

## ARC Practitioner Group Updates

### July 2025

<p><b>Admissions</b> Kevin Rogers</p>	<p>We have held two meetings in the last term. Both were online and were attended by between 80-110 Heads of Admissions or equivalent – it is a group which the attendees really value. Our recent meeting welcomed Dr Jo Saxton to present on the UCAS strategy, Harry Alexander from UUK to talk about the new Government White Paper, researchers from Queens University, Belfast to explore approaches taken to accepting qualifications studied in the mother tongue and a presentation on qualification verification and security. We had the standard presentation from UCAS and opportunity for colleagues to support one another in the ‘hot topics’ element of the agenda. The Jisc mail gets regular email queries from members and as such, this group is really ‘scratching an itch’.</p>
<p><b>Assessments</b> Rebecca Di Pancrazio</p>	
<p><b>Postgraduate</b> Rachel Birds</p>	<p>Our second in-person event of the year was held at the University of Coventry on 30 May 2025. Our theme was transitions at various points in the PGR research journey through admissions, onboarding, progression monitoring, career planning and keeping in touch with alumni.</p> <p>We were delighted to secure a presentation of a project coordinated by Birmingham City University and Wolverhampton University. The <b>That’s Me Project – Eliminating Barriers to Postgraduate Research Study in the West Midlands</b> is a highly prestigious project funded by UKRI and the Office for Students as part of a nationwide programme to widen participation in postgraduate research. The group welcomed Dr Eli Ashong, Postdoctoral Research Assistant at BCI to share the project’s initial findings. We hope she will be able to join the group again at a future meeting to provide an update on this important work.</p> <p>The group also enjoyed a lively session with Dr Heather Sears, Head of Researcher Development, at Coventry University where we shared a range of “sticky situations” we had encountered in vivas and how we managed to address them.</p> <p>Our final session was around supporting PGR students to explore careers options at the University of Huddersfield. The group received a presentation from Beth Ridley-Duff on a bespoke tool developed to help.</p> <p>I’d like to extend sincere thanks to all group members and presenters for making my last event as chair such a success. Both the deputy chair, Henry Forsyth and I have now finished our tenure in these roles.</p>

	<p>Thanks to Henry for his valuable support and to our secretaries Llinos Spargo and Tracy Wood for such meticulous planning and organisation. It has been a pleasure working with you all.</p>
<p>QPG Jacky Mack</p>	<p>Our summer 2024/25 meeting took place in person in London on 12<sup>th</sup> June at Mary Ward House. We had around 40 delegates in attendance, and the theme for the morning was the evolution of student voice, with key sector updates in the afternoon.</p> <p>We were thrilled to be collaborating with our partner evasys, and the day started with a shared session led by Dr Helena Lim, Academic Lead, evasys and Educational Excellence Lead, Queen Mary University of London. Beyond Feedback to Impact: Moving From "What Students Said" to "What They Gained" was an interactive session which explored themes including educational gain and TEF. The group will be partnering with evasys for the 2025/26 year and we are exploring opportunities for the upcoming meetings.</p> <p>We had invited colleagues from the group to showcase their approaches to engaging students, capturing data and evaluating impact, to understand how this has driven enhancement or institutional decision making. Dan Morton, Surveys and Data Insights Analyst, University of Sheffield presented on 'Student Voices – tying together the threads' sharing plans for a more integrated reflective model for evaluating student feedback.</p> <p>In the afternoon, we were joined by Graeme Rosenberg, Head of Student Outcomes, Office for Students for an update on a future integrated quality model, including possible future approaches to TEF. The OfS were planning to consult with the sector in the Autumn.</p> <p>The afternoon ended with a session from the QAA. Ruth Burchell, Quality Enhancement and Standards Specialist, gave an update on the UK Quality Code – Engaging students as partners: the new advice and guidance, and Tom Yates, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs gave an update on the QAA's work in policy and public affairs.</p> <p>Huge thanks on behalf of the group to our outgoing Secretary Rosina Thompson, Quality and Teaching Excellence Manager from Northumbria University who has been Secretary for 3 years and now hands over the role to Kristina Rudge, Partnerships Manager from the University of Sussex. Thanks also to Adam Child, Academic Registrar, University of Warwick for his fantastic support and input over the past year as Deputy Chair. Adam will formally take over as Chair from 1<sup>st</sup> August. A new Deputy Chair will be appointed over the summer.</p> <p>My sincere thanks to the group for making the past 7 years so enjoyable and interesting, and for their engagement and</p>

