**6th Annual Conference of the Higher Education Institutional Research (HEIR) Network:**

***Progressive Partnerships: Engaging stakeholders in Institutional Research***

**11-12 July 2013**

**Birmingham City University**

**City South Campus**

# HEIR Logo ColourWelcome from the HEIR Network

A warm welcome to the 6th UK and Ireland Higher Education Institutional Research conference!

Higher education remains in a period of rapid flux. Changes in policy, fees regimes and funding contexts present not only challenges but opportunities as well. An increasingly globalised landscape at once sharpens the differences between diverse higher education systems and yet, particularly with technological advances, opens up the possibilities for ‘borderless’ education. Higher education systems operating within this environment have to be agile, responsive and flexible. Standing still is simply not an option.

**About the HEIR Network**

## Who we are…

… a community of individuals with an interest or involvement in research into higher education at the institutional or system level.

## What we are trying to do….

… develop a network that enables higher education researchers to communicate with each other.

## What we mean by IR…

… research undertaken within an institution or higher education system to provide information to support an evidence-informed approach to policy and practice.

## The purposes of the HEIR Network include…

* developing knowledge about the practice in the UK and Ireland brokering expertise and identifying people willing to share their knowledge and skills with others.
* advocating and championing IR
* and in the future, establishing a professional association for IR practitioners in the UK and Ireland.

Within this landscape, institutional research (IR) takes on an increasingly vital role in institutional strategic management. The focus of this year's conference is on ***partnerships*** and how we can engage the different stakeholders in higher education in IR to support and enhance institutional decision making.

Set up after the 1st IR conference in 2008, the HEIR Network aims to build IR capacity and grow a community of IR practitioners in the UK and Ireland, although we also count IR colleagues from all round the world among our friends. The last six years has seen the blossoming of a small but authentic community around the concept and practice of IR and this has only been possible through your continued support and engagement.

I hope you have an interesting and fruitful conference and that you will take every opportunity to explore, discuss and establish useful partnerships with IR colleagues. Together, we make up the rich and varied mosaic of IR approaches and traditions from which we can all learn.

As we are an informal network almost entirely reliant on goodwill and support, do feel free to contact me with suggestions for future events and activities and indeed, any offers to host future events.



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**Welcome from the Hosts of 6th Annual Conference of the Higher Education Institutional Research (HEIR) Network**

Welcome to Birmingham City University for the 6th Annual Conference of the Higher Education Institutional Research (HEIR) Network: Progressive Partnerships: Engaging stakeholders in Institutional Research. The conference has been hosted by the University’s Faculty of Education, Law and Social Sciences. The conference has been sponsored by the electronic evaluation experts, **Electric Paper** and is conducted in association with the international journal *Quality in Higher Education*.

**Conference Welcome**

The Conference will be opened with a welcome on behalf of the University and the Faculty by Professor alex kendall, Associate Dean for Research in the School of Education, Law and Social Sciences at Birmingham City University, UK.  Alex’s wide ranging research engages with issues from literacies to professional education, including work on digital literacy, developing the virtual campus in prisons and, most recently, a Higher Education Academy funded project: ‘Reflexive research methods: content as method in the teaching of research methods (RM) in HE in FE contexts’. Alex has published extensively in all these areas and is co-editor of *Insights from Research and Practice* (2005). Alex is a member of the International Committee of International Professional Development Association (IPDA) and a member of the Editorial Board of the *Media Education Research Journal*.

**Conference Chair**

The Conference Chair this year is Dr James Williams. James is Senior Researcher in the Faculty of Education, Law and Social Sciences at Birmingham City University. James’s research focuses on the student experience and the wider context of higher education policy. He is particularly known for his work exploring the collection and use of student feedback as part of institutional continuous quality improvement processes. He has co-ordinated institutional student satisfaction surveys for a number of HEIs, including Birmingham City University, since 2004 and has published widely in this field. His interests in this field include how to conduct successful student experience surveys, the insights we can gain from collecting this data on particular issues or about different groups within a comparative framework. James has published papers on aspects of the UK’s National Student Survey, including one of the first academic articles ever published on the NSS.

James is currently Associate Editor of the international journal, *Quality in Higher Education*. James engages in a range of postgraduate-level teaching and teaches on the new EdD run by Birmingham City University. He is currently supervising PhD students whose research explores aspect of the staff and student experience of contemporary higher education. He is a member of the teaching team on the Tempus Mundus funded MARIHE (Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education) programme. James is a member of the Executive Committee of the European Association for Institutional Research (EAIR).

**Conference Theme: *Progressive Partnerships:* *Engaging stakeholders in Institutional Research***

In Birmingham this year, we want to build on the work of the five preceding HEIR network conferences by continuing our productive dialogue on institutional research. We will focus on the various different stakeholders in higher education and explore the ways in which they can be engaged in institutional research in order to enhance the sector to the benefit of all. At a period of transformation in the sector, this is a vital opportunity for us to share experiences and good practice.

**What is Institutional Research? Why is it so important?**

Institutional research (or IR) can be understood as ‘the use of research and enquiry to provide evidence to inform policy, practice and management at all levels within higher education’ (as noted at the 2009 HEIR Conference at Sheffield Hallam University). IR is thus very broad and can include research about the student experience, such as ‘retention, progression and achievement; teaching and learning enhancement; research activity and bibliometrics; and institutional, inter-institutional and sectoral performance’ (as noted at the 2010 HEIR Conference at Dublin City University). IR is vital because it enables institutions to take an evidence-informed approach to policy and practice, as well as more generally to provide data to better understand and manage activities within them.

The need for good IR – in particular, management information/ data - is perhaps clearer now than it has ever been. The sector has entered a period of change where all stakeholders face unprecedented uncertainty: students are expected to pay increasingly large tuition fees to follow their studies; many academic staff and even university management feel that their jobs are under greater threat than in any time before whilst the nature of their job roles is changing out of all recognition; external stakeholders are expected to play a greater and more complex role in the sector than ever before. The dominant discourse of higher education is now a consumerist one and for many stakeholders in the sector, the future looks bleak.

