



The Association of Heads of University Administration

A black and white photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair, smiling warmly while looking down at a document. She is wearing a white button-down shirt under a brown vest. The background is softly blurred, showing an office environment with a chair and some papers.

AHUA SECRETARIES PROGRAMME

Strengthening governance capability at board level

The Secretary role is pivotal in creating sound governance structures. This programme will equip you with the skills to encourage senior colleagues to accept your advice based on both your impact and your expertise.

Dr Helen Galbraith, Academic Registrar and Secretary, Keele University

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Introduction

Secretaries operate at the highest level of University administration. They have significant responsibilities which go to the heart of the efficient operation of the key decision-taking bodies within an organisation.

To have credibility in this working environment, Secretaries need to transition from being a technically-focused, 'compliance' subject-matter expert, to becoming a strategically-oriented governance adviser to the Governing Council and VC/Senior Management Team. Many Secretaries have not received the training – often of a soft skills nature – to help them do this.

This programme will help you achieve this transformation, and become equipped for a range of circumstances which you will face in your daily work. Being able to manage and resolve difficult workplace situations, in particular, is a critical skill which will help you make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the administration.

Who should attend?

This course will be relevant for anyone with governance responsibilities, particularly in providing support to the Governing Council, the Vice Chancellor and the SMT.

You may be responsible for preparing board and committee papers; circulating the packs; minuting meetings; drafting terms of reference; providing advice on, and interpretation of, the University constitution; arranging induction programmes, training and CPD. You may liaise with, or be from, HR, Finance, Legal, Risk, Audit etc, offering governance advice to senior colleagues in meetings, and in the normal run of business. Your exact title will not matter.

Programme focus

The programme will assume that you have the essential technical skills to 'do the job', and will be receiving appropriate ongoing technical training.

The focus of this programme will be on transitioning from technical expert to strategic adviser, developing the soft skills and power to encourage senior colleagues to accept your advice based on your expertise, and your impact, rather than your formal status. The programme will help you build the confidence to have difficult conversations, and manage challenging situations.

A rare opportunity for those with governance responsibilities to thoughtfully address the challenges faced by them and their institutions in shaping and guaranteeing the way decisions are made to deliver strategic goals while under increasing political and regulatory scrutiny.

Dr Tony Strike, University Secretary, The University of Sheffield, and co-author of 'Governing Higher Education Today: International Perspectives'

What the programme includes

The programme will have four key components:

- How to transition from the technical to the strategic
- The capabilities needed to be a governance professional
- What the high-performing governance professional looks like
- How to become the governance 'go to'.

Programme structure

The programme will comprise two half day workshops. These will include presentation of the practical issues involved, interaction and discussion, group work, reporting back, and case studies of how governance professionals overcame often daunting challenges to become 'influential inside the boardroom'.

The programme will be delivered via Zoom, using the meeting room functionality. Workshops will be highly participative in nature, and will also involve networking. Delegates will be expected to contribute – this will not be a listen and learn workshop.

During the programme there will also be the chance to engage with a guest speaker.

Dates

The programme takes place over two half days:

Tuesday 1 March 2022, 9am – 1pm

Tuesday 8 March 2022, 9am – 1pm

Fee

AHUA member institutions £350 (VAT exempt)

AHUA non-member institutions £500 (VAT exempt)

Deadline date for applications

Friday 18 February 2022, midday

How to apply

Download the application form at

<https://www.ahua.ac.uk/resources/ahuasecretariesprogramme/> ➔

About the AHUA

The Association of Heads of University Administration (AHUA) is the representative body for senior university managers (Registrars, Chief Operating Officers, Heads of Administration) in the UK and Ireland. The AHUA has 190 members from 140 institutions and is managed by an elected Executive Committee, with an office based at the University of Manchester.

The AHUA aims to represent the collective views of members on key issues and policies to the higher education (HE) sector, government and other stakeholders. It also brings together members to exchange information, share knowledge and experience, and to develop colleagues who aspire to fill senior roles in HE administration.

Contact details

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been designed to help you
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manage challenging situations.*

Catherine Webb, Executive
Secretary, AHUA

Programme Director

Seamus Gillen

Seamus has not only worked extensively with the board secretary community in the UK and overseas, but he has also been one of the governance professionals principally responsible for developing the secretary cadre. He was previously the Policy Director of the Chartered Governance Institute (CGI) (formerly the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators – ICSA), where he was instrumental in promoting the importance of the role of company secretary, overseeing a number of research projects which examined how the company secretary could develop the wider behavioural skills needed to succeed.



After he left the Institute, he took this work to the next level, and created the Leadership Development Programme for Company Secretaries and Governance Professionals, a scheme – involving coaching and mentoring – to develop the capabilities of company secretaries and other governance professionals.

Internationally, he created the training programme for developing the secretary cadre in Bahrain, working in association with the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance, and as adviser to the Central bank of Bahrain. He has trained the secretary cadre in the UAE, Mauritius and South Africa, and this wider international experience has informed the work carried out in the UK, and vice versa.

Seamus' experience in training board directors more widely is significant. It is this experience which helped him realise that the strategic secretary fits wholly into the director category, and requires training at this level. While it is the chair, and the board as a whole, which owns the governance of the organisation, someone needs to own the discipline at executive (strategic) level. That is the person who has the overall responsibility for the wider governance picture and whom Seamus has identified as the strategic governance adviser.

