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## Chair's Statement

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2015 Annual Review of the work of the Higher Education Strategic Planners Association. It has been another year both of change for the sector but also of development and reputation-building for HESPA – thanks to the efforts of a really excellent HESPA Executive Committee and the imagination and efficiency of our Executive Officer, Jen Summerton. We now have 123 fully subscribing HEI member institutions.

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

Being able to rely on Jen and a secure office base – with Hayley Overton and Dominic Fryer in the PHES office – has enabled Exec members to lead on planning-related activity. We have also formalised our wider Member Networks to influence HESPA's overall outreach. Our reliance on key "founder" members has reduced and we have improved succession plans for the Executive Committee and key officer roles – see our People section.

### More events and training

I suppose this review should start by acknowledging the success of our packed conference in February 2015, with thanks to all who participated and attended. We certainly showed that we can easily host conferences with 200+ delegates.

Our emerging strategy is to deliver events/activity broadly aligned to three types:

- high-level master classes, possibly with external speakers, to refresh and inspire us with new ideas and motivation
- joint workshops and update sessions with HE agencies (whatever shape or size they might be in 2016...)
- training and skill-sharing sessions

We hope thereby to be able to support planners at all stages in their career and across the broad range of specialisms within the profession.

Our two master classes with Dr Pietro Micheli have been extremely popular and valuable, while our annual day with UCAS is becoming a regular and useful fixture in the calendar. Another annual fixture is a mini-conference on league tables, organised by the Third Party Data Working Party Group. This year's league table event looked at the unique value-added Guardian Good University Guide indicators and was fully booked within one day of being advertised.

We have plans for a professional development framework for planners – an exciting project for 2016 and beyond.

### Member activity and sharing

This year we have formalised the ways in which members can contribute to HESPA's main twin aims; sector influence and the professionalisation of planning. There is such a huge wealth of experience, expertise and wisdom out there in planning departments, sometimes even individual institutions aren't aware of what they can get from their planners!

As you will see from the reports below, our Sector Liaison Groups (SLGs) have been active and we have started to develop our new Member Networks. It was very encouraging to see a range of old and new faces at the HESPA September Social – an event we hope to hold annually to plot ways of developing membership involvement, as well as providing some updates on sector

news. We also have good links with devolved groups (Scottish and Welsh Planners) and are starting to work with regional and mission-related groups of planners to offer administrative, web and financial support if required.

Thanks to Jen, our website has been revamped and made more user-friendly. We still would like to see more member engagement on the discussion boards though! Let us know which ways of sharing and communication suit you best.

### Consulting and influencing

Our work in the Exec has been influenced by the HEDIIP agenda (including the consultation on subject coding), the exchange of data and information with UCAS, new data sources as updated by HEFCE, HESA's Data Futures programme and the issues raised by the QA Review – which morphed first into the TEF and then into the larger animal that is the Green Paper.

This part of our work is only going to continue and grow during 2016 and beyond – as the issues of implementation of the TEF and other ideas are grappled with.

Above all, as I step down as Chair after five years, I am confident that - with the involvement and contribution of planners from across our wide spectrum of member institutions – HESPA will be a major support and advocate for the HE planning profession in the uncharted, marketised and possibly highly differentiated world of HE from 2016.



## HE in 2015 – the planning challenges

Well, there was a lot of scenario planning going on in planning departments in March and April with the possibility of a Labour £6k fee, but perhaps not as much scenario planning going on as there should have been about the effects of a full Conservative majority – with the Teaching Excellence Framework as a key manifesto pledge.

HEFCE's UK-wide influence grew during 2015, with the review of the QA, but a transformation of HEFCE into the Office for Students – a regulatory rather than a funding body (copied from Wales, which sees the implementation of its HE Act from September 2015) was then announced in the Green Paper.

The outcome of the election in Scotland, with more or less blanket SNP success, combined with expectations of a similar result in the 2016 Holyrood elections and the final outcome of the Parliament's ongoing deliberations

on the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill, have the potential to significantly alter the relationship between universities and government in that country.

Planners' student number models have had to be more flexible and adaptable than ever with the cap completely off in England for 15/16 FT UG Home/EU recruitment – and already we see evidence of winners and losers as numbers drift towards higher tariff institutions and/or big local universities. Finance Directors peruse in more detail than ever our student number forecasts as the "smoothing" effect of grant based on position in contract has long gone. Some parts of the sector under-recruited on overseas students (Theresa May continues to trump University concerns with advice about adapting a business model for HE which, ironically, Margaret Thatcher invented when she raised international fees to help bridge the funding gap in the 80s), and there has been widespread under-recruitment in postgraduate taught provision as the first high-fee cohort of undergrads qualified in 2015. The HEFCE analysis of HEI forecasts 14-15 to 17-18

worries about an overreliance on predicted but perhaps unsubstantiated student number increases, both for overseas and Home/EU students.

