ACADEMIC REGISTRARS COUNCIL

Admissions Practitioners Group

Agenda for the Sixty-Ninth Meeting of ARC APG
11am on Friday 24th November 2017
Tavistock Room, Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HQ
http://www.woburnhouse.co.uk/about-us/transport.aspx

Tea/coffee will be available from 10.30 am; a light sandwich lunch will also be available.

1	**Welcome** To welcome any new members to their first meeting.	Chair of APG	11.00am
2	**Apologies for Absence** Apologies are recorded on the attendance sheet.	Secretary of APG	
3	**Minutes of the Previous Meeting** To receive and approve the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 17 February 2017.	Chair of APG (APG/17/17)	
4	**Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda** To discuss any matters not arising elsewhere on the agenda.	Chair of APG	
5	**UCAS new admissions services** To receive an update from UCAS including a demonstration of the recent developments.	UCAS Head of Service Delivery (APG/17/18 – to be presented at meeting)	11.05am
6	**UCAS update** To include an update including responses to questions posed by members	UCAS Head of Advisor and Provider Experience (APG/17/19)	11.35pm
7	**BHASVIC and the student perspective on HE admissions** An interactive session with a large Sixth Form College	BHASVIC representatives (APG/17/20 – to be presented at meeting)	12.00pm
	Lunch		1.00pm

A light lunch will be served for members
and invited guests

9	**EU General Data Protection Regulations** To discuss progress amongst members towards compliance, including the UCAS response.	Chair of APG	1.45pm
10	**The use of social media in admissions** A discussion of current practices including an example from the University of Huddersfield	Chair of APG	2.05pm

2:35pm onwards: Confidential Discussion for ARC APG members only

11	**Change Steering Group** To receive a verbal update on CSG	Chair of APG	
12	**UCAS Business Rules and Admissions Practices Working Group** To receive a verbal update on the work of this Group	Chair of BRAP WG	
12	**UCAS Groups** To note updates on UCAS Groups	Chair of APG (APG/17/21)	
13	**UCAS Annual Provider Update** To receive feedback from members on the November 2017 meeting	Chair of APG	
13	**Any other business** (preferably to be sent to the Secretary in advance of the meeting)		
	Finish		3.30pm

Next Meetings:
9 February 2018, Tavistock Room, Woburn House, London
15 June 2018, Tavistock Room, Woburn House, London

ARC ACADEMIC REGISTRARS COUNCIL

Admissions Practitioners Group

Minutes of the Sixty-Eighth Meeting

Tavistock Room, Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HQ

Friday 16th June 2017

Present: Martyn Annis (University of Brighton, Chair), Richard Emborg (University of Durham, Secretary),Claire Boyes (Birmingham City University), Denise Whitehart (Canterbury Christ Church University), Michelle Davis (Coventry University), Anne Wilson (Edge Hill University), Julie Fisher (Glasgow Caledonian University), Laura Harper (Harper Adams University College), Katy Robinson (King's College London), Matt Birkett (Lancaster University), Jeanette Eriksson (London Metropolitan University),Dave Norton (Loughborough University), Kodjo Taylor (Manchester Metropolitan University), Susan Allen (Middlesex University), Dawn Bell (Newcastle University), Michaela Artingstall (Newman University College), Alison Wilde (Nottingham Trent University), Laura Kishore (Oxford Brookes University), Sue Gemmill (Royal Holloway, University of London), Philip Bloor (Sheffield Hallam University), Dan Shaffer (SPA), Amy Smith (SPA), Carolyn Colaço-Monteiro (St George's, University of London), Sarah Gibb (St Mary's University Twickenham), Abbie English (Teesside University), Andrea Henrichfreise (The London School of Economics and Political Science), Vikki Cannon (The Royal Veterinary College), Peter Derrick (UCAS), Louise Evans (UCAS), Alexa Jones (UCAS), Bella Malins (UCL), Briony Galpin (University of Essex), Victoria Azubuine (University of Bedfordshire), Nicholas Ranford (University of Birmingham), Helen Basterra (University of Brighton), Helen Reed (University of Cambridge), Luke Gibbons (University of East Anglia), Jo Hamilton (University of Exeter), Jenny Ventris (University of Hertfordshire), Steven Holdcroft (University of Kent), Graham Rees (University of Leeds), Phil Dalby (University of Leicester), Julie Haveron (University of Lincoln), Louise Pritchett (University of Manchester), Ross Sands (University of Northampton), Rachel Gillam (University of Nottingham), Marianna Asatryan (University of Oxford), Samantha Drage (University of Reading), Liz Hunt (University of Sheffield), Joanne Bainbridge (University of Sunderland), Sam Matthews (University of Surrey), Rob Evans (University of Sussex), Gemma Prichard (University of the Arts London), Mike Youlton (University of Warwick), Dean Leow (University of West London), Kerry Fey (University of West of England), Gracie Hinitt (University of Worcester).

