

**NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE BIRMINGHAM COMMONWEALTH
ASSOCIATION EDUCATION FOCUS GROUP HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8
OCTOBER AT 2.00PM AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM**

Present:

**Melvyn Pryer – University College Birmingham and Chair of the BCA Group
Jo Andrews – Birmingham City University
Robert Berry – Aston University
Marion Fleming – Froy – University of Birmingham
Mike Murray – International Team, Birmingham City Council
Paul Ryan – Newman University
Louise Toner – Birmingham City University**

Apologies:

**Apologies were submitted on behalf of Keith Stokes – Smith, Anjum Cave,
Jane Spilsbury, Naz Khan and Chike Oduza.**

Notes of last meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 16 July were agreed.

Presentation by Melvyn Pryer – discussions to date / terms of reference

- **Melvyn gave a presentation on the Education Group`s discussions and activities to date.**
- **In response the Group agreed the draft terms of reference in principle, with a general discussion on the future direction of its activities. The discussion encompassed a wide range of issues affecting their institutions and students. Amongst the points made were:**
- **The need to give recognition to the valuable economic and social contribution Commonwealth and other international students make to the Birmingham / West Midlands economy. There was consequently a need to quantify the economic impact of this activity with a view to agencies such as Marketing Birmingham / Birmingham Airport / Birmingham City Council being encouraged to provide resource information to help attract would – be international students to the region.**

- Colleagues undertook to provide the student data requested on Melvyn's questionnaire, for 2013 / 2014 as a means of providing quantifiable information to Marketing Birmingham etc.
- The suggestion was also made that the Lord Mayor may have a role in welcoming all international students to the city with a related reception.
- Members of the Group reiterated the benefits from representatives of Birmingham / West Midlands educational institutions signposting students to the most appropriate institution for their courses. This was particularly important when at overseas recruitment fairs or meeting with partner institutions abroad.
- Birmingham schools were identified as another resource and sector with which the Group should engage. It was recognised that amongst the 475 Birmingham schools considerable international activity was being undertaken. A better understanding of what was actually going on would be useful and should be sought, as the information was currently unavailable.
- Colleagues agreed to use the Distinctly Birmingham website (distinctlybirmingham.com) as a means of providing general information on the activities of their individual institutions as well as providing broader themed information for wider use.

ACTION: In the short- term colleagues were asked to send contact details of their recruitment staff to Melvyn to enable a database to be created for the future use of all staff and institutions engaged in international recruitment.

Future potential resources of Education Group

Reference was made to the potential use of interns to undertake research and other work on behalf of the Education Group. The example was given of South Korean post graduate students undertaking research for the City Council's International Team around youth. It was suggested further use could be made of other international students working on dissertation type courses at Birmingham institutions.

It was suggested HEA funding was available for such activities.

Priorities for Education Group

After consultation the following short- term priorities were agreed by the Group:

- To participate in the Commonwealth Day celebrations to be held on Monday 9 March 2015. MM to inform the Education Group of related activities being undertaken by the Commonwealth Communities Group, in order that student bodies in each of the partner institutions could get involved.
- Provide the required audit data to Melvyn identifying activity by individual institution in the Commonwealth, prior to a meeting with Marketing Birmingham. (Melvyn to consult with Birmingham Airport).
- It was further agreed that colleagues would provide data relating to the total number of international students each enrolled in the academic year 2013 -14 on the basis of pre-degree, undergraduate, post graduate, doctoral / researchers programme of study. This data will be needed to estimate the financial value of international students to the Birmingham / West Midlands economy.
- Consider the potential use of international students to undertake research around schools work with counterparts abroad.
- Consideration of a reception for all incoming international students in 2015.

Date of future meetings:

Friday 28 November at 10.00 – working group to quantify economic impact of international students on Birmingham / West Midlands for the academic year 2013 / 2014.

Tuesday 16 December at 10.00 – BCA Education Group meeting.

Both meetings to be held at University College Birmingham.

