



AGCAS

Report on AGCAS Alumni reunion University of Bath 8 June 2018

AGCAS Alumni held another successful reunion in Bath in early June. The event, organised by a small group comprising Paul Cox, Margaret Dane, Diane Hay and Lorna Froud, was enjoyed by the participants listed below and many others, also listed sent their apologies and greetings. Over half of the above met for a meal the evening beforehand, and as in Hull in 2017, it was agreed that this was a valued part of the reunion.

Participants

Sue Briault
Val Butcher
Paul Cox
Margaret Dane
Myfanwy Ford
Mike & Pam Gavin
Diane Hay

Anne Hillary
Dick Lidwell
Russell Jones
Pauline McDonald
Anne Nacamuli
Elaine Paradise
Martin Pennington

Apologies

Andrew Bottomley
Paul Brown
Gus Campbell
Ann Collins
David Cross
Sheila Cross
Jack Daniels
Tom Davie
Keith & Pat Dugdale
Anusha Everson
Lorna Froud
Barbara Graham
Paul Hacking
Neil Harris
Julie Hepburn
Mandy Jones

Merfyn Jones
Richard Jones
Terry Jones
Bernard Kingston
Valerie Metcalfe
Rose Mortenson
Jan Perrett
Bob Porrer
Tony Raban
Jane Saxton
Charlotte Scott-Beveridge
Jane Standley
Noel Starr
Maureen Tibby
Margaret Wallis
Tony Watts

On behalf of the small organising team, Margaret Dane welcomed participants and speakers and spoke briefly about the work of the small Alumni co-ordinating group and recent developments relevant to the Alumni Network which will be reported to the members separately. Val Butcher thanked her for all she and Martin Pennington in particular have done to help establish the Alumni Network as a more integrated part of AGCAS. Margaret then introduced the speakers as follows.

Tracey Wells, Director of the Careers Service, University of Bath

Tracey spoke with enthusiasm and humour about her own university and service and the current challenges & opportunities for HE Careers Services, focussing on the key influences affecting their work, such as:

- The labour market – degree apprenticeships, artificial intelligence/ technology
- Graduate destinations, league tables, TEF (Teaching Excellence & Student Outcomes Framework)
- Employer recruitment strategies – social mobility, work experience etc
- Student experience/ Value for Money (OfS)
- University strategic directions
- Government policy – Brexit, immigration policy etc

She spoke about the demise of DLHE and that after decades of AGCAS collecting graduate destinations, new timings, methods & issues will be used in future surveys. Social mobility was another topic addressed in some detail, reflecting HE careers services need to support an ever more diverse student population, recognising issues around disability and mental health, background, and other challenges some clients may face. She was glad to report that services still try to remain client focussed to meet individual needs at a time when student expectations are high and resources challenged. Opportunities for universities and their careers services include:

- Partnerships – with employers, collaboration (but also competition) with other HE careers services
- International reach – 30% of students at Bath are international students
- Degree apprenticeships – alternative ways of learning whilst gaining work experience
- Graduates/ alumni – support is provided and continued through on-line services
- Technology – use of careers registration systems that follow students' career thinking progress and can measure career readiness. There is also new software available to Careers Services, such as an AI system used by some US Universities to provide automated CV feedback
- Employer engagement – with all the usual restrictions and challenges

Linda Byrne AGCAS Learning Manager

Linda provided an excellent AGCAS update focussing on key developments following the new AGCAS Strategy and Governance structure. The new strategy has five pillars as follows, along with the names of the relevant Board & AGCAS staff member. This is reported on quite fully as it represents quite a change for AGCAS.

- Community – Terry Dray / Marcus Andrews
- Research and Knowledge – Bob Gilworth / Gemma Green
- Advocacy – Mark Stow / Elaine Boyes
- Quality – Nalayini Thambar / Marcus Andrews
- Learning – David Winter / Linda Byrne

A committee of members has been recruited to each pillar with a strategy and detailed business plan under each pillar along with new Terms of Reference.