Apologies: Sue Metcalfe (Anglia Ruskin University), Jo Ladwa (Keele University), Joanne Tallentire (Queen Mary University of London), Jennifer Dwyer (Queen's University Belfast), Maxine Charlton (University of York), David Howells (University of Bath),Bob Savill (University of Chichester),Shane Collins (University of Dundee), Rebecca Gaukroger (University of Edinburgh), Judith Davison (University of Huddersfield), Kathy Olivant (University of Hull), Sarah Simms (University of the Creative Arts), Dave Haddock (University of Westminster), Alistair Garmendia (University of Winchester).

17.15   Welcome to New Members
The Chair welcomed all new members to their first meeting, who were invited to identify themselves.

Stephen Wiggins, Academic Registrar at Portsmouth, is the new Deputy Chair of APG. Stephen will attend the next APG meeting.

17.16   Apologies for absence
Apologies were noted from 14 institutions.

17.17 Minutes of the Previous Meeting
The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2017 were approved as an accurate record.

17.18   Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda
None raised.

17.19   UCAS update
Received: an update from the UCAS Head of Advisor and Provider Experience including responses to questions posed by members (APG/17/12).

Noted and discussed:

Latest news
- A continuing small decrease in overall applications at the March deadline
- UCAS forecast a lower number of students in Clearing compared to 2016
- 2017 cycle has progressed as planned, although RBD was moved.
- There is a new HEP3 test environment where HEPs can test from the applicant point of view
- PERS - available until 5pm today
- The new UCAS CEO, Clare Marchant, starts in post on 3 July. She has already been learning about some elements of UCAS
- Embargo zero breach training has now been rolled out and is available to all. Feedback has been both positive and negative.

Confirmation & Clearing
- UCAS has been running delivery confidence reviews and 'dance plans'
- There is uncertainty over whether a hung parliament and TEF results will affect applicant behaviour

Admissions Conference 2017
- The Conference went well, but there is a general feeling that there was less engagement and less buzz than recent conferences
- It was suggested this may be due to one of more of the following:
    - a shift in attendance with a growing proportion of staff new to admissions
    - people attending on their own who are therefore less likely to raise questions
    - lack of anonymity in SLiDO

- Some criticism from attendees that there was too much sharing of information and not enough sharing of best practice.

Direct Contact Service

- Has been expanded to recruit from EXTRA
- Current level of interest is the same as last year
- Contact through DCS 2017 is from 11am in the morning. This has been brought earlier as it is highly likely applicants will know results by then and understandably HEIs want to start this contact as soon as possible.

Policy update

- Noted that the Progression Pathways 2017 report has been published. This is the second report of the series and is a discussion paper, looking at how applicants progress, concentrating on certain prior qualifications, to support information, advice and guidance

ABL link activity

- More effort has been invested this year to get earlier notice of applicants not taking some or any exams, which is intended to result in fewer applicants with missing results in Confirmation
- UCAS is emailing applicants and advisers to achieve this.

Questions
Question. What is the number of offers and accepts (firm and insurance) made to and received from EU (non-UK) applicants this cycle compared to last cycle at sector level?
Answer. -7% offers and -6% accepts

Question. There have been a number of system failures recently. Can UCAS explain what has caused these and provide any reassurance that these are not a cause for concern?
Answer. No underlying link to developments or continued dependence on some historic systems, mostly due to errors by 3rd party suppliers.
Blank search in new search was overloading the system. This is now fixed.
Another cause of an outage was the whole system went down for a Cloud provider
UCAS confident that in C&C all will be ok. All major 3rd parties are on site in C&C to fix things quickly

Question. Data destinations - Roughly how much revenue is derived from supplying course listings data to third party search websites (such as 'Which'), given that we sometimes have concerns about how they display application rate data?
Answer. UCAS generates around £580k from courses data per year. A list of organisations can be found here at Data Destinations on the UCAS website.

