

RAISE 2024 Elections

The candidates listed below have put themselves forward for election to the RAISE Committee.

All RAISE Conference 2024 delegates who have agreed for their details to be added to the Choice Voting Platform will receive a link to vote during the week of the conference (9th-13th September).

There will also be an opportunity for conference delegates to register to vote whilst at the conference.

Information for each candidate have been grouped by position and in alphabetical order.

Candidate and Role Overview:

Marketing Officer

- Tom Langston

Secretary

- Georgina Blakeley
- Chris Birchall
- Stacy Gillis
- Kiu Sum
- Steph White

Special Interest Group (SIG) Co-ordinator

- Georgina Blakeley
- Tadhg Blommerde
- Myfanwy Davies
- Amarpreet Kaur
- Costas Loizou
- Ro Tomlin-Willa

Tom Langston (UCL)

Marketing Officer

Outline your interest in student engagement

In my previous role I worked as an educational developer with a keen focus in student engagement using audience response systems. I helped academics integrate ARS in their teaching, leading to innovative uses of Padlet and Nearpod that allowed students to share art and textiles projects as a mini portfolio. I supported the creation of assessments that got students to engage with social media in a work positive way, to create summarise of research papers so that others could understand cutting edge research.

I now work as a lecturer supporting institutional partnership with students. I have been in my new role since January and I have fostered links to the SU, working with colleagues in the ChangeMakers (Student/staff partnership initiative) to make sure the central academic team are aware of and supporting student engagement within everything we do.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

I have attended RAISE previously and with my new role would like to help support the wider community as well as those at my institution. I am an advocate for the student voice and as part of my EdD am looking into the staff/student perception of blended/hybrid teaching, comparing students between two UK HEI. I feel that some within HE are claiming that students are less engaged with their studies but would like to help investigate some of the deeper issues that lead to this.

Working with the RAISE team would be a fantastic opportunity to support similar projects and help disseminate positive practice that is supporting and developing student engagement. It is only through many voices and institutions and professional organisations (such as RAISE) that we can start to see how best to shape our practice and what real world changes we can make in our daily lives.

Outline your relevant experience

I have worked on many websites and am comfortable with publishing internet content (who isn't really these days!).

I was once the manager of a small sports team, where I had to co-ordinate their web presence and marketing materials. I worked to develop sponsorships and build relationships that allowed the team to compete in the league for a few seasons. I co-ordinated the team on event day and made sure that everything was run smoothly.

I have experience of Photoshop and similar graphics packages but am aware of my own limitations. I have used these packages to design and promote bands by creating flyers, posters, album artwork, T-Shirts and gig banners but am always happiest doing so with a team to critique and reflect on the final outputs.

Chris Birchall (University of Nottingham)

Secretary

Outline your interest in student engagement

My career in higher education has been a journey of genuine and longstanding interest. I've had the privilege of working with prospective university students and supporting students taking their next steps after graduation. This unique perspective has allowed me to deeply engage with students at every stage of their journey, understanding the diverse challenges they face. I'm particularly interested in increasing student engagement by collaborating with students to co-create events and activities, drawing on their lived experiences.

My commitment to student engagement extends beyond my job roles. I've contributed articles to various publications, including WonkHE, Times Higher Education, and The Guardian, discussing key areas of student engagement and experience. These contributions have not only expanded the discourse on student engagement but also influenced the strategies and practices of higher education institutions, thereby enhancing student engagement.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

I want to put myself forward for this role as I believe I have the necessary skills to make a positive and long-lasting contribution to the Raise committee. I have experience organising large- and small-scale in-person and online events. I enjoy working with colleagues from other institutions, sharing ideas and best practices, and providing opportunities for others to do the same. I particularly enjoy finding avenues to talk in detail about lessons learnt, both good and bad, on projects I've completed and hear the thoughts of others. One good example is this year's Raise conference, where I can share the lessons learnt following our recent paid student representatives project, where we've expanded our paid roles for students in this area.

Outline your relevant experience

During my career, I have worked in a wide range of higher education roles covering the student journey from start to finish. This has included widening participation roles, working with young people in both primary and secondary school settings, and developing activities and initiatives to reduce the barriers to higher education. Following this, I've worked with students at the University of Nottingham, providing career support and guidance to help them progress to the next stage in their career, whether finding employment after studying or progressing to further study. I currently work as an Education and Student Experience Manager working with a range of support services and working closely with UoN SU colleagues to develop an improved Student Voice strategy which aims to provide us with a greater understanding of the needs of our students and allow us to implement targeted changes faster and improve the student experience.

