



**ARC Practitioner Group Updates**  
**January 2024**

**Admissions**  
Julie Kelly

**Assessments**  
Joanne Coward

## Postgraduate Rachel Birds

The Postgraduate Practitioner Group held an online 'brown bag lunch' (BBL) on Friday 13 October when we discussed the recently published UKRI's New Deal for PGRs. Our next BBL is scheduled for 12 January 2024.

An in-person full day event was organised for Friday 24 November in London. We had a thought-provoking and interactive range of sessions around the broad theme of 'PGR Assessment' including the current and future threats and opportunities posed by generative AI.

The morning sessions were led by Professor Tom Stoneham from the University of York who explored a number of ethical and practical issues around the interplay between AI and academic integrity in postgraduate research. The group were challenged to consider when the use of generative AI was acceptable and when it was not, and all the grey areas in between.

In the afternoon we were joined by Dr James Burford, Associate Professor in the Department of Education Studies at the University of Warwick who briefed the group on the #MADE project, recently funded by Research England Enhancing Research Culture Fund. The project examines mitigating circumstances and reasonable adjustments in doctoral education and aims to develop an evidence base which leads to rigorous, lasting outputs and the potential for institutional policy change.

Mariah Loukou Deputy Head of Doctoral College at City University of London shared her experience of navigating governance processes to gain approval for a new doctoral degree examination policy and advocated the importance of effective consultation.

Finally we considered the use of independent chairs at research degree vivas.

Presentations were given by Georgia Hawkes, Graduate School Manager, Leeds Beckett University and Pete Mills, PhD Academy Manager, London School of Economics.

## Quality Assurance Jacky Mack

### Quality Practitioners' Group Autumn update

Our autumn meeting was held online on 23rd November and we had three topic areas at this meeting:

- B3 / B4 / Quality Assessment Review

Jean Arnold, Deputy Director of Quality from the Office for Students joined to give an update on recent Quality Assessment Review reports, and a general update on B3 including the published priority areas for 23/24 (Business and management, degrees with integrated foundation years and partnership and sub-contracted partnership arrangements). The OfS will be publishing some thematic summaries of the reports. There were

	<p>questions seeking clarification on the relationship between B3 monitoring and quality assessment reviews, this was an area that the OfS were considering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- B4 and B5 Conditions Jo Coward, Academic Registrar, University of Bedfordshire and Chair of the ARC Assessment Practitioners Group gave an update on the ongoing issue of retention of students' assessed work and recent meetings with the OfS Task &amp; Finish Group. There was some discussion on the draft guidance that Jo circulated for comment in October, members noting that there had been some movement but there remained concerns over the lack of clarity on expectations. Jo would continue to represent ARC interests and concerns on the Task &amp; Finish Group.</li> <li>- CMA Guidance Updates / planned approach from Cardiff University (30 mins) Martine Woodward, Head of Quality and Academic Standards, Cardiff University shared how they approached alignment with the CMA guidance and the updated guidance published at the end of May 23. There was discussion about different approaches. This would likely be a topic we would return to.</li> </ul> <p>On the ARC mail group there has been a lot of discussion on curriculum management systems and linked to this Anna Powell, Senior Registry Officer from the University of Huddersfield has set up a special interest group, they are meeting online on 30th January. Our next meeting is online on February 15th and we are hoping to have the June meeting face to face if we get a volunteer to host.</p>
<p><b>Scotland &amp; Northern Ireland Steven Logie</b></p>	<p>The Group met on-line on 8 December 2023.</p> <p>The first part of the meeting focused on sector updates from ARC Executive, Scottish Funding Council and an update from Universities Scotland.</p> <p>Moving onto the standing items on the agenda a couple of members had recently undergone UKVI compliance visits and they shared the experience of the visit and the related outcomes with the group.</p> <p>Members also discussed varying levels of progress within their institutions with Data Futures.</p> <p>A few members of the group were either preparing or had recently had their QESR reviews and they noted the official name of the tertiary quality framework has been recently agreed as Scottish Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework : TQEF.</p> <p>There was a discussion about Graduation Ceremonies and the expectations of graduation participants to ensure that they are courteous during the entire ceremony and refrain from any</p>