**Engaging Stakeholders**

This has clear implications for IR: how do we engage the many different stakeholders of higher education in the collection of data to support effective management decision making? This raises the question of what IR means to different stakeholders. For some in the sector, the antidote to the consumerist model of higher education is a ‘partnership model’. Is this a way to engage stakeholders in IR too? To what extent can we engage stakeholders as ‘partners’ in IR processes? What does partnership mean? Where is the division between rhetoric and genuine, transformative partnership? These are important questions that face us as an IR community: these are some of the questions that we will be addressing when we meet at Birmingham City University in 2013.

**Conference Keynotes**

Our discussions will be framed by keynotes from three leading specialists in the field from across Europe. Dr Manja Klemenčič will be exploring the student perspective on IR, Professor Jeroen Huisman will be discussing management concerns and Professor Lee Harvey will be providing us with reflections on the success of attempts to engage stakeholders in IR.



**Jeroen Huisman** is Professor of Higher Education Management at the Odysseus project Higher Education Governance at the Department of Sociology at Ghent University, Belgium. His area of expertise is higher education governance, organisational change, and internationalisation and Europeanisation in higher education.

He is director of studies of the DBA Higher Education Management. Jeroen is Fellow of the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) and Chair of the European Association of Institutional Research (EAIR). He is editor of Higher Education Policy, and member of the editorial boards of several leading academic journals.

**Manja Klemenčič** is Postdoctoral Fellow in Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education and Researcher at the Centre for Educational Policy Studies, Faculty of Education at University of Ljubljana. Her research broadly focuses on reform processes in European higher education, with emphasis on students: student experience, student engagement, student services.

Manja obtained PhD in International Studies and MPhil in European Studies at University of Cambridge, and BA in International Trade at University of Maribor, Slovenia. She held several research fellowships: at the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College (2010/2011); at Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard (2007/2008), a Fulbright Fellowship at the Center for Business and Government at Harvard Kennedy School (2004/2005), and, in 2004, a UACES Fellowship at the Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels.

She has published on questions of student participation in HE governance and student organising, and is currently working on a book manuscript entitled ‘Student Power’.

**Lee Harvey** is Professor Emeritus at the Copenhagen Business School. Prior to that he has been creator and Director of two research centres and was also Director of Research at the Higher Education Academy. Lee has wide experience of social research as a research methodologist and social philosopher. He has been researching higher education issues since the early 1990s, when he started exploring the concept of quality in higher education, which has remained a lifelong concern.

However, his higher education research encompasses employability, diversity, funding, learning and teaching and student feedback issues. He is widely published with over 35 books and research monographs and over 120 articles in international journals, books and compendiums. He has been a quality advisor to institutions across the world and is regularly invited to major international conferences and has given over 50 keynotes at such events. Lee is currently Editor of *Quality in Higher Education* and *Higher Education Quarterly*.

**Parallel Sessions**

The conference has been arranged around four core themes. Learning and teaching, quality enhancement, management information needs and institutions’ relationships with the wider community are four central pillars on which modern higher education rests and which IR largely supports.

**Track 1: Influencing Policy and Strategic Thinking: Approaches to Developing Learning and Teaching in the Modern University (Chair: Paul Bartholomew, Birmingham City University)**

In this track, papers explore the interface between learning and teaching practice and the policies that impact upon it. Papers address issues such as the development of institutional policies and strategies (such as learning and teaching strategies or assessment policies), stakeholder engagement and management of innovation and change. Questions that the papers may address include: How do academics influence policy? How do academic managers secure buy-in for changes that impacts on learning and teaching practice? What are the dominant institutional cultures in the generation of strategies and policies that influence learning and teaching and curriculum design practice?

**Track 2: Engaging stakeholders for Quality Enhancement (Chair: David Kane, Birmingham City University)**

The development of a quality culture requires the engagement of all stakeholders; from management initiatives that help to create a common vision to shared values among other stakeholders that rely on their participation with the quality process. Papers in this track explore ways in which stakeholders can be engaged in the development of effective quality enhancement processes. They assess initiatives to engage stakeholders in the quality process, aspects of practice and policy and the identification of generalizable methods, systems and good practice.

**Track 3: Better Informed for Strategic Thinking: Management and its IR Needs (Chair: John Taylor, University of Liverpool)**

In this track, papers explore changes in the forms of management information used by institutional leaders and managers, and consider how effectively they present diverse stakeholder perspectives. The use of management information to inform policy formation and decision-making is crucial in higher education institutions, and is central to the role of many institutional researchers. For many years, researchers relied on a relatively small range of data (such as student:staff ratios and unit costs). Such data were essentially driven by supply-side considerations. However, new technology has increased the forms of data collected and the power of analysis. Moreover, increasing recognition of the need to take into account the stakeholder perspective has also encouraged the development of new approaches to management information.

**Track 4: Engaging and Negotiating with External Stakeholders (Chairs: Steve May and Steve Woodfield, Kingston University)**

Papers in this track focus on the different ways in which institutional researchers collaborate with external stakeholders (such as schools, colleges, parents, businesses, government agencies and the non-profit sector) to improve the quality of institutional data, policy development and strategic thinking. Such interactions take place in areas of key mutual interest such as academic development (pedagogy and curriculum development), improving the student experience, staff development, professional service development, management information, and policy development.

**Track Chairs**

**Steve May** joined Kingston University as lead researcher for the Student Retention Project in 2002. His subsequent research, set within a framework based on institutional, Widening Participation and Learning and Teaching strategies, has encompassed collaborative work with faculty and departmental colleagues in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions to support the experience, attainment and progression of students; particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds. His current role includes supporting the development of staff research skills and stimulating the use and practise of institutional research.

