

ARC Practitioner Group Updates

June 2024

<p>Admissions Julie Kelly</p>	<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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>This was my last meeting as Chair as I now hand over to Kevin Rogers at Solent.</p>
<p>Assessments Joanne Coward</p>	<p>We held our final meeting of the year on May 17th with a fantastic attendance of 115 delegates. The theme for the day was assessment inclusivity through innovation and design.</p> <p>The meeting started with updates on the work to develop more details guidance to support the OfS B5 & B5 condition of registration on the retention of students' assessed work and from Dr Charlotte Verney (University of Bristol) an update on the QAA Collaborative project on 'The Future of Exams Boards'.</p> <p>This was followed by a Panel discussion on digital examinations using the early results of the recent JISC survey on in-person digital exams. Panel members then shared their own institutional experience on implementing digital exams, how to ensure a successful implementation and any lessons learned. Jane Board (Director - Student Administration & Learning Development/Deputy Director, Academic Services, University of Glasgow and co-secretary of the ARC-APG Group) facilitated the session with insightful contributions from Dr Charlotte Verney, (Head of Assessment, University of Bristol) Lisa Greenslade, (Head of Assessment and Examinations, King's</p>

	<p>College London) and Andrew Higgins, (Director of Student Administrative Services, University of Warwick).</p> <p>Our second session was a presentation on 'Managing Extenuating Circumstances via the Student Record System' led by Emma Boylan, Assistant Registrar (Registry Services) and Charlotte Smith, Quality Officer, both from City University, London. This a good way to look at ways we can use our student records systems more effectively to support these processes.</p> <p>Dr Nick Watmough, Quality Enhancement and Standards Specialist at the QAA shared with us some recent work sponsored by QAA that considers compassionate assessment and optionality in assessment. Nick then used some fictitious programmes using and also not using these approaches to explore the potential benefits for the student experience alongside the consequences of pass/fail marking and assessment choice for securing academic standards, recording student achievement and degree outcomes.</p> <p>Our last session of the day was led by Fred Eggleton, Graduation Manager at Nottingham Trent University who shared with us ways in which NTU are offering alternative graduation formats and ceremonies to support neuro-divergent students and others who may find the traditional type of ceremonies intimidating or overwhelming. This was a wonderful example of putting students at the heart of the services offered.</p> <p>Finally, this was my last meeting as Chair of ARC-APG as my term of office comes to an end. It has been a real honour to chair this group and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank every member for their contributions to meetings, either through giving presentations, sharing their experiences and practice or just simply offering support to other members. The warmth, generosity and collaboration shown by every member to each other exemplifies what is so special about ARC and its members.</p> <p>My special thanks to Alison Wells who will now take over as Chair having been Deputy Chair this year. I leave the Group in very safe hands. I also thank Annie Sander and Jane Broad, Co-Secretaries to the Group whose amazing organisation skills service the Group so well and ensure the smooth-running of every meeting. I owe all three of you a huge thank you and much appreciation.</p>
<p>Postgraduate Rachel Birds</p>	<p>The Postgraduate Practitioner Group held an online 'brown bag lunch' (BBL) on</p> <p>26 April where we asked attendees to break out into small groups and discuss whatever was on their minds in the professional sphere at the time.</p> <p>An in-person full day event was held at Aston University on 24 May. Our theme was Supporting the Supervisory Process, focusing on the</p>

contribution made by our members to enhancing practice, for example matching supervisors with applicants, creating supervisory policies or regulations, good practice frameworks for establishing the supervisory relationship, assessing the quality of supervision, making sure supervisions happen (e.g. systems and/or data solutions), etc.

Following a lively ice-breaker session where colleagues got to showcase their artistic abilities as part of the networking activity, our first presentation was delivered by Dr Karen Clegg from the University of York. Karen is a Co-Investigator on the RSVP: Next Generation Research SuperVision Project.

This project aims transform the culture of doctoral education and supervision in the UK, working with UKRI, Wellcome Trust, more than 15 universities internationally and a wide range of industry partners. In a highly interactive session, Karen was also able to collect more data for the project from our members.

Dr Heather Sears, Head of Researcher Capability and Development at Coventry University followed on from Karen. Heather is also the Researcher Development Lead for the RSVP project above and shared with us the work she had been involved in to design and develop Coventry's supervisor development programme.

Our afternoon sessions involved more opportunities to network and share good practice. Heather was joined by Llinos Spargo (Graduate School Training and Development Officer at the University of South Wales) and Dr Elizabeth Scanlon (Researcher Training and Development Manager at Sheffield Hallam University) to facilitate a World Café style discussion on a range of challenges around support for the supervisory process.

The day ended with a discussion of a range of hot topics from Generative AI to administrative processes.

The email forum continues to support colleagues with specific queries. Some recent examples include extensions to registration in support of a disability, systems development, use of a Chief External Examiner, and return from sickness absence under the UKRI's terms and conditions.

Quality Assurance Jacky Mack

Our summer meeting took place online on 27th June. This was a shorter practitioner-led session, with over 70 attendees. I updated the group that this was the last meeting of our Deputy Chair, Michelle Vermeulen, Head of Registry Services at the University of Bedfordshire, so thanks to Michelle for all of her help and support over the past few years. We are hoping to recruit a new Deputy Chair over the summer and I will continue as Chair for another year to support this transition.

We had a brief update from the curriculum management systems special interest group set up by Anna Powell, Senior Registry Officer

from the University of Huddersfield. Shoshana Ormonde, Quality & Standards Manager, University of Brighton provided the update. There are around 60 colleagues attending the group, it has met twice and has been very useful in understanding how other institutions are approaching this area and for sharing practice. The second meeting recently focused on system integration and technical colleagues were invited to share knowledge and practice. A recording is available on the groups Teams site. The next meeting is planned for 6th August and will focus on data migration and workflow design and configuration.

