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Thank you to our proof-readers:
Jean Ash, Information Compliance, Governance and Records Manager, Glasgow Caledonian University; Dr Katy Beavers, Quality Officer, City University of London; Liz Buckton, Student Conduct and Appeals Manager, University of Sheffield; Stephie Butler, Senior Administrator, University of Chichester; Lisa Burton, Assistant Registrar, University of Warwick; Lydia McGee, Programme Administrator, University of Winchester; Alison McCuin, Head of Validation and Exams, University of Suffolk; Jessica Napthine-Hodgkinson, Research Support Officer, University of Manchester; Emma Paton, Senior Undergraduate Selecter, University of Bristol; Jessica Price, Administrator, Cardiff University; Orla Sheehan Pundyke, Senior Administrative Officer, University of Southampton; Andy Sousaques, GSAC; Administrator, University of Suffolk; Daniel Whittington, Facilities department Administrator, Oxford Brookes University.

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Guest editorial
Dr Steven Quigley FAlt
AUA Trustee and Academic Registrar, Regent’s University London

In no particular order: a commentary, an opinion, an observation, and a prediction.

This issue is packed with some excellent articles; we have part two of Michelle Gander’s piece on the careers of professional services staff, a piece on evaluation by Neil Raven, an interview with Douglas Blackstock, and an updated ‘timeline’ bringing the one we published in the Jubilee Publication up to date to illustrate the ongoing dramatic changes and uncertainty im/posed on the sector.

By way of a commentary, Jo Johnson (Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation) gave a speech on 20 July 2017 to an organisation called Reform (an independent think tank interested in improving public sector performance within budget). Jo Johnson’s speech may be found at: gov.uk/government/speeches/jo-johnson-delivering-value-for-money-for-students-and-taxpayers (accessed 5 October 2017). I have picked three things from the speech to comment on and I shall then make a prediction; first, of particular note, is the pushing of two year degrees for a reduced fee. Why? Simply because of money? Will this produce a better student experience? I am not convinced for two reasons; first, I question whether an employer places the same value upon a two year degree as a three year degree. Second, I am not convinced that a two year degree can ever be seen as academically equivalent to a three year one. If this notion of a two year degree gathers momentum then I will be interested to see the statistics of how many students who are signed up for two year degrees actually gain the breadth and depth of skills, knowledge and analysis needed to complete within that time period, and how many end up being employed within six months of graduation in graduate level jobs!

Third, Jo Johnson is looking to empower the Office for Students three months ahead of its previously intended launch. This will bring forward the timetable for delivering a new regulatory framework for higher education. I am left wondering what the first changes might be? Might it be a change of agency name to something that people can understand, such as the Higher Education Regulation Authority? What do you think? One of the first things Jo Johnson wants the OFS to do is to look at student-university contracts. This I suggest is a case of taking things too far. If you were a 17 or 18 year old student then would you sign a contract that might be up to or over 30 pages in length? I suspect not as it would terrify you. If we as a sector are to turn our implied terms for being a student into massive expressed term consumer contracts, then I predict that we might all end up having no students at all!
Chair's column
Kathryn Fowler F.AUA
Chair of the AUA and Deputy Executive Director, Aberdeen Institute of Energy, University of Aberdeen

It is now a year since my first Chair’s column!

How that year has flown for me. I am now looking forward to the 2017 AUA Autumn Conference and Annual Lecture, both on 23 November at City Hall Cardiff. As ever this will be a great occasion, with an exciting and stimulating line up of speakers and topics and ending with the AUA Annual Lecture, which this year gives us the opportunity to hear from our new Honorary President, Mary Curnock Cook OBE. I am delighted that we are taking the event to the capital of Wales and, as a lifelong Dr Who fan, I am hoping to encounter a Dalek or two!

The remit for the Honorary President is to:
1. Represent the Association throughout the sector and act as a key senior spokesperson on its behalf and as an honorary figurehead
2. Actively participate in the life of the Association
3. Contribute to the development and achievement of the Association’s longer-term vision and strategy as an experienced independent voice
4. Liaise regularly with the Chair, offering impartial advice and guidance

The AUA’s previous Honorary President, Professor Ruth Farwell CBE, finished her term of office on 31 July 2017. Ruth has been an excellent representative for the Association, leading by example, and many of you will have admired her adroit chairing of events like the debate at our Annual Conference and Exhibition. I have expressed my thanks to Ruth for her support of the AUA, which I know will carry on, even though she has demitted office.

Mary Curnock Cook OBE needs little introduction. She was Chief Executive of UCAS, the organisation that manages applications to higher education courses in the UK, between 2010 and 2017, and had previously been Director of Qualifications and Skills at the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency. She will make an excellent Honorary President, with her profound sector knowledge and connections. The Board of Trustees were delighted to support her nomination.

The June meeting of the Board of Trustees marked the end of Hayley Simpson’s term of office, and also of our co-opted member Dawn Turpin, who has led on governance matters. Both have contributed to the AUA Board in many ways. I speak for all the Board when I thank them and say we will miss their contributions. On a positive note, the Board welcomed two new Trustees, appointed following interview during the Conference: Sara Corcoran (University of Suffolk) and John Edward Baker (London South Bank University). We are also delighted to confirm Sam Bayley (University of York) will serve a second term on the Board. I would like to thank the selection panel members who gave up their time to select the new Board members. This is one way in which we try to involve members in the governance of the AUA.

I am delighted to advise that Chris Ince (SOAS) has been appointed as Vice Chair for the coming year, and will take up the role of Chair in August 2018. I look forward to continuing to work with Chris.

We are beginning to look forward to our next Annual Conference and Exhibition, which runs between 26 and 27 March at the University of Manchester. In 2018 the theme is Beyond Brexit: embracing uncertainty, defining our purpose, sustaining successful professionals. The ongoing challenges for higher education, posed by the ever-changing uncertainties of the political and economic landscape, offer complex and unprecedented strategic demands on our institutions and on us as individuals. The 2018 Conference will allow us to explore these challenges.

Conference is also one of a number of occasions to join and connect with colleagues across the HE Sector, to develop your understanding of the risks and opportunities ahead, to share the issues facing you in your own roles, and to support one another to meet these challenges together. Sharing makes us stronger and better. Use your membership to its full advantage.
Evaluation: An introductory guide

Dr Neil Raven (neil.raven@gmail.com)
Independent consultant

You may have noticed increased talk about evaluation across the academic sector. But what exactly is evaluation, why go to the trouble of evaluating something and how could it be done anyway? First, let us tackle the ‘what’ question.

What is evaluation?
Evaluation in higher education has traditionally been viewed in terms of teaching and learning. However, it also has an important role to play in supporting and enhancing the work of professional services. A consideration of what the term means helps to substantiate this claim. Evaluation is concerned with determining the quality and effectiveness of a programme, project or practice, usually against a set of objectives. One succinct summary describes it as the act of ‘comparing the actual and real with the predicted or promised’ (James and Roffe, 2000, cited in Mavin, Lee and Robson, 2010, p4).

Why evaluate?
As the definition indicates, evaluation requires the collection and analysis of information or evidence. It is therefore a purposeful and planned activity. As such, it comes with certain costs that should be borne in mind when addressing the question of ‘why evaluate’, not least, it requires time and effort to organise and to collect, collate and interpret the data generated (Mavin, Lee and Robson, 2010, p4). One should also be prepared to act on what an evaluation reveals. There are hidden opportunity costs to pay as well, the time and resources dedicated to evaluation that could be spent on something else.

Yet, on the plus side, evaluation makes it possible to determine if objectives have been met. It also has the capability of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a project or practice, and of providing guidance as to where improvements can be made and the form they might take. In summary, evaluation offers the prospect of decision making that is based on evidence rather than tradition or established practice, or even gut instinct. Arguably, it also has a particular role to play in the public sector, where considerable emphasis is now placed upon accountability and good governance (Mavin, Lee and Robson, 2010; Hargreaves, 2014; Research Councils UK, 2011).

