  
2024 - 2029**



# CONTEXT AND VISION

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## ABOUT US

The Society for Research into Higher Education was founded in 1965, and over its 60-year history has worked as a membership society dedicated to the furtherance of the understanding of Higher Education through support for and promotion of research into HE, and by encouraging knowledge exchange amongst researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. We do this primarily through an extensive programme of events, our major annual international conference, and the publication of quality research in our highly respected peer-reviewed journals and book series. We recognise and support excellence and innovation in research and practice through our awards and grants, we support the career development of our members, and we nurture connectivity and collaboration worldwide for those with an interest in higher education. We take pride in our history and our current activities and aim to build upon these and reinvigorate our mission and objectives, offering new and enhanced services to an increased membership community.

## OUR VISION

Higher Education research is valued, supported, and promoted worldwide, and is used to advance knowledge, enhance practice, and inform policy.

High-quality research into educational theory, provision, and practices in higher education is more crucial than ever, and the Society facilitates and supports this research. For universities worldwide, the post-pandemic environment presents student adjustment issues following periods of lockdown, and institutions facing increasing societal, governmental, and financial pressures. Within the UK, challenges currently facing the sector include frequent governmental policy shifts, funding model challenges, disaffected academic staff and resultant strike actions, and a changing regulatory and quality assurance environment. The implications of AI for both teaching and research is a matter for discussion and debate worldwide, and the shift to open access to academic research presents exciting possibilities, but also presents challenges in management of the transition from a journal subscription model. Research and researchers will be instrumental in addressing these challenges.

SRHE is therefore looking ahead, aiming to adopt new approaches in our activities and broadening our connectivity within higher education on a global basis. In light of all of this, we have examined and revised our vision, mission and values to form a basis for a new strategic plan.



# THE 2024-2029 STRATEGIC PLAN

Considerable work has been done over the course of 2022-23 to prepare a formal strategy for the Society. Governing Council's 2019 strategic work was re-examined and re-articulated in light of the environment four years on, and revised priorities and new objectives established. The first member survey in ten years was conducted in 2022, providing additional insight into potential development areas. It also revealed an appetite for a return to in-person activities, alongside a desire to preserve the hard-won gains of increased digital engagement in terms of international reach and greater accessibility.

This document outlines the key work programmes for the Society for Research into Higher Education in a changing environment both within the UK sector and internationally from 2024 – 2029. It presents the context of existing Society activities and describes the work of “Year Zero”, (2023), in transition to full implementation.

It is not intended to present a comprehensive statement of all Society activity; rather, it provides a high-level statement of the Society's plans and its priorities in the coming years. While a longer-term perspective will inform all of our work, the plan is intended to be a practical aid in prioritising the Society's activity in the near future, and therefore focuses on activity in the next five years.

Our aspirations focus on strategic objectives in five main areas:



These objectives will develop and complement our existing core activities of networks, annual conference, publications, and grant provision. While ambitious, they necessarily take account of the resources of a Society of our size, both in terms of staff numbers and our network of academics who generously donate their time.

An action plan outlines the ways in which we intend to work towards these objectives, and progress will be regularly reported to Council, along with a mid-plan review in Year 3.

# MISSION & VALUES

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## OUR MISSION

To advance understanding of higher education, through the insights, perspectives and knowledge offered by high-quality research and scholarship. SRHE supports and promotes research, aiming to be the leading international higher education learned society.

## OUR VALUES

### KNOWLEDGE

We value the research activity and academic freedom of our members, and strive to support, promote and disseminate knowledge of Higher Education to benefit the scholarly community and wider society.

### RIGOUR

We value academic autonomy and integrity, and encourage the highest academic standards – this is fundamental to everything that we do.

### CRITICALITY

We aim to be reflective, analytical and evaluative, engaging in issues facing Higher Education, and work with allied organisations to promote research-informed action.

### ENGAGEMENT

We are committed to facilitating discussion and collaboration amongst our members, valuing international, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary exchanges of ideas.

### EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We are committed to fostering an academic community and workplace culture that is diverse, inclusive and respectful, recognising that a dynamic mix of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives enriches the Society and its activities.

