

MARCH 2021

AISA Connect

The official newsletter of the Association of
International Student Advisers

WHAT IS INSIDE

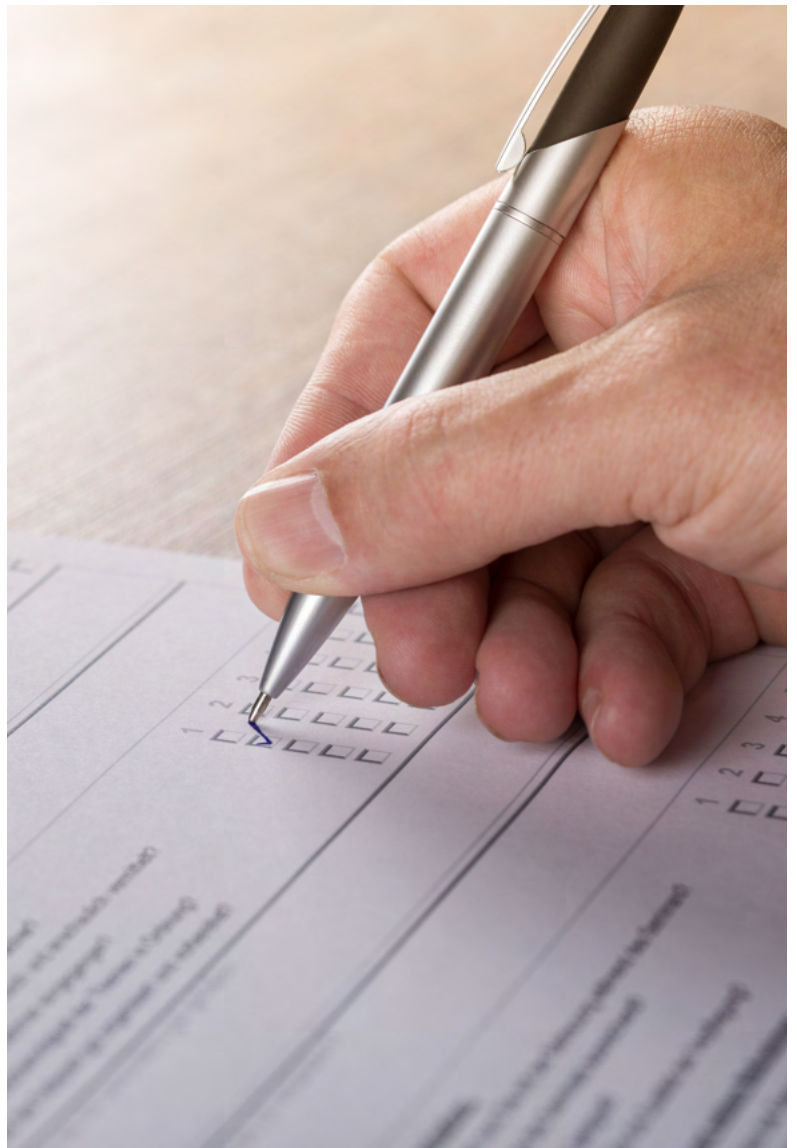
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AISA CONNECT SURVEY

**HAVE YOUR SAY ON WHAT'S
INCLUDED**

The AISA Executive are redesigning AISA Connect to meet the needs of our members. We have set up a [quick survey](#) for members, which should only take two minutes to complete (according to Survey Monkey!). We look forward to receiving your feedback.

You can also contact us by email on aisaexecutive@gmail.com or via our Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/aisauk>

CHAIRS' INTRODUCTION

Greetings AISA members!

We hope you are all doing well as we are now coming up to one year of working away from our colleagues (at least physically). Looking back to when this all started last year, we certainly would not have predicted that we would still be writing about this when contacting you one year on.

The last year has presented so many challenges to us all, and we are proud of how you all have continued to engage with each other in general but also as AISA members through the events we have put on in the last year; including our April 2020 online event 'Change in Challenging Times - Supporting Others Through Change', our 2020 AGM and regional meetings. It has certainly been strange that we have had to welcome our new Executive members Amelia Mansfield (University of Exeter), Laura Bryan (Aston University), Nadya McGinty (Newcastle College) and Tim Goss (University of South Wales) without actually being able to meet in person!

With the elimination of booking space travel expenses issues, the situation also has created some opportunities such as being able to offer additional remote events and to pass some of our expenses savings onto members through the reduction of membership fees for 2021.