How to evaluate
If the case has been made, the next and perhaps most fundamental question is how to conduct an evaluation. The first step is to identify what is going to be assessed. An early contribution to the discipline was provided by Kirkpatrick’s model (Dent et al, 2013, pp11-12; Baume, 2008, pp2-3). This suggests that evaluations should aim to capture evidence relating to the:
• Initial reactions of recipients to the activity
• Immediate impact on those engaged
• Medium-term effect on the behaviours and attitudes of those same individuals and
• Long-term impact regarding the activity’s contribution to wider institutional objectives

To illustrate this hypothesis, let us take an example from the field of widening participation. Summer schools are often deployed to raise awareness of HE and the aspirations of young people from backgrounds that are traditionally under-represented at university (those, for instance, from economically disadvantaged areas). An evaluation of such an event would begin by assessing how recipients felt about the experience, before considering its immediate impact on their knowledge and levels of interest. Turning to the medium-term effects, evaluation would seek to determine how far the acquired knowledge and interest had translated into actions back in school. Ultimately, the aim would be to discover whether the summer school contributed to the university’s targets for the number of its new entrants from under-represented backgrounds.

Whilst Kirkpatrick’s model is still widely cited, it has certain limitations as a guide to evaluation (Mavin, Lee and Robson, 2010, p7). It does not consider evidence that would provide insights into how well the project was implemented (sometimes referred to as process evaluation) for example, how efficiently organised the summer school was (Research Councils UK, 2011, p2; Silver, 2004). Nor is reference made to determining how well the summer school contributed to the university’s targets for the number of its new entrants from under-represented backgrounds. Strictly speaking, this relates to monitoring but it has an important role to play in assessing the success of an activity (Dent et al, 2013, p6; Research Councils UK, 2011, p2).

With these observations in mind, Table 1 organises the components of Kirkpatrick’s model into a logic framework, whilst also including the additional stages of monitoring and process evaluation. To offer a step-by-step guide, the framework requires the identification of the activity being evaluated, as well as the objectives it seeks to achieve. These also feature in the table.

Table 1. The steps involved in conducting an evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Immediate impact</td>
<td>Medium-term impact</td>
<td>Long-term impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project, practice or programme</td>
<td>Including monitoring targets and those concerned with delivery, as well as the immediate, medium- and longer-term impact</td>
<td>Number and type of recipient</td>
<td>How well organised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Raven (2016); Raven (2015).

Having decided on the activity to be evaluated and what its objectives are in terms of the numbers engaged, the organisation needs to identify how it should be organised and its immediate, medium- and longer-term impact. In our summer school example, monitoring data might come in the form of a register and insights into the effectiveness of delivery from feedback forms completed by those supporting the event. Meanwhile, post-event questionnaires could reveal what recipients have learnt, and follow-up focus groups held with the same individuals a few weeks to discover any changes in classroom behaviour.

In conclusion, given the subject, feedback on the framework has been gathered from a range of professional service practitioners. Whilst this has confirmed the framework’s value for me, I am keen to build on this evidence-base and would welcome readers’ comments and thoughts.

References
5 minutes with...

Douglas Blackstock, MAUA
Chief Executive of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

The AUA: Could you tell us about how you first became involved with the AUA?
Douglas Blackstock: 1997 was a pivotal year for me; it saw the publication of the Dearing Report, the birth of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and the start of my membership of AUA. I had just started working as CEO of the Students’ Union at Warwick University when an AUA mailshot crossed my desk.

This was my third role as a SU general manager and as such, I was very well connected across the students’ union community. However, while I had got a great deal from what was then the Association for Managers in Students’ Unions, it was a narrow field. The AUA was an opportunity to broaden my horizons. I wanted to take advantage of the networking and professional development opportunities it could offer.

To this day, I think students’ union staff should join the AUA. They could contribute significantly to the organisation and get an enormous amount from being part of it.

What compelled you to join the AUA and how did it change your career trajectory?
By 2001-02 I had started to think beyond the SU and knew that I wanted to move on, what was then the Association for Managers in Students’ Unions, and beyond our institutions as they tactics we need to play a vital role within the HE sector. The AUA has grown and adapted; for example with the introduction of the professionally recognised development programmes. The Annual Conference recognises the changing environment of university administration and addresses member’s needs, for example offering international expert insight.

What do you think of the AUA’s contribution to the sector?
The AUA has made a major contribution to the recognition of colleagues working in university administration. In UK higher education, people grow within and move between institutions. The AUA network not only raises the standing of our profession, but also the quality of the people working within it. The UK has a world class HE sector, and the AUA continues to contribute to that.

The AUA has grown and adapted; for example with the introduction of the professionally recognised development programmes. The Annual Conference recognises the changing environment of university administration and addresses member’s needs, for example offering international expert insight.

What are your thoughts about the future of the HE sector?
We could be facing another ten years of economic and political uncertainty, with global challenges like Brexit and huge changes within our own sector. We’re seeing increasing divergence across the UK, but we still have the frameworks for a UK-wide system.

As staff are increasingly challenged and the pace of change quickens, organisations like the AUA can help equip us with the skills, techniques and tactics we need to play a vital role within and beyond our institutions as they steer us through choppy waters.

Membership of a professional organisation like the AUA demonstrates a commitment to your own personal and career development. It’s also a chance to give something back to the sector and to be a role model for new members. In my case, I was privileged to be invited to be a keynote speaker at this year’s AUA Annual Conference.

Why would you encourage HE administrators to join the AUA?
AUA membership is a great opportunity to access professional development opportunities and to connect with colleagues working in similar and different jobs across many institutions.

The AUA made me think about national bodies in the sector. It helped me to look up from where I was to the bigger picture of UK HE and a rich variety of roles and opportunities available.

For the first few years of my membership I couldn’t attend the AUA Annual Conference as it always clashed with SU trade events, but the magazines, updates and connections were invaluable in shaping my thinking about my next steps.

Why did you take a role within the HE sector?
As a late starter in higher education (I didn’t go to university until I was in my 40’s) I spent the first half of my career feeling I’d missed out. Little did I know that I’d end up working in HE or the extent to which I’d be inspired by it.

Our new Honorary President
Mary Curnock Cook

What does your appointment as Honorary President to the AUA mean to you?
I am really looking forward to the opportunity to connect with and share expertise with other professional administrators in the sector. I hope I can add value through my own experience at the helm of UCAS, one of the oldest shared services in the sector, and no doubt learn a lot myself through the AUA network.

What do you think is the role of the AUA in the sector?
As well as recognising professionalism in administration, the AUA provides an instant network for members to share experience and learn from one another. A professional network is probably the most powerful learning tool that anyone can have.

What piece of advice would you give to someone just beginning a career in HE administration and management?
Decide whether you are there for the ride or whether you want to shape the ride. Shaping things can start in small ways, but managers always notice the people who are genuinely motivated and prepared to volunteer to get involved with new initiatives.

What do you think of the AUA’s role in the sector?
As a late starter in higher education I didn’t go to university until I was in my 40’s. I spent the first half of my career feeling I’d missed out. Little did I know that I’d end up working in HE or the extent to which I’d be inspired by it.
When an email lands in your inbox with a chance to present at a conference in Johannesburg, a little flicker of excitement starts. While this was not a personal invite, (a call had gone out to advertise the opportunity) I felt a pull to apply. Once I had secured funding from my Dean of School and Registrar (thank you very much) I contacted the AUA and expressed my keen interest.