### INTEGRITY

We strive to provide the highest standard of support for our members, and in so doing, use our income and other finances to fulfil our charitable function and declared mission. We are committed to effective governance. The Governing Council and Society committees reflect on and scrutinise their activities, and seek to improve their function.

### SUSTAINABILITY

We aim to be sustainable in all our activities, to preserve the Society's long-term viability and influence, and to reduce our environmental footprint.





# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES & PRIORITY ACTIONS

SRHE's new strategy has five objectives that set the 5-year framework for our activities, in delivering our charitable purpose. They build upon existing work and activities and extend these into defined priority areas/actions.

An action plan outlines the ways in which we will pursue our priority actions within each of these 5 objectives.

## OBJECTIVE 1: RESEARCH – DEVELOPING RESEARCH CAPACITY AND ENHANCING SUPPORT

Our core mission centres around support for research and researchers, and ensuring that research informs practice and policy, and we will further develop and enhance the Society's role in fostering higher education research. We will encourage and support both established researchers and practitioners, as well as those new to the field of higher education studies. We will work to expand our networks, activities and outputs in rapidly changing academic and publishing environments.

Our priority actions towards this objective are as follows. We will:

- 1.1. Develop and encourage Open Access to our members' research, with the goal of transitioning our publications from hybrid to fully OA, investigating additional OA options to determine which is best for the Society and its members
- 1.2. Become a signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- 1.3. Increase our funding for research awards
- 1.4. Increase efforts to engage with new researchers, via engagement with external and allied societies such as [UKRI's Early Career Researchers Forum](#), the [British Academy Early Career Network](#), [Vitae](#), [ESRC support](#), [ARHC support](#) etc.)
- 1.5. Highlight and celebrate our members' achievements by reviving the Fellowship programme to make retrospective awards covering the gap from 2014 to the present, and establish an ongoing programme of awards that will sit alongside the accolades programme
- 1.6. Re-engage fellows in the activities of the Society and encourage participation in Society events, and involve award-winners in Society activities/conference/publications
- 1.7. Develop a membership/fellows directory with areas of expertise to facilitate research collaboration, networking, and knowledge exchange
- 1.8. Develop and enhance our online and in-person conference provision



## OBJECTIVE 2: VISIBILITY – PROMOTING OUR ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

We will increase our outreach and actively promote the benefits of membership and Society resources, in order to grow our membership and participation within it, and to encourage collaborative work within the membership and with partner societies and academies.

Our priority actions towards this objective are as follows. We will:

- 2.1. Develop a marketing and communications strategy to promote Society membership and membership benefits (includes updated physical media [including the Annual Report], social media visibility and engagement, and new multimedia initiatives)
- 2.2. Create a database of mailing lists to promote the Society and its resources directly to global Higher Education Study Centres, relevant degree programmes, HE professionals, postgrad societies for writing support and development, EDI organisations (including BAME, LGBTQI+ etc)
- 2.3. Engage in regular formal activities (eg regular surveys) to obtain input and feedback from our membership
- 2.4. Develop plans for the Society's 60th anniversary in 2025 via a limited-life working group, to raise the public profile of the Society and promote its resources
- 2.5. Seek out sponsor opportunities with relevant/allied organisations
- 2.6. Improve network/PDP advance planning, with advance notice of a core programme (one term/year in advance) in order to better facilitate promotion on our side and planning on the part of our members
- 2.7. Utilise the 'Get involved' responses to recruit Society ambassadors, willing to work to promote the Society's resources within their universities and networks
- 2.8. Schedule a number of network/PDP events outside of London
- 2.9. Increase trustee, CEO, and executive team presence at external events



## OBJECTIVE 3: ACCESSIBILITY – FOREGROUNDING EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In line with our foregrounding of EDI as a stated value, we will make the Society and its resources more accessible to a wide and diverse community of researchers internationally and cross-disciplinarily. We will emphasise equity, diversity, and inclusion as integral to both research and practice in the field of higher education, and within the Society's governance, activities, and membership.

