

ARC Practitioner Group Updates**April 2024**

<p>Admissions Julie Kelly</p>	<p>The admissions group met at the beginning of March and had organised a panel from schools and colleges to gain an understanding of what it felt like for applicants going through the admissions cycle this year. Some worrying information being reported back about some HEI's employing pressurised tactics around accommodation and some issuing unconditional offers, which led to a discussion around the UUK Fair Admissions code of practice.</p> <p>UCAS gave an update on the ECD and asked the group about whether they were confident about whether processing would be finished by the RBD/DBD dates which would be falling at the start of exam season. This was a mixed picture with higher tariff universities being less confident.</p> <p>I also gave an update from UCAS Council which saw Jo Saxton chair her meeting following the departure of Clare Marchant last summer. One of the main items of business was looking at the difference between predicted and achieved grades, the margin between which has been steadily growing since before the pandemic. There were a number of options discussed, the main one being accepted that feedback needed to be given to schools to help support more accurate predictions going forward.</p> <p>Finally, UCAS will be holding a further Round Table event in April to continue the conversation around international admissions.</p>
<p>Assessments Joanne Coward</p>	<p>The Group held its Spring meeting on Friday 9th February 2024. We were delighted that the University of Leeds hosted us for our first in-person meeting since the Covid-19 pandemic. Our thanks to all the University of Leeds team for all their support in organising the meeting and for making us so welcome. It was great to meet so many members face-to-face and to be able to take the opportunity to get to know each other better and chat without a screen between us.</p> <p>The Future of Examination Boards cont.</p> <p>Our first agenda item was a follow-up from the workshop on the future of exam Boards that we held during our winter meeting last November. Dr Charlotte Verney, Head of Assessment, Bristol University, gave a presentation on what is now a QAA funded Collaborative Project that looked at the project scope and invited input to help shape the project.</p> <p>Michaela Pittom, Assistant Registrar (Regulations, Assessment and Student casework) from Kingston University showcased that Kingston has undertaken to review its Exam Board structure. Following on from Charlotte and Michaela's presentations, we shared examples of exam board profiles, agendas and other Board/assessment</p>

	<p>documentation that combined with questions of the two presenters, generated much discussion and sharing of good practice.</p> <p>OfS B4 draft guidance consultation feedback</p> <p>Our second major agenda item was to share comments on the then draft OfS supplementary guidance on the retention of students' assessed work. From this discussion, we agreed that we should collaborate across the sector to develop advisory guidance on implementation, and provide a framework that institutions could use in developing their own policy for implementation. A small ARC Task & Finish group has been formed which will meet over the next 3 months to develop advisory guidance for the sector.</p> <p>Our Summer meeting will be on Friday 17th May 2024 and it will be online. Booking will be open soon via the ARC website.</p> <p>Thanks again to our friends at the University of Leeds and especially to Annie Sander and Jane Board, our Co-Secretaries for their fantastic organisation before, during and after the meeting.</p>
<p>Postgraduate Rachel Birds</p>	<p>The Postgraduate Practitioner Group held an online 'brown bag lunch' (BBL) on 19 January where we asked attendees to break out into small groups and discuss whatever was on their minds in the professional sphere at the time. We noticed a lot of similarity between groups with concerns ranging from the policy arena and the prospect of a general election to the the most recent PRES results highlighting the importance for PGRs in belonging. Members also raised apprehension about the financial challenges across the sector and reflected on some local impacts on their practice.</p> <p>The next BBL will be held on 26 April with the final one of the year scheduled for 23 August.</p> <p>The next in-person full day event will be held at Aston University on 24 May. Our theme is Supporting the Supervisory Process, focusing on the 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.</p> <p>So far, we have accepted two proposals to showcase innovative projects around supervisor training. We are still lining up more sessions and plan to open for bookings from Friday 12 April. As always, we expect the event to attract a lot of interest and bookings will be taken on a first-come-first-served basis, with registrations likely to be limited to 1-2 people per institution.</p>
<p>Quality Assurance Jacky Mack</p>	<p>Our spring meeting took place online on February 2024. This was a shorter practitioner -led session and we had three topic areas at this meeting:</p>

	<p>On the ARC QPG 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 set up a special interest group. Anne gave an update on the first meeting of the group which took place online on 30th January. There was a very good level of participants and plans for further meetings.</p> <p>Jo Coward, Academic Registrar, University of Bedfordshire joined up to give a further update on the work of the OfS Task & Finish Group on guidance related to OfS conditions B4 and B5 and retention of assessment work. Jo circulated the final draft of the guidance after the meeting and asked for any final comments. This supplementary guidance has since been published by the OfS on 14th March. There was some interest from the group to work with the ARC Admissions group on some broad sector principles/guidance.</p> <p>Katie Akerman, Director of Quality and Standards University of Chichester facilitated a group discussion on micro-credentials. Generally, this was a challenging area for many HEIs, and most had limited activities in this area.</p> <p>We had hoped to hold the June meeting f2f, but after several attempts, did not have any offers to host us, so this will also be an online meeting.</p>
<p>Scotland & Northern Ireland Steven Logie</p>	<p>The Group met on-line on 23 February 2024.</p> <p>The first part of the meeting focused on sector updates from ARC Executive, Scottish Funding Council and from Universities Scotland. Moving onto the standing items on the agenda Members discussed varying levels of progress within their institutions with Data Futures and it was noted that most are now working on this year's submissions.</p> <p>The delays in processing visa applications by UKVI has resulted in large numbers of international students arriving late for the January intakes. Several members commented that they will be accepting students onto programmes until mid-February and some have given extensions to support late arrivals. Trimester 3 intakes are also being introduced for some institutions.</p> <p>There was a further discussion about Graduation Ceremonies and the expectations of graduation participants. Some members reported that students who arrive late for Graduation are not permitted to enter if the ceremony has started and to prevent late arrivals the correspondence sent out to students will state an arrival time rather than a ceremony start time.</p> <p>There was a brief discussion which highlighted the following challenges in the sector which touched on student mental health, lower numbers of international students, how to reduce spend and</p>