Other questions
Questions. Could UCAS make training accessible for all users, e.g. subtitled?

Question. Has the zero breach embargo initiative led to changes in the terms of service?
Answer. No changes made. If there had been, there would have been a consultation period.

Question. Will self-release into Clearing be activated this year?
Answer. No, no change this year

Question. Regarding the Embargo: if you confirm an applicant has met the conditions of their offer based on BTec results, but the offer also includes the option to meet offer through an A Level as well, does it breach the embargo? HEIs need absolute clarity on this, especially if they are making tariff-based offers
Answer. Absolute clarity promised on this example.

ACTION: UCAS Head of Service Delivery

Noted that if the decision is made before the A level embargo period it is not a breach as exam boards will not have released the results to UCAS

Other:
APG members are asked to highlight to UCAS areas of Conference that could be better and also ideas about improvements. Feedback to be provided to UCAS Head of Advisor and Provider Experience.

ACTION: ARC APG members

It was suggested that more challenging debate would be good, rather than a training session, including UCAS bringing challenging issues they are grappling with
It was suggested that even modest changes in how an institution manages or delivers admissions to make improvements will be of interest in a session. It doesn't have to be ground-breaking.

17.20   UCAS Update
Received: an update from the UCAS Head of Service Delivery including demonstration of the recent developments (APG/17/10).

Search
- Product is all live
- Initially some teething problems, but now very stable
- Advertising opportunities: skyscrapers on side of the webpage are available but there are no plans to offer any other format
- There is a new global search bar. This has not caused problems with applicants landing in the wrong search tool
- Feedback from HEIs is encouraged: members should use the tab that is available on top right hand corner of the web page
- Current feedback suggests a wish for more filtering options, notably by qualification outcome
- SEO = search engine optimising
- Entry requirements filter: 2015 UCAS Board wanted to do this for applicants stating that learners have been consistently asking for it. UCAS recognises that it is a very contentious and complicated issue. Some ideas have been proposed, e.g. banding courses, but there is no consensus on how big or small the banding would be and concern that too wide will not be exact enough
    - Comments -
        - UCAS must include BTec, could you use tariff?

- How would it include mixed qualifications? (Answer - need to sort that in Collect for common combinations before looking at filter)
- Would rather do nothing than have a bad product
- It could be confusing for International and EU applicants. UCAS is undertaking work to guide applicants how to use filters
- HEIs should decide how our courses are displayed
- Can only search on what is declared on Collect at present
- Data set information is highly controversial - UCAS should be neutral, needs to be very carefully considered.
- Don't want to have too many filters too early on
- Duration of studies suggested as a filter. UCAS agreed to check where it is in the development schedule and feedback

ACTION: UCAS Head of Service Delivery

Collect
- UCAS is developing a live complete course dump of listings, in CSV, including entry requirements on fees
- HEIs can request the new style of report
- Download is the first stage on developments that will include upload as well via API
- UCAS have added more qualifications. If members want more, they should contact their relationship manager

HECOS
- UCAS building the ability to collect in the tool, expected for 2019 cycle
- It will still be an application code at the moment
- The hope is this code will eventually become hidden

Rollover
- UCAS working on how rollover will work
- Considering giving HEIs ability to do rollover as well as UCAS doing it. Planned to be in place by autumn 2017.
- Dated and Deadlines Working Group suggested a launch in March to align with recruitment activity. Seems acceptable for APG members

Application Management System
- UCAS is hoping to help applicants to state the exact qualification they are taking, working with UKNARIC etc. This will help deliver a better quality of data
- Trying to work out what is needed for UG and then roll out
- Beta version of AMS in HEP3, members are encouraged to take a look and feedback
- Much more guidance to applicants than before
- Possible consultation at Annual Provider Update meeting

TEF
- Feedback welcomed on the way that UCAS has displayed TEF rankings
- Webinars and events have been held, lots of one-to-ones

17.21 UCAS Members Survey
Received: detailed analysis of the latest member satisfaction survey from the UCAS Head of Advisor and Provider Experience (APG/17/11).