	<p>participation, it is a great supportive network and we continue share and learn from each other.</p>
<p><b>Scotland &amp; Northern Ireland</b> Iona Beveridge</p>	<p>The group's final meeting of the year took place in May 2025. Updates provided to the group from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Universities Scotland were noted and discussed. The national tertiary quality arrangements in Scotland that were implemented from 2024/25 continue to develop in their operation. In parallel, there is ongoing change in some of the key sector agencies, most notably in terms of staffing at QAA Scotland and in leadership at SFC.</p> <p>The group covered its standing agenda items and therefore provided opportunity for discussion and sharing of practice and experience across: Student records/systems; Data/Data Futures; Timetabling; Exams, assessments and academic integrity; UKVI Compliance; Quality Assurance and Enhancement; Graduation; Student Casework.</p> <p>In addition, raised topics for discussion were: arrangements for graduation events at overseas partners; and approaches to student attendance monitoring. These are both pertinent areas of focus for the represented institutions and the sharing of practice was valuable.</p> <p>The 2025/26 series of meetings is scheduled, with the next meeting taking place in September 2025. At this stage, based on the challenging operating context, it is anticipated that at least most of the meetings will take place online to support maximum participation.</p> <p>The group's membership list was reviewed and updated during 2024/25 to ensure currency and appropriate membership.</p>
<p><b>SROC</b> Chris Carpenter</p>	<p><b>Conference</b></p> <p>The main SROC activity since the last update has been delivery of the 2025 Student Records Officers' Conference which took place on 23-25 April at the University of Nottingham. Almost 90 different institutions sent a total of 163 delegates, even including one from an institution in Switzerland!</p> <p>We had some fantastic keynote speakers, including Nottingham's own Professor Katherine Linehan, PVC for Education and Student Experience, who gave an excellent presentation on the Nottingham Learner Experience Survey they have implemented as a lead indicator. The incredible Jason Foster (CEO of Cynozure) spoke to us about embracing data for operational and strategic benefit and the power of using data to tell stories. Helen Blakie, Chief Data and Analytics Officer, showcased the innovative work she and her team have been doing at Aston University to develop real-time lead indicators. Finally, Nottingham's former Registrar, Dr Paul Greatrix, closed the conference with an assessment of the current sector landscape and a few laughs. All four speakers reflected on the important role the</p>

delegation plays in supporting data-driven decision making in the sector's current uncertain times.

Delegates had plenty of opportunities to network with each other, interact with the wide range of exhibitors, and attend varied breakout sessions to share updates, information, and best practice. Breakout themes ranged from student records and data management to systems development and statutory returns, and from service culture and student engagement to inclusivity and well-being, with a little GenAI sprinkled in for good measure. All presentations from the conference can be found on our website: <https://sroc.ac.uk/previous-conferences/2025>.

Since the conference, SROC Committee members have been undertaking site visits to determine the venue for the 2026 conference, with three institutions currently in the running. We expect to be able to announce the venue in July.

### ***HESA Data Returns***

On other fronts, SROC has continued to provide sector representation, particularly in relation to HESA data returns. We have fed back to HESA/Jisc on the supportive work they have been doing on provider readiness for the current year's Student Data Return. A summary of the support and information HESA/Jisc offer is available on their website: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/blog/18-06-2025/hesa-24056-student-record-2024-25>.

Looking further ahead, governance for in-year data collection has now been established and includes representation from SROC on the Programme Board. As part of this role, we have pressed for strong and effective communication and engagement with the sector with an emphasis on transparency. This has included asking HESA/Jisc and regulators to provide clarity on when we can expect to be informed of key decisions and information (such as the nature of the pilot year in 2027/28 for providers in England for which we understand further information is currently expected by the end of the summer). HESA/Jisc will also keep the following page updated with the status of items under consideration for change or removal from the specification:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/records/reviews/student-specification-reduction-work>

<b>Student Casework</b> Anna Sendall	<p>We are delighted to welcome our new Secretary, Rebecca Funnell from the University of Bristol, who has kindly taken on the role and will be supporting the planning and coordination of group activities.</p> <p>In March, we held an online practitioner half-day event, which brought together over 100 members and non-members. The event featured excellent sessions from both the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and legal experts Pinsent Masons. We also built in significant time for group discussions, allowing peers to share learning, raise concerns, and explore best practice. We covered challenging areas such as handling student complaints against staff and the interplay with HR policies; and managing student casework in a highly challenging financial environment.</p> <p>Feedback continues to highlight how valuable these peer conversations are, and we are committed to maintaining these spaces for connection, especially in light of the current challenges facing the sector.</p> <p>Our JiscMail group continues to be an active and supportive space for discussion, it remains a vital part of how we stay connected as a professional community. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their continued engagement at events and via JiscMail, the knowledge and support exchanged is invaluable.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we are planning a thematic online lunchtime session in late August/early September. This will offer a focused discussion on a specific topic, and we plan to continue offering these shorter, topical sessions alongside our longer events to provide flexibility and variety. Planning is also underway for a new annual in-person conference in November.</p>
<b>Timetabling</b> Adrian Novis	
<b>UKVI</b> Simon Maller	<p>Our summer 2024/25 meeting is scheduled to take place on Friday 11 July at Mary Ward House London and at time of writing we have over 100 attendees booked. The theme for the morning session is as per norm, updates and discussions with UKVI (visa operations) and Home Office policy team regarding the implementation of the HE focused elements of the Immigration White Paper.</p> <p>Post the Summer meeting we will be looking for suitable venues for the 2025/26 cycle of meetings (December/April/July), if any London based member, could assist with providing a central venue, I would be grateful to hear from them.</p> <p>Away from the meeting I attended a UUK discussion group focusing on what practical suggestions the sector could raise with the Home Office regarding the implementation of changes to the BCA as well as discussing the nature and impact of the proposed Levy. This is an</p>

informal group, which will be called together at short notice to discuss issues as they arise.

Earlier in the year UKVI approached ARC to set-up several focus groups to talk through what services the sector would want UKVI to provide them. Unfortunately, and at short notice, the focus groups were cancelled, though I am hopeful they will be re-scheduled later in the summer.

Lastly, the Groups involvement in the long-term technical solution to distribute data to HE providers as part of the View & Prove (student immigration credentials) project has not been continued by the UKVI. I am unclear as to why this has occurred, and I will be following up as soon as I have capacity to do so.