The AUA has a reciprocal agreement with the Higher Education Faculty Administrators Forum (HEFAF) Annual Conference (although a name change is imminent) and the 2017 conference was entitled ‘The professionalisation of the academic administrator at HEIs’. I recently began my Doctorate of Education and the first assignment was on ‘professionalism’. I focused on the relationship between professional services and academics, and the HEFAF conference was an ideal opportunity to present my research and hone my skills.

Having never been to South Africa, I had been warned that Johannesburg could be dangerous and I shouldn’t walk around on my own; as I boarded the flight I was somewhat apprehensive as to what I would be greeted with when I arrived. Landing in Johannesburg, a little flicker of excitement starts. While this was not a huge enthusiasm and, as a result, the focus for the future is to look at revisions to the South African Qualifications Framework to emulate the AUA, and begin to certify their skills and experience.

My trip to Johannesburg was an incredible experience and left me with unforgettable memories. To meet such a range of people from across the country, who couldn’t have been more welcoming, was amazing. The number of people who told me about their part of South Africa, and how I must come back to visit, demonstrates the warmth and passion they have for their country. Given its tumultuous history this is wonderful to witness. The conference team were fabulous; they welcomed me and answered all of my many questions about the HE system and the country. I learnt so much from the delegates, including their passion for music, at the Gala dinner. I still haven’t managed to replicate their amazing skills on the dance floor.

I would encourage any AUA member who gets the chance to attend the next Association for Academic Administrators conference in South Africa, to represent the AUA and experience the country first hand.
Higher education in the UK: a timeline 1961-2017

Dr Matthew Andrew RAFA
University Secretary and Registrar, University of Gloucestershire

In the AUA’s Golden Jubilee publication in 2011* we published a Higher Education Timeline covering the years 1961-2011. Matthew Andrews has provided a 2017 update for this issue of Newslink, highlighting both recent changes in the sector and those we have experienced in the past. We have successfully dealt with radical and dramatic perturbations before as HE professionals. The aim of bringing the timeline up to date is to highlight the fact that, while these may seem uncertain and unparalleled times, challenges resulting from change are certainly not. The revised timeline will thus hopefully encourage and empower you to face these new challenges!

1960s

**< 1961 POSTWAR SOCIAL AMBITIONS GROW**

By 1961 HE expansion was underway as part of the social ambitions unleashed by the Second World War. Plans for HE development were started as early as 1943. The University Grants Committee (UGC), under the Chairmanship of Keith Murray (1952-1963), established eight new Universities in the early sixties (Sussex, York, East Anglia, Essex, Lancaster, Warwick, Canterbury and Stirling).

1961 **UNIVERSITIES CENTRAL COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS (UCCA) ESTABLISHED**

Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) established following an inquiry by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP); UCCA was the central clearing house for university applications until it merged with the Polytechnics Central Admissions Service (PCAS).

1962 **UNIVERSAL STUDENT GRANTS INTRODUCED**

Following on from the recommendations of the Anderson Report (1960) new student financial arrangements were introduced by the 1962 Education Act. All fees were now paid and students received a maintenance grant.

1963 **ROBBINS REPORT**

The Committee on Higher Education met from 1961 to 1963. The report’s recommendations included that Colleges of Advanced Technology should become universities and also set down the principle that ‘all those who are qualified by ability and attainment’ who wish to enter higher education should be able to do so. (This echoed Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). The report reflected, rather than initiated, the post-war trend of higher education expansion which was already well underway.

1964 **COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL ACADEMIC AWARDS (CNAA) ESTABLISHED**

The Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) was established to award degrees outside the university sector, which would later include students of the Polytechnics (Hatfield Polytechnic in 1967 through to Anglia Polytechnic in 1991) and Scottish Central Institutions. It should be remembered that some Polytechnics had already existed for over a hundred years. It continued until degree-awarding powers became available to institutions by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

1965 **CROSSLAND’S SPEECH AT WOOLWICH**

Anthony Crossland, Minister of Education, confirmed the expansion of higher education would be managed through the binary system and the creation of Polytechnics.

1970s

1971 **OPEN UNIVERSITY ADMITTED ITS FIRST STUDENTS**

Although part of the Labour party’s manifesto for the 1966 general election (which Labour won), the Open University admitted students for the first time in 1971. The Open University represented the increasing desire of the time to make a university education more accessible to a wider audience than previously.

1972 **WHITE PAPER: A FRAMEWORK FOR EXPANSION**

The Secretary of State for Education and Science, Margaret Thatcher, presented a White Paper outlining both increased expansion in higher education but also reduced expenditure per student (a reduction accelerated by the oil crisis of 1973/4).

1973 **UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUCKINGHAM**

The University College of Buckingham was established in 1973 as a non-profit making and educational charity, becoming the University of Buckingham by Royal Charter in 1983 and gaining degree-awarding powers. For a long time the University of Buckingham remained the UK’s only private provider with degree-awarding powers.

1980s

1981 **FUNDING CUTS**

The Government reduced expenditure on higher education and the UGC introduced a cap on student intakes for the first time. For the first time also the block grant was divided into core funding and a separate element for research.

1985 **JARRATT REPORT**

Commissioned by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), the Jarratt Report adopted the view that higher education was a business and downplayed its social and cultural role. The controversial report reflected and accelerated an adoption of business models within higher education.

1986 **RESEARCH ASSESSMENT EXERCISE (RAE)**

The first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was held in 1986 to apportion the research element of the block grant. Other RAEs were held in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008.

1988 **EDUCATION REFORM ACT 1988**

The Universities Funding Council (UFC) was established to replace the University Grants Committee (UGC) which had been in existence since 1918. The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) was created to allow these institutions to be funded nationally, rather than by the local authority, and to be separately incorporated. Tenure was removed from academic staff but ‘academic freedom’ was enshrined in the legislation.


1990
INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT TOP-UP LOANS AND THE STUDENT LOANS COMPANY (SLC)
The student maintenance grant was frozen and future increases were instead to be delivered via a top-up loan; the Student Loans Company (SLC) was established to administer the scheme.

1990
CVCP ACADEMIC AUDIT UNIT (AAU) ESTABLISHED
The CVCP established the Academic Audit Unit (AAU), which only existed for two years before being replaced by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC).

1992
FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 1992
The Polytechnics were converted into universities, raising the number of universities in the UK from forty-seven to eighty-eight; devolved funding councils were established (HEFC, HECOW, SHEFC - funding in Northern Ireland was already devolved), as was the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC). The binary system, established in the mid 1960s, had ended.

1992
HEQC AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT DIVISION (QAD)
Two separate bodies were established to assure quality through two separate routes: the HEQC, which was the successor to the CVCP’s AAU, and the Quality Assessment Division (QAD), under the guidance of the Quality Assessment Committee (QAC), within HEFCE. The QAD ran processes which ‘assessed’ the performance of teaching, by subject (Teaching Quality Assessment [TQA]), and HEQC ‘audited’ institutions’ systems of quality assurance.

1997
DEARING REPORT
The National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education met from 1996 to 1997. Its recommendations included the introduction of student tuition fees, though not using the mechanism that was eventually introduced by the Labour Government of Tony Blair, and the abolition of student grants.

1997
QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY (QAA) ESTABLISHED
Introduced as a result of the Dearing Report, and the recommendations of the Joint Planning Group for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was created with a remit to check processes for the assurance of quality and standards in UK higher education, merging the roles of the HEQC and the QAD. Since 1997, the QAA has developed the Academic Infrastructure in collaboration with the higher education sector.

1997
DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE UK
Referenda in both Wales and Scotland ushered in new devolved administrations which would start a process of greater divergence in higher education policy throughout the United Kingdom.

1998
TUITION FEES INTRODUCED FOR 1998/9
Students started to pay up-front tuition fees in 1998/9, initially of £1,000 per year.

