



## Statements from shortlisted nominees AGCAS President 2020-22

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*Please ensure you have read these supporting statements before voting*

## Katy Gordon

Associate Director (Careers & Employability)  
Goldsmiths, University of London



## Developing and delivering the AGCAS vision and strategy from 2020-22

### Objective:

As President elect this year, I would support the President to drive forward completion of the existing strategy, using the time to observe which areas need greater focus and which are on track for completion, scanning the horizon alongside the Board to identify new challenges for AGCAS and holding in depth discussions with each director on progress within their themes.

As Head of Service at Goldsmiths, University of London, I had to create and secure approval for our first Institutional Employability Strategy within 6 months of arrival. It has been universally acknowledged as transforming the university's culture and ensuring employability is everybody's responsibility. The Strategy secured Runner Up in the GTI Target Jobs Best UK University Employability Strategy 2019. In the past 2 years, I have regularly presented at conferences and workshops on how to turn strategy into reality, based on my success at Goldsmiths. I also led the collective development of our first formal AGCAS Scotland strategy, when I was Convenor of AGCAS (Scotland) while Head of Service at University of Strathclyde.

As President, I would apply the same successful techniques to develop and deliver the new AGCAS strategy for 2020-22, namely:

- Early discussion with the Board on key themes
- Discussion with key partners to identify areas of common endeavour and how these might dovetail with our strategy. I would also use trusted 'critical friends' to explore any potential weaknesses in our approach
- Extensive consultation with the membership to secure approval
- Maintaining the current system of ensuring each theme has an individual director responsible for its delivery
- Ensure regular progress updates are provided to the Board
- Tackle any underperforming areas with honest evidence based discussion and agree clear remedial measures
- Report back annually to the membership via conferences, regular e mail updates, highlighting strategy achievements and identifying areas for development

### Principal responsibilities:

1. External champion: The President, as the public face of AGCAS, must have both the credibility to be heard and the ability to promote the profession to wider stakeholders and in the media, to challenge the simplistic prescriptions of successful career planning and progression and offer evidence based solutions that persuade government, statutory bodies and stakeholders

2. Internal representation: Key is setting clear direction, having an eye for detail but ability to pinpoint what requires Board discussion / decision, high visibility with members and inspiring increased engagement, all of which I would bring to the table
3. Board chairing and management: I have extensive experience of managing peers where the key is to shape, support and encourage Board members to lead their areas but be held responsible for progress
4. Manage Executive Director – The President must have a close working relationship with ED, to ensure Board decisions are carried out and trustee responsibilities can be met
5. Procedures / quality controls: Maintaining oversight requires clear understanding of President / Board / Trustee responsibilities, secured through my AGCAS Governance and Risk Committee membership, peer reviewer for AGCAS Quality Standard and Convener of AGCAS (Scotland)

## Experience, skills and knowledge

I believe I have the experience, skills, drive and ambition to lead AGCAS as your President.

Over 25 years as a guidance professional, including Head of Service roles at Strathclyde since 2012 and Goldsmiths since 2017, and active membership of ACGAS and the Career Development Institute, mean our core professional ideals and commitment to diversity are indelibly embedded within me.

From a professional life based in Scotland until 2017, leading change at a large engineering and business focused university targeted by graduate recruiters, to more recent stewardship of Goldsmiths, a smaller arts and humanities institution with many disadvantaged students, fighting for recruiter time in a crowded London landscape, I have strong understanding of differing institutional demands and varying HE landscapes north and south of the border.

Leading strategy development as AGCAS (Scotland) Convener 2015-16 meant finding collective ways forward that worked for all 16 member institutions and reinforced the vital importance of partnership working to maximise influence. I was immensely proud to work with Skills Development Scotland to create the first national Life Sciences Internship Programme, open to all member institutions, make radical changes to our annual conference and start relationship building with key stakeholders including Universities Scotland.

As new Chair of regional network Careers Services London, I've recently worked with colleagues to identify a clear programme of learning and development that AGCAS could deliver, benefiting members and generating income.

An active member of AGCAS Governance & Risk Committee, my forensic questioning technique has brought substantial changes to AGCAS accounts presentation, the new membership model and risk identification. As Vice Convener of the Scottish Liberal Democrats 2011-15, I applied similar techniques to fulfill my Board responsibilities to achieve a stable financial position, lead radical restructuring of all candidate recruitment and oversee regulatory compliance across Scotland.

My experience as AGCAS (Scotland) Convener, Board membership of a political party and target seat candidate, plus previous experience as Convener of UNISON members nationally within Careers Scotland at a time of profound structural changes for the profession in Scotland, demonstrates my ability to promote an organisational cause, network with decision makers to influence policy changes, attract positive media coverage and perform under pressure. An ability to make a convincing case (internally and externally) for initially unpopular decisions has been key to my political and trade union achievements.

As new Convener of Careers Services London, I know how to quickly pick up on regional concerns and assimilate them into my thinking. I would expect to lead from the front, following the excellent example of current and immediate past presidents, but also offer an ability to inspire members, stakeholders and key influencers with a confidence in our AGCAS vision and expertise. I would also leverage my political connections to open doors (as I did when securing the presence of the Secretary of State for BIS at AGCAS HoS conference in Glasgow, 2014)

With 20+ years line management of paid staff and volunteers, reporting to Boards and chairing them, I could confidently support AGCAS central staffing.

