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# Chair's Statement

It has been a great year for HESPA. Perhaps the most significant development in terms of our capacity to support you, the HE planning community, in helping you to do your job really well and furthering your professional development, has been the appointment of Jennifer Summerton as our Executive Officer from September.

staff who work for BUFDG) - being able to be part of a costsharing organisation with BUFDG has been really helpful and saved us a lot of pain. In addition to organising the HESPA 2015 Annual Conference almost from scratch, Jenny has worked on other HESPA events and processes, taking a systematic approach and providing increased capacity,

enabling us to take on more work to support planners from our member institutions.

I think we can divide our achievements broadly into three areas:

Organisational development for HESPA. We now have a website (which went live just after the last conference and is due to be refreshed in February), an office and a part-time dedicated worker. Membership now stands at 112 HE institutions. We have to record our thanks especially She is employed by Professional HE Services Ltd (as are the to the BUFDG Chair, Bob Rabone, its Executive Director, Karel Thomas, and all other staff in the BUFDG office for all their support and hard work in holding us together before Jenny arrived. Their support for Jenny since her arrival has also been fantastic. Thanks to HEI subscriptions and the generous sponsorship of our conference last year, we are financially solvent and have been able to invest in website

development, for example. We are also beginning to see a spread of leadership and initiative across our Executive Committee and beyond into our wider membership. Special Interest Groups, led by Executive Committee members, are in place and form networks which differentiate and characterise our work. We are moving into succession planning for the Executive Committee and will be looking for new members this year, so please do put yourself forward if you are interested.

Data, data, data! David Willetts challenged us to write to him with a planner's vision of a robust HE data environment. Huge thanks to the Executive Committee for their support, and for those who attended that long exec meeting in March, to help in editing this letter to its final publishable form (available to read on the HESPA website, Resources section).

We have also been significantly involved in the work of HEDIIP, the increasingly fast-paced data improvement project. Many thanks to Christine Couper (who is on the Advisory Panel for HEDIIP and on the Project Board for the Subject Coding project) and Jackie Njoroge for their energy around this – and thank you to all those members who have responded to our rather numerous call outs for responses at crucial times in the HEDIIP decision making process. And last but not least, our first and very successful League Table conference in June, organised by Sally Turnbull in terms of the speakers (with great help from Gill at BUFDG) - more on this below.

Increasing effectiveness and reputation. There are several examples of the HESPA effect! We were listened to and heeded over the non-inclusion of costs centres in the HESA FSR consultation and also regarding whether or not ABB data sets should be made publicly available by UCAS in

early 2015. Our logo now regularly crops up in the same "breath" as much longer established organisations and our lobbying got planners a slot for an award at the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards (THELMAs) – well done to York St John for winning! It is both a privilege and a challenge for the HESPA Exec to ensure that we deliver high-quality advocacy and support that is always professional and of benefit to our members, wherever they are in the sector - and that we reflect well on the HE planning profession.

The role of 'planner' in HE has never been more crucial and we rely on the support of our membership to continually grow and improve to meet the needs of the sector, and of planners particularly. We have been overwhelmed by our members' enthusiasm to date and we move into 2015 with excitement at both the rewards and the challenges that it will bring.

Lucy Hodson, Chair of HESPA and Director of Planning at Aberystwyth University

# 2014 was the year that...

Since David Willetts spoke at our conference in February last year, much has happened – both in our institutions, the wider sector and in HE internationally. All planning departments/offices – or sometimes just desks – have different remits, but probably you have been concerned with some or all of the following:

WHAT DOES PLANNING LOOK LIKE IN A BUYER'S MARKET? UNCONDITIONAL OFFERS – HOW DO YOU QUANTIFY THE RISK? IS CLEARING GOING TO HAPPEN AT ALL THIS YEAR....? CAP IS OFF IN ENGLAND IN 2015 – WHO IS GOING TO GROW THE MOST?

DID SCOTLAND NEARLY CEASE TO BE PART OF THE UK? WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE IMPACT FOR SCOTTISH HE? AND FOR UK HE PLC?