Planners are working closely with their marketing departments and becoming experts in market research and applicant behaviour. However, sudden changes in patterns of behaviour – either from the applicant (e.g. not adhering to deadlines in a buyers' market) or from the provider (unconditional offers anyone?) – can thwart predictive modelling efforts. Does big data – as used by the supermarkets to understand consumer choice – beckon? And are we equipped to model the effect on the market of the easier entry routes (as per Green Paper) for alternative providers?

Universities are going to report record levels of borrowing by 2017 – a reason why planners really need to understand the emerging new realities of university financing and the risk of rising 'fixed' costs because of cost of finance. There is big capital investment going on

now, but this will tail off in the next three years? How can planners support their institutions' capital plans?

The old ways of collecting and reporting on data are changing; HEDIIP brings with it the subject coding change for the HESA return from 18/19, HESA plans to introduce phased data collection with effect from the 2018 return, new UCAS tariffs apply from 2017 entry and the days of the DLHE are numbered as HEFCE/OFS/BIS seek to use HMRC data. It is good news that there will be greater support from the new HEIDI Plus – there is scope for more data sets to be included. We, as a professional sector body group, continue to express our support in understanding the importance of high quality data, which is well codified and structured, to encourage informed judgements or decision making, whether by Governments or HEIs themselves. As such, we continue to value our relationship with HESA, with more joint work coming up in 2016.

The emerging Teaching Excellence Framework brings its own data joys; teaching quality, learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain – but probably all

measured in subtly different ways than expected and with some of the data simply not available. And the Competition and Markets Authority is claiming its first cases against universities who offer what they can't deliver.

We have seen in 2015 the implications of the financial outcomes of REF2014 – some huge changes. In addition, research PVCs throughout the country are holding their breath for the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review on 25 November. Cuts and/or significant changes to the mechanisms of research funding could be pending.

Alongside all of this it seems that league tables and comparison sites are becoming increasingly important, despite being disingenuously only coyly mentioned in the Green Paper. As understanding of HE data becomes dissipated in the new regulatory structures, it is essential that HESPA is here to lobby for the robust and contextual use of data in information provisions, decision making, ranking and benchmarking.



# HESPA'S WORK

## Sector Liaison Groups

### **HE Data and Information Improvement (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. We are also lucky to have HESPA members Martin Boyle, Director of Planning and Business Intelligence at the University of Glasgow and John Britton, Deputy Director of Planning at Cardiff University on the New Landscape Project Board on the Unique Learner Number Project Board and John Britton, Deputy Director of Planning to strengthen the planning voice. Both also sit on the Advisory Panel.

The work of HEDIIP has progressed on a number of fronts over the last year:

A new subject coding scheme with associated governance, maintenance and adoption plans has been developed.

The final phase of the project will be to implementation of the code. Christine Couper has been on the project board, advocating that if the code frame is changed, then just as important as the new structure is the need to manage how subjects will be aggregated for use in funding, strategic planning or performance review purposes.

Work to implement the unique learner number is progressing. A lot of the focus has been on the interoperability of the ULN alongside the Scottish Candidate Number. The NHS are especially interested in this project as it could provide a way of monitoring lifelong learning of health professionals.

Data capability has been a key focus of the HEDIIP work and many colleagues from across the UK planning community have attended workshops and used a toolkit to estimate the current data capability of their institution and to develop a plan for improvement.

Andrew Fisher, formerly Head of Strategic Planning at the University of East London is the lead supplier on the data language project the aim of which is to develop a common student data language.

Finally, a project to develop a New HE Data landscape was carried out by KPMG, with John Britton on the project board. The project report has been published and has formed a cornerstone of the HESA Data Futures project.

Colleagues at HEDIIP and HESA are now working closely together with the aim that HESA will take the outcomes of the projects forward after summer 2016.

### **HEFCE Liaison**

**Exec lead: Craig Hutchinson-Howorth**

The association has continued to work with HEFCE over the past year. Regular meetings provide the group with a chance to pose questions from its membership and to discuss regulatory changes, with particular reference to the supporting metric set. Wherever appropriate the group continues to look for pathways to bring the funding council and the planning community together to discuss both regulatory processes and management information systems. It is the aim of the group to continue to working with the Office for Students, should this opportunity remain, as institutional metrics are increasingly used to measure organisational success.