1999
CUBIE REPORT
Following the publication of the Cube Report the Scottish Executive agreed to abolish tuition fees in Scotland and replace them with a graduate endowment scheme.

2000
UNIVERSITIES UK (UKU)
The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), originally formed in 1918, adopted a new identity as Universities UK (UKU).

2002
INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT
Subject reviews were discontinued in favour of Institutional Audit and Teaching Quality Information (TQI): a ‘lighter touch’ quality assurance regime.

2004
HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 2004
The Higher Education Act 2004 removed the up-front payment of tuition fees and raised the upper limit for full-time, home, undergraduate fees to £3,000 under a scheme for variable tuition fees. The eventual Bill was only passed by the narrowest of margins: with 316 votes for, and 311 against. Although intended to introduce a market place in fees, all but a tiny minority of institutions opt to charge the maximum £3,000. Students are given bursaries by institutions on a large scale for the first time.

2005
NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) LAUNCHED
The first National Student Survey (NSS) was conducted as part of the TQI requirements. All publicly funded universities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were obliged to provide contact details for all final year degree students, though participation was voluntary for the students themselves. Universities in Scotland were not obliged to take part, but a number did so voluntarily.

2006
VARIABLE TUITION FEES AND BURSARIES INTRODUCED FOR 2006/7
Full-time, home, undergraduate students in England charged variable tuition fees up to £3,000 for the first time; in reality, virtually all institutions opt to charge the maximum £3,000. Students are given bursaries by institutions on a large scale for the first time.

2007
DEPARTMENT FOR INNOVATION, UNIVERSITIES AND SKILLS (DIUS)
The short-lived Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, with some UK-wide powers as well as some specific to England, represented the first time a Government department incorporated Universities in its title. In 2009 it was merged into the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

2007
GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS
The global financial crisis commenced in 2007 and led to recession in the UK. By 2010 the recession had resulted in deep cuts to funding for higher education amounting to a baseline reduction of £1.13 billion.

2008
OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS (OFFA)
The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was established to consider and approve Access Agreements, by which institutions were granted approval to charge variable fees in excess of the standard rate.

2013
OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (OIA)
The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) was established as an independent body to run a student complaints scheme in England and Wales. The decisions of the OIA would not be binding on institutions.

2015
UNIVERSITIES AND THE GROWING CHALLENGE OF INTERNATIONAL STAFFING
The National Committee of Enquiry into Further and Higher Education, (The Dearing Report) was the first to recommend the abolition of student grants. The recommendation was introduced in England in 1998/9, initially of £1,000 per year.

2016
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)
The first REF was launched in 2014 and resulted in a large-scale assessment of research excellence in universities. It was intended to support the funding of universities for the period 2014/15 to 2017/18.

2017
UNIVERSITIES UK (UKU)
The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), originally formed in 1918, adopted a new identity as Universities UK (UKU).

2018
DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY, BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND TRADING (DEBIT)
The Department for the Economy, Business, Industry and Trading (DEBIT) was established to administer the scheme.

2019
THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS)
The first National Student Survey (NSS) was conducted as part of the TQI requirements. All publicly funded universities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were obliged to provide contact details for all final year degree students, though participation was voluntary for the students themselves. Universities in Scotland were not obliged to take part, but a number did so voluntarily.

2020
VARIABLE TUITION FEES AND BURSARIES INTRODUCED FOR 2020/21
Full-time, home, undergraduate students in England charged variable tuition fees up to £3,000 for the first time; in reality, virtually all institutions opt to charge the maximum £3,000. Students are given bursaries by institutions on a large scale for the first time.

2021
DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY, BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND TRADING (DEBIT)
The Department for the Economy, Business, Industry and Trading (DEBIT) was established to administer the scheme.
2010s

2010 THE BROWNE REVIEW

Launched on 6 November 2009, the Browne Review into HE funding and student finance in England reported on 12 October 2010. Browne’s key recommendations included removing the cap on undergraduate fees, increased targeting of financing towards medicine, science and modern languages and the formation of a Higher Education Council to bring together the former functions of HEFCE, OFFA, QAA and OIA.

2010 STUDENT RIOTS

The Minister of State for Universities and Science (David Willetts) announced the Government’s response to the Browne Review, including the intention to remove teaching grants for humanities and social sciences and to allow universities to charge up to £9,000 per year in graduate contributions (aka tuition fees). Large scale student protests, held on 10 November 2010 in London to demonstrate against the proposals, turned violent as some protesters stormed Conservative Party headquarters.

2011 STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF THE SYSTEM

The Government White Paper on HE introduced few new proposals, instead focusing on bringing together previously announced changes such as those to student finance, the provision of information to students, and an enhanced role for OFFA. The document also announced formally the concept of ‘tore and margin’ recruitment, including that students with grades AAB+ should be outside an institution’s quota.

2012 KEY INFORMATION SETS (KIS)

Information submitted by institutions in a new return – the Key Information Set (KIS) – was published in September in a revised Unistats website. (This website had been available since 2007).

Unistats presented the data from each institution in a standard format to help students make informed decisions about their higher education choices, and included NSS data, summaries of contact time and assessment methods, course fees, accommodation costs, financial support, graduate employment rates and destinations of leavers and salaries.

2012 FEES INCREASE

Fees for full-time undergraduate students in England were increased to £9,000 for 2012/13. Despite widespread concern, this increase did not deter young full-time students from applying to university, though mature student numbers declined. In 2016, however, those from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely than ever before to enter university.

At the same time, the Government raised the cap on part-time undergraduate fees in England to £6,750 a year, heralding a decline in these student numbers.

The number of students at the Open University fell by 30% between 2010-11 and 2015-16.

2013 REMOVAL OF STUDENT NUMBER CAP

In the Autumn Statement, the Government unexpectedly announced it would remove the cap on student numbers from 2015-16, with an additional 30,000 student places for 2014-15. This heralded a new era for competition within the sector.

2014 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)

The four UK funding bodies released the results of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF). 154 institutions participated, having successfully made their submissions in November 2013. The research of 52,061 academic staff was peer-reviewed. 30% of the submitted work was judged to be ‘world-leading’ (4*) and a further 40% to be ‘internationally excellent’ (3*).

2015 CONSUMER PROTECTION

In March, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published the definitive version of its advice informing providers about their consumer law obligations to undergraduate students. At the same time, the CMA published guidance for undergraduates, informing them of their rights under consumer protection law.

2015 GENERAL ELECTION

David Cameron was elected Prime Minister in May. It was an unexpected win for the Conservatives. The party’s manifesto repeated the commitment to ‘lift the cap on university places’ and to ‘introduce a framework to recognise universities offering the highest teaching quality.’

Nick Clegg, previously Deputy Prime Minister in the Conservative-led coalition government, resigned as Liberal Democrat leader after his party was routed. Much of the blame for the loss was placed on the party’s decision to support increased tuition fees despite their formal pledge to have fees abolished.

2016 BREXIT

The Conservatives pledged in their manifesto for the 2015 general election to hold a referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU before the end of 2017. The vote took place on 23 June 2016, earlier than required.

The higher education sector was very strongly in favour or remaining in the EU, citing concerns over student and staff recruitment, access to EU research funding, and concerns at the loss of the research and knowledge exchange functions of HEFCE.

Intent on bringing in new providers, the white paper also proposed reducing the size threshold – at that time 1,000 students – required for applications for university title.

The research was expected to allow tuition fees to increase by the rate of inflation for universities participating in the TEF and meeting minimum eligibility requirements until 2018/19, with a differentiated fee cap being introduced from 2019/20 onwards. The TEF would introduce subject-level ratings from 2021/22.

