



ACADEMIC
REGISTRARS'
COUNCIL

Academic Registrars Council Practitioner Groups

*A guide to the roles of
Chair and Deputy-Chair*



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FOREWORD

The Academic Registrars' Council (ARC) is the national forum of senior managers responsible for the academic administration of student matters in publicly funded Universities and Colleges of Higher Education within the United Kingdom.

ARC is committed to excellence in higher education administration. One of the ways that ARC delivers this is through specialised Practitioner Groups who support ARC's work to:

- **Promote** and share best practice in academic and student administration
- **Support** members and their colleagues in performing their roles in institutions by providing a focus for networking and development
- **Influence** national debate and policy on matters related to academic and student administration
- **Stimulate** debate on issues within and affecting academic and student administration
- **Engage and work in partnership** with Government Ministries, statutory and representative bodies and the funding councils
- **Represent** the aims of members

Practitioner Groups are a cornerstone of ARC's overall framework and the effectiveness of these groups underpins the success of ARC's contribution to and for the sector. It is therefore vital that anyone seeking to undertake a leadership role within a practitioner group is aware of the responsibilities inherent to the position and has confidence that they will be able to fulfil the requirements of the role.

This guide has been developed to ensure that any person interested in applying for a practitioner group co-ordinator post has a clear understanding of the position before seeking to undertake the role. This guidance will also be useful for newly appointed co-ordinators when they are becoming accustomed to the position.



OVERVIEW OF PRACTITIONER GROUPS

Practitioner Groups provide a framework of support for ARC members. They are an opportunity for discussion, sharing of best practice, professional development and networking.

Each group assists the development of policy and practice in specialized areas of student administration. The practitioner groups include:

- [Admissions](#)
- [Assessment](#)
- [Postgraduate](#)
- [Quality Assurance](#)
- [Student Records](#)
- [Subjects Allied to Medicine](#)
- [Scotland and Northern Ireland](#)
- [Student Casework](#)
- [Timetabling](#)
- [UK Visas and Immigration](#)

Details of each group's specific remit can be accessed via the links above.

Membership of the groups is open to all member/associate institutions and Academic Registrars may nominate up to two users per group.



BECOMING A PRACTITIONER GROUP COORDINATOR

Practitioner Groups are co-ordinated by a chair and deputy chair, supported by a group secretary.

To ensure there are timely opportunities for progression to co-ordinator posts, a set period of three years in office exists.

New co-ordinators will initially be appointed to a deputy chair role, where they will have the opportunity to shadow an experienced chair. Shadowing will normally take place for at least one year, during which time the outgoing chair will support the deputy-chair in making the transition to chair.

The appointment of deputy chair roles is filled as the end of the three-year period in office approaches through expression of interest requests being emailed to all members, with a 21-day notice period and a conversation with the relevant existing post holder or other member of the Executive.

Where there is just one expression of interest, the Executive receives a recommendation from the colleague involved in the informal discussions of their nominee. The Executive either endorse a recommendation to Council or reject the recommendation, re-opening expressions of interest. The next Council then either approve or reject and re-open expressions of interest.

Where there is more than one expression of interest those interested parties are entered into a secret ballot, which involves the following:

- a) Allows each institution one vote
- b) Is open for a period of 7 days using online voting
- c) Results are notified within 7 days of closing to the membership.
- d) In the case of any substantive concern or irregularity then the Executive can vote to reject the result and hold the election again, advising the Council of the reasons for that change and being accountable for that change.

A register of current co-ordinators and their terms of office is held by the ARC Business Secretary and published on the ARC website.



THE ROLE OF CHAIR

The role of chair is multifaceted, and the precise functions will be shaped by the needs of each particular group, which will vary. Generally speaking, however, the role will comprise:

Providing Leadership to the Practitioner Group

As chair, you will be a point of authority for your practitioner group. You should therefore expect that on occasions you will be required to provide advice, guidance and direction on the subject matter of your group.

You should also be mindful that your group will consist of more junior staff who will not necessarily be as informed as you are given your position in your institution and within the wider ARC community. Keeping the group up to date on national debate and sharing your experience and knowledge will be key to this leadership role.

Chairs also hold a specific responsibility to direct the duties of the secretary and deputy-chair to ensure the overall effectiveness of the group. In doing so, you should be cognisant of the requirement to ensure that, at an appropriate point, your deputy-chair is developed in order that he/she may rotate into the chair's role.

Responsibility for Ensuring Practitioner Group Meetings Function Properly

It is the chair's overall responsibility to ensure that practitioner group meetings are planned effectively, with agendas agreed and published in good time and logistical arrangements made soundly.