Noted and discussed:
- The survey was the lowest response rate ever. As any survey is only as good as the number of those participating there was a plea for more responses next time
- Parents Survey results sat higher in satisfaction than HEIs, as was applicants (95%)
- Less people thinking UCAS is better than last survey and more people thinking UCAS is worse. This is a concern for UCAS
- Lots of increased happiness for IT staff
- Others who were involved included planning, WP, Outreach - perhaps less contact with UCAS?
- UCAS recognise there is a job to do to convince people that UCAS is listening
- There is an improvement in satisfaction with UCAS products compared to 2015-16, but not all
- Free text comments have been received. UCAS is working out how to respond to these. Planned action so far is very high level
- UCAS has used additional comments e.g. from Relationship Managers to help identify themes
- Comments about the UCAS website included take down some content, make language less corporate
- Comments about communications included UCAS needing to be more consistent in using all channels and provide more feedback
- ARC APG Chair suggested members need to continue the discussion at a later date and constantly review the member experience
- Request for HEIs and UCAS to work together to challenge ourselves over this.

17.22   SPA considerations for applicants with criminal convictions
Received: a presentation from SPA on the updated SPA considerations for applicants with criminal convictions (APG/17/13).

Noted and discussed:
- It's a controversial topic; some academics are championing removal of question to support WP
- The updated considerations are available on the SPA website. It's a complicated procedural document
- Feedback from HEIs that the recommending flow chart is very helpful
- Noted that criminal convictions are more common amongst WP applications – HEIs therefore encouraged to ask themselves if their procedures might present a barrier to applicants
- 'Unlocking Potential' prompted SPA to review their guidance
- Members asked to provide SPA with examples of positive use of criminal conviction information, e.g. providing support during studies

ACTION: ARC APG members

- Suggested that a message that we are not judging the conviction but instead managing the risk is a good way of positively explaining the process
- Noted that the spent period differs between countries, as does standard and enhanced disclosures
- Three questions are the words to state in policy: is it relevant, is it spent, would it be filtered?
- A large numbers of convictions would not be filtered out and removed from all standard and enhance disclosures but others have to be cleared out
- Noted that the onus from applicants' view is not to declare

- Recommended to take a risk based approach as it helps show the thinking behind the decision
- Transition follow up is recommended, it shows that an HEI is supportive in its approach
- Next term SPA is planning on doing a toolkit module on dealing with applicants who declare a criminal conviction
- *Question*. Do applicants with pending conviction have to declare it or if they declare it should it be considered? *Answer*. In the UK people are innocent until proven guilty, so applicants do not need to declare before they are convicted. Recommended that HEIS should align with their policy for current students. However DBS check might bring the pending conviction. Suggested that HEIs include a statement about applicants who receive a conviction after application in the terms and conditions sent after the firm accept (example identified from Glasgow Caledonian). Has to be in terms and conditions re: CMA so that applicants agree to when they accept the offer.

Secretary's note: GCU statement is 'You must tell us about any relevant unspent criminal convictions which you receive at any point after you apply. This includes any relevant criminal convictions received after you have registered as a student until you cease to be a student registered on your Programme. You must disclose any such convictions as soon as possible to the Academic Registrar (academicregistrar@gcu.ac.uk). Our webpage at http://www.gcu.ac.uk/student/regulations/criminalconvictionsdeclaration/ explains what is meant by a relevant conviction'. Taken from: https://www.gcu.ac.uk/media/gcalwebv2/student/regulations/GCU_Student_Terms_and_Conditions_2016-17.pdf

- Members asked to volunteer to talk about how they deal with applicants with criminal convictions, especially if linking it to transition to student stage. Any volunteers should contact the Secretary of ARC APG.

ACTION: ARC APG members

17.23 SPA Update
Received: an update from the SPA Admissions Support Manager on current activities (APG/17/14).

Noted and discussed:
- Amy Smith has joined SPA
- Entry requirements guidance has been updated twice since February
- Confirmation and Clearing guidance is now a checklist document
- 42% drop in AS study according to OFQUAL. Mitigating circumstances requests for students affected by recent terror attacks and the Grenfell Fire are expected
- A request for examples of institutional practice in supporting Care Leavers to be provided to SPA

ACTION: ARC APG members

- The applicant experience guidance has been refreshed

17.24 HEFCE Guide to providing information to prospective undergraduate students
Discussed: the latest guidance published in March 2017 (APG/17/15).

Noted and discussed:
- We are being told what applicants want by HEFCE, sounds like OfS
- Annual Provider Review will expect you to meet this guidance
- There is a lot to include because KIS is going
- Best practice examples discussed
- Comments on sections:

- o Timetabling will be challenging
- o Entry requirements section was rushed, will be a new version in the Autumn
- o Course requirements - like prospectus entry
- o Module information - interesting caveats, very helpful
- o Teaching & Learning - not in KIS anymore, overall workload in KIS
- o Assessment = use KIS data
- o Course costs - course related costs can be challenging, e.g. dependent on the nature of the project
- Timescales is to be ready for September 2017
- Volunteers who do it well sought to speak at future ARC APG meeting. Any volunteers should contact the Secretary of ARC APG.