Professor Georgina Blakeley (University of Huddersfield)

Secretary and Special Interest Group (SIG) Co-ordinator

Outline your interest in student engagement

I have had a firm interest in student experience throughout my HE career previously at the Open University where I was Director of Teaching and now at the University of Huddersfield as Associate Dean Teaching and Learning. When explaining my role to colleagues, I always say that I don't worry about the teaching and learning part of my role because I am confident in my colleagues as teachers, but I do worry about the student experience aspect. This is because it does not matter how good the teaching and learning experience is in the classroom if students don't feel like they belong, haven't had enough to eat, have been unable to get parked because they've had to drop their children off and are running late. Fixing the wider student experience so students are ready to learn motivates all of the work and projects I do.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

I have followed the activities of RAISE for a while now but have never taken the opportunity to become more closely involved. I am keen to do so now to be able to make use of all of the experience and expertise I have in student experience projects and activities. I believe I have an excellent mix of experience and skills to allow me to add value to RAISE while learning from the existing team. I am interested in the role of Secretary as well as the role of Special Interest Group Coordinator and would be delighted to do either.

Outline your relevant experience

I have over 30 years of experience in leadership roles within higher education and have won numerous teaching awards including being a National Teaching Fellow (2020). I would bring various skills to the role including the ability to lead and manage projects related to student experience, experience of working collaboratively with colleagues from different disciplines and professional backgrounds, strong communication and organisational skills and a deep understanding of the student experience within different contexts such as the part-time distance learning experience of OU students and the experience of students at post-92 institutions like Huddersfield.

Stacy Gillis (Newcastle University)

Secretary

Outline your interest in student engagement

I believe emphatically that opening up access to engagement - and allowing all students to feel that there are opportunities for them at all stages of their degree - is key to students being able to get the most out of their university experience, both in terms of academic achievement, as well as in terms of emotional intelligence, and the expansion of soft and phatic skills. While committed to graduate skills outcomes and quality assurance processes, I assert that there is an alchemy in terms of positive and sustained student engagement which can transform students' lives, both during and beyond their studies.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

I have substantial experience in EDI roles, including Chair of the women's network at Newcastle University (for staff and students), and as Chair of the national Feminist & Women's Studies Association. I draw on this experience to think intersectionally about how to support individual students, but also to make institutional change in terms of the larger structures that support all students. I have worked with colleagues in student progress roles, and in student wellbeing roles, to help shift institutional discourse around student engagement. From pre-arrival to post-induction; from visitors on Open Days to PhD candidates: all these students matter in terms of how they engage with the intellectual work of their degrees, with the support services helping their degree progress, and how they access and use the built environment of their institutions.

Outline your relevant experience

With twenty years of experience of teaching in higher education, and as a key role holder at School level (Senior Tutor; Degree Programme Director; Director of Education) and now at Faculty level (Associate Dean – Education, and co-lead on student experience and engagement in the Faculty), I have demonstrable experience of interest and expertise in this field. I have led on a number of School and Faculty projects around engagement – most recently one on transition and undergraduate student engagement at the School level, which has been awarded follow-on funding to roll out across the institution, and another on doctoral study and supervision (published in WonkHE), which is now part of the institutional workshop provision for PhD supervisors.

Kiu Sum (Solent University)

Secretary

Outline your interest in student engagement

I believe student engagement is integral to every role within the higher education sector, regardless of specific responsibilities. My interest in this area arises from a commitment to ensuring that students receive opportunities beyond their disciplinary education to prepare them as future-ready graduates. I am also driven by the injustices and opportunities students may face within the system. This has led me to collaborate with students and staff on partnership projects, exploring assessment, belonging, and professional and learning development themes. I focus on implementing innovative practices that enhance student engagement and experience. I also strongly advocate for amplifying the student voice, fostering cross-disciplinary and institutional collaboration, and building partnerships between academia and industry. I believe these are essential components for creating a successful academic community. This philosophy shapes my approach to all aspects of my academic role as I strive to contribute meaningfully to the broader academic environment.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

My involvement with RAISE Network, such as serving as a Student Officer on the committee and leading the Special Interest Groups (Engaging Assessment and Early Careers Researchers), has allowed me to collaborate with members across various aspects of student engagement. My work within the RAISE community demonstrates my commitment to advancing professional and learning development practices, and I am eager to continue contributing at a strategic level as Secretary. I am keen to support the smooth running of the organisation, effectively managing tasks and actions and fostering transparent, responsive communication that aligns with RAISE's mission and principles. I understand the importance of maintaining and managing membership and ensuring continuous improvement and member satisfaction. I focus on creating an engaged and active membership where individuals feel a strong sense of belonging. Thus, my ability and dedication to member engagement support my commitment as a Secretary for RAISE Network.