Additionally, chairs should ensure that business is dealt with in an orderly way at group meetings whilst also, importantly, managing the event in a way that ensures meetings serve as a forum for enabling stimulating, informative and open debate.

The chair is expected to attend all meetings of the group; where full attendance is not possible, a minimum of two-thirds of meetings is required.

Representing the Group as its Figurehead



The requirement to represent the group as its figurehead will often be influenced by the political landscape and the extent to which the group's area is subject to policy debate. As chair, you must be prepared to engage with relevant debate, and to raise the profile of your group's subject matter through joining affiliated groups and presenting at partner conferences, where required.

Practitioner groups also provide the opportunity to discuss the ideas of newer/more junior staff who will have a valuable contribution to make to enhancing practice as we look forward. As chair, ensuring that there is healthy debate and facilitating the transfer of ideas will allow you to be a voice for as well as to the group.

Sitting on the ARC Executive Committee

As chair, you will be co-opted to sit on ARC's Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is comprised of

- Chair and deputy-chair of ARC;
- Chairs of practitioner groups;
- ARC business secretary;
- Data Futures HESA Lead;
- Student Loans' Company Lead;
- Professional Development Coordinator; and
- Conference Coordinator.

As a member of the Executive Committee, you will be required to:

- Act in the interests of ARC as a whole rather than as representatives of any particular constituency;
- Attend all meetings of the executive committee and where full attendance is not possible, attend at least two meetings per year;
- Attend the annual ARC conference;
- Attend at least two meetings of ARC Council; and
- Contribute to the work of ARC as directed by the chair and Executive Committee.



THE ROLE OF DEPUTY CHAIR

The primary role of the deputy-chair is to assist the chair in the organisation of the practitioner group and its meetings/events as directed by the chair.

The deputy-chair should also be able to deputise for the chair on any given matter relating to the chair's role, when required. To this end, deputy-chairs should familiarise themselves with the role of the chair, as described in this guide, and work with the chair to ensure that they are prepared to undertake designated functions when required.

Additionally, there is a fundamental expectation that deputy-chairs will go on to become a chair at an appropriate point. As a chair's term approaches its end, the deputy's role will become more visible as they make the transition to chair, and deputies should expect to have an increased presence across the group in their final term as a deputy.

Deputies should attend all meetings of the practitioner group; where full attendance is not possible, attendance is required at a minimum of two-thirds of meetings. Deputies should also attend ARC's annual conference.



PRACTITIONER GROUP MEETINGS

Organisation

It is the chair's overall responsibility to ensure that practitioner group meetings function properly. To do this, the chair should work with the deputy-chair and secretary to ensure that workload is apportioned appropriately and, importantly, that colleagues are clear about their responsibilities and the timeframes for completion of tasks.

There are a number of elements that underpin the successful organisation of a practitioner group meeting at both strategic and operational levels. A general checklist is provided under Appendix A. This checklist is not intended to be a definitive guide, however it will support conversations between the chair, deputy-chair and secretary about how workload would be best assigned.

Managing the Event

Ordinarily group meetings will be led by the chair who is responsible for opening the event, introducing speakers, managing question & answer sessions and making closing remarks.

In view of this, it is advisable for chairs to refrain from also delivering full sessions where possible, instead asking the deputy to lead on specific items where appropriate.

Some other practical items to note which may assist you are:

Opening Address:

- Include/arrange for a 'housekeeping' announcement regarding where facilities and emergency exits are and whether there are any fire alarms scheduled.
- Indicate relevant passwords/wifi codes if applicable.
- Remind members that the freedom for fair and frank conversation is underpinned by Chatham House rules.

During the Day:

- Have a pre-prepared brief bio of each speaker and a summary of the sessions ready to assist you to make introductions.
- Ensure that sessions run to time. Give speakers notice when they are coming to the end of their allocated time and work with them to close the session at an appropriate point if they are likely to exceed the scheduled timeframe.



- Prepare questions to stimulate debate following each session – particularly where you are hosting an external speaker. Whilst it would be ideal for questions to come from the floor, colleagues will look to the chair to stimulate debate if no questions are raised by members.

Follow-up items for the Chair after the Meeting

- Thank speakers.
- Ensure that notes of the meeting are circulated to members by the secretary within one month and are uploaded to the ARC web site along with any other relevant materials such as copies of presentations.