**Steve Woodfield** is senior researcher in higher education policy and management in the Vice Chancellor’s Office at Kingston University. This is a specialist research role in which he undertakes policy-related research and consultancy projects funded by internal and external sponsors. His responsibilities also include institutional development activities at Kingston related to university strategy, international strategy development, facilitating a higher education research network and developing management information systems. Steve has over 15 years’ experience in the design, management and application of policy-related, educational, business and consumer-focused research and consultancy projects. He also has formal training and practical expertise in research design, data collection and analysis, report writing, project management, and seminar and conference presentations. He has undertaken consultancy activities within his own institutions to assist with development strategies, including management and planning functions, international strategy and producing intelligence reports on key policy areas. Steve has also acted as an external consultant in his areas of expertise, both to other universities and to organisations such as the British Council and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

**John Taylor** has had over 20 years of experience as a senior manager in higher education, working at the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and Southampton before moving into an academic career. He is particularly known for the development of research strategy that helped to elevate the University of Southampton to its present position among the leading research universities in the UK and for his leadership of highly successful returns to the Research Assessment Exercises in 1996 and 2001. As Director of Planning, he was involved with all the main policy developments in UK higher education. With his deep interest in higher education and strong commitment to teaching and research, John moved into an academic career, first at the University of Bath, then as Professor of Higher Education Management and Policy at the University of Southampton, and now as Professor of Higher Education Management and Special Adviser to the Vice-Chancellor, University of Liverpool. This combination of high level practical management experience and international recognition for teaching and research provides an unusual and distinctive approach to the study of higher education, combining a practical understanding of leadership and management issues and higher education policy with cutting edge research.

**Paul Bartholomew** is Head of Curriculum Design and Academic Development at the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT), Birmingham City University. He has responsibility for CELT's Academic Staff Development activity and currently leads on curriculum design, with particular emphasis on supporting the on-going iterations of RoLEx. Through the JISC funded T-SPARC project, he has a role in supporting programme approval. His main areas of interest are curriculum design; representation of curriculum design; programme approval. e-Learning design, particularly integration of e-learning technologies into curriculum design. He evaluates learning and teaching, particularly through the use of video as data. Computer supported collaborative learning. In addition, Paul teaches on the MA Education pathway and is module coordinator for Learning Through Innovation.

**David Kane** is Senior Researcher with the Social Research and Evaluation Unit (SREU) within the Faculty of Education, Law and Social Sciences at Birmingham City University. David is well known for his research on the student experience of higher education and the value of student satisfaction surveys in institutional quality enhancement processes. He presents regularly at international conferences on this subject and has worked on institutional student satisfaction surveys for a number of HEIs since 2005. David also conducts research into the application and use of technology, including social media, in learning and teaching and works collaboratively with colleagues across the University and beyond.

**Papers**

**Georgina Andrews and Caroline Carpenter (Southampton Solent University, UK)**

***Engaging business graduates and students as partners to help make employability development work.***

Graduate employability has been a key concern for the UK Higher Education Sector for decades. Official reports highlight issues of employability, and the need for business – university collaboration (Browne, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Concerns about ‘education to employment’ are not confined to the UK. A recent international survey highlighted differences in the perspectives of key stakeholders, concluding that ‘Employers, education providers, and youth live in parallel universes’ (McKinsey & Company, 2012.) Employability is one of the ways in which, increasingly, universities seek to differentiate themselves and their provision. Employment data inclusion in KIS may raise it even higher up the institutional research agenda.

This paper reports on key findings from a survey of over 400 employed UK business school graduates in October 2012 about how their university experience prepared them for employment. The authors have been awarded funding from the Higher Education Academy for a project that engages graduates and students as partners to identify improvements in the way business schools prepare graduates for employment. This paper reports on the first stage of the project.

**Dr Anne Boultwood and Dr Zoe Millman (Birmingham City University, UK)**

***Addressing Aspects of Researcher Development: A Model of Engagement***

This paper presents an account of the Knowledge Exchange in Design project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and designed to address two significant aspects of researcher development that we as institutions have tended to neglect in the past: career development and public engagement. The project runs for eighteen months as a means of piloting and evaluating a scheme that supports the development of doctoral students (PGR) and early career researchers (ECR), while at the same time providing an opportunity for the wider research community to engage with the world beyond academia. It has involved a previously constituted consortium of art and design faculties from four institutions, together with a range of commercial and cultural organisations from their respective communities.

**Dr Alex Buckley (Higher Education Academy, UK)**

***The National Student Survey and depth of learning***

The validity of the NSS, in terms of its relationship to indicators of effective learning, is largely unresearched. Virtually the only evidence available about those properties of the NSS lies in that previous research on the Course Evaluation Questionnaire (CEQ) created and used in Australia. It is surprising, therefore, that no attempt has been made to systematically map the findings from the body of research into the CEQ, onto the NSS. The extent to which such findings can be successfully mapped onto the NSS is key to determining the extent to which it can be a guide to educational quality.

The core element of this project is an evidence summary of the research into the CEQ, focusing on the relationships between measures of effective learning and the survey as a whole (in its various iterations), the scales, and the individual items. The primary focus of this evidence summary is the relationships between the CEQ and students’ approaches to study. Secondarily, the development of the NSS from the CEQ is mapped, and the relationship between the current NSS and the scales and items studied in the CEQ research is established. Thirdly, findings from the CEQ research are mapped onto the current NSS as a whole, and the core and the optional scales. Finally, these results are used to evaluate the extent to which the current NSS is a good guide to educational quality.

**Stefan Buettner (University of Tuebingen, Germany/University of Edinburgh, UK)**

***Understanding the State of IR Around the Globe***

At ‘AIR 2010’, the White-Paper-Discussion group on ‘Going Global: Institutional Research Studies Abroad’ called for an IR-peacecorps, in 2011 we established the Network of International Institutional Researchers (NIIR), and since 2012 we have IR-ambassadors. However: in discussions with practitioners across the globe some questions arose: How can we find out how IR is developing across the globe? Which elements are done? Who is doing them? Does this differ within an educational system? Can a global study help to find answers and lift ‘traditional-IR’ to the next level? This session will give first multinational insights in IR and new definitions for ‘IR’ as well as inspiration what IR can do for and in European Higher Education.