Our priority actions towards this objective are as follows. We will:

- 3.1. Establish a limited-life working group to develop a formal EDI strategy that promotes membership resources, publication avenues, and research funding opportunities to a more diverse membership, particularly targeting under-represented groups and geographical regions
- 3.2. Engage with other organisations on EDI policy and initiatives including the AcSS/ESRC EDI partnership
- 3.3. Work with editorial and publishing colleagues to encourage and increase research submissions from under-represented regions (including countries in the Global South)
- 3.4. Encourage guest editorships specifically focussed on attracting international colleagues – special issues or publications on regional or internationally thematic HE research
- 3.5. Encourage diverse panels, plenaries, chairs, network convenors, and network events composition
- 3.6. Facilitate and further develop ongoing remote attendance at events through a mixed-model delivery (online and in-person) of events and conference
- 3.7. Ensure our benefits are made available to as many of our members as possible – evaluating physical space of our conference room and offices, making reasonable adjustments proactively to be more inclusive for members with disabilities



## OBJECTIVE 4: SUSTAINABILITY – SAFEGUARDING OUR FUTURE

We will make the Society more effective in a rapidly changing HE sector and increasingly challenging charity environment, and within a wider context of environmental responsibility. We will secure SRHE's future as an independent and respected learned society with a healthy membership, and sufficient and sustainable funding.

Our priority actions towards this objective are as follows. We will:

- 4.1. Grow our membership through systematic approaches to institutions and organisations (including HE professionals through AHEP and students of HE policy and practice)
- 4.2. Establish a regular schedule of governance and leadership review in alignment with the Charity Governance Code (including a regular cycle of board effectiveness reviews, trustee skills audits, training, etc.)
- 4.3. Develop an Environmental Responsibility Strategy in line with Charity Commission guidance. Expand upon environmentally-conscious policies and processes (paperless office, green office environment, recycling, etc.)
- 4.4. Work to obtain favourable terms and conditions for the ongoing publication and development of the Society's journals as we transition to Open Access publication models
- 4.5. Diversify our income through development of new income strands
- 4.6. Register the Society with the Fundraising Regulator, and establish formal fundraising mechanisms on our website including legacy donations
- 4.7. Use the occasion of the Society's 60th anniversary in 2025 to focus upon developing membership and income generation opportunities
- 4.8. Sustain remote attendance and mixed-model delivery of events/conference to minimise environmental impact while increasing international engagement and accommodating members with access issues and/or caring responsibilities
- 4.9. Improve current reporting processes for internal and external audiences – develop the *Annual Report* to better reflect impact measurement and social benefit





## OBJECTIVE 5: INFLUENCE – ENHANCING OUR RELEVANCE

The Society will develop ways in which the research and expertise of its members can be better promoted and used for the public benefit. We will commit to promoting and disseminating relevant HE research, supporting research impact broadly, including that which informs national policy systems and sector bodies, as well as institutional policies and practices. The Society's commitment to academic research over editorialising, and the international perspective of its members are great strengths in this regard. We will increase our engagement with practitioners, policy-makers, HEIs, and relevant external organisations, so that policy and practices are influenced by research.

Our priority actions towards this objective are as follows. We will:

- 5.1. Include more policy makers/influencers in Society governance structures. This may be an area where we may wish to co-opt a member of council or introduce alternative fellowship or ambassador models.
- 5.2. Include policy makers/influencers on Society editorial boards, particularly on *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*
- 5.3. Liaise/partner with organisations such as *Times Higher Education*, *HEPI* and *WonkHE* to promote the research of our members so that policy influencers have the benefit of SRHE research, and we benefit from their promotional opportunities
- 5.4. Provide support for researchers engaged in research applicable to HE policy and practice in the UK and internationally
- 5.5. Engage with other societies and organisations, and establish or reinforce links and partnerships with national and international sector bodies (eg. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies [PSRBs], learned societies, think tanks, relevant governmental organisations and NGOs) to promote members' research (particularly SRHE-funded research) and increase the Society's visibility more generally in a wider arena
- 5.6. Participate in governmental consultations in the HE sector as a Society, using the expertise of trustees to inform responses
- 5.7. Invest in longer term commissioned research, potentially in collaboration with bodies like the British Council
- 5.8. Make more of existing member benefits to key stakeholders – i.e. access to journals for civil servants and policy makers.

# MORE ABOUT US

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The Society for Research into Higher Education is a registered charity number 313850.  
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