WALES - LEADING THE WAY WITH NEW HE REGULATORY BILL?

PGT TUITION FEE LOANS - YAY! BUT FOR ENGLISH STUDENTS TO SPEND IN ENGLISH HEIS ONLY... ADDING UKVI TO THE RISK REGISTER IN LARGO LATERS... ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE UNDOW FRANCHISE AGUE TABLE MAYHEM BASIONS, STRIKES... AND MAINTAINING BASIONS, STRIKES... AND MAINTAINING MINISH SATISFACTION BASIONS, STRIKES, MAINTAINING, MAIN

VING FINALLY SORTED OUT WHO IS ANY YOUR HEI AND GETTING THEM TRAIN FIETAND GETTING THEN TRAINED FOUND OUT IT'S ALL GOING TO

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# HESPA's work

### What are the Special **Interest Groups?**

While we are still developing labels for our activities, the term Special Interest Group (SIG) has emerged to mean a group of HESPA members, of whom at least one is usually on the HESPA Executive Committee to act as a link and reporter, who are undertaking advocacy, relationship building or training development in relation to a particular HE agency, project or theme. It is a tremendously important part of our work, as the major sector agencies – both UK-wide ones such as Jisc, UCAS, HESA and the devolved Funding Councils – redefine what it is they offer, where they strengthen the planning voice. sit in relation to government priorities and what they offer for free or charge for. By keeping in close contact with the leadership of these organisations, we have an opportunity to help shape their future for the good of the sector.

Our SIG coordinators report below:

#### HE Data and Information Improvement Proiect (HEDIIP) Exec lead: Dr Christine Couper

HESPA has a representative on this panel. HEDIIP Advisory Panel was established to form a network of professional representatives from major stakeholder communities. The panel acts as a quality assurance body to advise the Programme Management Office (PMO) on the planning and

delivery of projects. Members of the panel are assigned to individual projects and will sit on Project Boards, providing more enterprise-specific guidance through technical and logistical oversight. Christine Couper, a member of the HESPA Executive Committee and Director of Strategic Planning at Greenwich University, represents HESPA on this panel and sits on the Project Board for the Subject Coding. We are also lucky to have HESPA members Martin Boyle, Director of Planning and Business Intelligence at the University of Glasgow on the Unique Learner Number Project Board and John Britton, Deputy Director of Planning at Cardiff University on the New Landscape Project Board to

#### ii. Third Party Working Group Exec lead: Sally Turnbull

The working group on the use of HESA data by third parties, known as TPWG for short, was jointly established with HESA (particular thanks to Jonathan Waller) and acts as an effective forum for jointly addressing issues relevant to planners and HESA.

Key areas of focus for the group are:

- Transparency/increased understanding of HESA policy and practice
- Improving support for HEIs during the data preview process
- Capture and application of 'data intelligence'

- Promoting use of corrected data the 'fixed database'
- Improving the quality of supporting information
- Assessing how the sector might influence onward use of data

The working group has led to a number of notable achievements, including:

HESA has further developed the 'DDS Announce Resource' (www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2664/). This area of the website was created to provide further support and information for HEIs in response to a number of the issues raised by the TPWG in its first year. The DDS Calendar provides an early warning of data requests to enable workload planning by HEIs, there is information about the use and purpose of the DDS system, derived field documentation, JACS subject mapping and the HESA data release policy.

TPWG discussed the problems and ongoing additional workload that resulted when a HESA record was revised and resubmitted, but the data requests were processed using the original data. The revised data is held in the 'fixed database' which is used by HESA's statutory customers (primarily the funding councils), but was not previously made available for use in preparing data for third parties. HESA has now gained agreement to use the fixed database as the standard source for all time-series data requests.

TPWG is working to develop 'low jargon' definitions of data items and methodologies used in calculations, aiming to capture more contextual information for non-experts. through the use of googledocs, which will be appearing soon.

The supply of *contextual data* alongside institutional data in preview form (such as sector/country totals, mean, upper and lower quartiles), to help institutions understand how their data sits alongside the other data being released, is now supplied as standard, where appropriate.