2017 HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH ACT

The Higher Education and Research Bill was given Royal Assent on 27 April and became an Act as part of the rushed approval of legislation before the snap general election. The key features of the new Act were:

• The Office for Students (OfS) will be set up in 2018.
• The OfS will hold the statutory responsibility for quality and standards, approve new entrants to the sector, and the granting of university title and degree awarding powers.
• Under UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) the existing research councils will maintain their composition, but be subject to a single accounting officer.
• A new body, Research England, will be responsible for quality-related (QR) research funding.
• Universities be able to charge higher annual fees for courses that are taught over a shorter period – ‘accelerated degrees’ – in a move designed to encourage two-year degrees.
• The connection between the TEF and differential fees was deferred. The Government is now expected to introduce differential, inflation-linked fee increases only after 2020.

2017 TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (TEF)

The rules for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) were launched, with institutions finding out their performance would be graded as gold, silver, or bronze shortly after the Olympic Games were held in Brazil.
I would place quite high stakes on every single one of my colleagues in the AUA Office here in Manchester, or indeed anyone who has ever worked at the AUA, to tell you that the two stand-out things about working here are firstly, the collaborative team ethos, and secondly, the ridiculously fast paced working environment. Things move quickly here when it is ‘business as usual’, so when you add the development projects we’ve been working on to the mix, you realise we’ve been in the express lane with our foot down for the last 18 months.

But it has all been worth it as each of these projects enriches the experiences we can offer you, our members. You may have already seen and got involved with the new initiatives, but here is a quick overview to ensure you’re not missed anything.

New development opportunities:

Development days
We are bringing you five new learning and development days which build on the AUA CPD Framework. Each day brings alive a specific behavioural category of the CPD Framework and uses a variety of participative learning methods to enhance your understanding and interpretation of what you can do to develop in your job.

We have already held three days over the past month; Delivering Excellent High Quality Service, Managing Change and Managers as Developers. There are two more available for you to benefit from:
• Achieving More with Less, 5 December, Manchester
• Professional Effectiveness, 18 January, Manchester

You can sign up for these at aua.ac.uk.

Bursaries
Through our links with our international partnerships we have introduced a bursary to give members the opportunity to represent the AUA at conferences around the world. Check out Matthew Hisbend’s blog from his trip to the TEMC Conference in Melbourne in September on the website and look out for blogs from John Burgess and Kirsty Wadlow on their experiences of the AUAACRD SEM Conference this month. In addition, detailed reports from international conferences where the AUA was represented are often covered in Newslink; for example the 2016 AACRAO SEM conference (USA) in Issue 86.

The new CRM and website
It was painful at times but we got there! It is on the whole a behind the scenes development that replaces a 20 year old system (yes really!), but our new customer relationship management (CRM) system will help us do our jobs better and offer you a much more joined up membership experience. Now we can better support your every need, from a simple administration question to a long-term professional development ambition.

When logged in to the new website aua.ac.uk, your personal dashboard will, at a glance, give you your continuing professional development (CPD) record and your next development engagement, as well as access to edit your profile so you can update your preferences and interests, renew your membership and keep up informed of any career moves or name changes etc. Also you can take advantage of being part of the AUA’s wider professional community and connect with fellow members via the new online forums which are coming soon.

Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Administration, Management and Leadership
The PgCert programme team successfully gained revalidation of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Administration, Management and Leadership from Nottingham Trent University. This period of revalidation is particularly significant as it launches a new chapter in the programme’s 15 year history; from 1 March 2018 students will complete their studies over one year instead of two. We are particularly proud of the commendation which the team received for their “...commitment and vision to developing senior university leaders of the future, which reinforces the distinctive nature of the course as a vehicle to support and develop creative and reflective HE professionals.”

It is almost old news now but amongst all of the above activity we rolled out a new brand which we are putting down as a success as it has quickly become part of the furniture now at the AUA, and we’ve had such glowing feedback from you!

We’d really like to know what you think of the developments we’ve introduced and want to thank you for your patience whilst we have been bringing them to you. Do get in touch, either by email aua@aua.ac.uk, phone +44 (0) 161 2752063, or at one of our events. We are always open to hearing your suggestions and niggles so that we can make things even better.
General election panel discussion held in Birmingham

Nick Allen MAUA
Executive Officer, Office of the Vice Chancellor, University of Northampton

In conjunction with the Birmingham Professional programme at the University of Birmingham, the AUA in the Midlands held a panel discussion on the outcome of the recent General Election and implications for the higher education sector.

The event attracted over thirty attendees from across Birmingham and the Midlands region. Hosted by AUA Trustee and the University of Birmingham’s Academic Registrar, Stephen McAuliffe, the panel comprised of David Morris (Deputy Editor, Wonkhe), Andrea Bolshaw (University Secretary and Registrar, Newman University, Birmingham) and Dr Matt Cole (Teaching Fellow, Department of History, University of Birmingham) and discussed relevant matters arising from the General Election. Questions were then put to the panel by members of the audience. It was an interesting event, a great collaboration between the University and the AUA, and worthy of a follow-up later in the year.

Birmingham student experience/support network of practice

Sam Murphy MAUA
Student Engagement Manager, University of Birmingham Business School

Networks of practice are an important means for staff to meet, collaborate and share best practice. Having a dedicated space and time to work with colleagues in similar roles in different institutions with their own structures, pressures and contexts can be an invaluable experience for staff, whether you have worked for 25 years in higher education or have recently started your career.

This was our starting point when discussing how institutions can collaborate in the region. Birmingham is home to more than five institutions delivering higher education to students from different backgrounds in different parts of the city. Despite the differences however, there are shared challenges; engaging international students with services, supporting the student’s transition to higher education, and finding the space and time to collaborate outside of our own institutions. The common themes of shared context are areas that we wanted to build upon between institutions.

The most important part of the event was the networking section. Rather than have a networking session where everyone speaks to people they already know, we structured the networking around four themes: International student experience, Transition, Welfare support, and how the Student Experience/Support Network of Practice should work going forward. Each group was able to look at all four themes in a world café style discussion, building on each other’s knowledge, sharing best practice and thinking about how the two institutions can collaborate in the future.

Following this first meeting of the Student Experience/Support Network of Practice, we aim to have themed meetings throughout the year, focusing on relevant topics throughout the academic year. Alongside this we hope to bring other institutions on board, and if anyone would like more information or would like to get involved in the Network, please do email me on s.murphy.4@bham.ac.uk. We believe this is an exciting and interesting model for institutions to collaborate and would like to expand this to include other roles such as programme administrators in the future.
A world apart but united in a commitment to higher and tertiary education:
The 2017 Tertiary Education Management Conference, Melbourne, Australia, September 2017
Matthew Hisbent
Head of Operations, Oxford Brooks University

This year I answered the call for submissions to apply for the 2017 Tertiary Education Management Conference (TEMC), run jointly by the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) and the Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association (TEFMA). I was delighted to have my submission approved and, with a little trepidation but a lot of excitement, I set off to Melbourne in Southern Australia, prepared to deliver my session on the theme of ‘Reciprocal loyalty - a case study on the impact on staff of moving our Business School’.

The TEMC Conference theme this year was ‘Eureka Revolutionary Ideas’ which was very fitting as, in my opinion, the entire conference was a gigantic Eureka moment! The Melbourne Conference smashed last year’s attendance by reaching a total of 921 delegates derived from a range of institutions across the Southern Hemisphere, South Africa and, of course, the UK. It produced the cultural and professional mix we are familiar with at the AUA Annual Conference and Exhibition.

The breakdown of the conference shows that we enjoyed presenter training, preconference workshops and tours, a range of grand plenaries, over 80 concurrent sessions presented by delegates, and several panel discussions. Add to that the ATEM Awards Evening and the Gala Dinner on the final night of the Conference and it all made for a packed four days in Melbourne.