**Dr Val Chapman and Will Bowen Jones (University of Worcester, UK)**

***Engaging Stakeholders Through An Appreciative Inquiry Approach - Five Years On…***

In 2007/08, the University of Worcester (UW) was one of ten universities who undertook a project as part of the Higher Education Academy’s ‘Developing and Embedding Inclusive Practice’ Programme. In 2006/07, 7.47% of all university students in the UK disclosed a disability (HESA 2007) and UW had recruited well above this at 9.4%; UW’s project aimed to improve the learning experience of disabled students and embed effective inclusive practices in learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum design within the University.

It was realised at the outset that these aims would not be achieved simply through the development and implementation of a staff development programme, but was likely to be entirely dependent on the project team’s ability to engage the interest and commitment of academic staff to further develop their inclusive practice. It was decided to pilot an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) with the Institute of Sport and Exercise Science (ISES) at UW prior to rolling it out across the University.

This workshop will describe the project and its impact five years on, and will enable participants to discuss the potential of the approach within their own institutions.

**Camille Kandiko, Juliet Chester and Frederico Matos (King’s College London, UK)**

***Internal and external uses of student engagement metrics***

As part of an institution-wide enhancement initiative, King’s College London recently developed an engagement survey, The King’s Experience Survey. To not compete with the NSS, the survey was designed for all non-final year undergraduates. As with any major institutional endeavour, there were multiple drivers, agendas and outcomes. Two competing approaches to the data emerged: internal and external uses of the survey.

A challenge arose: Can we bridge the gap between seemingly opposing drivers of institutional research? On the one hand, there is the academic-led research where the priority is (or perceived to be) better understanding in order to identify best practice and support locally-led improvements. On the other hand, management-led monitoring and enhancement of institutional performance and reputation is closely linked to nationally comparable metrics used in league tables and statutory information provision.

This paper presents challenges around the ownership of data and analysis and the strategic priorities that result. We will argue that the best means is to give free access to as much of the data as possible, so that it can be used for a range of analyses and for departments to learn from the lessons of others. Investment decisions should be supported by both quantitative analysis and local qualitative evaluations of what works. A balance needs to be struck between collecting meaningful data that is used for institutional improvement and pedagogical enhancement and for external comparisons and marketing.

**Neil Currant (Oxford Brookes University, UK)**

***Combining institutional data with student-led research: The case of institutional research into Black and Minority Ethnic student completion and attainment***

It is widely recognised in the literature (Singh 2009) that Black Minority Ethnic (BME) student good completion rates (i.e. students obtaining first or 2.1) are lower than their white peers. This problem still persists with the Office for Fair Access targets for BME good completion set much lower than for all other groups of students. However, these targets will increase over the years and universities need to develop policies that address this ‘attainment gap’ and understand the reasons for it. This paper will discuss a project which uses the analysis of institutional data coupled with stakeholder engagement to develop an understanding of the ‘attainment gap’ in order to advise policy making at the university.

Our key project aim was to combine institutional data about students with qualitative input from students to inform policy. The risk with such a sensitive topic was that the institutional data analysis alone could lead to the adoption of the wrong policies. The detail of the qualitative data allowed a more nuanced analysis of the institutional data. The second key point is that by engaging stakeholders in the research also serves to raise awareness of the issue being researched.

**Paul Gorman and Neil Cocklin (Aston University, UK)**

***The impact of CDIO principles on student learning: A comparison between first and second year engineering undergraduates at a UK university***

In 2011, 161 engineering undergraduates were surveyed at Aston University (92 first years, 69 second years), all of whom were taught using CDIO principles. The aim of this research was to explore student perceptions of how CDIO impacts on their learning and whether first and second year opinions are significantly different. The research suggests that CDIO encourages deep approaches to learning and revealed that both first and second year students perceive CDIO as having contributed highly to them ‘analysing’, ‘synthesising’, ‘evaluating’ and ‘applying’ ideas, concepts and/or theories. Also, the research revealed that CDIO impacts highly on their abilities to think ‘critically’ and ‘creatively’ about tasks, ‘learn effectively on their own’, ‘work effectively with other individuals’, and ‘gain knowledge/skills to help in their career’. Overall, t-tests revealed no significant differences between first and second year opinions, suggesting that students engage with CDIO principles early on in their transition into higher education.

**Kerry Gough (Birmingham City University, UK)**

***We Level Up: Institutional Support for Student Transition, Success and Retention***

Student retention and progression is an ever prevalent educational hot potato within the turbulent landscape of the recent funding climate. These educational shifts, coupled with the public perception of the rising costs of education, have seen a regrettable move towards a consideration of the student as consumer. It is our job to shatter that perception and as an institution, once a student has made that choice to study with us, we need to ensure that they stay, that they proceed and that they succeed. With these ambitions in mind, the Level Up programme frames its activities around the transition from further education into higher education, with a specific focus upon both the pastoral and academic support necessary to enable that success. Level Up offered a pilot programme of online activities for our 2012/13 intake and through which our students were introduced to their university as a holistic community of learning and support. As an institutional measure designed to facilitate student success, the Level Up programme was built upon the expertise of the wider learning community. Employing the findings of the HEA What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme Report (Thomas, 2012), we designed our own complementary research survey to investigate the specific areas of concern for our own undergraduate and postgraduate populations within the Birmingham School of Media.

In assisting the transition of our new students into the School, the aim was to launch a pre-emptive strike through which we acclimatised our new students in a light and entertaining way. The student Level Up Venture Mentors assisted in designing the programme materials in a way that they felt would be fresh and engaging for new students coming into the school, with the majority of that activity occurring within the online learning environment and via social media. The key learning point emerging from this project was the necessity for the buy-in of all stakeholders. With the Level Up programme, the importance of consultation at all levels when planning for the design and implementation very quickly emerged as a key factor that can be correlated with the projects’ success. For the Institutional Research community, an awareness of how the project will impact stakeholders at all levels is essential, and perhaps nowhere is that more key than in facilitating open communication between the ambitions of directorate and the experiences of the students themselves.