Community

The key issues under the community heading are: nurturing a sense of common purpose; supporting the sharing and development of practice; engaging all staff in all member services; supporting Task Groups in developing and realising their terms of reference and their business plans by facilitating annual meetings of task group chairs; establishing a new Task Groups and extending the role of others as required; reviewing AGCAS Liaison Officer roles; and reviewing the Heads of Service groups.

Research & Knowledge

In developing its strength and reputation in conducting and disseminating its research and knowledge AGCAS has launched two national research reports. It is also co-ordinating the new First-Year Student Career Readiness Survey and a Careers Fairs Survey. In addition it has held successful annual research conferences; redesigned Phoenix in line with the new AGCAS branding; continued to produce expert careers information and advice publications; facilitated good practice in processing research data; conducted a privacy impact assessment for AGCAS research and issued guidelines for research ethics.

Advocacy

In its advocacy role AGCAS has been strengthening its effective strategic links with HESA, HEFCE, Universities UK & Scotland, the Dept. for Education and has continued to develop a group of purposeful critical friends and to write strong AGCAS responses to key consultations. The recent website redevelopment and re-branding has incorporated revised AGCAS positional statements.

Quality

AGCAS continues its strong support and encouragement of quality and has set up a new professionalism working party to develop a revised AGCAS membership quality standard, an Ethics Statement, complaints & concerns procedure and a new self-evaluation document (SED) which it has piloted with 11 member services.

Learning

Under the learning pillar and strategy, AGCAS continues to develop the expertise, effectiveness and confidence of all HE careers professionals through providing learning and training opportunities which are relevant, accessible, innovative, sustainable and effective. The focus of provision is on addressing current and future needs for busy members whatever their role and wherever they may be, by leading the way being self-supporting and demonstrating measurable impact. Underlying principles include: supporting critical reflection, building professional confidence, promoting sustainable improvement and encouraging mutual development.

Hot topic portfolios on the AGCAS Board are as follows

- Internationalisation – Sue Bennett. This covers all five pillars of the AGCAS strategy and builds on our strong international brand.
- Regionalisation – Paul Grattrick. This includes understanding the regional activity of AGCAS and its member services and better promotion and sharing of those insights
- Graduate Outcomes – Naomi Oosman Watts. This includes graduate destination data, DLHE and LEO

Hot topic strategic areas for the Board and services are:

Social mobility; graduate outcomes; internationalisation and regionalisation. These topics are under regular review and subject to change. The Board has also updated the Articles of Association and developed new Regulations as well as renaming the previous Plenary Committee the Advisory Committee.

In the last two years AGCAS has also re-branded its logo, publications and website, moved office premises within Sheffield, developed a new communications strategy and an on-line booking system, redesigned and restructured its website and improved its financial management and operations systems. Overall Linda gave a very impressive account of AGCAS as an active, forward-looking organisation.

After a short questions and discussion session, there was an enjoyable and relaxed lunch with plenty of opportunities for participants to mix and mingle and catch up with personal news over food and drink.

Clive & Jill Field, Cotswold Canals Trust

After lunch, Diane Hay introduced two representatives of the Cotswold Canals Trust who gave a lively, interesting and enjoyable presentation on the work of the Trust with many photographs illustrating the history of both the canals' development and their demise as important transport routes for the goods and products that fuelled the early Industrial Revolution. Further photographs showed the restoration work of the Trust and the speakers also brought along examples of artefacts found at the bottom of the canals in the course of this work, eg a helmet that looked like a WW2 ARP helmet and a very old glass & bead bottle that pre-dated both flip-top bottles and screw-tops. Again there was an opportunity to ask questions and look more closely at the publications and artefacts they had brought.

Conclusion & thanks

The reunion was once again deemed very successful by those who took part and it was agreed that we should aim to hold another reunion on 2019. Margaret indicated that there had already been a tentative suggestion for it to be held in the North-east next year and this will be followed up. The meeting on the 8th June had been preceded by an evening meal on the 7th which about half the participants attended and it was agreed that this once again had been an important part of the success of the reunion. The day ended with a final opportunity for informal conversation over refreshments and a visit to the Careers Service for those who wished. Thanks were extended to all the speakers, the host service and the organisers and to all those who had come often quite some distance to take part.

Margaret Dane
26.7.2018