	<p>make savings and drive efficiencies. To allow for a fuller discussion on these challenges, it was agreed that this would be an agenda item for the next meeting which is being held in person in May.</p> <p>The group is seeking to appoint a Vice Convenor, who will take up office from 1st August 2024 for a two-year period and any group member interested in the position was invited to send an expression of interest to the Chair by 15th March 2024.</p>
<p>SROC Chris Carpenter</p>	<p>Since the last update, we've been busy with the final preparations and delivery of the 2024 Student Records Officers' Conference which took place on 3-5 April at the University of Leeds. We had a fantastic turnout of over 170 delegates from over 80 institutions, with lots of positive early feedback received.</p> <p>Four excellent plenary speakers covered a range of topics. Professor Jeff Grabill, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Student Education, from the University of Leeds opened the conference with a highly engaging talk on why data is fundamental to the student experience. Lesley O'Keeffe (Registrar, Brunel University London, and ARC's Professional Development Lead) gave us some fantastic insights from her experience of navigating personal change, and Richard Puttock (formerly of the OfS and now Head of Business Intelligence and Data Analytics at the University of Leeds) helped us to understand why a lack of understanding makes the lives of regulators and providers harder. The conference was closed by David Kernohan, Wonkhe's Deputy Editor, who reflected on the current state of the sector and the important contribution made by Student Records Officers.</p> <p>As well as plenty of opportunities to network with other delegates and interact with the 10 exhibitors, we had 24 breakout sessions to share updates, information, and best practice. These covered our usual kind of content around student records, data management, systems development, and statutory returns, as well as sessions on AI, curriculum data management, EDI, and staff development and well-being. The evening entertainment included the conference dinner at the Royal Armouries Museum preceded by a drinks reception in their incredible Oriental Gallery.</p> <p>Next year's conference will be held at the University of Nottingham from Wednesday 23 to Friday 25 April 2025, so please spread the word and save the date.</p> <p>Finally, we are hoping to run a day session focusing on business intelligence in July 2024. More details will be released soon.</p>
<p>Student Casework Sara Moggridge</p>	<p>A meeting of the SCPG was held on 26th February 2024 online chaired by Sara Moggridge, Deputy Chair.</p> <p>A legal update was delivered by Julian Sladdin from Pinsent Masons, who outlined key headlines arising from the Abrahart case. The presentation stimulated discussion around the need to anticipate and implement reasonable adjustments, to carefully consider</p>

identification of competency standards when designing assessments and considering adjustments, and the importance of audit trails relating to decisions made in this respect. It also generated questions relating to the identification of students' needs and these not necessarily being through formal diagnosis. It was felt that institutions need to consider how proactive identification of needs can be enhanced and the need for a holistic institutional approach.

The second session was an update from Chris Down who chairs the Investigators' Network. Chris noted that the Network now consists of 260 members with 80 attending their last meeting. They had also considered key findings from the Abahart case as well as the RWCMD case and the AB vs XYZ case, with the latter triggering discussion about communications with reporting students and the need to now ask them to attend panels and potentially be subject to questioning. Chris advised that they have established small working groups to develop guidance around these cases. He also noted that they had discussed software solutions for case management and the increasing demand for these across the sector; this was echoed by the practitioner group. The network had also discussed the use of video and audio recordings and seeking legal advice if these are admissible/should be considered if permission was not sought.

Finally the Practitioner Group meeting ended with an update from Jo Nuckley, Head of Outreach and Insight at the OIA. Jo outlined recent publications including the Operating Report 2023 and Operating Plan 2024. She noted receipts in Jan and Feb were up on the same point in 2023, She outlined emerging themes, with Academic Appeals being the largest category year to date. She observed that whilst most are eligible, most also go on to be non-justified; suggesting that there may be opportunities for increasing awareness and understanding for students. Information was also shared from the OIA's Disability Experts Panel and discussion groups and three case examples outlined.

The next meeting of the SCPG will be in 26 April online.

Timetabling Stephen Lopez

Forty members of the Timetabling Group meet in March hosted by Glasgow Caledonian University. A revised format to the meeting included more time for round table discussions, however two presentations were given, one from GCU on dealing with rapid expansion at their London campus and another very interesting discussion from Nottingham on considerations regarding planning for a new TT system.

Feedback received from those in attendance suggests that they enjoyed the format of the meeting. An online meeting is scheduled to take place in July, with our next face to face meeting scheduled in London for November.

	<p>The group still plan to, on occasion, invite external speakers from system providers to attend and present, however this would not be on a sale pitch scenario, but rather to facilitate two-way discussion on developments within the sector and emerging changing needs of HEIs.</p>
<p>UKVI Jo Wright</p>	<p>The UKVI Practitioner Group met on 12th April in London, with more than 100 delegates attending.</p> <p>Hot topics of discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• implementation of the Home Office's new remote learning policy (max 20% online delivery on any taught course without special approval), including the planned data reporting requirements• intake trends, including increased fraud detection and refusal rates for study route applicants from Pakistan• audit visit requirements• MAC review of the Graduate Route• the political landscape re net migration• Immigration rule changes and their impact to date• View and prove project update (latest news relayed by Group Deputy Chair in the absence of project colleagues from the Home Office). <p>The final UKVI group meeting of the year is scheduled for 19th July, but as I will be on holiday on this date, this was my final meeting in the chair.</p>