Continuous Monitoring and Periodic Review: exploring opportunities for process integration

- Kathryn Gomm, Quality & Academic Services Manager, University of South Wales
- Sarah Connor, Academic Projects Manager, Kingston University London
- Syed Islam, Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Kingston University London

We heard two different institutional approaches to how annual/continuous monitoring processes and periodic course review are being brought together into more holistic models. Data was a key underpinning in both institutions. This topic generated a lot of interest and questions indicating this is an area that many institutions are looking at currently.

External Examining: a new model

Detta Palin, Assistant Manager: Academic Quality, Data and Systems from the University of Chester gave a presentation on the work at Chester on a different model for External Examining based on a new External Quality Adviser role with a broader more flexible remit than the previous External Examiner role. This was noted as an area where the sector had generally not moved away from the established External Examiner model but some institutions were starting to look at alternatives now. There were requests for Detta to share the role description of the Quality Adviser role.

Looking ahead to 24/25, we have a few topics carried over from previous meetings including; 'sprint method' for programme development, curriculum simplification, Gen AI and academic misconduct, and different approaches to defining Intended Learning Outcomes.

**Scotland &
Northern Ireland**
Steven Logie

The Group met in person at the University of Stirling on Friday 17 May 2024.

The first part of the meeting focused on sector updates on ARC Executive, Universities Scotland and we were delighted to welcome Erica Russell-Hensens, Deputy Director, Student Interest, Access and

	<p>Quality from SFC to give an update on SFC's plans on a revised approach to assurance and accountability.</p> <p>We also welcomed Michael McLaughlin and Angus Warren from APUC to the meeting. Michael McLaughlin provided an overview of the student systems software market and plans of how the ARC Group could work together more closely with APUC and Angus Warren give an update to the group on the proposed launch of a business model for the University and College (Tertiary Education) Conduct Investigation Shared Service (TECISS). Angus explained the company's set up, staffing model and governance within APUC's existing structure. The overall aim of this model is internal investigation being carried out using external expertise.</p> <p>Moving onto the standing items on the agenda Members discussed varying levels of progress within their institutions with Data Futures. There was a general discussion regarding the increasing number of students with individual needs and rising numbers of students requiring single occupancy venues to sit exam and the challenges this creates for estates.</p> <p>With regards to UK Visa and Immigration there was discussion on the remote delivery policy that had been shared for consultation. It was noted that the sector is awaiting the Government's response to the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) review of the Graduate visa.</p> <p>There was a further discussion about Graduation Ceremonies and security protocols with regards to on stage protests at graduation ceremonies.</p> <p>The group appointed Suzanne Daly as Vice Convenor from 1st August 2024 for a two-year period and at the same time Iona Beveridge will take over the role as Convenor of the Scottish and Northern Ireland ARC Practitioners Group.</p>
<p>SROC Chris Carpenter</p>	<p>Activity on the SROC front has been a little quiet since the last update which covered the 2024 conference held in April. Work is now well underway for planning the 2025 Student Records Officers' Conference which will be held at the University of Nottingham from Wednesday 23 to Friday 25 April 2025. We already have a couple of senior leaders from the University lined up to deliver plenary sessions and will be adding more from elsewhere to the bill in due course. A call for breakout presenters will also go out in a couple of months.</p> <p>As always, we'd greatly appreciate the support of ARC members in spreading the word about the conference, as well as encouraging your teams to offer breakout sessions – after all, these are the foundations of what makes the conference a success. Feedback from academic registrars who have attended in the past indicates that they have found the conference to be very valuable, so please do save the date and consider attending yourself.</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: c.j.carpenter@lboro.ac.uk.</p> <p>On other topics, HESA/Jisc have recently reviewed their approach to sector engagement fora. This has resulted in the establishment of the Student Data Forum, which will replace the Data Futures Programme Board and the Provider Forum which have both operated for several years now. SROC will continue to provide representation for the student records community through the new forum, which includes representatives from Jisc, statutory customers and a variety of other sector bodies. The inaugural meeting will be held later this month.</p>
<p>Student Casework</p>	
<p>Timetabling Stephen Lopez</p>	
<p>UKVI Jo Wright</p>	<p>The UKVI Practitioner Group met on 12th April in London, with representatives from Home Office Policy, Home Office Operations, UKCISA and UUK presenting to the group, in the usual format. The Operations team gave an update covering intake trends, current fraud risks (particular focus on Pakistan), planning for the summer surge of visa applications and the merging of the former HEAT team into a broader Student Visiting Team, auditing all sponsors not just HEIs. Policy representatives briefed members on the MAC review, ministerial approval of the new remote delivery policy (setting a maximum of 20% for remote delivery), recent negative press around use of international agents and some minor changes to the immigration rules.</p> <p>UUKi provided some data showing the adverse impact that recent government policy changes had already had on international student recruitment, and also presented on UUK's actions in response to the negative press on agents and its engagement with the MAC review. UKCISA colleagues talked about several of the above areas/policy changes and shared details of their 2024 policy paper 'Equity, Inclusion and Innovation: a sustainable international student policy' and their upcoming conference.</p> <p>In private group sessions led by the Deputy Chair, members discussed (i) the detail of the proposed remote learning policy, including whether it is workable for the sector particularly with regard to the required collation and reporting of data, and (ii) the latest developments with the View and Prove system (long term replacement system for e-Visas).</p> <p>The UKVI Group is also engaged in regular small group meetings with UKVI project colleagues around the introduction of e-visas, with changes impacting later this calendar year, and is particularly seeking</p>



to influence final decisions around the requirements the Home Office is looking to place on Universities such as mandatory use of MOVEIT and signing a separate data sharing agreement.