Deputy-Chair to Chair Transition Year

During the chair's final year, it is advisable to enhance the profile of the deputy-chair at group meetings in preparedness for their accession to the role of chair. Ways in which this can be done include transferring responsibility to the deputy for:

- Leading on setting the agenda.
- Acting as the event facilitator for a significant part of the day.

DISCUSSION LISTS AND WEB RESOURCES

As a member of ARC, you will already have access to the general ARC web resources available at www.arc.ac.uk. ARC facilitates the exchange of best practice and encourages debate through discussion using the forums within the ARC website. The ARC website can also be used for the organisation of events and to share materials (presentations, minutes of meetings etc.). As a practitioner group co-ordinator your rights will be extended, enabling you to manage group events, upload resources and access the group forum.

General administration of the relevant webpage is undertaken by the group secretary. However, you may find it useful to have direct access to information such as event registration figures. The AUA can send you a User Guide with full details of the ARC web resources and how to use them.

As co-ordinator, you are encouraged to engage fully with your group's mailing list and to provide a steer where required. Full engagement will also ensure that you are always apprised of those matters most relevant to your practitioner community, which in turn will prove invaluable for you when you are setting the agenda for group meetings.

For assistance on using the ARC website please contact the AUA by emailing info@arc.ac.uk.



SUPPORT FOR YOU

Deputy and incoming Chair

Normally, there is a period of one year in which the deputy-chair is guided by the outgoing chair to make the transition to chair. On occasions a full year may not be possible, but in all circumstances incoming chairs are strongly advised to meet with the outgoing chair specifically to be briefed on the role as it relates to the particular practitioner group.

To ensure you are well equipped to make a seamless transition, if you aren't aware of the answers already, you should raise the following questions when you meet with the outgoing chair:

- When are meeting dates set up until, where will they take place and what other arrangements have been made so far?
- Is there a particular formula for agreeing where and when to hold meetings?
- Has a new deputy-chair been appointed? If so, what are their contact details? *If not, the ARC Business Secretary should be prompted to resolve this.*
- Who is the secretary, and when does their term of office end?
- Are there any external contacts, particularly representatives of sector bodies, which should be introduced as part of the induction period?
- Are there any standing agenda items?
- Is there anything in particular to be generally aware of in relation to the group?
- Is the role expected to be part of any other allied groups? If so, what are they – and have any dates already been set that should be diarised?

Chair/ Deputy-Chair

As indicated throughout this guidance, the chair and deputy-chair provide a critical support role to each other. Ensure that as deputy-chair you take full advantage of the leadership and guidance that the chair will provide, and that in turn you ensure that when you become chair you maximise the support that your deputy can give you.

Secretary

Each practitioner group has a designated secretary, appointed directly by the chair for a specified term (normally three years). The chair may use their discretion to determine an appropriate process for appointing a group secretary, from the group's membership, as and when required.

The secretary is responsible for the group's administrative affairs and will:

- Maintain the membership records;



- Assist in the organisation of the practitioner group and its meetings/events;
- Manage the group's web pages;
- Take notes at group meetings.

Secretaries should attend all meetings of their practitioner group and, if possible, attend ARC's annual conference.

ARC Professional Support

The Association of University's Administrators (AUA) provides a professional support service for ARC. This includes hosting ARC's web pages, providing administrative support for ARC Council and Executive meetings and supporting the organisation of ARC's annual conference.

ARC Executive Committee

ARC Executive Committee operates as an inclusive forum, where colleagues are welcome to ask questions and seek advice. By nature of the structure for progression, the ARC Executive Committee will always encompass a good mix of new members and experienced voices. You are encouraged to view the Executive Committee as a key support network of colleagues facing similar experiences as they too embark on a new role. Well established members are also happy to provide you with the benefit of their experience.



PRACTITIONERS' FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Practitioner Group:

Q: How do I join/leave?

A: *Your academic registrar/equivalent is responsible for nominating two representatives of the institution per practitioner group. This can be done by adding the representative as a User:*

<https://arc.ac.uk/member-area/users> and then signing the users to a Practitioner Group:

<https://arc.ac.uk/member-area/practitioner-group-users>.

If you want to leave, your academic registrar/equivalent can remove you from the Practitioner Group and remove you as a User.

Q: Can a person without an 'ac.uk' email domain join?

A: *No. ARC is closed to member/associate institutions only.*

Group Meetings:

Q: I can't attend a meeting – can someone else from my institution attend in my place/instead of me?

