

Co Chairs' Welcome

Welcome to the spring edition of AISA Connect. We hope this academic year is going well for you and your students, and that you found the time to attend one of the recent regional meetings.

Networking with other colleagues, sharing ideas and supporting each other with the challenges we face, is so important to our work and wellbeing. To allow for discussion outside the regional meetings we have been piloting email support groups in the South West region. This has proved to be very popular amongst our members and we plan to roll this out to the rest of the regions shortly. You can hear more about the pilot at our annual conference, which will take place on 10th May in London. This year we will spend the morning on immigration related matters and the afternoon exploring issues around the mental health

For many of us, supporting our EU students through the uncertainties surrounding Brexit, has added to our workload. We responded to this by offering training in conjunction with UKCISA to provide members with up-to-date information, highlight useful recourses, and discuss the best ways we could support our students applying to the EU Settlement scheme. The training proved to be very popular and after our initial training day at Oxford Brookes was oversubscribed, we added a new date in London. Feedback from the sessions was extremely positive with colleagues saying they felt much more confident advising their students.

We are in the process of updating our website, and making it more interactive for members. We hope this will be ready to show you at the UKCISA conference, so come and find us at the lunchtime session we are hosting alongside ICN.

Please remember, if you have any feedback about the work we do and how you think we can improve the service we offer our members, let us know.

Emma Gwynnett-Davies and Sally Saca



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"**

AISA Annual Conference and AGM 2019



On 10th May 2019 AISA will be holding its annual conference.

In a change from other years, this year's AISA conference will have two distinct parts rather than an overall theme.

This is due to the perceived urgent need for space for our members to discuss and share our institutional management of the new Sopra Steria Front End Services. A representative from the UKVI will also be offering their take on the situation and highlighting any upcoming changes we can expect.

After lunch we will be leaving Tier 4 firmly at the door and delving into the important, and sometimes challenging, world of student mental health. Experts from the UK Student Mental Health charity Student Minds will be helping us to plot the international student mental health journey and see how we might be able to make simple interventions to benefit us all.

Please be aware that at the annual conference AISA will hold its AGM where the AISA executive committee will present annual statements and any constitutional amendments put forward for consideration/ratifying.

The cost of the conference will be: **£95 for AISA members** and **£155 for non-AISA members**. This includes refreshments and lunch.

If you would like to attend the conference on **Friday 10th May** please complete the registration form and return it to: **UKCISAAdmin@ukcisa.org.uk**



Preparing for Brexit: top tips

a | i | s | a |
ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISERS

ICN Immigration Compliance Network
www.immigrationcompliancenet.org

- 1. Reassure** – let people know what information is already available and that they are able to come to the UK to study or work even in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Check what information your institution may already be providing.
- 2. Support** – Will your team be offering immigration advice to EU/EEA /Swiss students? Identify what training you might need and where it is available. Will you need extra resources?
- 3. Wellbeing** – Will a change of status in the UK impact on the wellbeing of EU/EEA/Swiss students and could they be less likely to access support due to this? Plug into your wellbeing teams to raise awareness of the changes and the support they provide for students who find themselves feeling 'other' following Brexit and the psychological stress that this might cause.
- 4. Identify** – Know which groups of students that may need to be contacted before the 29th March 2019. Are there any students on absences from their studies or with re-sits who are expected to return after this date? What documents may need providing to these students and will there be any communications sent to Tier 4 and non-Tier 4 students travelling over Easter?
- 5. Location** – Are any students on placements, fieldwork or study abroad who may need to be contacted? What messages may be needed based on where they are and when they are expected to return? Are your study abroad teams aware that there may be changes to the opportunities they can provide?
- 6. Communicate** – Once target audiences have been identified, how will your institution issue communications and who will lead on this? It is vital that Communications teams send the right messages to the correct cohorts.
- 7. Prepare** – Do you know what discussions are already happening in your institution to prepare for a no-deal Brexit and who to contact in the case of a business critical issue? What mechanisms are in place to support students with financial difficulties, specific health issues or if there are safety concerns?
- 8. Plan** – Does your institution offer professional accreditation or double-degrees? Will UK credits and accreditation be recognised in the EU after Brexit? Are your recruitment, admissions teams and faculty aware of this and will their information need to be reviewed for future cohorts?

Meet the... AISA Executive



This edition we introduce you to a member of AISA Executive: **David Barrott**

Job title: Senior International Student Adviser, The University of Sheffield.

Years working in international 7 years. (12 if you count my time at the Home Office!)

Years on the AISA Executive? 3

Why did you decide to sit on the AISA executive?

I really wanted to get out of my bubble and get working with colleagues all over the country. An adviser can get very bogged down in how immigration matters work in one institution, so you can learn a lot from colleagues who work under very different systems by getting out there and collaborating with them.

