

ARC Practitioner Group Updates October 2024

Admissions Kevin Rogers	<p>The group met online for its last meeting of the academic year and before the busy confirmation and clearing season, with over 100 colleagues joining from across the sector. Dr Jo Saxton, the new Chief Executive of UCAS joined the group for a quick introduction. This was something of a first, as the Chief Executive hasn't normally attended, and we hope signals her intention to listen more closely to the needs of the sector. UCAS outlined their plans for confirmation and clearing as well as gave a more general update about the running of this admissions cycle. They also spoke about their 3 year strategy which will link to their 10 year vision, where they will be focusing on improvements to their core business, i.e. UG admissions. However, they also made us aware of discussions they are having with the Charity Commission around amending their purpose to include apprenticeship provision. Any change would require full consultation with the sector. We had been expected a presentation from the DfE, but the election purdah resulted in that being postponed. So instead, we invited Kelli Wolfe, Deputy Academic Registrar at the University of Roehampton to talk about her research into professional staff burnout. This was my last meeting as Chair as I now hand over to Kevin Rogers at Solent.</p>
Assessments Alison Wells	
Postgraduate Rachel Birds	<p>The Postgraduate Practitioner Group has not met since the July update. However, the chair, deputy chair and secretaries have met to build a timetable of events for the coming academic year.</p> <p>Our first event will be online on Friday 27th September 2024 and will explore the challenges that institutions are facing this summer around recruitment.</p> <p>An in-person full day event is being organised for Friday 29 November, in London at Mary ward House. We have an agenda coming together and continue to look for speakers on any topic around the broad theme of 'change management'. This is a reflection of the considerable number of institutional restructuring challenges around the sector currently affecting our members, and to provide an opportunity to reflect on the impact on PGR support. We also want to return to the theme of generative AI, something we considered at an event last year, recognising the transformative change it can bring to the PGR experience.</p>

	<p>The email forum continues to support colleagues with specific queries. Some recent examples include approaches to HESA reporting for PGRs in write-up, alternative assessments for PGRs, fee practices beyond three years, and PGR progression monitoring.</p>
<p>Quality Assurance Jacky Mack</p>	<p>We are finalising meeting dates for 24/25, planning November and February online with an in-person session planned for June 2025.</p> <p>The last update in July covered our online meeting at the end of June 2024. A new Deputy Chair has been appointed, Adam Child from University of Warwick. Seeking expressions of interest for new group Secretary.</p>
<p>Scotland & Northern Ireland Iona Beveridge</p>	<p>The group held its first meeting of the session online on 20 September 2024.</p> <p>The first part of the meeting focussed on sector developments such as the launch of the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) in Scotland, and the continuing development of the sector-wide approach in Scotland to collecting and considering data on student criminal charges and convictions. Discussion also took place on the ongoing development of a Scottish sector shared service for conducting investigations.</p> <p>TQEF represents a significant change since it means that for the first time both colleges and universities in Scotland will operate under a single quality framework. Whilst TQEF retains some core delivery approaches that feature in the existing framework, its implementation will require ongoing focus and effort across the sector.</p> <p>Wide ranging discussion took place across the standing items on the agenda. Current discussions institutions that are SITS users are continuing to have with Tribal and more generally considerations on student record systems and future planning for these critical tools was an important topic within this. Discussion also took place on: matters including HESA Data Futures and institutions' progress towards 2023/24 data submission and sign off; graduation planning; timetabling challenges and approaches; UKVI compliance; and student discipline arrangements, particularly as relevant to the stage where an applicant has only just become an enrolled student.</p>

	<p>The group had a focussed discussion on the topic of approaches to improving the student experience, measures of progress and success within this, and governance arrangements that are effective in driving and overseeing action and progress.</p>
<p>SROC Chris Carpenter</p>	<p>It's quiet at this time of year for SROC activity, given colleagues across the sector are busy with student registration/enrolment and HESA returns. Nonetheless, SROC representatives were present at the last Student Data Forum (5 September) convened by Jisc, where the focus of discussion was progress with the current HESA Student return. The meeting pack was circulated to the ARC members mailing list in early September, along with a survey on options for addressing bug fixes which was one of the key issues discussed.</p> <p>For those with apprenticeships provision, you or your colleagues may be interested in the upcoming Degree Apprenticeships event we are organising. It will include sessions on Ofsted visits, ESFA assurance and off-the-job hours, along with opportunities to share best practice and network with colleagues across the sector. The event will cost £150 per delegate and will take place on Thursday 28 November 2024 at Woburn House, London. Booking information will be shared on the ARC members mailing list.</p> <p>Planning for the 2025 Student Records Officers' Conference at the University of Nottingham (23-25 April 2025) is well underway. We have managed to keep costs down for the conference so we are pleased to report that the price of the full residential package will be held at the 2024 rate. Booking for the conference will open in January 2025.</p> <p>We have some great plenary speakers and breakout sessions lined up, although we're still looking for more people on the latter (it comes with a 10% discount on the full residential package) – please send on the proposal form to anyone interested: Breakout Session Proposal Form 2025.</p> <p>We're also looking for venues for the 2026 conference so, if you might be interested in hosting and would like to find out more, please get in touch (Chris Carpenter, c.j.carpenter@lboro.ac.uk).</p>
<p>Student Casework Anna Sendall</p>	
<p>Timetabling Stephen Lopez</p>	<p>The group held its first online short coffee morning session on Aug 23rd, with 30 colleagues attending. The group intends to hold a number of these 1hour sessions over the year, where members have an opportunity to raise and discuss issues / gather feedback.</p>

	<p>Our next in person meeting is taking place on Fri Feb 7th 2025, hosted by UCL.</p> <p>The chair has been invited to participate in a round table discussion in October, led by Gravitas, on education strategy, Timetabling Policies and Space Utilisation & Modelling.</p>
<p>UKVI Simon Maller</p>	<p>The UKVI Group has not met since the July update. However, the chair, deputy chair and secretary have met to build a timetable of events for the coming academic year. The group meets three times a year, with meetings timed to coincide with immigration rule changes (normally November, March and July) with the meetings scheduled as follows: 29 November 2024, 11 April 2025 and 11 July 2025.</p> <p>Our first event of the year has opened for bookings and as of 25 September it is proving very popular with 94 of the 100 available places booked. This event marks the first at Mary Ward House, as the group's events had, for the past decade, been held at Woburn House. Attendance from colleagues working in various branches of the Home Office has been tentatively confirmed, as have colleagues from UUK and UCISA.</p> <p>In addition to normal Home Office updates, we will be discussing the outcome of the automation of the View & Prove service (part of the digitisation of immigration which will see the end of students needing a biometric card (BRP) to prove identity and status) and its impact on members. ARC has collaborated with the Home Office to ensure that member institutions have access to the data they need to successful enrol students without the processes being overly manual.</p>