The link between ATEM and TEFMA means that the sessions at the conference were incredibly relevant to me. It was possible therefore, as I did, to construct a theme for day one around women in leadership, and for days two and three to follow a diverse range of topics relevant to my role as Head of Operations in Oxford Brooks Business School. It made the experience all the more interesting.

A special mention must go to the four spectacular plenary sessions by Professor Glyn Davis (Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Melbourne), Dr Jenny Gray (CEO, Zoos Victoria), Dr Jason Fox, and Todd Sampson. They made us all think outside the higher education box for a while and recontextualise what we think and perceive and how we approach our daily challenges.

It was the most amazing experience and I thank the AUA and ATEM whole heartedly for this opportunity.

Top Tips for making the most of resources

Jan Shine
People Development Consultant, Paullus People Development (jan@paullus.co.uk)

In the current climate of ‘doing more with less’, the key to success in our roles is making the best use of available resources to deliver outputs and outcomes. To use resources efficiently and effectively we need to ensure we recognise the breadth and diversity of resources available to us, and continuously review how we are utilising resources.

The following points may be useful prompts for you to review your current approach.

Think broadly about what constitutes a ‘resource’
Think of ‘assets’, for example. Are you making the most of your skills, knowledge and experience – both your own and those of others? Are systems and management information being used to optimum effect?

Look for opportunities to share resources
Don’t stumble across these by accident – actively seek, identify and seize them. Be alert, creative and open-minded. Approach others or connect with people where you can see an opportunity for cross-team/department collaboration.

Be discerning
Regularly review how you are spending your valuable time. Do three of you from the same team need to be in the same meeting? Do you need to duplicate a task being done in another area of the institution? How are you expending your energy, for example are you focusing on things you can influence or control or wasting energy focusing on things outside of your control?

Be generous with your expertise
Offer your expertise where you know it can make a difference and foster a reciprocal knowledge and expertise exchange in your working relationships and networks.

Be resourceful
Draw on your internal resources to achieve results, for example motivation, enthusiasm, energy, resilience, creativity. Be curious – look outside your immediate area, across the institution, the sector and other professional bodies you may be affiliated with.

Be self-aware
Recognise your limitations – you cannot be an expert in everything. Draw on others’ talents in those areas, and use resources such as mentors, articles, books, podcasts, online personal development toolkits to supplement your knowledge.

Optimize strengths
Ensure that your strengths are being put to optimum effect, not just in your role but in a wider sense within the institution/sector. If you are team leader, ensure you are fully embracing and utilizing the strengths of your colleagues.

Invest your time to save time
Do not fall into the trap of believing that you do not have time to find resources. Be knowledgeable about where to look and what is out there. There is an abundance of resources within our own organisations; the intranet is the key to finding them.

Make the most of your AUA membership
You obviously read Newslink so that’s a good start! Have you fully explored other member resources such as Perspectives, Good Practice Guides, regional groups and special interest groups?

Be resourceful
Draw on your internal resources to achieve results, for example motivation, enthusiasm, energy, resilience, creativity. Be curious – look outside your immediate area, across the institution, the sector and other professional bodies you may be affiliated with.
Learning, building and enjoying: a career in HE management and administration

Christopher Hallas
Higher Education and Diversity Enthusiast and Executive Director for Transformation

After a 32 year career in university management and administration, I retire from my role as Director of Student and Academic Services at the University of Greenwich with mixed feelings.

On one hand, I’m in a very happy personal place, whereby I enjoy my work at the university and my activities within the HE sector more broadly. I enjoy achieving things for myself, for the many different teams or ‘communities’ that I’m a part of, and also achieving things for the university and other organisations I’m involved in across the sector. I feel as if I’ve had time to learn, time to build, and time to enjoy my career. On the other hand, creating the opportunity to retire early (if I wanted to) has been part of my career planning – as some of you will know from my AUA workshop on career planning for HE managers and administrators, which I’ve presented along with John Ryan at many AUA conferences and network events. Now feels the right time for me to pursue other interests and achieve new things.

I’ve had the opportunity to work in many different roles in many different HEIs. If we imagine the UK HE sector as a Monopoly board, some might think that I’ve moved from the Deep Kent Road and Euston Road areas of the board (brown and blue) to Bond Street or Park Lane and Mayfair (green and purple). From my first, early roles at City of London Polytechnic, starting in 1985, I moved to a role at South Bank Polytechnic (now London Southbank University), followed by a later return to a more senior role as Faculty Registrar at City of London Polytechnic, just as it became London Guildhall University. I moved through more senior roles at London Guildhall University prior to the merger with North London University and the creation of London Metropolitan University in 2002. Moving to the role of Academic Registrar in 2005 was a step into a new HEI cultural experience, with different connections within the sector. Moving then to the University of Greenwich as Director of Student and Academic Services in 2011 allowed me to move into the management of a broader portfolio of student services, with ‘students at the heart of the system’.

Of course, the AUA has played a vital role in all that I’ve done and all that I feel I’ve achieved. Membership of the AUA, and my participation in the wide range of activities and opportunities that it offers, has been a key factor in supporting my 32 years of learning, building and enjoyment. Let’s imagine our AUA as the Community Chest on that HE sector Monopoly board, full of different, good things. The community chest itself has been transformed over the course of the 32 years that I’ve been making use of it. From the Association of Polytechnic Administrators (APA) and the Conference of University Administrators (CUA) being relatively loose professional-social networks within their respective areas of the then binary HE system, the merged AUA has become a fully-fledged professional body, with the characteristics associated with such entities, for example, explicit values and professional standards, a CPD Framework, assessed and accredited membership opportunities, a suite of publications and professional networking activities. I’m convinced that I would not have been able to move around the HE sector Monopoly board if I had not participated in AUA activities, developed an understanding of the diversity of the HE sector and learned from colleagues at different HEIs, such as UEL, what it might be like to work in a different part of the sector or a different HEI.

It’s been a privilege and a great part of my learning to act as an AUA Network Coordinator, to serve as a Trustee and also as Chair of the Association. Importantly, achieving things for the AUA, building and delivering new things for our members, working with an enormous network of like-minded colleagues, has been a great source of enjoyment. For the future, I still intend to continue to undertake some activities within the HE sector and I hope to continue to support the AUA in as many different ways as possible, still learning and building at a new time in my life, while also enjoying the special retired membership category.

In Newlink 87 I detailed the more theoretical aspects of my research into professional services careers in HE. In this article I’m going to be discussing the top five strategies we can undertake to successfully manage and enhance our careers.

Part one described hybrid type careers, which combine the best of traditional organisational careers (job security, loyalty, a career) with the best of contemporary careers (interesting work, meaning, and autonomy). However, career success can be measured in different ways; do you put greater emphasis on psychological (or intrinsic) measures of success, or external (extrinsic) measures, or a combination of both?

My research has shown that most of us pragmatically mix the two. We want a combination of a good salary and (at least some) promotion opportunities, coupled with rewarding roles; for example encompassing meaningful and challenging work, autonomy, work-life balance and so on. Only we as individuals can decide on what we value the most and our tenure or life-stage can play a big part in what we deem important as we navigate our career.

The literature suggests that the top five most effective career enhancing strategies for success are high performance, continuing professional development, job rotation, networking and mentoring.

1. High performance

Not surprisingly, there is nothing more important than high performance in your current role! It has been found that high performance comes down to a small number of factors: general intelligence, job knowledge, emotional intelligence, and intrinsic motivation (O’Boyle et al, 2001). What does this mean in practice? Intrinsic motivation is an important aspect as it drives a continued desire to learn and perform, and impacts on quality of performance. Emotional intelligence may be especially important in our professional roles as we need to understand both the academic and business needs of our work, and/or have what has been termed academic empathy. Job knowledge is also a key factor; we have all experienced the feeling of being new and not knowing the job at all, and with experience we start to understand and then become experts in our job. These factors combine to contribute to high performance, which is usually indicated in the literature by line manager performance ratings.