Outline your relevant experience

- I am active with the RAISE Network: Engaging Assessment's Special Interest Group Convenor (since 2017), founded the Early Career Researchers (since 2020), served as Student Member and Student Officer on RAISE Committee (2018-2022), and contributed to the establishment of the monthly RAISE Journal Club. I am also a member of the Editorial Board of the Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal (since 2021) and guest-edited a Special Edition (published 2024).
- ALDinHE's Chair of EDI Working Group and Steering Group member – fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration across the HE sector
- Lecturer in Nutrition (Solent University) – lead the Future Ready Skills Programme, focusing on student engagement and graduate outcomes.
- Chair of the Institute of Food Science and Technology's South East Branch and serves on its Education and Professional Development Committee –facilitating and championing professional development opportunities in the sector.
- Previously a Council Member of The Nutrition Society, responsible for students' needs and engagement across the membership. This includes organising and delivering six national conferences, monthly journal clubs, and careers webinars. I also served on the Scientific, Membership and Training Academy Committees.

Steph White (King's College London)

Secretary

Outline your interest in student engagement

- I'm the Head of Student Community at King's College London, a role created to support students throughout their student journey, aiming to create a cohesive student experience across the college, helping them feel part of the university community and a sense of belonging to King's.
- Previously I worked in our Welcome and Graduation team, I focused on Welcome to King's attended by 16,000 new students annually, helping them transition into HE.
- I have worked in careers and employability teams, and outreach and student recruitment teams, and have a breadth of knowledge and experience on student engagement.
- My roles have all had a student experience focus, largely because I care a lot about ensuring our students are safe, supported and feel at home at university. I'm keen to learn new ways and implement initiatives to help further foster a sense of belonging and have found the RAISE network incredibly helpful.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

- I've recently become more engaged with the RAISE network since starting my new role and have found it an incredibly helpful and supportive network to be a part of and would like to be able to contribute to the network and engage further.
- I have a lot of relevant experience for this role, from managing logistics of meetings and events, and chairing working groups, to building strong relationships with a wide range of stakeholders internal and external to my organisation.

Outline your relevant experience

- I am incredibly organised which I feel is pivotal to this role, ensuring that all meetings are organised and information in advance and post the meeting are shared timely.
- I have experience creating communications for internal and external stakeholders, particularly in my role managing Welcome to King's, in which there are over 400 internal stakeholders to be updated with the project. I have created an array of communications for students for different platforms, including email, social media, internal communications and the university app.
- I have been responsible for creating and analysing many surveys and evaluations, on a range of scales, from engaging a small focus group to a survey completed by 1000s of students.

Tadhg Blommerde (Northumbria University)

Special Interest Group (SIG) Co-ordinator

Outline your interest in student engagement

- Passionate about creating a collaborative educational environment with students as active partners.
- Dedicated to fostering students' self-belief and readiness to engage, respecting their diverse backgrounds and aspirations.
- Advocate for inclusive practices that celebrate the unique 'ways of being a student.'
- Committed to building trust-based relationships between staff and students, ensuring open dialogue.
- Enthusiastic about participatory, dialogic, collaborative, and authentic teaching methods, promoting critical and active student engagement.
- Focused on designing assessments that promote self-evaluation and involve students in co-creating learning outcomes and curriculum.
- Recognises the impact of non-institutional influences on student engagement.
- Experienced in integrating Generative AI to enhance digital literacy and ethical usage.
- Proven success in increasing student motivation, engagement, and performance through active involvement in curriculum design and continuous feedback.
- Committed to RAISE principles, ensuring inclusive, empowering, and transformative educational practices for all students.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

- Strong passion for fostering student engagement and enhancing their educational experiences.
- Proven track record in implementing innovative pedagogical practices, including the use of Generative AI.
- Commitment to promoting inclusivity and celebrating diverse student backgrounds and aspirations.
- Desire to contribute to RAISE's mission by sharing good practices and influencing educational policy.
- Experience in building trust-based relationships and open dialogue between students and staff.
- Ability to design assessments that foster critical self-evaluation and active student involvement.
- Dedication to creating collaborative learning environments where students are active partners.
- Keen interest in enhancing digital literacy and ethical technology usage among students.
- Enthusiasm for continuous improvement and adapting teaching methods to meet students' needs.
- Commitment to upholding RAISE principles and promoting transformative educational practices.