The lack of transparency in *league table methodologies* is a recurring discussion point. A very well-attended conference on league tables was held in London in June 2014, giving HESPA members the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with the compilers of the three main (UK) university league tables.

A sub-group has recently been established to review the methodology currently in place to create student/staff ratios.

#### iii. National Student Survey Exec lead: Gary Sprules

During 2014 HESPA has continued its involvement with sector level discussions related to the National Student Survey. This has included representation on the IPSOS Mori stakeholder group, the HEFCE NSS & Unistats Review Steering Group (NURSG) and participation in HEFCE workshops on KIS and Public Information. The NURSG has



now been disbanded but the work in this area is continuing as part of the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group (HEPISG). One of the key outcomes of the work around public information is recognition of the potential for reducing regulatory burden on institutions. This year has seen the HEFCE review of NSS completed and publication of longitudinal NSS data analysis covering the period 2005-2013. HEFCE will be presenting the outcomes of this activity in a workshop at the 2015 HESPA conference.

#### iv. Open Data Exec lead: Dr Giles Carden

HESPA has responded to requests to be part of discussions to take place regarding open data, the benefits associated with it and the way it might be better utilised in the HE sector. There have been a series of meetings in London organised by UUK and the Open Data Institute.

While we don't yet have a HESPA group fully formed around this theme, the need for HESPA input around this will grow. We have been pleased to work with UUK's Paul Clark on this (and to have set up a regular communication channel between HESPA and UUK through Paul on a range of issues). A roundtable discussion, hosted by Will Hammonds, Policy Researcher at UUK, is due to take place in February 2015 and we would like to organise more HESPA activities around this theme.

#### v. HEFCE liaison Exec lead: Dr Craig Hutchinson-Howorth

The HESPA Executive has a nominated member who is the main link with HEFCE. Craig makes sure that we have HEFCE officers at our Exec meetings at least twice a year

- many thanks to Mario Ferelli and Toby West-Taylor for attending our October 2014 meeting. This is an immensely valuable opportunity to catch up on latest and forthcoming developments. Please look out for the notes of those meetings on our website - they are very useful "heads up". Craig also organises workshops and consultation events which often emerge as follow-up actions to what is discussed in our twice-yearly meetings.

#### vi. HESA liaison Exec lead: Vacant

Our founder Chair, Vicky Goddard, established a place for the old National Planners Group on the HESA HEI User Group when Alison Allden set this up after taking on the leadership of HESA – and this has continued as we moved to our new structure. Ali Hartrey from SOAS has fulfilled this role, and we are currently seeking a replacement attender. This has proved a valuable way of feeding in planners' concerns, and indeed was an starting point for the TWPG. And HESPA members are prominent in other HESA-led projects, although not always officially in a HESPA capacity - on HEDIIP and on the heidi Stakeholder Group.

HESA is the sector agency perhaps with whom HESPA has the longest history of working together. A number of training sessions (which now form part of the regular HESA calendar) on HESA for Planners (Introductory, Student Record, Resources, and, in 2015, League Table data in HESA returns) have now been developed by HESA through drawing on impetus from previously the National Planners Group and now HESPA. Thanks, especially, to Daniel Kidd on the HESA side and Christine Couper on the HESPA side for their vision and energy about what would (and does) work.

#### vii. UCAS liaison Exec lead: Stella Fowler

Since Mary Curnock Cook opened the first HESPA Annual Conference with an expert oversight of how the pattern of HE applications had changed since 2012, HESPA has engaged regularly with UCAS. In May 2014, UCAS hosted an over-subscribed joint HESPA/UCAS workshop, led by Helen Thorne, Director of Policy and Research at UCAS, which delivered an insight into UCAS data products and services and presented an opportunity for planners to highlight and discuss their business needs with UCAS.

HESPA has recently strengthened its link with UCAS to support good cross communication regarding admissions work of interest to the planning community. It is hoped that, through this link, HESPA and UCAS can encourage planning and admissions staff to work more closely together on relevant matters in an effort for both departments to benefit and maximise competency in their area.