### **HESA HEI User group**

**Exec lead: Helen Watson**

There are a number of significant HESA developments on the horizon and HESA and HESPA have continued to work closely together to ensure that our members are kept fully informed and are able to contribute to the debate. The pace of change in the data landscape has led to us offering a one day workshop bringing together updates on HEDIIP, HEIDI-Plus and Data Futures (formerly known as CACHED). We also opened this session to colleagues in student records through SROC.

Our joint training sessions on HESA data and league tables continue to book out very quickly and our HESA planners' introductory training also continues to be very popular. We have continued to contribute to the shaping of the Data Futures and HEDIIP agendas through attendance at the HEI User Group and responses to consultations.

### **HESA Jisc BI**

**Exec lead: Giles Carden and Jackie Njoroge**

THE HESA Jisc BI project is a major programme to change the provision of business intelligence and analytics to the HE Sector and external subscribers to the service. Major strides have been made over the past year, the most significant being the launch of the Higher Education Information Database (Heidi) Plus. This service comprises a subset of HESA data offered through two routes. The first is through the proprietary analytics software tool Tableau. Tableau offers world class data analysis and visualisation standards. The second is via an existing API (application programming interface). Other developments under way are the development of a professional services benchmarking tool; this initiative evolved out of the UUK Diamond 2 agenda. Heidi-Lab is an exciting new national analytics experimentation project. The projects team has endeavoured to identify business questions that cannot be addressed through Heidi-Plus and prioritised them for further investigation in Heidi-Lab. The team is negotiating access to a wider selection of data collections allowing expert analysts to make new connections in their search

for valuable insights. Two members of the HESPA executive, Giles Carden and Jackie Njoroge, serve as co-designers on the project. A wide range of planners are also contributing to the project.

#### SLC

*Exec lead: Jackie Njoroge*

The SLC group was initially formed to support the two HESPA members who attend the SLC operations group. It is primarily interested in the use of SLC data and whether planners are aware of what data is available and making maximum use of it.

HESPA is interested in developing its relationship with the SLC. It has a very close working relationship with other sector bodies and agencies such as HESA, Jisc and the funding councils and is keen to nurture the relationship it has with the SLC in order to develop mutually benefitting outcomes.

The Sector Liaison Group is small. It consists of four members; Jackie Njoroge (MMU), Amanda Watson (Sunderland), Lucy Hodson (Aberystwyth) and Helen Watson (Oxford). Our first SLC seminar was hosted by the SLC in their offices in Glasgow and HESPA members were offered an insight into what SLC data is available and how planners might better use and engage with it. We 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 Imperial who chairs this group.

#### Third Party Working Group

*Exec lead: Sally Turnbull*

The Third Party Working Group – known as TPWG – focuses on the effective use of higher education data by third parties. To date the focus has been very much on HESA data and the group has been a very effective joint initiative between HESA and HESPA – please check out our area on the HESPA website for more information and a link to HESA resources: [www.hespa.ac.uk/sig/third-party-working-group-including-league-table-matters/](http://www.hespa.ac.uk/sig/third-party-working-group-including-league-table-matters/)

Having achieved much of what we originally set out to do, the group is now starting to look at how we might grow our influence on the understanding and onward use of data about the sector from a broader range of sources.

Key projects for this year are, therefore, the review of the remit and constitution of the group, plus continuing our series of events focused on university league tables with a day conference looking at international league tables.

We believe that having planners on the HEDIIP project boards and advisory committee has been invaluable in ensuring that the practicalities of implementation have been kept to the fore, along with a reduction in burden. We have also been able to strengthen the voice of the HEPs to balance that of the statutory customers and other governmental stakeholders. This is also embedded in the governance structure proposed in the New Information Landscape Project report.

#### UCAS

*Exec lead: Stella Fowler*

Since Mary Curnock Cook opened the first HESPA Annual Conference, HESPA-UCAS liaison has gained a great deal of momentum. The UCAS Sector Liaison Group is proud to have led by example this year, showcasing its approach at the first annual HESPA social in September.

During the last year, HESPA has secured representation on the UCAS Data Group and embedded the HESPA-UCAS Planners Forum as an annual event. The May schedule is timed to follow UCAS's own annual conference so that data outcomes and matters arising can be shared. This year's forum was a huge success and extended the group's reach to planners not previously represented. Engagement at the event was outstanding and planners embraced a forum to highlight and discuss their business needs with UCAS. The next forum will be on Friday May 13, 2016. Save the date!