This is one reason why job design is important. If individuals are not intrinsically motivated by their current job, then it will be difficult to maintain high performance levels. Job design can go some way to ensuring the job description itself is satisfying, but it is also a way for line managers to increase high performance by providing opportunities for increasing responsibility and task variety, for example. Another factor that contributes to high job performance is continuing professional development (CPD).

2. Continuing Professional Development

There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that CPD is linked to long-term extrinsic career success through enhanced performance. One study suggests that it is high-performance in early career stages which attracts more CPD opportunities, which then produces gains that become greater with time (cumulative advantage) (Mauer and Chapman, 2013). However, one of the key aspects that leads to extrinsic success is learning agility, the ability to learn from experience and subsequently apply that learning in new situations. CPD then could be one way of ensuring that we have the skills required, not only for doing our current job well, but also for preparing us for new situations that we may find ourselves facing.

This is one reason (amongst many others) for universities to offer different levels and types of CPD; some of which aim to enhance skills for current roles (for example project management) and others which aim to enhance general competencies and provide skills for future roles (such as leadership programmes). Interestingly, high levels of learning agility have been found in staff who undertake job rotations.
3. Job rotation

Job rotation, more commonly described as secondment, is closely correlated to promotions. Employees who have experience of different functional areas and a breadth of institutional experience have greater skills acquisition, as well as the ability to transfer general principles to new situations (Dries, Vanitliborgh and Perpermans, 2012). There are normally many opportunities for rotation within our institutions, and this may give us a quicker route to promotion. Even if you know you don’t want to work in governance, perhaps a secondment there to get a greater understanding of this area, isn’t a bad idea.

4. Networking

Networking for professional staff has been shown to correlate with career satisfaction, as well as growth of salary, over time (Nabi, 2003). This may be due to the increased collaboration that networking brings, which creates social capital. Collaboration in higher education is of course key, most of us work in teams and are highly interconnected with other areas of the university. It has been suggested that investing time in the development of many, albeit superficial networks, increases the level of social capital, i.e. the more individuals in your network, the better. These can then be strategically strengthened, dependent on your job role or career aspirations.

5. Mentoring

The literature is conflicting in the benefits of mentoring to career success with findings stating both positive outcomes, and no significant benefits, although research on professional staff has indicated its benefits. For example, my previous qualitative research showed that the career mentoring of female middle managers by senior executive-level managers did provide extrinsic and intrinsic career success (Gander, 2013) and other research on professional staff also points to career advantages for those who both mentor and are mentored (Bozionelos, 2004). Although we think of networking and mentoring as activities for individuals, both these can proactively be supported by the university. Some institutions offer formal mentoring programmes, for example for under-represented staff, as well as networking events. Even if these more formal activities don’t specifically exist, the institution can support a culture that encourages them.

So, there you have it, five career enhancing strategies that you can start to implement straight away. Don’t forget though, networking and mentoring are two-way streets. Networking works best when there are mutual advantages to those involved, and advantages from mentoring seem to cumulate the more you also provide mentoring to other staff.

I hope this has been a useful overview. More information can be found in my book: Gander, M, H Moyes and E Sablazella (2014). Managing your Career in Higher Education Administration. (Palgrave Macmillan, London).

References


“Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down”

Jonny Driscoll
Founder/CEO Loopd

“In every job that must be done there is an element of fun. You find the fun and snap, the job’s done. And every task you undertake becomes a piece of cake.”

Mary Poppins, 1964

“I was studying at the University of Birmingham when I began working on Loopd. I wanted to build a new technology to help students make the most from their time at university. After several years of technical development, pilots and conversational research with institutions from all over the UK, it turned out that the entire industry was looking for the exact same thing! Since the beginning it has been a collaborative effort to deliver the best product for both sides. Our solution is Loopd life, a community social network that selectively empowers both staff and students to strengthen relationships. In this article I share my thoughts on the operational and human needs that influence the success of teaching and learning, and how these needs can be better supported online through the design and delivery of new education technologies.”

Accessibility has two sides

There are many ways in which new education technologies (Edtech) can play a powerful role in education, and arguably the most important is to transform the accessibility of opportunity. Accessibility and its many forms have been at the top of numerous educational agendas for decades; some of the impacts are:

- Access to larger volumes of people and resources
- Access to better feedback and faster response times
- Access new ways to provide equality for gender and socioeconomic background
- Access to new operational capacities and widening participation and
- Access more targeted motivational strategies

The key to really influence the accessibility of opportunity is to appreciate that every solution requires a functional component (to make it possible) and an emotional component (to make it appealing). The emotional component is especially important within education since progress requires a voluntary commitment of time and attention in often new and challenging personal circumstances. In the context of Mary Poppins, the emotional component is where we can design and deliver a source of sugar (or fun) to help the medicine (or learning) go down.

Too much medicine, too little sugar

Generally two paths emerge for Edtech innovation (Figure 1) – services are either designed for institutions to become more efficient at adding value, or to help individuals seek a better learning experience. Technology development (and its ongoing maintenance) is expensive and needs a sustainable source of funding which is usually sourced directly from institutional budgets or indirectly from individuals as a result of their attention (in which advertising space or user-generated data is sold). The opportunity cost of indirect funding is both our time and attention, the exact voluntary commitments for educational progress, and poses a direct threat to our education budgets or indirectly from individuals as a result of their attention (in which advertising space or user-generated data is sold). The opportunity cost of indirect funding is both our time and attention, the exact voluntary commitments for educational progress, and poses a direct threat to our education maintenance) is expensive and needs a sustainable source of funding which is usually sourced directly from institutional budgets or indirectly from individuals as a result of their attention (in which advertising space or user-generated data is sold). The opportunity cost of indirect funding is both our time and attention, the exact voluntary commitments for educational progress, and poses a direct threat to our education.
Edtech in order to drive up their impact. This is far from the sugary incentive Mary Poppins was describing.

As shown in Figure 1, the evolution of a product to cater for certain needs will likely follow its source of funding, and therefore without a significant position of empathy from the side of the institution the potential of any Edtech service to have a disruptive impact on the sector reduces with product maturity, unless of course institutions are able to demonstrate greater empathy over the factors that influence their budgetary decisions. Perhaps the results from the Teaching Excellence Framework in July 2017, which shocked a number of prestigious institutions, will help to reinforce the importance of design and delivery empathy regarding their student experiences. How can we expect to optimise teaching and learning through efficient and isolated practices that reject allegedly inefficient informal community experiences. How can we expect to optimise teaching and learning through continuously increasing efficiency, and not simultaneously expect to reduce the cognitive processes that inspire creative thinking and lead to real understanding? Technology can often have unintended side-effects that limit our sensations and sources of validation, and both of these can impact on the development of personal characteristics like trust, confidence and collaboration during education's critically influential years.

Many well designed services are delivered into educational communities with a high-barrier for entry, meaning that the accessibility of opportunity is emotionally out of reach until other basic needs are fulfilled. This immediately raises the CAC of the service and lowers the ROI, since not all staff and students will be able to access high-barrier opportunities until they feel secure within their local environment and accepted within their local community. Furthermore if these emotional needs are repeatedly not met this can reinforce a feeling of isolation and incompatibility.

As shown in Figure 2, the hierarchy of human needs adapted for education. Maslow (1943). Many well designed services are delivered into educational communities with a high-barrier for entry, meaning that the accessibility of opportunity is emotionally out of reach until other basic needs are fulfilled. This immediately raises the CAC of the service and lowers the ROI, since not all staff and students will be able to access high-barrier opportunities until they feel secure within their local environment and accepted within their local community. Furthermore if these emotional needs are repeatedly not met this can reinforce a feeling of isolation and incompatibility.