Outline your relevant experience

- Led an initiative at Northumbria University integrating Generative AI into a research methods module, enhancing digital literacy and ethical usage.
- Successfully increased student engagement and motivation through active involvement in curriculum design and continuous feedback.
- Developed innovative teaching methods that are participatory, dialogic, collaborative, and authentic, promoting critical and active learning.
- Proven ability to foster trust-based relationships between students and staff, ensuring a supportive and open educational environment.
- Experienced in designing assessments that promote self-evaluation and involve students in co-creating learning outcomes and curriculum.
- Advocate for inclusive educational practices, recognising and accommodating diverse student backgrounds and aspirations.
- Published co-authored works with students, demonstrating a commitment to collaborative research and academic excellence.
- Presented at educational conferences, sharing good practices and influencing policy in student engagement.
- Dedicated to RAISE principles, ensuring educational practices that are inclusive, empowering, and transformative for all students.

Myfanwy Davies (Bangor University)

Special Interest Group (SIG) Co-ordinator

Outline your interest in student engagement

Having benefited from small-group teaching that supported active learning in my own studies, I have sought to create similar positive experiences for others using active learning in larger groups and promoting peer-to-peer learning as an educator, and in other roles.

Working with students to revalidate my school's portfolio over 10 years ago, I came to understand how promoting interactive engagement over traditional lectures is not only more interesting but provides a much better basis for learning (Wieman, 2007, 2008). Many of my colleagues in Sociology and Philosophy teach theory which can be dry and alienating, particularly for students unfamiliar with formal HE and people like me with conditions like dyspraxia and dyslexia. Promoting the understanding and application of concepts rather than memorization released student's creativity and collaborative skills and was also key in driving up our NSS and creating a positive sense of belonging (Mazur, 1997, 1993, Freeman, 2014).

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

I would like to nominate myself for the role of special interest group coordinator as I enjoy collaborative working and mentoring and supporting colleagues who share my interests across the UK and further afield.

My interests are in the niche fields of promoting active learning in international partnerships and exploring student engagement in Welsh medium and bilingual education. I understand the value of establishing networks to support and enhance research and scholarship in the fields that they feel passionately about and to help scaffold successful careers across the expanding field of student engagement.

I have mentored 11 people through higher level HEA fellowships since 2020 and the award of my own PF and have extensive experience of effective working in committees from being the elected academic staff representative on my University's council, working within college executive groups, to leading the QAA's Wales Quality network in a more policy-relevant direction from 2023.

Outline your relevant experience

I am passionate about working with students and cross and inter-institutional collaboration. I am organised and committed to capacity building in mixed teams.

I have recently led two collaborative research projects for the QAA-HEFCW in Wales and was recently funded to lead an international collaboration exploring student engagement in studying through the medium of Welsh. The first two studies are used by the QAA as exemplars of shared learning while the last was awarded partly on the basis of the strong team and the projects role in harnessing new potential. In a former role as Chair of a Wales-wide subject group in Social Sciences I designed and led on training a new staff cohort for 5 years. I would like to use these collaborative, organisational and mentoring skills to support academics across the UK in developing the agenda for student engagement and finding the right place for themselves within it.

Dr. Amarpreet Kaur (University of Birmingham)

Special Interest Group (SIG) Co-ordinator

Outline your interest in student engagement

My interest in student engagement largely centres on my core values of enhancing the student experience and widening participation in higher education. I have been actively involved in trying to improve student engagement with both curricular and extra-curricular activity since I entered higher education as a Bachelor student. I was a very active course representative throughout my degrees, a student ambassador, a welfare officer (during my MPhil), and a Chair of a mental health society. My ongoing commitment to and interest in enhancing student engagement is now explicit in my role as my Department's student experience and employability lead; the better the experience, the more engaged students are likely to be. I want to be a greater part of a wider community which shares this interest.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

I am nominating myself for the role of Special Interest Group Co-ordinator as I previously served on the RAISE committee (between 2015-2018) in this role. I thoroughly enjoyed being the SIG co-ordinator. Having previously served in the role, I know first-hand what the role entails, and the commitment required; I know I can fulfil the role with flair and ease. I remain adept at being able to oversee activities and reporting back to management. I have no doubt that if I were elected to reprise this role, I would engage well with the SIG convenors and the rest of the RAISE committee to deliver their activities and reports, within budget. Further, I would seek to expand SIG activity in relation to topical matters in higher education, for example, adding to the four existing SIGs, I would be keen to start a new SIG on Generative AI in higher education.

Outline your relevant experience

I have previously served as a SIG Co-ordinator for RAISE. My background and experience in supporting student engagement also includes being a voice for matters relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion in mainstream practices. Having worked at the University of Birmingham for the past three years, particularly in my role as a student experience lead, I now also have experience with supporting international students and students from a very diverse range of backgrounds. I am alumna of a post-92 university, Oxbridge, and Russell Group universities; my experiences at these three types of institutions have given me a rich insight to the differences in practices between these institutions (including in relation to student engagement), and their ambitions. I believe that these experiences will be valuable to guiding what I can contribute to RAISE's committee. I have extensive experience at organising events and producing reports regarding said events, including their expenses.

