

Report on the AGCAS Alumni Reunion 14.9 2015

Almost thirty AGCAS Alumni recently met in Cambridge for another successful annual reunion, hosted and supported by Gordon Chesterman, Director of the Careers Service at the University of Cambridge and organised by a team of alumni from the East of England led by Joan Newton, with Anusha Everson expertly chairing the day. There were plenty of opportunities for participants to chat and catch up before, during and after the more formal parts of the programme and we all enjoyed an excellent albeit rather delayed lunch. At the end of the afternoon, there was a visit to the nearby Careers Service but unfortunately rain prevented the planned punting opportunity on the river.

The programme kicked off with an interesting and stimulating panel session on current developments in HE careers services and graduate employment as well as the National Careers Service in England. Gordon's opening contribution was followed by Alexia Grech, a 2011 Univ. of Bedford graduate from Malta recounting the invaluable support she had from the Careers Service, then by Sharon Gaymer, Recruitment Manager with the National Grid providing excellent insights into the changing graduate recruitment scene and finally by Eileen Scott, a recently retired Head of Service, describing her experience as a part-time adviser with the NCS.

As the programme had slipped considerably, during dessert there was a short but productive business meeting, led by Margaret Dane who had previously circulated two papers covering the matters listed below in more detail. She updated those present on her negotiations with the AGCAS Office & Board covering the various issues that were raised at last year's reunion and answered a number of questions from participants. Below is a brief outline of the points covered and any actions still to be taken forward.

The aim of the proposals put to the AGCAS Board is to make Retired / Alumni Membership of AGCAS more meaningful and interactive, and the Board recognizes the need to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship between former members of AGCAS and the AGCAS organisation.

1. Redefine the purpose, aims and arrangements for retired membership in order to make it more active and attractive and enabling retired members to do much of the necessary work themselves. *The Board has asked the group to do this and it was agreed that Margaret Dane should seek a few volunteers to look at rewording the purpose & aims as well as the benefits offered to retired / alumni members.*
Action: anyone interested in contributing to email Margaret.Dane@hotmail.co.uk by Mon. 5 October
2. Develop an active on-line community to provide a focus for ideas and discussion. It had been suggested this could be as one of the many AGCAS Communities or possibly as a Linked-In group.
AGCAS is not willing to set up a discussion list as for its other communities as we are not full members. Participants felt this should be challenged further as few are keen on using Linked-In.
Action: Margaret agreed to raise this again in the on-going discussions
3. Continue annual reunions in different parts of the country to foster on-going relationships and links between retired members and with other parts of AGCAS. These would be organised by retired members themselves with minimal supervision and input required from AGCAS Staff.
AGCAS is happy to provide the final admin/finance support to the annual reunions on this basis, with AGCAS banking the consolidated payments and settling the finances with the venue. **Action: Margaret to query whether AGCAS would also be willing to pay any advance deposits required**

4. Develop publicity, including notices in ARENA & Phoenix, to attract AGCAS members about to retire to ensure that they know about and are encouraged to take up retired AGCAS membership.
The AGCAS Office is willing to include publicity information and reminders about Alumni Group membership in ARENA provided the group writes this and submits it in good time.
Action: Members of the group to contribute entries as appropriate.
5. Clarify, update and consolidate the AGCAS database and current mailing list of retired AGCAS members and provide those listed with access to the membership list. On behalf of the group, Margaret reported that she has already provided Chris Dean in the AGCAS Office with her mailing-list of retired members and is working with Chris to ensure a match with the AGCAS database. **Action: It was agreed that Margaret should continue to work with Chris on any inconsistencies which are identified.**
6. Investigate the possibility of a one-off larger lifetime payment on retirement rather than an annual subscription. This would also reduce work for the AGCAS Office.
The AGCAS Board was happy with the idea of a one-off payment and sought the group's views on the appropriate level. In the meantime AGCAS has held-off billing retired members. Margaret referred to her written report on the findings of her survey: that most respondents were in favour of a one-off payment, that value-for money and greater clarity about benefits were issues, that the level had to be such as to encourage new members to join and that there is a need to differentiate between fully retired members and alumni who are still in employment. Most felt that £100 was too much, that £50- £70 for newly retired members seemed reasonable, and that there should be a sliding scale for those already in membership. Finally, though honorary members are free, a few of these too were willing to pay.
Action: Margaret to feed these views back to the AGCAS Office and Board.
7. Provide a real social network of former AGCAS colleagues to meet face-to-face as well as on-line. This would include annual reunions for all retired members and encourage more regional get-togethers too.
The AGCAS Board recognises the value of an Alumni Group & network and appreciates its work, particularly in organising annual reunions and providing a focus for communications.
Action: the group will be responsible for setting up its own annual reunions & if notified, could publicise regional alumni events to others
8. Consider how recently retired members might offer current AGCAS members the benefits of their knowledge, experience and contacts through personal mentoring, supporting research or consultancy.
*AGCAS recognizes the value of making use of recently retired members for the benefit of AGCAS and its members. AGCAS will contacts members as they are due to leave to ensure it doesn't miss the opportunity to tap into potentially years of experience and expertise. The Board agreed that rewording the annual communication addressing member service numbers might help, as would an occasional reminder in Arena that an active retired / alumni membership category does exist. **(See Point 1).***
9. Investigate what help might be offered to support the retention / management of the AGCAS archive
If a move from the current premises does happen, the AGCAS Office would contact the Alumni Group to seek volunteers to review materials to establish exactly what should be kept, scanned or disposed of.
Action: anyone interested or willing to have their name put forward for this please email Margaret
10. The meeting sought offers for future AGCAS Alumni reunions and a group from E. Yorkshire offered to organise an event in Hull in 2017 as part of the European Year of Culture celebrations. **Action: we are seeking an offer to organise a reunion in 2016 preferably in a region not yet covered by an event.**

List of participants

Margaret Dane
Anusha Everson
Myfanwy Ford
Mike Gavin
Paul Hacking
Diane Hay
Anne Hillary
Merfyn & Barbara Jones
Bernard & Jackie Kingston
Bill Kirkman
Arti Kumar
Dick Lidwell
Valerie Metcalfe
Joan Newton
Martin Pennington
Jan Perrett
Bob Porrer
Eileen Scott
Noel Starr
Brian & Ann Steptoe
Joanna Symons
John Thurman
Mike Tiley
Tony Watts

Apologies

Val Butcher
Tony Caston
Paul Cox
Sheila Cross
Jack Daniels
Jim Davidson
Keith & Pat Dugdale
Barbara Graham
John Handley
Lesley Knaggs
Pat Pearce
Richard Pethen
Peter Pierce-Price
Colin Rigg
Margaret Wallis

Notes written by Margaret Dane
23.9.2015

List of AGCAS Alumni reunions

2002	Leicester
2003	Edinburgh
2004	Cambridge
2005	Warwick
2006	London
2007	Birmingham
2008	Oxford
2009	Brunel
2010	Reading
2011	Nottingham
2012	Sheffield
2013	None held
2014	London
2015	Cambridge

Photos of reunion lunch 14.9.2015