**Kate Irving (University of Chester, UK)**

***Responding to the Enhancement Agenda in HE: leading learning and teaching at local level***

The emphasis on enhancement continues to pervade the higher education environment, particularly in the area of learning and teaching. Whilst striving always to “do things better” is appropriate during times of constant change, facilitating improvements in practice requires sensitive leadership. Research has shown that academic leadership is most effectively provided at the “local” level, within disciplinary teams. However, providing such leadership within a peer group of colleagues provides not only opportunities but also challenges and, it is suggested, requires certain institutional structures and approaches to leadership development in order to be successful.

This paper reports on research conducted between 2002 and 2010 on local enhancement of learning and teaching roles. It explored the perspectives of academic staff who hold these roles and their managers, and situated this within the literature of leadership in HE and leadership more generally. The results of the study are considered in relation to the renewed emphasis on enhancement in UK HE, and the necessity to balance demands made on staff by policy and practice imperatives and the necessity of responding to changing student needs.

**Anders Jörnesten (Knowledge Foundation, Sweden)**

***Enhancing Strategic Recruitment and Career Paths for Academic Staff in Swedish Universities: A Research Funder’s Attempt to Improve Learning and Development Together with Academia by Using IR***

The Knowledge Foundation is a research funding body in Sweden with a huge annual distribution to new HEIs. One important mission for the Foundation is to enhance development of new HEIs in order for them to become more strategically focused, with few but excellent research and education areas. Among many things this calls for a new way of recruiting and developing academic staff. To be able to support this ambition in an efficient and appropriate way, the Foundation has to learn more about how different HEIs in Sweden work with this issue. The key problem is: In what way can and should research funders and HEIs work together to create attractive career paths for academic staff?

The Foundation has initiated a study on how Swedish HEIs work with strategic recruitment and career paths. The study has two main objectives: 1) to gather and analyze information to understand how Swedish HEIs work with strategic recruitment and career paths; and 2) to engage HEIs and highlight good examples. This kind of co-arrangements (that also can be considered as a sort of action research) with stakeholders will be of great importance for our purpose.

This study, based on IR, will contribute to the Foundation’s understanding of how support tools can be developed to enhance the HEIs academic and professional practice. Such a methodology will be an important tool in the Foundations own development and future practice, especially when it comes to ways of engaging and working together with stakeholders. The ongoing research aims to show possible ways of which a research funder can develop a methodology by using IR in order to enhance informed decision-making and strategic thinking among HEIs. This challenges the concept of IR to include more than HEIs. It also shows how an “external actor” or “stakeholder” (the Knowledge Foundation) can be the central figure in an IR project.

**Helena Lim (Higher Education Academy, UK) and Betsy Carrol (York College of Pennsylvania, USA)**

***Learning from Each Other: IR Sharing across Nations***

Higher education is a sector in rapid transition, in both the US and the UK, indeed globally as higher education’s stakeholders and markets are shifting. In this kind of changing environment, it’s easy to be caught up in dealing with immediate crises. And yet a major part of the value of IR professionals is in their ability to access and interpret data and information to inform higher level planning. IR professionals are one of the most important voices on a campus reminding policy makers to see both the close view and the overall picture of their campus and the environment in which it functions. This ability to make sense of the big picture is particularly critical in a time when new groups are considered stakeholders into higher education, and when the priority level and demands of stakeholder groups may be shifting.

Because of this need for higher level sense-making, there is real value in sharing across our borders. Learning about the current dialogue in higher education and about the function of IR professionals between the UK and US is not merely interesting, it’s valuable. It seems we ask the same broad questions in both geographical areas, but from different perspectives. Because of this, we can learn a great deal from one another about whether specific strategies have worked within these common issues.

In this paper we highlight the value of this knowledge exchange along two major issues - cost and quality. It is work-in-progress and will consider issues, questions, priorities, opportunities and challenges from both sides including the costs of undergraduate education and the quality of education.

In these challenging times, IR is increasingly called upon to provide answers to resolve questions that institutions face. Against this backdrop, opportunities for practitioners to dialogue and share strategies can only serve to strengthen the wider IR community of practice within each institution, across institutions, and across national boundaries.

The nature of the session will be highly discursive and interactive. The collective experiences of participants will be drawn on through active participation and contribution to the discussion. It is anticipated that there are valuable lessons to be learnt from the different approaches and contexts and that issues and challenges identified are not necessarily exclusive to any one context and will resonate with IR practitioners across institutional/national/pan-national boundaries.

**Paddy Maher (University of the Highlands and Islands, UK)**

***Higher Education Institutions’ approaches to self-evaluation in the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework***

HE Institutions’ self-evaluations of their learning and teaching underpin two components of the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework (SQEF): internal quality review and QAA’s Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). Institution-led evaluation and review are the primary means by which Scottish HEIs are expected to assure and enhance the quality of their provision. After ten years since the SQEF was introduced there is growing evidence that institutions’ self-evaluative practices have become more analytical and robust with a shift from assurance to enhancement and higher levels of staff and student engagement. This paper will describe the purpose and progress of the on-going ‘Institutional approaches to self-evaluation’ (IASE) project, commissioned by QAA Scotland. The IASE project is charting these changes, exploring and codifying institutions’ approaches to self-evaluation and identifying and sharing examples of effective approaches across Scottish HEIs to support them in developing their own practices. IASE draws on the experience of an innovative and evolving enhancement-led approach to quality in Scotland and should be of interest to a wider audience. The paper will summarise the project’s development and results to date including what appear to be important factors in facilitating effective and productive self-evaluation that can lead to quality enhancement. In the wider field of institutions’ approaches to self-evaluation, IASE is gathering data on annual programme monitoring and periodic quality reviews. These illustrate how these processes have developed within the SQEF to become generally more analytical, forward-looking and likely to lead to improvements in learning and teaching quality. A set of characteristics which appear to facilitate more effective review processes is being derived from the incoming data and the paper will include more specific results.