## Scope and direction of the role

### What do you think will be the priorities going forward for the President, and how would you approach / address these?

Given the challenges in the HE landscape presented by the Augar review, the TEF, embedding of the new Graduate Outcomes Survey and potential conflict with LEO data, the drive for value for money degree experiences by the OfS and the general climate of uncertainty engendered by Brexit, I would see a twin role for the President in looking both outward and inward. As the budgets of member institutions become increasingly tight, it is essential that AGCAS membership is regarded as a core commitment. So the key priorities I would envisage (barring major unexpected events) are:

- 1) **Tackling the financial pressures on AGCAS** – particularly by ensuring learning and development activity maximises income generation. Ensure the Executive Director has controls and plans in place to reduce costs, drop-outs and event cancellations and set fair prices, making use of early bird discounts and other techniques to increase bookings. Work with Learning Director to ensure an attractive programme of events that brings in external speakers and attendees, grows sponsorship and reinforces our role as policy influencers
- 2) **Providing value for money for AGCAS membership** – Work with the Board to promote and reinforce the benefits of the new membership model, ensuring there are obvious quick wins to secure buy in and conducting a review of the impact of the new model, seeking feedback from member services and demonstrating how such feedback might lead to any amendments to the model
- 3) **Increasing our role as policy influencers** – As it becomes increasingly clear that lack of careers guidance in schools is damaging pupils' early career awareness and planning, AGCAS should seek to fill the vacuum by working with bodies such as the Career Development Institute, UUK and ISE to advocate for change in government policy. In preparation for this, we should be expanding our evidence base, using Careers Registration as our core data set, building on the Liverpool John Moore's model of 1<sup>st</sup> year student starting points. We also need to pursue every opportunity to promote understanding and recognition of Careers Registration as a core national data set to sit alongside Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS). This would require an internal campaign, led by the President, to encourage all member services to embed Careers Registration within their institutions. We also need to work across key bodies (including OfS and the government) to offer alternative options to an over reliance on LEO data
- 4) **Pursuing recognition from HMRC as a professional body** – Build on the work on quality standards and professional ethics, to ensure these are embedded in our structures. As President, lead the Board in seeking to learn from experience of others who have successfully challenged similar HMRC decisions or successfully secured HMRC

acceptance of professional status and embed that into our strategy so we are able to reapply with the most robust possible evidence base to HMRC at the earliest possible opportunity

I have set out below how the above play out in the 5 pillars of the strategy, which still feel the right 5 to base our strategy on. I have added in core goals for 2020-22:

- 1) Research & knowledge - to be UK and Ireland experts in HE student career development and graduate employment
  - a. Seek support of the Board that The Careers Group (TCG) Research Unit is recognised as national resource and work towards it being funded as such, with a publication and conference strategy to underpin this
  - b. Seek agreement of the Board & membership for promotion of Careers Registration as key national unit of learning gain and lead profession towards all institutions incorporating this into their operating plans
- 2) Learning – all members are able to rely on AGCAS for their professional development
  - a. Build on the mapping and revision of training to support all careers professional needs in order to develop attractive, income generating, CPD programme that supports all other work and ensure processes are in place to minimize costs, maximize attendance and expand external sponsorship
  - b. Develop online learning options to broaden access and work towards AGCAS accredited courses, with clear pathways for all career professionals to develop their skills, knowledge and experience
- 3) Community – create a sense of common purpose so all AGCAS members feel that their profession / mission group / region is represented
  - a. Lead the Board to increase the visibility of all state / regional / task / standing groups and lead regular promotion of their achievements across the membership
- 4) Advocacy – to be regarded as thought leaders and influence policy
  - a. Work to engage all major political parties in recognising the expertise of AGCAS as a professional body and our relevance to party policy on schools, higher education and skills development
  - b. Work with strategic partners (UUK & US (Universities Scotland), ISE, CDI etc) to promote and advocate for shared policy goals, seeking joint actions to reinforce each other's advocacy
- 5) Quality – to be recognised as a professional body
  - a. Seek expert advice from strategic partners / successful previous applicants for professional recognition to build case for reapplication to HMRC for recognition

I believe that the excellent work undertaken by the current and immediate past presidents to put AGCAS on a more sound financial footing and ensure the infrastructure and central staffing resource are fit for purpose means that, while it will be important to maintain and fine tune these areas, AGCAS is no longer facing major challenges in these areas.