Costas Loizou (University of Leeds)

Special Interest Group (SIG) Co-ordinator

Outline your interest in student engagement

My passion for student engagement stems from a deep belief in the transformative power of active participation in education. I have consistently advocated for student involvement in decision-making, recognising that it fosters a sense of ownership and community. My commitment to student engagement is evident from my relevant experience, where I have successfully implemented initiatives that encouraged student participation and collaboration, leading to a more inclusive and dynamic academic environment. I am leading the project funded by the British Council Rethinking EAP and Innovation of Language Focused Disciplinary Inclusion (LFDI) for UK-China TNE, where we aim to blend the English language and Mathematics. Furthermore, I am also working on the project Enhancing Active Learning Strategies in Transnational Education: A SWJTU-Leeds Joint School Case Study, where we examine how active learning strategies affect student learning at the Joint School, seeking to shift from traditional lectures to interactive, student-centred approaches.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

I would like to nominate myself for the role of Special Interest Group Co-ordinator because I am dedicated to fostering a collaborative and dynamic environment within the RAISE SIGs. This position aligns perfectly with my skills in coordination, communication, and leadership. I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to support SIG leaders, facilitate meaningful activities, and contribute to the strategic goals of the RAISE Committee. My proactive approach and organisational skills will ensure the effective management and growth of the SIGs. I am particularly excited about the prospect of overseeing the SIGs development budget and supporting SIGs leads in making successful funding bids, as this will directly contribute to the sustainability and impact of their initiatives. I view SIGs as unique platforms for exploring ideas and scholarship activity. They also offer great opportunities for collaborative projects, and I am excited to supporting them through this role.

Outline your relevant experience

I am a Lecturer in Mathematics and Physical Sciences at the University of Leeds and I am leading two modules for Year 1 of the SWJTU-Leeds Joint School. I coordinated multiple student-led initiatives and facilitated regular meetings to discuss and address student concerns. As previously mentioned, I am leading a project funded by the Joint Institute Alliance via the British Council. My strong communication skills have enabled me to build and maintain positive relationships with diverse stakeholders, ensuring the smooth operation of all activities. Furthermore, I have experience in delivering comprehensive reports on project activities, which will be invaluable in reporting SIGs activities to the AGM. My background in student engagement and project management equips me with the necessary skills to excel in this role and contribute meaningfully to the RAISE Committee's objectives.

Ro Tomlin-Wills (London Met)

Special Interest Group (SIG) Co-ordinator

Outline your interest in student engagement

I am deeply committed to enhancing the student experience by fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where every student feels valued and empowered. With a proven track record as Head of Engagement at a Students' Union and my current role as Student & Academic Engagement Manager, I have successfully led initiatives that increased participation and satisfaction across diverse student groups. My approach is holistic, integrating academic and extracurricular activities to ensure a well-rounded and fulfilling university experience. I adhere to a student-centred philosophy, continuously seeking to understand and address student needs through feedback, collaboration, and engagement strategies. I believe in the transformative power of education and am committed to creating opportunities for personal growth, leadership, and community building. Additionally, I am skilled in leading teams, building partnerships, and working collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff to achieve shared goals, all of which drive my dedication to student engagement.

Why would you like to nominate yourself for this role?

I would like to nominate myself for the role of SIG Coordinator for RAISE because I am passionate about fostering collaborative environments that drive meaningful change in student engagement. My experience in operational management within the Change Portfolio Office at the University of Southampton as the departments senior administrator has equipped me with the skills to effectively coordinate SIGs, forums, committees, boards, and general meetings, whilst keeping track of high volumes of paperwork across multiple projects/programmes. I have successfully facilitated these activities to ensure that they are productive, inclusive, and aligned with the strategic goals of the institution. My strong organisational abilities, attention to detail, and commitment to stakeholder engagement have consistently resulted in successful outcomes.

Outline your relevant experience

HE roles held:

- Employability and Engagement Officer
- Head of Student Engagement
- Inclusive Curriculum Coordinator (EDI work stream with student partners)
- Student Hub supervisor
- Senior Administrator
- Teaching & Learning Development Manager
- Student & Academic Engagement Manager

All of the above roles have had a medium to significant amount of coordination/administration elements. I am highly proficient at using, sharepoint pages, outlook, excel, Powerpoint etc.