**Lee O’Farrell (University College Dublin, Republic of Ireland)**

***UCD Student Engagement Analytics***

This paper outlines work on University College Dublin’s Student Engagement Analytics. The tool was originally developed from an administrative need to identify students who had withdrawn from their studies without informing the University. This function was extended to pro-actively identify students burdened by excessively onerous workloads or who may be less engaged with their Programme than their peers. Acting as an early warning system, it enables the development of a fostering academic environment, tailored to a student’s specific circumstances. Its use helps to prevent academic deterioration and possible withdrawal. It facilitates the University in meeting a key strategic goal, namely increasing progression and retention from first to second year. This is achieved by giving struggling students the opportunity of developing, under the guidance of local student support staff, effective practices which will improve their learning environment throughout their student life.

Student Engagement Analytics has proven to be a simple, cost-effective solution to a number of potentially complex and expensive challenges. Its implementation in UCD has required the following:

* The availability of accurate, relevant data in a useable format
* A resource who can mould that data into a fit-to-purpose format and provide a small amount of on-going administrative support
* Local commitment to engage with and use the platform to its full potential

Moreover, there is a myriad of further uses which the system can be adapted to support. Maximum value can be gleamed from it through constant innovation and evolution.

**Richard Pountney (Sheffield Hallam University, UK)**

***Creating the curriculum for ‘whoever’ and ‘whatever’: institutional ‘consensus-seeking’ in the higher education curriculum***

This paper reports doctoral research based on a qualitative case study of curriculum development in Higher Education (HE). It focuses on the characteristics of the practices that shape, and are shaped by, the educational beliefs and values that university teachers bring to course design and planning (Barnett, 2005; Barnett and Coate, 2005; McClean 2006). It explores the experiences of 12 teachers, from ten HE institutions, preparing to make their course practices ‘open’ to others ‘collegially’; alongside the accounts and texts of 26 teachers, in one institution, seeking ‘official approval’ for their courses in the form of institutional ‘validation’, or who are responsible for ‘developing’ and ‘approving’ these statements of ‘course design’.

Conclusions: 1) Strategies that teachers find to be ‘collegially focused’ are effective in as far as they can enable the meta-language needed for curricular change; 2) Strategies that are considered to be ‘bureaucratically focussed’ are complex, intertwined and often misunderstood; 3) The form that curriculum development currently takes can be understood as a form of ‘consensus-seeking focussed’ activity. Understanding this is important for progression and accumulation of knowledge.

Implications for practice: This paper informs teachers’ understandings of how the curriculum is developed in HE, and the means by which this is undertaken. It highlights the need for institutional support for course design that can accommodate economic and other factors that influence its development and implementation. The importance of peer review in this is emphasised, as a means of safeguarding both the practical and the moral purposes of education.

**Marie Stowell, Marie Falahee and Harvey Woolf (Student Assessment and Classification Working Group [SACWG], UK)**

***Student academic failure and reassessment: policy and practice in UK Higher Education Project***

As the impact of higher student fees takes hold and HE funding and quality policies place UK providers under greater pressure, institutions will be challenged to find ways of maintaining student satisfaction, whilst cutting costs and retaining high quality provision. Academic policy and practice related to assessment and re-assessment can be expected to come under scrutiny. SACWG has over many years studied aspects of assessment. Latterly, its focus of attention has been on the regulatory aspects of first-year student academic success and failure.

The paper is based on research that seeks to assess the impact of different regulatory and policy practices in UK Higher Education on student 'success' rates - measured in terms of progression at the end of the first year of study in undergraduate honours degree programmes. There is known to be considerable variation between HEIs in student success as measured by retention and completion rates, and student attainment in terms of degree class achieved. The research for this paper explores the extent to which this success is shaped by the regulatory frameworks that govern student assessment at module and course level, the extent of variation and the rationales for key regulatory practices.

**Lorenzo Vigentini and Barry McCluckie (University of Glasgow, UK)**

***Postgraduate students as research partners: understanding what they are asking in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey***

PRES is run by the Higher Education Academy in conjunction with HEIs in the UK. The HEA provides a national online survey template, sets the national survey window, convenes the PRES Advisory Group, conducts the national analysis and reporting, and provides support to institutions on both survey delivery and its use for enhancement. A review of PRES was carried out by Vitae in 2011 to 2012 on the use by institutions of the survey for enhancement. This includes several case studies giving in-depth information into how PRES can be used to improve the postgraduate student experience. This study was commissioned to provide further evidence in support of a revision of the items of the PRES for 2013. The key issue was to test the understanding of the questions in order to provide better wording for the PRES and a set of guidelines for the interpretation of the results. The originality of this project is 1) the use of cognitive interviews as a method to diagnose the validity of the items and 2) the contribution/engagement of postgraduate research students (PGRs) as collaborators to conduct interviews and shape the discussion about the items used.

Experience surveys are widely used in the HE sector and the results are often under- or over- estimated depending on a quality assurance processes too often pushed by reputation management rather than quality enhancement agendas. It is important to scrutinise and test the questions asked in student experience surveys in order to be able to make sense of the figures generated; the outcomes of this project provide a useful insight in students’ understanding of the questions. The IR community could benefit from a better understanding via good practice guidelines when building survey question sets while using cognitive interviewing. Furthermore the recruitment and management of PGR collaborators/interviewers working in a virtual environment presented challenges and we certainly have a number of lessons learnt for others thinking about a similar project involving students as partners.

**Margaret Wood (York St John University, UK)**

***Developing the authentic engagement of students in collaborative pedagogical research***

This paper provides an account of the experience of engaging undergraduate students as participants in collaborative pedagogical research. Teaching is conceptualized here as a research process in which the practitioner engages students in constructing knowledge about and explanations of academic practice. The particular focus in this research project is on learning through group work. The aim is to develop pedagogic understandings by creating a process and the conditions for dialogue with students and to embed this learning within academic practice. The research reports a model of student engagement in both the collection and analysis of the data which is based on research ‘with’ and ‘for’ students, rather than research which is done ‘on’ or ‘to’ students. With reference to the work of Wenger et al (2002) on communities of practice, this research is underpinned by a belief in the importance of communities of practice in the classroom, positioning students as valued sources of knowledge and expertise on learning and encouraging them to share this in authentic ways.