ACTION: ARC APG members

Confidential Discussion (for HEI representatives only)

17.25 TEF

Discussed:

- UCAS has developed it well as applicants can't search on it
- Not everyone in it, institutional badge but not course badge.
- Subject TEF will be high level and not that detailed
- Noted lots of consultation by UCAS over this - viewed as welcome approach by UCAS

17.26 Change Steering Group

Discussed:

- CSG has been suspended because of recent actions by UCAS, e.g. Offer Rate Calculator
- Chair of CSG will be asking incoming UCAS CEO what they think
- Great work has been achieved by the Group, e.g. creation of the Clearing Working Group

17.27 Variable Start Dates Working Group

Discussed: initial suggestions from the Working Group presented to UCAS UAG

Noted:

- Concern about the dates: tighter and shorter needed
- It is completely different
- Secretary of ARC APG will share the paper and invite comments to Andy Frampton

ACTION: Secretary to ARC APG

17.28 UCAS Groups

Received: written updates from UCAS Groups (APG/17/16)

Discussed:

- Concern raised about a lack of cross membership joining up the Groups e.g. admissions discussion in International Advisory Group
- Noted that UAG - SEAG sharing is now in place

17.29 Any Other Business

Discussed:

- Apprenticeships
  - Request for anyone with good practice to share at a future ARC APG meeting. Any volunteers should contact the Secretary of ARC APG.
    ACTION: ARC APG members
  - Suggestion - approach both employer and an HEI
  - Noted that much more information required than for direct applicants
  - Noted that fee status assessment is more flexible than that followed by HEIs
  - Question raised as to whether tariff points on entry are reportable through HESA because generally lower?
- Question: Did any HEIs have any advice on how to manage applicants on social media posting inappropriate comment?
  - No answers from members

17.30 Dates of Future Meetings

Future meetings are scheduled take place on:

- Friday 24 November 2017: Woburn House, London
- Friday 9 February 2018: Woburn House, London
- Friday 15 June 2018: Woburn House, London

Report - UCAS Update

ARC APG

24 November 2017

1.   Operational Update

2017 cycle (review)
The 2017 cycle has now closed, and the only remaining activity is the final RBD on 4 December, for Delayed Confirmation Decisions. Please ensure that any outstanding actions for the 2017 cycle are completed by this date.

During the 2017 cycle all milestones were met successfully and each deadline passed without issue. The Confirmation and Clearing period was one of the smoothest in UCAS' recent history. During confirmation over 500,201 decisions were recorded through link products, with the service performing as expected. UCAS successfully served all our customers.

SQA results day – 8 August 2017
SQA results day went well, with all activities being delivered on time and with no issues. Some interesting numbers from the day include, 200,312 ucas.com page views, 108,116 Track logins, 19,932 course searches.

JCQ results day – 17 August 2017
Applicants experienced no issues, with our technologies performing as expected, and continued support from the Customer Experience Centre (CXC). All critical services worked seamlessly throughout the day, including the anticipated peaks at 08:00 and 15:00. Key numbers from the day include, 35,658 calls to Customer Experience Centre, 3,892 social media responses, 2,173,077 ucas.com page views, 1.4 million logins to Track and 21,320 Clearing choices added. A key change delivered this year was Adviser Track opening earlier at 06:30.

2018 cycle (story so far)
The 2018 cycle launched successfully with Search and Apply being made available in May 2017, with learners being able to pay and send their applications from 06 September 2017. The cycle is currently running smoothly. The 15 October equal consideration deadline for medicine, dentistry, veterinary courses, and all courses at Oxford and Cambridge, passed successfully. All on time applications had been processed by the following day 1350, with application processing commencing again on the Wednesday. This deadline saw a year on year increase, with UCAS receiving circa 72,000 applicants, compared to circa 61,000 in the 2017 cycle.