In addition to giving us a voice in UCAS data governance, liaison group members have supported the development and communication of planner-targeted information and guidance on the new Tariff. In response to feedback, UCAS and HESA held a joint seminar on the new Tariff to take participants through the impact of the new Tariff from a HE Planning perspective, including a speaker from the SLG. Resources are available on the HESPA website to help us plan and prepare our colleagues for 2017/18 entry. Looking forward, UCAS has committed to HESPA membership of its new Qualifications Advisory Group, which will advise on all qualifications added to the new Tariff.

## Member Networks

#### HE Risk Management Network

*Lead: Clare McDonald (Durham University)*

The group was set up in Autumn 2014 with the aim of facilitating communication between those with a responsibility for risk management in the sector and sharing best practice. There is an annual networking seminar and Jisc-mail group. The first conference was held in Durham and this year's seminar is planned for 8th December at Kings College London. A stimulating and varied agenda is planned, with presentations from a number of contributors from the sector. The seminar will include sessions on exploring the links between horizon scanning and risk management, the results of an HE risk management survey and an IT risk case study.

#### Strategy Development

*Lead: John Pritchard (Durham University)*

This group aims to provide a forum to share insights into the development and implementation of institutional level strategy.

The main objective is to share ideas about good practice in institutional strategy development and implementation, particularly in relation to the role of senior strategic planners. Additionally, the network will consider key areas of thematic interest with reference to institutional strategy and development. The network will promote an awareness of relevant evidence, models and research literature which will complement the main practitioner based focus.

The group is still developing, but it is envisaged that the following themes will be explored.

- Strategic thinking: styles, approaches and models
- The changing dynamics of the external environment: emerging trends and disruptive scenarios
- The organizational processes by which institutional strategy is developed and implemented, including political and cultural dimensions
- Enabling institutional sustainability, including strategic resource allocation and new business models
- Strategic partnerships
- Integrating and embedding strategy with annual planning and engaging leadership teams across the institution

The group will be of particular interest to senior members of strategic planning departments i.e. Directors and Deputy Directors. It is expected that the group will predominately comprise staff who are working at a strategic level alongside and in support of senior management teams.

#### Workload Management

*Lead: John Tully (University of East Anglia)*

The network considers the latest developments in workload management, recognises best practice in the sector and helps to enhance approaches to workload management. It also discusses and resolves issues and problems, and shares ideas and experiences.

A workload model is a planning tool which seeks to allocate the staff resource in a unit, dividing the resource to support key academic activities such as research, teaching, engagement, leadership and administration, over a period of time, and in relation to a strategic plan. All universities operate forms of models which aim to achieve these objectives.

Workload models and workload management are often concerned with:

- Workload allocation and enabling the best match between unit strategic objectives and its staff resource
- Providing improved management information to senior management for personnel, finance and strategic management planning
- Joining up workload data to activity costings and establishing a better understanding of real costs
- Introducing efficiencies in TRAC
- Making the allocation of workload more transparent, building trust between staff members within a unit, aiming to improve morale, and about fostering understanding and respect for the differing individual contributions of academic colleagues
- Linking workload allocation with the professional and career aspirations of individuals
- Helping to support Health and Safety responsibilities
- Supporting equality and diversity
- Being Athena Swan compliant
- Analysing the pressures within a unit and understanding impact on working culture.

While not an exhaustive list the above indicates some of the topics for possible exploration by the network.

This network is newly established and is expected to develop over time. Currently it is planning a meeting for members at the annual conference and an event to take place in the summer, 2016.

## People

A huge thank you to Lucy Hodson who, although is stepping down as Chair and as a member of the Executive in February, remains involved in HESPA by virtue of her still being in the planning team of a member HEI.

Lucy led the organisation through its transition from a sub-group of the AUA to its current position as part of Professional HE Services (along with AUDE, BUFDG and HEPA) with institutional membership and office-based staff. She has been integral to the development and success of HESPA to date, leading a committed and active exec and paving the way for new Chair, Alison Jones, to continue the good work.

Thanks also to Steve Chadwick, who stepped down from the Exec in June 2015 on his departure from his role as Director of Strategic Planning at Exeter University – we wish

him every success in his new consultancy work and other ventures. Steve was a founder member of HESPA and the organisation owes him an immense debt for his vision for its development, his gravitas and superb connections.