Whilst we have been pleased to continue to offer events remotely, we are very much looking forward to seeing you in person. We are not quite there yet, but it looks like there is some room for optimism that we may be able to do this before the end of the year. We hope you are looking forward to the virtual conference 'Looking forward, from a distance' on 31st March (further details are included later in this newsletter). We envisage that AISA's annual AGM and any further events over the next few months would follow suit in being virtual as well, with the hope of there being a face-to-face event for members in late 2021. However, one thing the events of the last year have taught us is not to plan things too far ahead!

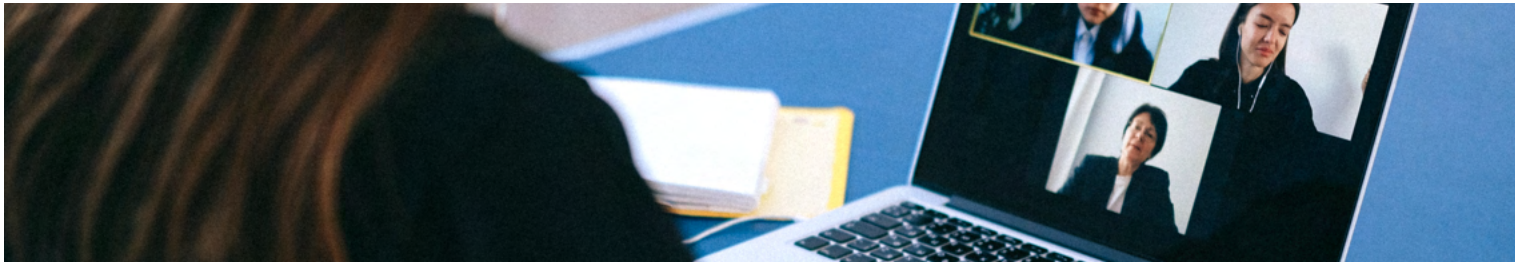
You will notice that we have included a short survey in this edition of AISA Connect (about AISA Connect itself!). We would be very grateful if you could spare a few moments to complete this. As ever, your feedback is extremely valuable to us as we endeavour to make sure what we are providing members, whether it be communications or events, are relevant and reflect what you are looking for from AISA.

If you have any other feedback or would like to raise anything with the exec, please email us: aisaexecutive@gmail.com.

Take care everyone, and whether it be virtually or in person, hope to see you soon!
David Barrott & Kate Walker
(AISA Co-Chairs)

ACROSS THE SECTOR

- [New statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 1248](#) - CJ McKinney, Freemovement Blog, 04/03/2021
- [UKCISA Peer Support Scheme](#) - UKCISA Members' News, 11/03/2021
- [International Education Strategy](#) - Office for Students, February 2021
- [Free online courses for international students](#) - Study UK
- [Studying abroad during the pandemic](#) - Seeta Bhardwa, Times Higher Education Student, 16/02/2021



AISA CONFERENCE 2021

'Looking forward, from a distance'

Wednesday 31 March 2021, 13:30 – 16:30

Cost: Free (AISA Members Only)

After over a year of working remotely in difficult circumstances, it is an important time to help support and motivate colleagues advising international students, to look at what is to come as we hope to return to something more like our 'normal' way of working and look to the introduction of the Graduate Immigration Route bringing significant, positive change; but with challenges.

Hughie Teape will kick us off for our first session with a motivational presentation. Something a little bit different as we are motivating ourselves moving into a time of optimism, but further change and uncertainty. Hughie Teape is a former Great Britain international track and field athlete who competed in the Commonwealth Games and the Olympic Games, in the early '90s, where he reached both finals. He specialised in the 110 metres high hurdles, competing alongside world-leading athletes Colin Jackson and Tony Jarrett (and Tony was his training partner). Hughie has now branched out into motivational speaking and delivered presentations to various organisations. He has given a number of presentations to the London School of Economics, including staff as well as students, and presented to the RAF. In addition to fulfilling his various speaking engagements, Hughie is actively involved in coaching club athletes, for sprints and hurdles, at Brunel University in Uxbridge. He also works with sportspeople from other sports including football, basketball, cricket and rugby, in order to improve their speed and agility. Furthermore, Hughie gives motivational talks to school students, highlighting his athletics experience, in a bid to inspire the next generation. **Social Media Links:** [linkedin.com/in/hughieteape](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hughieteape), [instagram.com/hughieteape](https://www.instagram.com/hughieteape)

After a short break, Andrew Humphrey, Advice and Training Officer with UKCISA, will compare and contrast the Skilled Worker and Graduate Visa routes, looking at the different perspectives on this for students, institutions and employers. A basic knowledge of both the Skilled Worker route and what we know so far about the Graduate Immigration Route will be required for this session. Therefore, we ask that before attending that colleagues read the following sources:

Skilled Worker: <https://www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa>

Graduate Route: <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2019/10/14/fact-sheet-graduate-immigration-route/>

Due to the time constraints of a shortened, remote conference, we ask that any questions for Andrew's session are sent in advance. If you have questions you would like to ask, please email them to: aisaexecutive@gmail.com

Whilst many of us are looking ahead to how the introduction of the Graduate Immigration Route will affect our work very much from an immigration perspective, Janet Woolnough and Luke Hahn from the Careers Team at the University of Portsmouth will deliver our final session to help us consider the wider labour market context and issues of employability. The session will focus on timelines that international students interested in finding post-study employment in the UK may need to consider to enhance their prospects, and how we as advisers, can help raise awareness, including the role that inductions and welcome activities play, plus the benefits of collaborative working with careers departments at this important time.

The conference will conclude with breakout rooms for reflection and social time with colleague.

Book your place at the following link. Please provide your institution name and job title when booking.

<https://aisaconference2021.eventbrite.co.uk>

Attendance is limited to 120 members. We kindly ask that no more than 2 members from any one institution book onto the event to ensure that as many different members are represented as possible. Please liaise with any other AISA members within your institution before booking. We will have a waiting list in case of cancellations. We do ask colleagues to cancel any tickets booked in the event that you can no longer attend to give the opportunity to colleagues on the waiting list.



Misadventures in Online Visa Advice

Kate Williams, University of Wolverhampton

The screen crackles with the poor internet connection, and I can hear my own voice (ironically) echoing back at me as I try again, 'No, E for Echo' as the student blissfully enters V, (presumably he thinks I'm saying that well known word 'Vecho'?). Again, 'No, E for Echo.' Has he got it this time? 'No, not D' (for Decho?). 'E. For Elephant.' The student enters P (for Pelephant?). I've sent him the CAS number via the chat function in Teams so all he has to do is copy and paste it across, but it's taken him fifteen minutes to work out how to share his screen, and after a few attempts at explaining how to view the chat it seemed easier to read it to him. Bearing in mind E is the first of a fourteen character reference number, we might be here a while.

To be fair, fifteen minutes to work out how to share a screen isn't the worst online experience I've had since the start of Lockdown 1. That prize goes to the student with six dependants who couldn't grasp screen-sharing at all, and eventually resorted to getting his daughter to read each individual question and answer on the application form to me so I could confirm the correct answer. All while cartoons were blasting at full volume in the background. I tried to ask him to turn the volume down, but his infant son objected so loudly I was overruled. The questions with 'yes/no' answers proved most challenging when the correct answer was 'no' and the student needed me to say 'yes' before he could move on.

Another time it was the student themselves watching TV while I was trying to advise them. I couldn't compete with what sounded like Homes under the Hammer and asked her to turn it off. She promised she had, but the glazed look in her eyes suggested she was focussed on something other than the finer details of the correct time to apply for the Doctorate Extension Scheme. And I could see the reflection of her TV still playing in a mirror behind her.

Now we're deep in Lockdown 3 (Lockdown with a Vengeance), the online appointments where the signal is clear and the student instantly knows how to share their screen are blissful. The ones where the student is using Teams on their phone while trying to complete their visa application on their laptop are becoming rarer. And if they do try it, I'm better at telling them how to access the meeting on their laptops ('yes, even if the app isn't downloaded'), so I don't have to spend most of the appointment asking them to hold their phone higher/lower/further back/closer.

I have had the odd one who's tried to video call me for a BRP (RC) application while on public transport, or in what seemed to be a dark cupboard while on their break in the Amazon warehouse, but generally the students have been pretty good at sticking to their appointment times, and I've only had a few no-shows, which is a vast improvement on what was happening on campus before all this began. Of course there has been challenges, but, all things considered, the transition to providing our services online has been fairly smooth, and the novelty of being able to give visa advice while wearing my slippers hasn't worn off just yet.

I do sympathise with the students. This technology is new to most of us and I'm sure we've all had our own share of online faux pas too. My brother-in-law was left slightly red-faced during an online lecture being given by Malcolm Gladwell when he unmuted himself to announce loudly that Malcolm was on mute, when in fact his own speakers were not switched on. And in case you're wondering, playing Battleships online with four sets of relatives in different locations who don't know how Zoom works, or the rules of Battleships, is a sure-fire way to make you question your sanity.

Speaking of which, where was I? Oh yes... 'No, not G' (for gecko?). E. For... '...Ahhh he's got it. 'Great. Now ó. No, not X...'