Collection & Search
From February 2017 the Collection tool became our product for managing all UCAS Undergraduate and UCAS Conservatoires courses. It has replaced Course Collect for the 2018, and subsequent cycles. Our new products are being developed incrementally, so new functionality is being released regularly. Soon we'll be giving you the ability to create your course options in bulk via the collection tool. This replaces the annual rollover UCAS teams used to complete in November. For UCAS

Postgraduate courses, this functionality will be available from mid to late November 2017. For UCAS Undergraduate and UCAS Conservatoires courses, this functionality will be available from mid to late December 2017. Please note, you won't be able to publish your 2019 courses yet, but this will allow you to get them ready before next May. As part of our work to decommission of legacy products we are currently developing an interim solution to display open day information on UCAS.com. Further information will follow in provider bulletins.

Adding HECoS codes for 2019
HECoS codes will be mandatory for undergraduate and postgraduate 2019 courses, including courses that start at any time. If you have any existing course options starting in September 2019 or later, you can now add HECoS codes to these courses. You will not be able to publish the course until it has been assigned a HECoS code. The HECoS system has been developed by HESA to replace the JACS system, and will require a cross-provider approach, working alongside colleagues in areas such as planning, student records, and faculty members, to ensure successful implementation. UCAS, in collaboration with HESA, has developed a wealth of support resources, including FAQs, a provider webinar (of which the recording is available) and there is also a dedicated webpage on the HESA website.

UCAS data for HESA Transaction (StarJ)
Following on from the updates in the provider bulletin, we're pleased to confirm that StarJ will be available to download from Thursday 23 November 2017. Access to the StarJ data should be made via odbc-link or xml-link. For those providers who have requested a StarJ flat file, this will be available via MOVEit, our secure file transfer service.

Extra statistical data (StarX) is available for all applicants who were referred to your institution in the previous cycle. This data is available on request at the end of the cycle. It will not contain any data for any applications that have been cancelled or completely withdrawn and is only available via the UCAS link products. Information on what's included in StarX is available on the Availability of UCAS Data page on ucas.com. To request StarX data please raise a request via the UCAS ServiceNow portal.

2. Zero Embargo Breach
Project Update
UCAS and universities have privileged, early access to examination results data to allow students' places to be confirmed and we take any unauthorised release of information before exam results days very seriously.

In 2017 we ran a zero-embargo breach project to raise awareness of the results embargo, to gain senior accountability at each provider and to create a culture of compliance. We have provided mandatory training for those responsible for admissions, and resources to encourage good practice. Altogether about 4,000 university and college personnel completed the training. In the annual confirmation and clearing provider survey, 96% of providers who completed the survey agreed that the project was successful in raising awareness.

There were no embargo breaches in the lead up to Scottish Results Day. There were, however, still a number of universities that disclosed to students that they had a place before A level results day. In comparison to 2016, fewer providers breached

the results embargo in 2017, fewer applicants were affected, and no results were disclosed.

UCAS ran a workshop with all providers that breached the embargo this year. The day was incredibly productive and will help form next year's project. UCAS will continue to support providers to achieve a zero-breach culture and outcome in 2018.

3. Policy update
Unconscious Bias Report

In autumn 2015, the government asked UCAS to work with the higher education sector to explore the feasibility for introducing name-blind applications, given that this approach had yielded positive outcomes for underrepresented groups when applied to recruitment for employment. This request led to the publication of our Unconscious Bias 2016 report.

UCAS has now published its follow-up report 'Minimising the risks of unconscious bias in university admissions: 2017 update on progress.' Key findings include:

- In the 2017 entry cycle, six universities volunteered to run pilot projects to test a name-blind application process. These covered a range of different kinds of universities in different parts of England, running their admissions services on different models and software systems. None of the six projects produced conclusive evidence that masking applicants' names led to significantly different admissions outcomes. In two of the projects, the universities found that masking applicants' names appeared to have a negative impact on initial admissions outcomes, particularly where this prevented the linking of the application to information about involvement in widening participation programmes.
- Over 110 higher education providers have engaged with resources produced by SPA in relation to unconscious bias. UCAS continues to make these resources available for use by admissions staff. HELOA will now be taking this work forward and developing further resources for student recruitment staff.
- UCAS continues to publish resources, such as our equalities release, and make data available to researchers to enhance the understanding of widening participation and social mobility at a local and national level.

UCAS continues to encourage those responsible for fair access and widening participation to consider what further actions could be taken.