	<p>activity that is disruptive, and also what practise in the different institutions if students arrive late.</p> <p>Members provided feedback on the annual conference, overall they had found the conference to be useful with excellent presenters/speakers with the session on “Streamlining of Exam Boards” being highlighted as being informative. Members also commented that holding an informal social evening event the evening before was especially helpful for first time attendees.</p>
<p><b>SROC</b> Chris Carpenter</p>	<p>Since the last meeting, the SROC Committee has been in full swing with planning the 2024 conference which will be held at the University of Leeds from 3-5 April. This year’s theme will be “Navigating Change: Transforming University Processes for a Progressive Future”. We have keynote speakers from the University of Leeds, the Academic Registrars’ Council and Wonkhe lined up, along with our usual wide range of breakout sessions and excellent evening entertainment.</p> <p>As is well known, student records teams and other colleagues across the sector have been grappling with the implementation of Data Futures and providing a HESA Student return. SROC Committee members have been regularly representing the sector, including at HESA Provider Forum meetings. As well as working with HESA and statutory customers to address the technical issues, we’ve tried to convey the impact on colleagues involved in this activity and pushed for reasonable changes to the timeframes for this year and beyond.</p> <p>We’re also keeping an eye on the potential acquisition of Tribal by Ellucian given the proportion of the sector with student record systems from these two providers and await the outcome in April.</p> <p>Finally, we have had several changes in Committee membership in the last few months. We have said goodbye to two long-serving members, Marian Hildith (Chair) and Mark Jones (Secretary), and elected a new Chair (Chris Carpenter), Deputy Chair (Tom Moody) and Secretary (Gabby McLaren). In addition, we look forward to welcoming a number of new members joining us from the January Committee meeting.</p>
<p><b>Student Casework</b> Lysandre de-la-Haye</p>	

## Timetabling Stephen Lopez

### Group Administration

- Chair - Stephen Lopez (GCU) took on role as group chair in September 2003
- Vice Chair – Following a call for notes of interest, 1 note was received and following discussion with the Chair of ARC, Adrian Novis (Swansea) has been appointed as Vice Chair.
- Group Secretary - Iain Aylett (Hull) has confirmed that he will remain as Group Secretary until at least the end of 2023/24.

### Group Meetings

A planning meeting took place in November with regards future meetings. The aim is to hold 2 in person and 1 remote meeting per year. For in person meetings the aim is to hold one meeting in the North and one Midlands/South per year. The next meeting is taking place at GCU in Glasgow on February 16<sup>th</sup>.

Future meetings will include an external institutional speaker, along with at least 1 internal group member presentation and agenda time for themed round table discussions, either on a topic of innovation or problem solving. Engagement of system suppliers at meetings will be considered, however it was felt that previously such presentations were very sales focused.

### JISC Mailbase

The mailbase continues to be active, however it is noted that there appears to be a number of non HEI members, mainly suppliers or consultants on the group. A discussion is due to take place regarding resetting membership,

### External Engagement

UUK have been in contact with regards engagement from ARC as a sector representative body with regards working with the Union of Jewish Students with regards guidance for Universities relating to issues that can arise due religious observance. The topic of general religious observance issues for students within a timetabling perspective is due to be a topic for discussion at the forthcoming group meeting.

## UKVI Jo Wright

The UKVI Practitioner Group met on 1<sup>st</sup> December at Woburn House, with more than 100 delegates in attendance. In addition to the usual presentations and debates around Home Office policy and study visa operations, we had been asked by a Home Office project team not in attendance to pose some questions around the digitisation of student visas, which gave rise to quite a bit of discussion and feedback. This discussion was followed up via a special meeting with the Home Office project colleague to collate further feedback on the digitisation project and proposals.

Following on from the Practitioner Group meeting, the Deputy Chair attended a short notice meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December prior to the government announcement on net migration, which included briefing regarding the government's planned changes to



	employment and social care visas and notice of a review of the Graduate Route by the Migration Advisory Committee (the time frame for which is currently unclear).
--	--