In addition, HESPA will jointly co-host an annual event with UCAS in May, timed to follow UCAS's own annual conference so that matters arising can be shared.

HESPA will, in future, be represented on a number of key UCAS working groups, e.g. the Qualifications Advisory Group, which will advise on all qualifications added to the new Tariff and the UCAS Data Group, UCAS will also share new Tariff communication items to ensure that relevant messages reach all those with an interest in new Tariff developments.

The primary purpose of the new Tariff is as a metric for HESA data returns and for management information. On this basis, HESPA has strongly urged UCAS to consider escalating its approach to communication about changes to the Tariff from an operational to a strategic level. UCAS will work with UUK to ensure that their newsletter to Vice Chancellors highlights that the implementation of the new Tariff is well underway and that there are resources available that can be Imperial who chairs this group. used by both admissions and planning colleagues to plan and prepare for 2017/18 entry. It will also highlight that HESA data returns are to be based on the new Tariff.

A number of useful UCAS resources are available on the HESPA website.

#### viii. SLC liaison Exec lead: Jackie Nioroge

Building on our first workshop led by Paul Smith at the Planners Forum in 2012, we have developed our relationship with the SLC through the efforts of individua members. Thanks in particular to Eleanor Currie, who is responsible for stakeholder engagement at the SLC, for persevering on the complexity of organising meetings with what we are reliably informed is now the fourth largest financial institution in the country. Our first SLC seminar was hosted by the SLC in their offices in Glasgow, and chaired by David Wallace, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Finance, Strategy and Corporate Services, and Derek Ross, Executive Director of Operations and Customer Services. HESPA members were offered an insight into what SLC data is available and how planners might better use and engage with it. We have set up an SLC link group. The group consists of Jackie Njoroge (MMU), Tom Wright (Northumbria), Amanda Watson (Sunderland), Lucy Hodson

(Abervstwyth) and Helen Watson (Oxford) and will continue working with key members of the SLC to promote data sharing and mutually beneficial outputs. HESPA now has representation on the SLC Stakeholder Group – Jackie is our rep at the moment. Thanks also to Dean Pateman from

#### ix. Representation on HESA Longitudinal DLHE Steering Group Exec lead: Alison Jones

The HESA longitudinal DLHE Steering Group oversees the development and implementation of the survey to establish graduate employment information 40 months after graduation.

HESPA is represented on the Steering Group by Alison Jones, University of Bradford, and has responsibility for negotiations with the survey provider on the construct of the survey instrument, data set and sampling requirements as well as liaison regarding the needs of funders and support required from HEIs.

Other groups represented include the UK National Funding Councils. Research Council. Careers Advisors. BIS and expert researchers. The survey is delivered by IFF Research who attended each meeting and take into account the views of all the stakeholders in relation to survey design and implementation.

Whilst the 'Long DLHE' continues to be perhaps problematic for HEIs due to small sample sizes, at a sector level it provides invaluable data to demonstrate the added value of higher education and so looks set to say.

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#### x. Jisc/BI liaison Exec lead: Jackie Njoroge

Since our last conference, HESPA has been working with Jisc and others to help shape sector-wide support for Business Intelligence and input into a range of Jisc initiatives three universities across the range of pre and post '92 in this area. We have been pleased to work with Dr Phil Richards, Chief Innovation Officer at Jisc, and Myles Danson, phase of this work asks the pilot institutions to test the Senior Co-design Manager at Jisc, on this. Some of this work will be reported on and discussed at one of this year's conference workshops and a meeting to discuss working further with Jisc has been arranged for 24 March – feedback from which will be available through our website. HESPA is represented on the Jisc Stakeholder Group.

#### xi. Operational Benchmarking and Efficiency Exec lead: Giles Carden

The UUK led Operational Benchmarking Project emerged out of the Diamond Review, funded by a joint HEFCE/ Leadership Foundation Innovation and Transformation programme grant to UUK. HESPA is represented on the steering group by Giles Carden, alongside representatives from BUFDG, UCISA, SCONUL, AHUA and HESA.