VQ reform: changes to Applied Generals and Tech Levels for summer 2018
Applied General and Tech Level qualifications – such as BTECs and Cambridge Technicals – are changing. To appear on DfE's performance tables for 2018, the new style qualifications include 30% (Tech Level) or 40% (Applied General) mandatory external assessment, as well as synoptic assessment. This makes them quite different from previous versions of the qualifications, which do not have a mandatory external assessment requirement.

Around 500 learners holding the smaller sized versions of these qualifications entered HE in 2017. However, significantly more learners will enter in 2018 holding larger sized qualifications. Ofqual has confirmed the pass rate is likely to be lower than for previous versions of the qualifications, reflecting the additional challenge presented by external assessment.

We have worked with awarding organisations to produce [Qualification Information Profiles (QIPs).](#) These aim to explain the differences between legacy and reformed qualifications, and provide easy access to specifications. We hope this will support you if you refer to these qualifications in your entry requirements. In addition, we are continuing to update our qualification reform resources to provide further information about these changes.

During the 2018 admissions cycle, we'll also be encouraging advisers to support their students in entering the right version of their qualifications in Apply, and we're working with Ofqual to try to improve this data.

4. Analysis and Research Update

Day 28 data

On 18 September 2017, UCAS published the analysis report titled 'Interim assessment of UCAS acceptances for the 2017 cycle, 4 weeks after A level results day'. This report provided analytical commentary on the key findings contained in the Day 28 versions of the UCAS Daily Clearing Analysis, to give an early understanding of the likely patterns at the end of the 2017 cycle. The report included breakdowns, by country of domicile, age, sex, area background, provider tariff group and entry route.

DCS update

The Direct Contact Service (DCS) has been operating on a trial basis since 2015, to match unplaced applicants to courses and allow participating providers to phone opted-in applicants directly to discuss opportunities with them. Further development of the machine learning matching algorithms that underpin DCS is underway and additional enhancements to the order process and outputs are planned for 2018, as we continue to shape the service to meet customer needs. Following an experimental deployment of the service in Extra in the 2017 cycle, DCS will return to its previous scheduling as a Clearing-only service for 2018.

2017 provider EXACT records supply (PERS) available in February 2018
EXACT is a commissioned analysis data service. Exclusively, UCAS' undergraduate scheme customers can opt to receive, without charge, all their underlying data as a computer readable data file under an internal-use EXACT license.
With this data, you can replicate any analysis of your own provider that you could commission through the EXACT data service.
This has been made available in May/June but will be brought forward to February following feedback from our customers.

Modernised contextual data service

This cycle, UCAS is exploring how we might support our university and college customers further in widening participation in higher education, through a modernised contextual data service (MCDS). This will use the principles behind our multiple equality measure (MEM) to code applications by representation level, and make suggestions about how this might affect predicted attainment. Initially, we'll be piloting this service with a handful of providers that have expressed an interest in this area of work. Following a thorough evaluation of the pilot's effectiveness, we'll work with the sector to explore next steps for the 2019 cycle.

End of Cycle 2017 reporting schedule

This year UCAS is to publish its End of Cycle report in a series of smaller publications that are capable of being read in a standalone fashion. Doing so enables us to take account of the increasing importance of timeliness of data and begin to release components of the report from the end of November through to mid-December.

The timeline for publication of each topic is:

When	What
Monday 27 November	Overview
	Age
Monday 4 December	Subject
Monday 11 December	Geography
Monday 14 December	Equality
	Offer Making
	Qualifications
	Summary

- A briefing for journalists will be on Tuesday 12 December
- Data explorers will be published on the UCAS website on Thursday 14 December

2017 cycle UCAS equalities data

UCAS has published equalities data for 130 universities/colleges which shows, while there are some large differences in the share of the population who enter universities and colleges by background, sex, and ethnic group, that there is no evidence of systematic bias in admissions at an aggregate level.

UCAS equalities data describes the likelihood of being offered a place in the context of average offer rates for other applicants with the same predicted grades, applying to the same course at the same university/college.

This analysis controls the two factors that are most strongly correlated with the likelihood of receiving an offer – namely, predicted grades held, and the competitiveness of the course applied to. Taking these two strongly predictive factors into account typically reduces large raw differences in offer rates between groups to much smaller values, indicating that the offer-making process operated by universities and colleges is broadly fair.

The timeline so far:
- Equalities reports will go to providers 1 month prior to publication
- Final publication yet to be decided, likely to be January 2018
- Briefing for journalists will be scheduled in before publication date
- No plans to introduce HESA data into equalities reporting for this release
- Data explorer will be published on the UCAS website alongside the reports
- Provisional second release of equality reports which include HESA data for reporting of continuation rates planned for summer 2018.

