

Academic Panel Meeting – 8th June

Room 4.33, Westminster University

Attendees	University/Organisation
Sir Ernest Ryder (SPT) (Skype)	
Andrea Coomber (AC)	JUSTICE
Robert Thomas (Chair) (RT)	University of Manchester
Naomi Creutzfeldt (NC) (Skype)	Westminster Law School and University of Oxford
Brian Thompson (BT)	Liverpool University
Sarah Nason (SN)	Prifysgol Bangor University
Lindsay Stirton (LS)	University of Sussex
Margaret Doyle (MD)	UK AJI
David Southern (DS)	Queen Mary University of London
Graham Gee (GG)	University of Sheffield
Christopher Hodges (CH)	Oxford University
Joe Tomlinson (JT)	University of Sheffield
Chris Gill (CG)	University of Glasgow
Tom Mullen (T M)	University of Glasgow
Abi Adams (AA)	University of Oxford
Huw Pritchard (HP)	Cardiff University
Heidi Bancroft (HB)	JUSTICE (Secretary to the AJC)
Apologies	University/Organisation
Stephen Hardy	Coventry University
David Cowan	University of Bristol
Helen Fenwick	Durham University
Richard Kirkham	University of Sheffield
Ann Sherlock	Aberystwyth University
Charlotte O'Brien	University of York
Grainne McKeever	Ulster University

1) Introductions

RT welcomed the attendees to the first Academic Panel meeting.

2) Update from Sir Ernest Ryder

The SPT gave an introduction on how the academic panel would contribute to the Administrative Justice Council. He informed the panel that they should identify an aim that they were happy with. He had a number of areas in mind for the panel to focus on. Firstly, they would provide collective advice. They would also come up with agenda items for the full council to pursue, provide a consultation piece and come up with issues for broader discussion for both the annual conference and plenary meetings. The academic panel could also consider hosting their own annual event with the wider academic community, resulting in a paper.

The SPT also requested that the panel identify research areas (where they could apply for funding), look at research gaps in the MoJ research paper and consider how to fill those gaps. There should

also be a communication plan to engage with the pro bono panel so the work could come together in meetings. He would also like to have a view from the Academic Panel on sharing their work with their counterparts including the Civil Justice Council.

The SPT asked the panel to come up with some challenging ideas. They should come to a consensus view on the work they would like to take forward and agenda items to take to the Steering Group and full Council.

3) Research areas – UK AJI Roadmap, themes and research gaps

RT suggested that the panel had a look at the work currently undertaken so they could identify their own themes. He asked attendees to talk about their own research projects. Members gave a brief update on their work.

RT asked the panel what issues they would want to flag up to the full Council.

- **Access to data** - MD flagged up that access to data was an issue for researchers. Government departments themselves know little about their own data. AA pointed out that HMRC had a data laboratory which they could look into getting access to. NC was concerned that with the new GDPR regulations in place, institutions could hide behind the law and not give access to information. She had encountered problems herself and been denied access to some ombudsman institutions in the UK. They needed to come up with a strategy to respond to these issues. MD suggested that with the digitalisation of tribunals, it could be an opportunity to get access to data. RT stated that they would have a more persuasive case to get access through their role on the academic panel.
- **Devolution** – BT informed the panel about the work of the former Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council of which he had been a member. He was interested to know what the Council's role would be on devolution and what their expectations would be. This issue could be put on the Council's agenda.
- **Draft Ombudsman Bill** - CG suggested discussing the draft bill on ombudsman reform. It was ambitious but did not cover all issues. AC also suggested the Courts Bill might be something the Council would be interested in.

There was a discussion about the AJC's purpose, what it would deliver and the whether there would be a change in government departments. It was suggested that a redesign with ombudsman, tribunals and the internal complaints mechanisms was needed.

NC suggested having a list of outcomes and short themed topics. She suggested identifying gaps, looking at who was already working on them and then linking them to bigger topics.

Action: RT and NC to draft a list of issues to flag up to the Council. HB to circulate for comments.

4) Working Groups

RT recommended the panel set up two to three working groups to look at specific issues. AA suggested keeping the working groups broad rather than committing to particular agenda. Each group should have short, medium and long term goals. The panel could also invite other researchers to join the working groups. The panel could become more of a portal.

NC informed members that she was working on a project with Richard Kirkham and Chris Gill on ombudsman reform. They would be holding a conference and drafting a report. She suggested that it could be the start for a working group.

CG suggested looking at the Research Roadmap in more detail and its' recommendations. The action points could be put to the Council. MD explained that the research priorities identified in the Roadmap were the result of extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders within admin justices and should serve as a starting point, rather than the panel trying to identify priorities at this meeting. The three broad headings in the roadmap were people (users, non-users, and people not in the system), new technologies (including automated decision-making) and information (e.g. access to data); within each heading are specific research projects. She suggested organising the working groups into those three areas.

The logistics of funding was discussed. It was thought that without funding it would be difficult to get projects off the ground. However, access would also be valuable to terms of research particularly in institutions like the ombudsman. RT said that the panel needed to do the best they could with the available resources.

RT and NC would draft a document with key issues to present to the Council and they would circulate for comments.

Action: RT and NC to draft and circulate document to present to the Council.

5) Date for next meeting

The next meeting would take place in September. HB would circulate the date.

6) Any Other Business

MD asked for a commitment that members' travel expenses be paid. She noted that some researchers do not have access to funding for travel expenses for this purpose. RT also noted that the panel is a UK-wide group and so colleagues in N Ireland, Wales and Scotland will be affected. AC responded that while she appreciated the concern, funding was very limited and the Council was not currently in a position to make such a commitment. Further funding would be sought to try to meet travel and other expenses, but in the meantime people would need to use technology to join meetings if need be. AA suggested that conference calling could be used and that face to face meetings were not always necessary.

Heidi Bancroft
Secretary to the AJC