

Co Chairs' Welcome

Welcome to the autumn edition of AISA Connect. We hope that you survive the surge period and that your students manage to arrive before your enrolment deadlines.



Despite the huge number of challenges we are constantly facing supporting our international students, we continue to feel passionate about making a difference to the student experience and providing a network that supports you in your work with international students. When things become calmer we hope you will find time to attend a regional meeting to share your experience of what is going well and any problems you are facing.

The executive committee are currently busy making plans for our training day and conference 2017/18. Our training day will take place on Monday 27 November at King's College, London and we will be focusing on crisis intervention and helping vulnerable students along the best possible path. If you are interested, save the date, more details will be sent to you nearer the time! We are hoping to organise the conference to take place in April 2018 to include some focus on non Tier 4 students, for example how we support dependents and short term students. If you have any ideas of training you would find useful, please let us know!

Wishing you all a successful 2017/18!

Emma Gwynnett-Davies & Sally Saca

KING'S
College
LONDON



Training and Conference Update



On 13 January 2017 we held our annual training 'A working plan: safely supporting international student employability' at Oxford Brookes. The training included Nichola Carter highlighting key areas of UKVI concern around employability.



As well as interactive discussion relating to international students' queries relating to employment issues, there were presentations about the Brookes Tier 5 internship scheme and how that was set up, examples of Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur schemes and a session looking at other employment opportunities that don't relate to the tiers.

There were over 40 attending the training and the feedback was very positive. Some of the positive comments we received were 'Extremely good value. Good venue', 'Well structured day' and 'Sessions were good and all the presenters very engaging'. It was great to see colleagues from careers services at the training as it provided a useful insight into different ways of working with international students and how our services can work together in the future.

We also held the AISA Conference at The University of Bristol on 15 May 2017 – 'Finding the silver lining: supporting positive student experience in challenging times'.

Following the AISA AGM and presentation of AISA's financial statements and an Immigration Update from Jo Attwooll (Universities UK), there were 3 interactive workshops which concentrated on how we work in relation to recommendations and requirements of organisations such as UKVI, QAA, OISC and UKCISA and on the area of institutional discretion and how to use this safely.

It was good to see over 25 colleagues attending and the feedback showed that attendees found it useful work on case studies and share best practice from other institutions together.

Hope to see you at the next training event on 27th November!



**Next training
event
27th November**

Meet the... AISA Exec!

This edition we introduce you to **Will Burton**. Some members may already know Will through his role with UKCISA but some of you may not know that Will also combines this with the work he does for AISA Executive!

Name: Will Burton

Job title: Training Administrator/Coordinator

Years working at the UKCISA: 8

Years working with the AISA Executive: 8

What one word best describes your role? Diverse

Why did you decide to sit on the AISA executive?

It is part of my job description! I am very pleased that it is though, as it gives me direct contact with many of our members.

What is the best thing about your job?

Contact with UKCISA members.

What is the worst thing about your job?

Training/event venues not providing the service they originally promised.

Describe a 'typical work day' for you

I am responsible for the smooth running of over 40 UKCISA events, including our main conference. Much of my time is spent organising these. This includes liaising with venues, promoting the courses, processing bookings, putting together materials and updating our website. Otherwise I am usually dealing with delegate queries and problems. As well as AISA, I also work with the ICN Executive.

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

It's a toss up between Coffee and Outlook. I prefer coffee.

Tell us something interesting we might not know about you?

Child number two is due any day now. Yikes!!



Connect With Your AISA Colleagues on LinkedIn!

AISA are now on linked in!

It would be great if you could join our group and network with your AISA colleagues around the UK. To ask to join, on the "Groups" page of your LinkedIn profile, just search for **"AISA: Association of International Student Advisers Forum"**

Resource Corner

A space for signposting resources which might come in useful for our AISA members

Healthy Relationships Project



An International Student Sexual Health Campaign Toolkit.

Following an increase in the number of students seeking medical advice, Sheffield Hallam University embarked on an award winning project that won UKCISA's Professor Paul Webley Award for Innovation in International Education in 2016. Helen Paskins (International Student Adviser at Sheffield Hallam University) helped implement the project and explains how you could do this too...

Hello Helen. Congratulations on winning UKCISA's Professor Paul Webley Award for Innovation in International Education last year. What prompted you to start the Healthy Relationships project?

Thanks! We are very pleased with the award. The project began because Sheffield Hallam University's medical centre noted an increase in the number of female international students, particularly from SE Asia and China seeking medical advice due to unwanted pregnancies. We also had occasions when in confidential interviews, international students have reported feeling under pressure to enter into sexual relationships whilst studying in the UK. We therefore wanted to start this project to help international students to improve their knowledge about sexual health and consent.

How many people were involved in setting it up? How long did it take to implement?

The project was initiated and run by the International Experience Team. The Healthy University Steering Group is the project's strategic sponsor at Sheffield Hallam University. Operationally, the project was implemented by two people: Krassie Teneva (Head of International Experience) and me. We also trained a small crew of student health facilitators, to deliver healthy relationships sessions to students.

It took around 3 months to do the project planning and recruiting health facilitators, and we ran our first pilot healthy relationships sessions thereafter. The project has now been running for over a year. We have made continual adjustments along the way.

What response have you had from the rest of the sector since?

The project got a great reception at a UKCISA regional conference. I have had a couple of universities contact me to find out more information because they are thinking of running a similar project. We delivered a presentation at UKCISA on how we implemented the project, and attendees were all interested to know more. I would love to hear from any other institutions who are interested in doing something similar.

Any advice for colleagues elsewhere in the sector looking to develop something similar?

My main tips would be:

- 1) Get colleagues excited and on board with the project. The more enthusiasm you can generate, and the more you can link it to wider welfare campaigns, the better the chance of success. Your students can be your champions of the project. The positive feedback they give after attending a healthy relationship session can be used to demonstrate why the sessions are so important.
- 2) Make links with your relevant local sexual health services. They have a wealth of information and materials they can share. We also made links with academics at Sheffield Hallam, who have an interest in this as a research area, and have provided us with useful ideas.
- 3) Don't be worried about giving it at a go! If you feel anxious about talking about the topic of sexual health to students, it helps to try small and practice a few small sessions on students known to your team. Also you don't have to be an expert in sexual health – it is about giving key, basic messages on what makes a healthy relationship and making sure students know where to go for more information. If you don't have the resources or time to run sessions, then producing and distributing a leaflet about health and contraception (see our blog below) is something simple and effective you can do.
- 4) Please do check out our toolkit which is on our blog. We have put all our resources, session plans and leaflet for you to use and adapt: <https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/healthyrelationshipsproject>. We welcome anybody across the sector to get in touch.

What changes have you noticed since implementing the project?

The project itself has evolved into something of which we are very proud. Some staff initially expressed concerns about the aims and content of the sessions. This apprehension has dissipated now that the project has been tried and tested, and proven to be a success with students. Personally, I feel I have also grown in confidence. I had never thought my role (which is principally visa and welfare advice) would involve a sexual health angle! I was nervous at first but it I have to say it is now one of the most enjoyable aspects of my role.

Are you thinking about any further developments to Healthy Relationships in the future?

Yes. Aside from continuing to evaluate and adjust the sessions we run, we are also currently planning some exciting research with a Professor at Sheffield Hallam University around the Healthy Relationships project. Watch this space!

David Barrott

AISA & Senior International Student Adviser, University of Sheffield

If you have found a helpful website, organisation or other resource please contact us at the email below so we can share with or wider membership.