**Mantz Yorke (University of Lancaster, UK)**

***Tracking ‘belongingness’, engagement and self-confidence over the duration of a programme***

The Higher Education Academy and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation [PHF] are supporting a 3-year Change Programme focusing on student retention and success, involving 16 institutions. A major concern is to identify what impact specific institutional activities have on, in each institution, three subject areas. The ‘impact evaluation’, which runs in conjunction with an evaluation focusing on the institutional context, covers both student ‘belongingness’ and engagement as well as measured achievements. The ‘belongingness’ and engagement dimensions are the aspect covered in this paper, and are being addressed through the development of a short survey questionnaire which will be administered at various points in students’ programmes. The rationale for the particular type of survey will be presented, and the survey’s relationship with existing surveys (e.g. NSSE) will be discussed.

The survey instrument has undergone an initial piloting, which has enabled the original pool of 30 Likert-type items to be reduced to 18 with acceptable statistical properties. The large-scale use of the current survey in a single institution will enable the pool of items to be reduced a little further, perhaps to 15 or 16. By the time of the conference, the piloting will have been completed and the final version of the instrument (which will also include some basic demographic items) will have been determined.

The piloting to date indicates that there are three scales with acceptable reliability: Belongingness; Engagement; and Self-confidence. The presentation will consider, in the light of the analysis of the pilot data, the extent to which the instrument can provide a rapid marker of students’ sense of ‘belongingness’ and engagement.

The original ‘What Works?’ Project, co-funded by HEFCE and PHF identified ‘belongingness’ and engagement as key contributors to student success. The instrument under development is potentially of value to institutions in respect of their interest in ensuring that the student experience is as successful as possible.

**Elena Zaitseva and Claire Milsom (Liverpool John Moores University, UK)**

***Expect nothing less: managing expectation through semantic analysis***

The decision of where to study and how a particular university could maximise their opportunities for the future is becoming very important for students and other stakeholders (e.g. parents, sponsors, employers). Student choices are being more carefully weighed than ever before. As findings of the Youthsite indicated, getting a good return on investment is now a key priority for applicants and students, driven by the confluence of higher fees and a pessimistic economic outlook (Youthsite, 2012). High on every Higher Education (HE) institution’s agenda is the maximising enrolment through the presentation of an experience that is attractive to all stakeholders. In order to deliver an experience that meets the needs of students it is important to develop an integrated approach to capture their expectations and experience from pre-enrolment to graduation.

Feedback from open days as well as applicant day can give institutions some useful information about stakeholders’ priorities. Sponsors, usually parents, often leave comments in addition to prospective students. The presence of parents at University open days implies a stronger ‘buying signal’ (Ibid). Being a starting point, pre-enrolment information needs to be followed by analysis of expectations of the first and second year students. Research at LJMU shows that some students experience a dip in performance and engagement in the second year, and their satisfaction with the course often drops. Whilst most students recover in the final year is it possible to prevent the onset of this ‘disconnection’ through the provision of information that describes the entire student lifecycle rather than focusing on entry and exit points?

**Posters**

**Nicola Bartholomew, Caroline Hutchings and Oonagh Reilly (Birmingham City University, UK)**

# *Differential Student Engagement: lessons learned*

An exploration of the motivations that underpin student engagement when working in partnership with academics and the power relations between partners that may have influenced levels of engagement, led to recommendations for future partnership working. These recommendations are now being implemented as we set up a new cycle of partnership working. One of last year’s student partners (working as an unpaid mentor) and an academic partner recently ran a workshop to facilitate the generation of project ideas with current students. Students identified a main theme of ‘Surviving the course: resilience and coping on the Speech and Language Therapy Course’ and are currently devising a number of smaller projects within this theme with support from the previous student-academic partners.

**Goran Briski, Davorka Androic and Vesna Dodikovic-Jurkovic (Agency for Science and Higher Education, Croatia)**

***The role of external stakeholders in Croatian higher education***

This poster outlines the roles of stakeholders in the development of quality assurance in Croatia. In Croatia, there are 50 established QA units at higher education institutions (at fully integrated universities, departments and libraries included); 108 students involved in the work of QA units; 35 representatives of external stakeholders involved in the work of QA units. External stakeholders are also represented in HEIs governance structures (Boards, Councils). External stakeholders include representatives of: business and industry; bodies of local and national government; civil organisations; alumni. In 2009, the Croatian Parliament passed the National Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education. The Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE) carries out the procedure of QA audit - assessing the degree of development and efficiency of internal quality assurance system of HEIs. 20 audits carried out from 2010 - 2012 (faculties, academies, polytechnics, colleges, universities) – with 20 audit reports. Audit is carried out by a 5-member expert panel – 1 panel member is always a representative of business sector/industry. Panels are selected from the ASHE Database of Audit Experts. 17 audit experts from business sector/industry trained by ASHE in the Database (domestic and foreign). External stakeholders are seldom included in QA units (35/150) and mainly in following activities. They are involved in: designing curriculum or revisions of study programmes; monitoring study programmes; quality of students’ internship; transfer of good practice from the economic sector to HE; advisory role with impact on HEIs management. Cooperation between Croatian HE and business sector/industry exists in the following activities: projects; science and technology parks, where there are opportunities for transfer of knowledge; teaching (external associates); organising student internships; scholarships. There are three Career Centres/Offices (out of 20 audited institutions). Individual cases of HEIs surveying employers on the quality of their students. Initiatives for improving links between higher education and labour market include: creating national information system that would contain data on the employment of graduates; collecting data on employment of students (during 1st, 3rd and 5th year after graduation); analyses for individual study programmes, helping HEIs to respond to demands of labour market; publishing of collected data - providing accurate information to prospective students. In Croatia, improving quality is possible only with: the active participation of all stakeholders which leads to transformation of HE; the development of a general awareness of the importance of systematic quality assurance in HE; the development of a quality culture; transparency.