## Marc Lintern

Director of Student Experience, Newcastle University



## Developing and delivering the AGCAS vision and strategy from 2020-22

If elected as President of AGCAS I will aim to;

1. Represent AGCAS, and our member Career Services, as an ambassador and as Chair of the Board. I am a skilled speaker and facilitative leader, and as President will draw upon, and support, the expertise of the Board members, AGCAS Office and wider membership to ensure that the Board are collectively working towards our agreed vision and strategy. We are all concerned about issues such as Graduate Outcomes, changes in regulation through the Office for Students, TEF, NSS and possible financial challenges resulting from the Augar Review. In these complex times I will work hard to ensure that our voice, and expert opinion are heard, and that as members we understand as much as we can about the climate we are working in. As a profession we can be too responsive; we also need to be on the front foot and get our opinion out.
2. I will work to represent the diverse views, interests and needs of our members building on my experience of managing Careers Services in two different mission groups, and my wider experience of collaborating with very different institutions across regions in the south west and north east of England, including further education colleges. I have always believed that a key strength of AGCAS is the positive contribution from our members to the Association, and that this is based on the different strengths and perspectives we each offer. I also recognise and value the expert opinion and expertise that different services can offer depending on the issue and will want to harness this.
3. I will seek to ensure that opportunities are promoted openly and fairly to staff across the range of our institutions. Moving into the Russell Group, I am mindful of the different levels of resourcing, and influence, that services have in different sectors and will work to reach decisions that reflect the needs of all our services and are relevant to our diverse membership.

## Experience, skills and knowledge

### Management and Institution Experience

I am passionate about the value of high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance. I have been a Head/Director of Careers Services for 20 years, in two different sectors – Newcastle University (6½ years) and Plymouth University (14 years) – and before this was a Careers Adviser at Portsmouth University.

I have a strong understanding of issues facing the sector and experience of leading the implementation of institutional strategies and policies relating to employability, placements, enterprise, student employment and widening participation.

As President I will use this experience to steer and advocate on behalf of the Association, to support the Board and to work with the Executive Director and AGCAS Office.

### AGCAS Experience

As AGCAS Treasurer from 2010-2016 I oversaw the achievement of a break-even budget that enabled AGCAS to restore financial viability. At times this meant making unpopular recommendations, but I was able to reach a working consensus. I enjoyed this experience, and gained a valuable insight into Board dynamics and the challenge of delivering on member expectations.

I am an experienced AGCAS trainer (currently lead trainer on 'Management of HE Careers Services') and was on the Older Graduates Sub Committee. Research for OGSC included the realities of older graduates being recruited by graduate recruiters, this complementing my own Masters dissertation on the experience of mature female students in the labour market. These experiences will help me support the Learning and Research Directors, and to have insight into their portfolios.

### Speaker and media contact

I have presented at a wide range of conferences in the UK and overseas, including the Institute of Student Employers, Westminster Forum, UUK, AGCAS, NAGCAS and Inside Government. I am a university media contact and am used to being interviewed by the press, radio and television. At Newcastle I am proactive in liaising with our press team, while also compering our annual Pride of Newcastle University Awards and introducing graduation ceremonies. I will relish the opportunity to ensure that in a crowded space, the views of AGCAS, and our collective expertise as members, is clear and visible.

### Building Networks for Impact

I have a strong international network, from attending NACE (USA) and NAGCAS (Australia) Conferences, and by attending and hosting the 2018 Global Careers Services Summit. As AGCAS President I will draw on such networks, and those gained through my institutional experience, to inform our own insights and expertise, and to help extend AGCAS' reach and reputation.

At Newcastle and Plymouth I have been an active member of regional heads groups which will enable me to support the Regionalisation and Community Directors in an important aspect of AGCAS work. Through regional groups I have developed a strong understanding of the pressures and challenges faced in different types of institution. I will also draw on my ten year experience as Project Director of Gradsouthwest – a website supporting graduate retention in south west England – where it was vital to represent and meet the needs of all institutions in the region.

## Scope and direction of the role

**What do you think will be the priorities going forward for the President, and how would you approach / address these?**

We are working in exciting and complex times. Graduate employability and career decision making have never been of such strategic importance across the sector and it is essential that AGCAS maintains its relevance and has a clear, visible and authoritative voice. As such, I see some of the key priorities of this role as;

- Ensuring that AGCAS's voice is heard and that we campaign on issues that are important – with so many players in the employability space, I recognise that this will always be a challenge, but we are expert leaders in this area and need to be visible as the 'go-to' organisation for speakers, commentary and for consultations. AGCAS has made great strides here in the last couple of years, and we have some very active members with social media presence and profile. I want to help build on this through my responsibilities as a speaker, advocate and campaigner, so that that our social media presence is strong. As President I will draw on the expert contributions of staff from across the sector and give a voice to parts of the sector which aren't always heard.
- Ensure that AGCAS represents all of our members – in part this links to the first point, and about ensuring that as President I encourage the wider involvement of staff from across the sector to be proactive in sharing our expertise. On a more practical level, it is about ensuring that training, events and support provided by AGCAS meets the needs of all members and is good value for the subscriptions we pay.
- Ensure that the new membership model benefits careers service professionals – there are many benefits to the new membership model, particularly the opportunity to widen our membership to all Careers Service staff (something I have always supported) and also to members of our academic and professional services communities (again, something I favour). However, this also has the potential to change the nature of AGCAS, and so as this change emerges I will want to ensure that Careers Services benefit from the new model and that our core professional skills, knowledge and values retain prominence and have a strong voice in the association.