

## AHUA ELECTIONS 2024

The AHUA is holding an election for a place on the AHUA Executive Committee.

The election is being run by Civica, formerly Electoral Reform Services, and will take place from 26 June to 17 July 2024.

Each institution has one voting member who will be contacted directly by Civica.

There are two candidates: their statements are below listed in alphabetical order by last name.

## CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

### **Sophie Bowen, Chief Student Officer, University of East London**

I am delighted to be considered for election for Nationally Elected Member on the AHUA Executive Committee and thank my colleagues for their nomination. This will be my thirtieth year in HE, starting at the University of Birmingham as an administrative assistant and progressing through my career across nearly every area of professional services at all levels, with leadership roles in a small specialist institution, a large modern with overseas campuses and most recently at the University of East London. I feel HE is my home, and I am passionate about our sector, the amazing colleagues I meet every day and the students whose HE experiences help define their future lives.



I've been a member of AHUA for nearly 15 years, with one short break, and have greatly appreciated engaging regionally, nationally and internationally with colleagues on all things HE and beyond. Over my time at AHUA I have been London Network Convenor, Chair of the Development Group and then Honorary Treasurer – all opportunities to give something back to our community that I have relished and learnt from in equal measure.

AHUA's role, focus and reputation has grown over recent years, and we're now seen as a vital part of the sector's machinery, appreciated for our wealth of knowledge, skills and deep understanding. The sector is again facing unprecedented pressures, and more than ever we need to take a shared approach in response - in the policy arena, in delivering for our many stakeholders and in innovation. I want to help AHUA continue to contribute, supporting our members and the challenges we face.

**Rachel Brealey, Chief Operating Officer,  
University of Leeds**



I am delighted to be considered for the post of nationally elected member of the AHUA executive. I have been a member of AHUA since 2022, when I became Chief Operating Officer at the University of Leeds, but have been in the Higher Education sector for over 25 years working across a range of planning, student, operations and transformation roles. I have benefitted enormously from involvement with sector groups, including AHUA, throughout my career and have found the openness of colleagues to share their experiences, advice and support invaluable. The networking at the autumn and spring conferences, as well as the opportunities for personal and professional development via sector groups, learning sets, and coaching have also been incredibly beneficial. I am therefore really keen to support AHUA's continued success and development and ensure that others can benefit from the support, advice and friendship that it offers.

Whilst I am relatively new to AHUA, I believe my skills and experience would enable me to make a valuable contribution as a member of the executive. I am passionate about the role that Higher Education plays and the benefits that our research and education deliver to individuals and communities nationally and globally. I am committed to the importance of widening participation and enabling students from all backgrounds to succeed in Higher Education as well as working to support increased diversity in leadership roles in the sector. I am involved in a number of programmes to better understand and improve the challenges relating to diversity including reverse mentoring, 100 Black Women Professors Now, and Aurora.

Given the many and varied challenges that the sector is currently facing AHUA occupies a very important space, ensuring effective representation on key issues and policies to stakeholders and supporting and enabling sharing of current concerns, learning and best practice for senior leaders. This representation is needed more than ever as we continue to respond to challenges around the value of Higher Education from government and other bodies, intense (and increasing) regulatory and legislative demands, and the reality of an increasingly volatile and complex financial environment. Whilst none of this is likely to change in the short term following the election, there is a clear opportunity to reset some of the narrative around the value of the sector and to be clear about the need for change around current financial and regulatory models. I would like to support the Association in continuing its advocacy on behalf of its members and, if elected, I would bring my enthusiasm and passion to ensure that we grasp the opportunities available to represent our views.