A: *Yes – there is an opportunity for either of your institution's two delegates to nominate another individual to attend as part of the registration process.*

Q: Can more than two people from my institution attend?*

A: *To ensure that all institutions are able to be appropriately represented, there is normally a maximum of two delegates per provider permitted. *note, 1. for some groups attendance is restricted to one attendee per institution and as chair you should familiarise yourself with your group's protocol before making a response; 2. Chairs may generally use discretion here, for example if a compelling case is made for an additional attendee, or if it is unequivocal that the venue could accommodate the numbers, then additional attendees can be permitted.*

Q: Can someone who isn't staff at a member/associate institution attend?



A: Not unless they are presenting a specific item. Practitioner groups are reserved for ARC Members/Associates only.

Mailbase:

Q: How do I join?

A: Some practitioner groups have JISC mailing lists setup for members of their group to email queries and share good practice. Once you have been nominated as a group user by your Academic Registrar/equivalent, you can email the group secretary, details of which you can find [here](#), to request to be added to your group's mailing list. Groups with mailing lists are detailed below:

Practitioner Group	Existing JISC mailing list?
Admissions	Yes
Assessments	Yes
Postgraduate	No but group secretary circulates regular messages/queries via email
Quality Assurance	No, but group secretary circulates regular messages/queries via email
Scotland and NI	TBC
Student Casework	Yes
SAMs	Yes
Timetabling	Yes
UKVI	Yes

You may notice that there are Discussion Forums on your Practitioner Group page on the ARC website, however these are not currently in use.

Q: When asking for information on sector practice, should I anonymise responses before they are shared?

A: There is no fixed rule, but it is good practice to be clear about how you will share data at the point you make the request. If the information shared to you is sensitive, you can offer your email address so that people can respond to you privately.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

There are two ARC events that take place across the year alongside the ARC Annual Conference. You can find a list of these events, how often they are run and which month they take place in below:

Month	Event	Venue (if not virtual):	Role Required
September	Council Meeting	Woburn House, London	Chair and Deputy
October	Executive Meeting	Woburn House, London	Chair
November	ARC Annual Conference	Different location each year	Chair and Deputy
January	Executive Meeting	Woburn House, London	Chair
March	Council Meeting	Woburn House, London	Chair and Deputy
April	Executive Meeting	Woburn House, London	Chair
June	Council Meeting	Woburn House, London	Chair and Deputy
July	Executive Meeting	Woburn House, London	Chair

Specific dates are available at:

Practitioner Group Meetings (add here):

Month	Date	Event	Venue
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CONTACTS

General Contacts

ARC Executive (available to group Chairs): arc-executive@JISCMail.AC.UK

ARC Admin (AUA): info@arc.ac.uk

You can find contact details for the ARC Executive Committee using this link:
<https://arc.ac.uk/about-arc/arc-executive-committee>.

Your contacts (add here)

Practitioner Group Secretary:

Deputy Chair:

Outgoing Chair:



Appendix A

Practitioner Group Meetings: Checklist

What?	When?	Who?	Notes
Set date	Dates for the academic year should be set in advance of the start of the academic session		<i>In doing so, you should ensure that you are familiar with, and follow, any agreements with regard to frequency, location and budget for meetings</i>
If an in-person event, agree location and venue	At least 6 months in advance		
Ensure that the Group is updated on the date, time and venue of meetings	As soon as practicable once confirmed		<i>Early notice will allow for colleagues to manage workloads, make travel arrangements and will prevent questions being put to you about timeframes</i>
Create the 'Event' on the ARC web pages	As soon as practicable once confirmed		<i>See Appendix B for guidance</i>
Agree the general contents of the agenda			<i>This will be formed based on items rolled forward from or recommended at the last meeting, items brought forward by group members and topical items that, in your view, it would be timely to consider; you may also be approached by external speakers seeking to</i>



			<p><i>present to the group – it is a Chair’s discretion whether to facilitate such requests</i></p> <p><i>(tip: ensure that you engage your practitioner group in setting the agenda and provide timely opportunities for them to raise items/volunteer to deliver sessions)</i></p>
Registration to be opened and deadline to apply to be set			<p><i>Once the content of the agenda is known, even where timings aren’t confirmed, it would be helpful to share this with members to assist with their decision-making on whether to attend</i></p>
Liaise with speakers to confirm agenda timings			
Circulate the confirmed agenda, reminding colleagues of the deadline to register			<p><i>Deadline to register should be no later than 2 weeks in advance of the event.</i></p> <p><i>This may be later if the event is online and there are no venue requirements.</i></p>
Ensure there is appropriate liaison			



with the hosting venue with regards to facilities and hospitality, if applicable			
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