

## Welcome to AISA Connect

We'd like to welcome you to the first edition of the new AISA: Connect Newsletter!

We hope that you like our new look and will find the content interesting and informative. In an effort to create more cohesion and parity amongst our groups, we will be focusing on each of the AISA regions in turn in our 'Spotlight on...' feature. Here you can find out a little bit about the AISA Regional Co-ordinators and see what your colleagues across the regions are talking about.

You can also get to 'meet' the AISA Executive, find out about any training opportunities that are coming up and hear what your colleagues have been up to.

If you have an interesting story, undertaken some particularly useful training or have any other newsworthy items, then we'd be delighted to hear from you so please stay in touch via the contact details at the end of the Newsletter.

We hope to see you at the AISA training day at Oxford Brookes on 8th June or perhaps some of you at the AISA conference in July.

Have a great summer!

*AISA Executive*



## AISA Annual Conference 2015

The Annual AISA conference was held this year at the University of South Wales on 23rd March and was a resounding success. Around 40 delegates attended the conference which had the title: *To infinity and beyond: Exploring new horizons that support the whole international student experience.*

Bobby Mehta, Head of Enquiries & Admissions and International at USW opened the conference and Emma Gwynnett-Davies, Manager, Immigration & International Student Advice (USW) offered the keynote speech followed by (all too brief!) discussion groups. The subject of this was *Back to the Future: the 21st Century Adviser* and during her talk, Emma highlighted several Business Process Tools that could be used by colleagues and their teams to assess their current situation and then promote, gain support for and grow their services. In the afternoon delegates chose from a selection of workshops on a range of issues including using social media as a communication tool, international student induction and post study work options. These were kindly led by colleagues from USW, University of Sheffield, Bangor University, Bournemouth University and Oxford Brookes University.

Feedback on the day was overwhelmingly positive with colleagues appreciating the welcome at USW and valuing the subject matter. It was suggested that the Keynote speech and discussion group could be offered as a standalone training session and so the AISA Executive will look at the viability of possibly running a further session around that in the future. The Executive were also happy to see that their decision to offer more holistic business training and personal development opportunities, to sit alongside those around immigration and international student affairs that are already ably offered by UKCISA, was warmly received and supported.

# Meet... the AISA Executive

This edition we introduce you to the Chair of the AISA Executive



**Name:** Jo Holliday

**Job title:** International Student Adviser

**Years working in international:**  
24 years

**Year on the AISA Executive:** Well I was a founder member of OSAG (Overseas Students Advisers Group) back in about 1992 but then joined the current AISA Exec in 2013

**What one word best describes your role?** Rewarding.

**Why did you decide to sit on the AISA executive?** I wanted to give back more to the wider international student adviser community by offering to share some of my own experiences and of course to learn from others. I have not been disappointed – they are a great bunch of people who inspire me so much.

**What does AISA mean to you?** For me AISA is a collection of very committed and wonderful professionals who support each other through networks, training and our annual conference to continually reflect and develop our role to enhance the international student experience.

**Describe a 'typical work day' for you?** A typical day for me starts with a brief catch up with other team members before checking my calendar. My appointment slots are usually fully booked up a week in advance or more due to the high demand for immigration advice. I try to have a look at the casenotes for any repeat clients before they come if I have time.

Otherwise I am usually getting on with casework or responding to staff queries on immigration/international related matters. Most of my time is student-facing which is good but can be tiring – so I always welcome a catch up meeting with other colleagues on other issues relating to international students. Recent catch ups have been looking at how we work together to support Libyan and Iraqi students faced with a range of difficult financial and immigration issues.

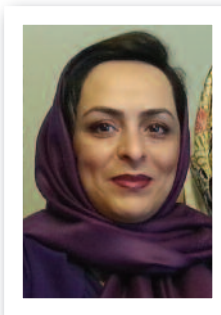
**What is the funniest or weirdest thing that a student or staff member has ever asked or said to you?** I was once asked by a male international student whom I was advising on immigration matters if I could advise him on how to find a prostitute!!!! Needless to say I was somewhat flabbergasted and was unable to help with that query!

**What one thing in your office could you not function without?**  
Endless cups of tea :)

**Tell us something we might not know about you?** I grew up on the islands of St Lucia and Tortola.

# Members' Experiences

## The Postgraduate Certificate International Student Advice & Support



You might have seen the above course, which is run by the University of Nottingham in conjunction with UKCISA, advertised online and at conferences. Well, what's it all about and what can attendance on it bring to your role? We asked **Azadeh Madanian Mohammadi** (University of Sheffield), a recent graduate of the course, to tell us all about it. . .