What does AISA mean to you?

For me, I see colleagues really keen to network and share experiences at training events and things like that where there isn't much time to do so. AISA gives us that chance. The regional meetings are a great opportunity for us to help support each other. The Exec all exchange notes about what's going on when we meet up also!

Describe a 'typical work day' for you?

Well, they all start with me trying to go back to sleep after my alarm goes off! Other than that, it is a tough question. The great thing about my job is that it is varied. There are things

that are repeated during the week such as advice sessions and appointments to check visa applications. But you can find yourself doing creative things as well, such as designing online support tools, doing ad-hoc presentations for academic departments, staff training etc. It's sometimes good to have some unpredictability!

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

Weekends!

What is the most embarrassing situation you have encountered when advising?

I always find it embarrassing when there is a fire drill in the middle of an appointment, and I find myself answering a student's questions when walking down the fire escape. The fire alarm makes it difficult to hear what they are asking me for a start!

What is the most unusual question you have been asked by a student?

I remember meeting with a student who was planning a trip to the Isle of Man and then onto Gibraltar, and wanted to know what the visa requirements were! It seemed to be a very complicated way to see more of Britain (or its dependencies and territories anyway). I hope he made it to both in the end!

Training & Conference Update

On 27 April 2018 at De Montfort University Leicester we held our annual conference: **'Off the beaten track: exploring non Tier 4 immigration routes'**. The keynote speaker was Sheena Kerr from the UKVI Student Policy Team.



Following the annual AISA AGM, Sheena gave a very useful presentation on the Short-Term Student rule changes that came into effect in January 2018, as well as answering questions and giving an insight into policy intention on Short-Term Students. The group then took part in a series of three workshops: to ascertain who our non-Tier students are, scenario based case studies for finding immigration solutions for non-Tier 4 and 'non-standard' students and creating communities; how we can improve engagement in our institutional communities for students we consider to be 'non-standard' (e.g distance learners and mature students) and their families.

33 colleagues attended (in addition to members of the AISA Exec) and the conference was well received based on the feedback we got. A number of colleagues fed back especially on how useful they had found Sheena's presentation. Other positive comments we received included: 'I would thoroughly recommend all of my colleagues to attend an AISA conference. I have been to quite a few of them in the past. I wasn't entirely sure about how useful the content would be before I booked on but it turned out to be one of the best I have attended. Thank you AISA Exec,' 'the day was really useful, informative and everything done

in an informal but really friendly style' and 'I enjoyed it. It had some useful discussions, and it is always useful to meet other advisers and discuss HEI policy and approaches to topics'.

Then, with Brexit imminent, we held two EU Settlement Information Days on 22nd January and 12th February 2019 at Oxford Brookes University and at Woburn House, London. We are very thankful to Tema Nwulu (Oxford day) and Chris Benjamin (London day) from UKCISA for giving their time to present an overview of the scheme and to colleagues who had already applied through the pilot that presented and shared their real life experiences of making their applications and then fight their way through the snow to make it home in the case of the Oxford Brookes event! As well as the presentations, the days involved group work as colleagues came up with their own plans on how to prepare to support EU students through the scheme.

68 colleagues attended over the two sessions, and they appear to have found these sessions extremely timely and useful. From the feedback we have received, many colleagues were reassured by the clarification provided at the events about how we can advise on the EU settlement scheme in relation to OISC and most colleagues left feeling more confident about supporting EU students.

Thank you all for coming to both of these events, and we hope to see you at the conference in May!



Spotlight On **Regions**

As always, the AISA regions have been in action in 2018. Here's what's been going on in two of our regions...



London and South East, Imperial College London – 29th October 2018

This meeting took place following the July 2018 changes to the immigration rules and challenges resulting from some of these such as ATAS being required for any length of study and the changes to countries included in the differentiation arrangement were in the agenda.

Also, with the changes to the Home Office's visa application process and front end service being imminent, issues surrounding how much clarity institutions had on these changes were also discussed. Other discussions included whether there had been an increase in instances of the Home Office requesting supporting documents for applications submitted under the differentiation arrangement, and of course, the consequences of Brexit!

North East, Newcastle University – 4th June 2018

Home Office guest speakers Neil Fletcher and Sonjia Shilhan gave an overview of the new front end service plans expected to be introduced in October 2018. At the time, the information given was new to colleagues and prompted many questions! Many thanks to Neil and Sonjia for giving their time to talk to us.

Given the recent introduction of GDPR legislation, changes that institutions had made to privacy statements and client care letters was on the agenda. New students with adverse immigration history (e.g previous credibility refusals), visa extensions for PGR students and whether institutions still run a non-booked 'drop-in' service were also discussed.