5.   UCAS Delivery Roadmap
Feedback from Annual Provider Update

At the Annual Provider Update (APU) on 7 November, UCAS was able to give an update on the delivery roadmap.

Rescheduling the PG AMS milestone means that technical teams will be required to focus on PG AMS offering until Spring 2018. In parallel, we are continuing the improvement of Collection and Search in response to providers' ongoing feedback.

Therefore, further time is required to extend the product development of AMS for Undergraduate and Conservatoires and to build any specific functionality required based on collected customer requirements. UCAS is currently undertaking an extensive sizing and prioritization exercise to inform the development of several options to be considered by the UCAS Board in December.

The APU gave UCAS the great opportunity to engage with the sector in shaping the delivery options for the UCAS Board. These outputs will be shared in the ARC APG meeting on 24 November.

6.   UCAS Corporate Strategy Refresh
Update

UCAS is in the middle of a strategic refresh; this work involves focusing on, and clarifying our core purpose. Once this is agreed, it will inform key decisions around strategic choices and priorities throughout the lifetime of the corporate strategy.

We were very grateful to have the opportunity to start this engagement at regional forums followed by an interactive session at APU. This engagement with providers will be complemented by input from other customer groups and stakeholders. The customer input will then be socialised and considered internally before being translated into a series of strategic choices and direction of travel that will be presented to the UCAS Board in December.

7.   Business Rules Admissions Principles Group
Launching this autumn

A new sector-led group, the Business Rules and Admissions Principles Working Group was created in October 2017 at the request of, and reporting to, the Undergraduate Advisory Group (UAG). The group will review the existing Business Rules and Admissions Principles for the UG scheme and make recommendations for revisions and additions following consultation with the wider sector, including teachers and advisers, before making its recommendations to the Admissions Conference in March 2018.

Final recommendations will be considered by the UAG in June 2018, and where appropriate and supported by UCAS, implemented for future admissions cycles. Richard Emborg, Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions, Durham University will Chair the group, with membership from a representative group of providers.

Attendees of the autumn regional forums have had the opportunity to engage in initial consultation around the current rules. The outputs of these workshops will very usefully contribute to the work of the group. The group will be meeting for the first time on 29 November 2017, and the sector will be informed of updates through the Correspondents Bulletin and Regional Forums.

8. Apprenticeships

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

Last month we launched UCAS' new 'apprenticeships hub', supplying information and advice for learners and advisers across the UK. We are continuing to work with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to provide English apprenticeship listings (with applications managed by providers directly) and are seeking to expand this to the other UK countries, with the aim of better supporting learners and advisers access information about the full range of higher education opportunities, and addressing parity of esteem issues between apprenticeships and other pathways.

Apprenticeship services are now being explored as part of the wider Corporate Strategy refresh. A range of 'next steps' options, including incorporation of higher and degree apprenticeships in centralised Search, are being explored in the context of UCAS' wider service developments. Customer requirements are being validated and feedback obtained on strategic direction of apprenticeship services via a series of webinars, advisory group meetings and other customer engagements, and via the Apprenticeship Steering Group which will next meet in January 2018. This work draws also on insights into the benefits and challenges associated with higher and degree apprenticeships, which were explored in our June report: Progression Pathways 2017: Pathways through higher education.

On 13 October, the Policy Team hosted the UCAS Tariff apprenticeship roundtable, which brought together representatives from all UK nations to debate if apprenticeships at Level 3 could (and should) be allocated Tariff points. Further discussions are to be held, which are likely to result in allocations for the May 2019 update

9. Annual Admissions Conference 2018 (LE)

Update

The Annual Admissions Conference will take place from 24-26 March 2018 at the Celtic Manor Resort. We have responded to feedback from the conference last year and have considered this whilst developing the agenda. We have been encouraged by the number of providers who have supported this work in helping to shape the content. The booking website will be open in mid-December.

10. UCAS Presentation at Meeting

At the meeting the following items will be covered:

- Higher and Degree Apprenticeships
- GCSE results processing
- VQ reform and changes to applied generals for summer 2018
- Unconditional offer-making
- Feedback on the interactive exercises from the Annual Provider Update
- HEP Satisfaction survey – update on actions from 2016, launch of 2017
- Admissions Conference 2018 – call for contributors
- ARC APG questions arising including GDPR