**Stefan Buettner (University of Tuebingen, Germany/University of Edinburgh, UK)**

***The River – An intriguingly different but simple definition of what IR is all about***

This poster presentation will introduce you to an intriguingly different but simple definition of what IR is all about, a definition that not only works for one office in one country but for all offices everywhere. It all starts with a river full of challenges, opportunities and imperfections.

Imagine a river and you stand on the one side, being keen to get across to the other side, which stands for a truly optimal higher education institution, on dry feet. In the river there are stepping stones, symbolising existing offices and tasks, e.g. quality management, student affairs, examination office, accreditation. If there are enough stepping stones, it might be possible to get across on dry feet but risky. IR though resembles concrete that is filling the gaps and making the links between the stepping stones to allow for a safe and dry crossing over. And no matter what and how many stepping stones exist at an institutions river crossing, Institutional Research can always link them up and bridge the gaps.

The content and message will be put across by providing a graphical visualisation of the definition completed by a written explanation/description of the elements.

This poster provides a completely different way to present what they are doing to colleagues who don’t know IR or call it differently, to ‘sell’ IRs value for the institution to principals & presidents and can also get inspired by new ideas through looking at IR metaphorically from a bird’s perspective.

**Marisa Silva (University of Coimbra, Portugal)**

***The enhancement of the students’ role in the University of Coimbra***

Within the continuous improvement system implemented in the University of Coimbra (UC), students’ role has been progressively enhanced. Their intervention is reflected in the several phases of PDCA cycle [Plan-Do-Check-Act], underlying the UC management system: planning, setting goals and methodologies in order to meet their own needs and interests (Plan), implementing methodologies (Do), conducting several initiatives related to the monitoring and analysis of gaps considering goals previously defined (Check) and implementing necessary changes, ensuring planned approach fulfillment and the integration of successive improvements (Act).

**Marion Thompson (Birmingham City University, UK)**

***Education Commissioning for Quality – Funded projects to enhance the student experience (2011/12)***

In the academic year 2011/12 The Midlands and East Strategic Health Authority (M&ESHA), through the Education Commissioning for Quality (ECQ) process, provided funding to the Faculty for projects to specifically enhance the quality of our provision and hence the student experience.

Bids were invited from across the Faculty schools, departments and practice partner organisations and, following this process, ten joint University and Practice projects were funded. Details of these bids, together with project aims and expected outcomes were reported back to the Strategic Health Authority who expressed their satisfaction with the collaborative way this funding had been used and suggested that this process might be adopted by other Universities.

Project leads were asked to provide a report on progress against their expected outcomes and implementation of the recommendations resulting from their work. The following vignettes give a flavour of the projects underway in the Faculty around enhancing the student experience.

**Workshops**

Delegates have the opportunity to participate in one of three workshops on **Day 1** of the conference. Each workshop addresses key aspects of working in partnership with stakeholders to improve institutional research.

**Lou Comerford Boyes (University of Bradford)**

***Learning from student-led research collaborations***

This workshop explores what staff researchers and higher education institutions can learn from student-led research collaborations. Student-to-student research projects, whereby small, collegiate groups of student researchers design and carry out evaluative research projects with their student peers, is reviewed in relation to what it means to truly hand over control, and implications for student-led and student-centred practice in higher education are discussed.

Against an all too familiar institutional background of bombarding the student body with too many requests for data, the positive impacts and the challenges involved in engaging students as a collaborative and collegiate group of research interns are outlined. Specifically, in relation to engaging students as researchers in their own right outside the usual contexts of doctoral and/or formal curriculum, and as an alternative to seeing students as a group to be merely researched.

**Luke Millard (Birmingham City University)**

***Change agents: Students as co-creators of curriculum Or Creating the Learning Community through Student Engagement.***

In 2010 Birmingham City University received the Times Higher Education award for outstanding support for students. This was based on its work in creating effective student engagement activities that influence curriculum change through its Student Academic Partners scheme. The workshop will highlight this work and the other student engagement activities that the University has undertaken in an attempt to better engage students in organisational and curriculum decision making.

 The workshop will consider the impact of the:

* The Student Academic Partners Scheme
* Redesign of the Learning Experience (RoLEx)
* College collaborative networks and initiatives to better prepare students for the transition to University through examples such as the Virtual Students’ Union.

**Dr Mark O’Hara (Birmingham City University, UK) and Dr Abbi Flint (Higher Education Academy, UK)**

***Partnership working in HE: ‘risky ventures’ for some?***

Student engagement in the governance and development of universities is an important and valued aspect of higher education. In the UK, changes to funding and quality assurance arrangements have led to concerns over the development of a consumerist model of HE. The National Union of Students has responded by calling for a purposeful shift to promote communities of practice amongst students and their institutions (Streeting & Wise, 2009), and more recently for clear articulation of the rationale and definition of ‘partnership across all levels’ of institutions (Wenstone, 2012). Plautus famously remarked that a poor man entering a partnership with a wealthy man was engaging in a ‘risky venture’. Drawing on the notion of communities of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 2001) this workshop explores a project which aimed to develop engagement with student representatives at the faculty level (O’Hara & Flint, 2010). A critical analysis of outcomes provides valuable insights for improving staff-student partnerships – particularly through the notion of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 2007). Our analysis highlights the limitations of interrogating this framework through practice and recommends integration with scholarship around student voice and partnership working. In addition to outlining operation and findings of the project this session will provide a forum for discussion of some of the challenges in defining staff-student relationships.

The workshop should be of interest to academic, professional and learning support staff, student unions and student representatives who are committed to developing ways in which they work in partnership to improve the student experience and are therefore interested in discussing the types of challenges outlined above. The workshop will adopt a ‘liquid café’ approach with a plenary feedback session at the end.