We welcome – as new members of the Exec – Tony Strike, Simon Jennings, Anita Jackson and Aash Khadia who bring a wealth of skills and experience to our management group – our new Exec skills matrix is now helping to ensure that we are aware of looming skills gaps as Exec members come to the end of their terms. We will be announcing vacancies at the conference – please do consider putting yourself forward, or to serve on one of our sub-committees, such as the conference organising committee.

We have appointed a management group within the Exec consisting of the Chair, Deputy Chair/Treasurer, Training Coordinator and the Conference Chair for that year. See the Executive List for names.

### Executive List

#### Chair

Lucy Hodson (Aberystwyth University)

#### Chair-Elect (from Feb 2016)

Alison Jones (University of Bradford)

#### Deputy Chair and Treasurer

Jackie Njoroge (Manchester Metropolitan University)

#### Training Coordinator

Dr Christine Couper (University of Greenwich)

#### Executive committee members

Dr Giles Carden (University of Warwick)  
 Stella Fowler (University of Gloucestershire)  
 Dr Helen Galbraith (University of Bristol)  
 Anna Grey (University of York) (Conference Co-ordinator 2016)  
 Dr Craig Hutchinson-Howorth (Edgehill University)  
 Anita Jackson (University of Kent)  
 Simon Jennings (University of Strathclyde) (Conference Co-ordinator 2017)  
 Aashish Khadia (Brunel University London)  
 Gary Sprules (University of the Arts London)  
 Dr Tony Strike (University of Sheffield)  
 Sally Turnbull (University of Central Lancashire)  
 Dr Sonia Virdee (University of Essex)  
 Helen Watson (University of Oxford)

#### Executive Officer and Membership Development Manager

Jennifer Summerton

#### Administrative Officer

Hayley Overton

## Message from the new Chair

I am delighted to be taking up the role of Chair of HESPA, it's a real honour to be asked to lead the Executive in what is a very dynamic and interesting period in our sector.

The role of the planner continues to grow in significance in higher education providers and will be pivotal in helping those providers to respond to the challenges being posed in relation to teaching excellence, performance management, student choice, research excellence and the constant drive for efficiency and value for money.

HESPA in turn will continue to champion the voice of the planner in the sector; ensuring that our views are heard and captured in sector debates and that we are working alongside colleagues from all of the other sector professional groups. I am extremely fortunate to be taking over the reins from Lucy Hodson, who has done an outstanding job over the past few years with our organisation – we owe her our thanks. I look forward to working with you all over the next few years.

*Alison Jones (University of Bradford)*



## What to look forward to in 2016/17

### A new practical guide to higher education strategy and planning

An edited practical guide is to be produced for those who work in or study higher education management and policy, particularly aimed at those who work in Strategy and Planning Departments. Produced in association with HESPA and with contributors from across the sector this will be a great new resource for HESPA members. Contributing authors are sought from the HESPA membership; have a look at the HESPA website and if you see a topic you are interested in or have one to suggest then complete the proposal form provided. We need a range of voices and contributions from across the sector.

For further information contact the editor:  
Dr Tony Strike  
Director of Strategy, Planning and Change, University of Sheffield  
Tony.Strike@Sheffield.ac.uk

### There is lots happening!

TEF parameters are developing fast – HESPA will be feeding in through consultation structures, through lobbying and through representation on key groups

HEDIIP, due to close in July, is to be absorbed by HESA's Data Futures project (pending any further developments with regard to HESA from the Green Paper). HESPA will ensure that its strong voice on the HEDIIP strands will be maintained

Review of destinations and outcomes data – HESPA has representation on both HESA's strategy and working groups

HESPA continues its position, through Giles Carden and Jackie Njoroge, as co-designer on the HESA Jisc BI project which is forming, among other things, the new HEIDI-Plus

More HESPA events: Pietro Micheli (by popular demand), UCAS, international league table event, a general Green Paper event sometime in March/April, a strategy workshop and a workshop on space/capital planning are all in the pipeline

We hope to offer one or more events/sessions which can form part of an emerging professional training framework

HESPA17 is to be held at the University of Strathclyde's state of the art Technology and Innovation Centre and we are delighted to announce Simon Jennings, Strathclyde's Director of Strategy and Policy, as conference chair

There are lots of other unknowns, but we will continue to offer support to members to keep them abreast of any developments as well as maintaining a platform on which people can share views.

We hope that new Member Networks will continue to emerge and flourish, supported by webinars, discussion board chats and ad hoc meetings. If you are interested in developing one of these groups, please have a look at our website for more information: [www.hespa.ac.uk/our-work/member-networks](http://www.hespa.ac.uk/our-work/member-networks).



**HESPA**

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