The first phase of the project aimed to get a better sense of current practices, data sources and uses of operational cost benchmarking in the sector, the six key findings were:

- 1) A range of benefits
- 2) Diversity and varying levels of openness
- 3) Good initiatives
- 4) Sector-level demand
- 5) Data sources need development
- 6) A common framework and taxonomy

#### Diamond 2

In the second phase of the project the Steering group developed a proposed common framework and operational cost taxonomy. It also established a pilot project involving institutions, to test the taxonomy. The second and final taxonomy and start using their own and other available data to benchmark across the common areas identified.

#### A Common Approach to Benchmarking

Given the diverse nature of institutional structures and functions, there is never going to be a completely perfect approach. But this work will allow the sector to take an important step forward and provide the right conditions for developing a common approach to operational cost benchmarking. At the end of this project the aim is to make the taxonomy freely available along with supporting materials developed during the process. This will enable institutions and those with an interest in supporting benchmarking to use them and develop approaches that meet their own needs - all within a common framework.

#### Competition Regulation

On the question of competition regulation, UUK has received advice that benchmarking of operational functions should not necessarily be curtailed when thinking about competition law. Indeed, benchmarking operations against competitors may result in institutions offering their services more efficiently, which could benefit students and tax payers. However, care must be taken to ensure that participation in a benchmarking exercise does not result in the exchange of strategically useful information, which is effectively information that could result in a reduction of

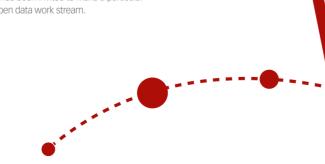
competition. Ideally, information should also be anonymised and particular care taken when benchmarking between a small number of institutions. UUK will develop this advice further and provide guidance to institutions along with the project outputs.

Over the past year the Diamond 2 Efficiency and Effectiveness Programme, hosted by UUK and chaired by Professor Sir Ian Diamond has been progressing several work streams. These are:

- Delivering value from the HE estate
- Evidencing efficiency
- The HE workforce
- Open Data
- Procurement
- Asset sharing

See www.efficiencyexchange.ac.uk/workstreams/efficiencyin-higher-education/

The final report on the programme is due to be published early in 2015. HESPA has been invited to make a particular contribution to the open data work stream.



## Member Networks facilitated networking

We are currently exploring the idea of hosting member networks on our website and providing some administrative and organisational support from our office. An example of this is Risk Management Network, led by Claire McDonald, Risk Manager at Durham University. The aim of the group is to share best practice on risk management and to facilitate networking between risk colleagues throughout the UK HE sector. The group meets for a conference annually and has a designated Jiscmail account.

Our Member Networks scheme is new and we are looking for interested members who may wish to set up useful working and networking groups, which may be more about • February/March – Open Data roundtable with UUK and good practice sharing than specific advocacy or projects.

To discuss any potential group or the scheme in more detail, please contact Jenny: j.summerton@hespa.ac.uk.

## Training and Events

Exec members Christine Couper and Steve Chadwick lead our Training Development SIG, working closely with Jenny who then follows up and puts flesh on the bones. Christine and Steve would be glad to welcome others to help form our training and workshop programme. There is an inevitable overlap with events organised by the other SIGs, but here are all our activities listed:

During the period since February 2014 we have delivered or co-delivered:

- A number of HESA for Planners workshops, led by HESA but with input from planners, in Cheltenham, London, Manchester
- May 2014 data workshop with UCAS, Cheltenham
- June 2014 League Table mini-conference, London
- September 2014 SLC seminar, Glasgow
- November 2014 HEFCE Key Information Set seminar (led by HEFCE)
- December 2014 consultation event organised for the HEDIIP Subject Coding project

Events planned for 2015 include:

- the Open Data Institute
- 28 April A training day on Advanced Performance Measurement and Management with Pietro Micheli
- 15 May UCAS event for HESPA members
- June A successor to our League Table conference
- Throughout the year HESA training events on HESA records for planners
- A number of seminar-type events are being planned with other agencies and groups.
- Probably a range of consultation events reactive and proactive!