Figure 2: Hierarchy of human needs adapted for education. Maslow (1943).

Figure 3: Screenshot from the Loopd.life application to demonstrate how the physical student experience is combined with technology to provide a stronger sense of inclusion and belonging.

**Lack of empathy may be isolating our learners**

Within the last decade, isolation has consistently been reported as the most common reason that students disengage and dropout of education, especially within low-socioeconomic backgrounds; this results in large economic losses and reduced social mobility. From a community perspective, the perceived owners of Edtech products are the institutions, and without a visible presence of empathy in the design and delivery of Edtech services, staff and students can begin to feel isolated from the institution and incompatible with its goals. Clearly the most sustainable solution for society is to align the factors that influence Edtech purchases with something more closely representative of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 2) thus supporting inclusion, belonging and the emotional component of accessibility.


**Efficiency and results**

Institutional needs

Need to feel challenged

Esteem needs

Need to feel progression

Fulfilment needs

Need to excel

Spiritual needs

Need to feel socially accepted by peers

Social needs

Need to feel secure in a new environment and culture

Safety needs

Need to access high-barrier opportunities until they feel secure within their local environment and accepted within their local community. Furthermore if these emotional needs are repeatedly not met this can reinforce a feeling of isolation and incompatibility.


**Put collaboration ahead of efficiency in the race for improving learning outcomes**

The crux of the challenge within education is that cognitive learning is an imperfect process that requires an ability to pursue both a subjective and objective understanding of the world around us, and requires support from many sources of trust to validate our understanding along the way. As an industry, we need to be careful about ‘optimising’ teaching and learning through efficient and isolated practices that reject allegedly more inefficient informal community experiences. How can we expect to optimise teaching and learning through continuously increasing efficiency, and not simultaneously expect to reduce the cognitive processes that inspire creative thinking and lead to real understanding? Technology can often have unintended side-effects that limit our sensations and sources of validation, and both of these can impact on the development of personal characteristics like trust, confidence and collaboration during education’s critically influential years.

Empower the community

I believe that all of our answers lie within the effective redistribution of community ownership. Empowering areas of the community lowers the barriers to accessibility by nurturing informal collaboration and community decision-making. These informal relationships have a deeper emotional ingredient that cascades more approachable support to all levels of the community strengthening inclusion and belonging where it was previously inaccessible through a more structured process. At Loopd life we focus on optimising this redistribution of ownership to maximise accessibility of opportunity, whilst ensuring that the institution remains in complete authority of opportunity, whilst ensuring that the institution remains in complete authority over its operational requirements such as safety, control and reputation.

Loopd life is designed to support the culture and experience of learning in the physical world with the potential of online resources and benefits to accessibility in the virtual world (Figure 3). Simply put, the Loopd life applications are private community infrastructures with a number of subtle productivity tools and varying levels of social empowerment that support and encourage greater participation. The exact quantity of sugar vs medicine is made available in part by the decision-makers who implement the software and in part through other community-generated content, but ultimately lies at the discretion of the individual using the application and their spontaneous needs. The close and cyclical relationship of offline culture and online technology is our way to ensure the functional and emotional components of accessibility are met at all times and in all circumstances, so that institutions can maximise the impact and ROI for their services and to ensure that students get access to the best experience possible.
AUA Office news

Meet your new Trustees

SARA CORCORAN MAUA
Director of Human Resources, University of Suffolk

Sara joined the University of Suffolk as Director of HR on 1 August 2012, having previously held senior HR posts with Queen Mary University of London and the University of Essex, as well as serving as the Director of Personnel for University College Falmouth (now the University of Falmouth). As Director of Human Resources, Sara is a member of the University of Suffolk senior executive team. In addition to leadership of the Directorate of Human Resources, she is responsible for Organisational Development and Equality and Diversity. She also works increasingly closely with the Students’ Union in her role to develop the overall culture of the University.

Before joining HE, Sara spent 13 years working in the NHS in acute and mental health Trusts and in a Regional Health Authority. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and gained an MA in Strategic Training and Development from the University of Surrey and an MA in Educational Research from the University of Sussex. Her professional interests include organisational development, leadership and the psychological contract, particularly the engagement of academic staff with their employing institution. Other interests include dance and rugby. She is a novice runner and a very reluctant camper! Sara joined the AUA Board of Trustees on 1 August 2017.

JOHN BAKER MAUA
Corporate and Business Planning Manager, London South Bank University

John Baker is the Corporate and Business Planning Manager within the Planning Performance and Assurance team at London South Bank University. He leads on risk management processes, and works with the executive team to refine and implement the integrated planning cycle, which enables a strategic approach to planning, performance review and reporting across the institution. He also delights colleagues by introducing them to the internal audit programme.

Previously he has worked as a strategic project manager and as a departmental manager, and has been a member of the AUA for over 10 years, acting as Institutional Advocate for the last seven years. He was elected as a member representative on the AUA Council, and is an enthusiastic proponent of the AUA Study Tours, having gained rich insight, along with great friendships, on the 2015 trip to the Netherlands and Belgium.

Prior to HE, John worked in administration in the Arts, as Facilities Manager at Riverside Studios and Building Manager at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. He is also a founding Trustee and Treasurer of the Sheerness Dockyard Trust, a charity working to restore some of the Dockyard Architecture on the Isle of Sheppey, which has recently received a £4.7 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. John holds an LLB (Hons) from the University of Hull and, despite his active interest in all things digital, hasn’t yet managed to move across to streaming, so is still slowly expanding his eclectic record collection.

AUA new starters

JORDAN PATERSON
Administration Assistant, AUA

I have joined the AUA as an Administration Assistant, having previously worked at the University of Bolton and the University of Manchester as an Applications Advisor, Project Administrator and ResLife Advisor. I also recently graduated from The University of Manchester with an MSc in Forensic Psychology and Mental Health. I am really looking forward to getting involved with the rest of the team here and liaising with AUA members and networks. I look forward to speaking and engaging with many of you in the future, and if you have any insight into what I can do to better support our members and networks then please get in touch aua@aua.ac.uk.

JOANNE FORSYTH
Professional Development Officer, AUA

I have joined the AUA from Careers and Employability at the University of Chester and am going to be working in the Professional Development Team. My main area of focus will be on the Mark of Excellence and I will also be supporting the team with professional development activities (including our newly introduced CPD courses) and resources for AUA members. I am really excited to be involved in this area of work and to begin working more closely with colleagues from across the AUA networks. If you have any questions about the Mark of Excellence Awards or Professional Development in general, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Achieving results

Manchester
Tuesday, 5 December

This interactive workshop will help enhance your ability to consistently meet objectives, find holistic workable solutions and maximise your use of the resources available to you.

Introduction to HE

London
Thursday, 14 December

This event will provide you with a thorough overview of the UK higher education sector including a brief look back at the historical development of the sector before looking at more recent changes and current influences.

CPD tools for HE professionals

London
Friday, 15 December

This day introduces the AUA Continuing Professional Development Framework and offers tools and techniques to manage your future personal and career development.

Professional effectiveness

Manchester
Thursday, 18 January

This interactive workshop integrates theory and practical exercises to enable you to stand back and consider what professional identity and effectiveness means to you in your professional services role.
The AUA is the professional association for higher education administrators and managers. As well as being a representative voice for HE professionals within our sector, we’re here to support and guide you, our members, as you define and develop your career ambitions.

Feeling inspired? If you would like to submit an article for future issues of Newslink or would like to provide us with your thoughts on this publication, please contact newslink@aua.ac.uk.

Follow @the_aua on Twitter, like our page facebook.com/MyAUA, and join our members group on LinkedIn for all our latest news.

The views and opinions expressed in Newslink are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of their institutions, or of the Editor, nor should they be considered as expressions of opinion or official policy of the Association of University Administrators (AUA).

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