*I was an international students' Visa Advisor when I started this course and on daily basis dealt with international students. To me this is a unique job different from other administrative posts. Since apart from common inter-personal skills it demands various special skills which are not generally taught at classical higher education courses. I attended the PG Certificate International Student Advice & Support at the University of Nottingham to develop such skills and found it a great match to my requirements/expectations. We studied various topics, namely: Cross cultural aspects of advice and support; Advice giving and client care; Legal frameworks and advice giving; Managing complexities: Enhancing the students' influence and impact. Out of these I liked the first and third courses the most. The tutors were very knowledgeable and we had lots of in depth discussions during lectures which were very helpful in consolidating the course concepts. The assignments were in line with what we had studied and we received adequate guidance and support to deliver good quality work and also received great feedback that helped developing our understanding of the topics even further.*

*Another advantage of the course is that almost all students were working in similar areas so we were able to share our experiences and learnt from each other. It was also good to expand our professional network which helped us to understand the ways that other institutions were dealing with international students. The course is run on from Friday evening over the weekend so it was perfect for me as I did not need to have time off to attend the course. The course co-ordinators were very friendly and were always willing and available to help and give advice even on holidays!*

*Overall the course was good value for money, gave me lots of confidence in dealing with challenging cases, and expanded my knowledge of international students and how to do my job more efficiently.*

# Spotlight on... Wales & the South West

21 AISA members from 11 institutions met at the regional meeting for Wales & the South West at Swansea University on May 15th 2015. This region has an all day meeting (10-4) with a break for lunch and networking.

After the meeting became regularly hijacked by Tier 4 issues, the members decided that they would split the day into 2 parts, discussing immigration only in the morning and non Tier 4 issues after lunch. This is felt to be more inclusive of attendees who do not deal so much with immigration and also helps to redress the balance of Advisers as supporters of wider student experience and not just 'visa machines'! This region also invites a guest speaker to the meeting (such as the UKVI or legal professionals). This meeting they were delighted to welcome Vini Templeton from Duncan Lewis who discussed the impact of the removal of appeal rights for Tier 4 (and other) applicants, the often prohibitive costs of bringing a private Judicial Review and the devastating effect that the removal of the Human Rights Act would have on the legal system and those it seeks to protect.

Attendees spent considerable time in the morning discussing the impact that the removal of full term Entry Clearance vignettes would have on enrolment and how this would be managed by institutions- both those receiving the BRPs and those whose students will need to attend local Post Offices. No clear way forward was identified and institutions wait impatiently for further information to be released from the UKVI. The new Health Surcharge was also touched upon, especially relating to filling in the new online form and what data people were using to populate various fields. Attendees discussed the new Exit Checks and whether this would impact on institutional business- none of those present kept students' return flight details as standard. Neil Gaskin (Swansea University) also highlighted an excellent document that has been produced in Germany to help institutions assess the correct immigration routes for visiting academics and researchers. Attendees were delighted that he had already approached UKCISA to see if it was possible for them to co-ordinate the production of a similar leaflet for use in the UK and gratefully agreed to add their weight behind this request.

Non immigration areas discussed were to do with: Arrival Services; managing enrolment of late arrivals; replacing lost passports overseas; supporting students who wish to undertake fundraising activities (in light of the Nepalese earthquakes) and Chinese students have increased difficulties in accessing embedded forms. Siew Oh (Swansea University) then gave a short presentation outlining interesting resources she had discovered via the Warwick Integration Summit.

AISA members are welcome to attend any regional meetings that they choose, if you fancy joining Wales & the South West at their next meeting, it will be held at Bristol University on Friday 20th November 2015 and you should contact the Regional Co-ordinator introduced opposite:



## Regional Co-ordinator

**Name:** Liz Rees

**Job title:** Student Services Manager, Bath Spa Global

**Years working in role/international:** 8 years in the field of international advice, 1 year in current role

**Years as an AISA Regional Co-ordinator:** 2 years

**What one word best describes your role?** Wide-ranging

**Why did you decide to become an AISA Co-ordinator?** To give our previous co-ordinators a well-deserved break!

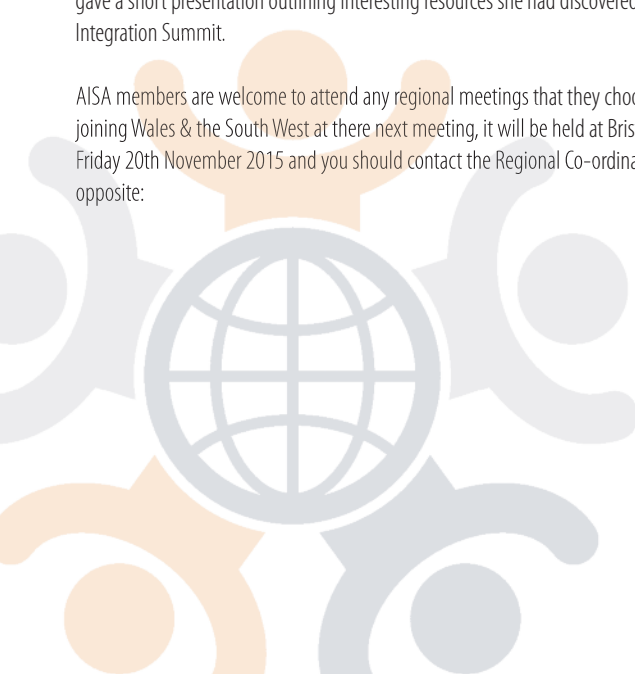
**What does AISA and the regional meetings mean to you?** A space for sharing best practice, building relationships with colleagues, and gaining strength and reassurance from the fact that – whatever the latest nightmare – we're all in in together!

**Describe a 'typical work day' for you?** The usual really – lots of emails and meetings, with a liberal dose of event planning and student welfare appointments thrown in. In my current role I have no responsibility for Tier 4, which was strange at first but something I've grown to appreciate as it means I can really focus on the wider student experience and integration agenda.

**What is the funniest or weirdest thing that a student or staff member has ever asked or said to you?** The other day a student came in to see me and asked if I had any '...', then showed me the translation from the Chinese on his phone as he didn't know how to pronounce 'scissors'. I said yes, and he then asked me to use them to cut his hair for him as he'd done a shoddy job by himself the night before and kept finding random long bits everywhere! All part of the service. . .

**What one thing in your office could you not function without?** My teapot

**Tell us something we might not know about you?** I'm a juicing and raw chocolate evangelist!



# AISA Training Day



Monday 8th June 2015 11am-4.30pm  
at Oxford Brookes University

Following our stated intention to provide appropriate, holistic training and support to our membership: the AISA Executive is very proud to offer members the opportunity to attend a subsidised training day structured around the widely acclaimed **Mind Management Programme**.

This was developed by Prof. Steve Peters (University of Sheffield) and used by many of the GB Olympic teams. This programme is based upon a practical model, the Chimp Model, which simplifies the neuroscience of the brain to explain how it impacts our emotions and behaviours and then how to manage it.

The model will be positioned in specific reference to the AISA membership demographic and will be used to provide insight into, and ways of managing, themes that affect us through our working lives:

- **identifying and managing emotional awareness and how this impacts on our relationships with others**
- **communicating effectively- especially across differing cultures**
- **developing successful teams**
- **improving and maintaining relationships across all levels from Senior Managers to students**
- **how to nurture our health, reduce our stress levels and be productive, happy and confident.**

After an introduction to the Model, our professional tutor and 'Chimp Leader' Adam Wright, will lead us through some practical exercises and group work to ensure that every attendee has the opportunity to develop their own learning and gain maximum benefit from the day. There will also be plenty of opportunity to network with colleagues and to test out your enhanced communication skills!

**The cost of this training day is just £50 for AISA members (£65 non members) please book early as we are expecting high demand.**

You can find more information at: <http://chimpmanagement.com/index.html#>

## Date for the diary... UKCISA Conference

1st-3rd July 2015 at the University of Sussex

Spaces are still available on this year's annual UKCISA Conference which is to be opened by Simon Marginson from the UCL Institute of Education, speaking on the Global position and national prospects for UK International Education.

Delegates can choose from a selection of over 60 sessions covering a whole range of subjects from Immigration Stop Press to OISC and from Twitter to establishing an institutional Global Voice.

As well as the 'serious stuff' attendees will have ample time for networking and can even enjoy a fish and chip supper at Brighton seafront.

Further information and booking can be found at: <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Info-for-universities-colleges-schools/Training--conference/Annual-Conference/>

## Contact details

You can find the AISA website at:  
<http://www.aisa.org.uk/About/>

If you'd like to contact us with any stories, feedback or questions we'd be delighted to hear from you via:  
[aisa@ukcisa.org.uk](mailto:aisa@ukcisa.org.uk)