For more information about any of these events, or to suggest an event, please contact Jenny: i.summerton@hespa.ac.uk

#### Huge thanks to all planners who have supported HESPA over the last year by getting involved and working to develop our activities.

Juliet Ingram (King's College) stood down from the Executive Committee in October 2014. Alison Hartrey (SOAS), Mike Wilson (Glyndwr, now Bangor) and Rona Smith (Strathclvde) will this year be standing down from their position on the HESPA Executive Committee.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their enormous contribution – Ali, for being a very important founder member, Mike particularly for his website work and Rona for keeping us on track with our constitution and negotiations with BUFDG/PHES.

Debbie Prysor has been promoted at Aberystwyth and is therefore going to step down from the important role of Hon Executive Secretary, which she held during 2013 and 2014 – including managing the transition to HESPA and playing a huge part in organising last year's conference, which she was devastated to be unable to attend at the last minute due to flu. Our special thanks to her.

We welcome Helen Watson (Oxford) and Stella Fowler (Gloucestershire) as new Executive Committee members and Jennifer Summerton as HESPA Executive Officer.

We hope to appoint a new post of Deputy Chair in 2015 and also new Exec members, as we embed succession planning for leadership into our Exec appointments. Please do look at our website for our latest governance documents.

#### Executive Committee (as at January 2015)

#### Lucy Hodson, Chair, Director of Planning, Aberystwyth University

Dr Giles Carden, Director of Strategic Planning and Analytics, University of Warwick Steve Chadwick, Director of Strategic Planning and Change, University of Exeter Dr Christine Couper, Director of Strategic Planning, University of Greenwich Stella Fowler, Planning and Reporting Manager, University of Gloucestershire Dr Helen Galbraith, Director of Strategic Planning and Governance, University of Bristol Anna Grey, Research Strategy and Policy Manager, University of York Alison Hartrey, Head of Planning, SOAS, University of London (standing down in February) Dr Craig Hutchinson-Howorth, Director of Strategic Planning, Edge Hill University Alison Jones, Director of Planning, Legal and Governance Jackie Njoroge, Head of Strategic Planning and Management Information, Manchester Metropolitan University Rona Smith, Deputy Director of Planning, University of Strathclyde (standing down in July) Gary Sprules, Director of Planning, University of the Arts London Sally Turnbull, Corporate Strategy Manager, University of Central Lancashire Dr Sonia Virdee, Director of Straegic Planning, University of Essex Helen Watson, Director of Planning and Resource Allocation, University of Oxford Mike Wilson, Head of Planning and Intelligence, Bangor University (standing down in February)

Jennifer Summerton, HESPA Executive Officer and Membership Development Manager

# What to look forward to in 2015/16

# MORE EVENTS TO BE ANNOUNCED

MORE TRAINING FOR MID-CAREER LEVEL STAFF AND NEW PLANNERS

## EXPLORING A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY FOR HE PLANNERS

EXPLORATION OF MENTORING/ACTION LEARNING SETS/OTHER PEER SUPPORT FOR PLANNERS AT A RANGE OF LEVELS

WEBSITE REFRESH WITH BETTER ARTICULATION OF THE HESPA ROLE, TO FACILITATE BETTER DISCUSSIONS, NETWORKING AND USE BY MEMBERS

PROMOTION OF CROSS INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS VIA THE DISCUSSION FORUM ON THE WEBSITE

## INTRODUCTION OF LIVE WEBINARS FOR MEMBERS, LED BY GUEST PRESENTERS

NEW SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS AND MEMBER NETWORKS, AS WELL AS EXPANSION AND GREATER EFFICACY OF THE EXISTING ONES

FURTHER ENGAGEMENT OF POLITICAL AND MEDIA PARTNERS, PUTTING PLANNERS ON THE AGENDA AND RAISING THEIR PROFILE IN THE SECTOR

NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF PUTTING ON AN ADDITIONAL CONFERENCE – FEEDBACK TO BE GAUGED AFTER HESPA15.



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