



*Agenda for an exceptional Meeting of ARC APG
June 2020*

- 1 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
To receive and approve the minutes of the meeting (APG/20/08)
held on Friday 21st February 2020.
Any comments to be emailed to the Secretary of
ARC APG

- 2 **UCAS update** UCAS staff
To receive:
 - Written report (APG/20/09)
 - Recorded presentation (APG/20/10, see
<https://bcove.video/2YeT1HH>)Any questions to be emailed to the Secretary of
ARC APG

- 7 **DfE update on new PG Teacher Training
Admissions system** DfE representatives
Any questions to be emailed to the Secretary of
ARC APG (APG/20/11)
(APG/20/12)

- 12 **UCAS Groups** (APG/20/13)
To note: updates on UCAS Groups
Any questions to be emailed to the Secretary of
ARC APG

Next Meetings:

Friday 23 October 2020 at Woburn House, London

Friday 26 February 2021 at Woburn House, London

Friday 11 June 2021 at Woburn House, London

Venue is dependent on any Government restrictions.



Admissions Practitioners Group

Minutes of the Seventy-sixth Meeting

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

Friday 21st February 2020

Present: Steve Wiggins (University of Portsmouth, Chair), Richard Emborg (University of Durham, Secretary), Sarah Whitehead (Aberystwyth University), Louise Foster-Agg (Aston University), Colin Higgins (Birkbeck, University of London), Stephen Grice (Birmingham City University), Jon Williams (Bournemouth University), Charlotte Norman (Brunel University London), Michelle Magee (Canterbury Christ Church University), Richard Broom (City, University of London), Phil Bailey (Cranfield University), Jake Benilov (Department for Education), Chris Davis (Department for Education), Liz Dodds (Durham University), Sarah Walker (Falmouth University), Julie Fisher (Glasgow Caledonian University), Robert Cuthbert (Harper Adams University), Jo Ladwa (Keele University), Maeve Huttly (King's College London), Sam Javed (King's College London), Sam Lamswood (Leeds Trinity University), Mark Fry (Liverpool Hope University), Charlotte Harrison-Smith (Liverpool John Moores University), Louise Drinkwater (London South Bank University), Kathryn O'Shea (London South Bank University), Dave Norton (Loughborough University), Adam Thoburn (Newcastle University), Amy Smith (Nottingham Trent University), Jessica Trahar (Office for Students), Ed Hackett (Oxford AQA exams), Alison Lewis (Oxford AQA exams), Julian Crawford (Oxford Brookes University), Robert Hodgson (Oxford Brookes University), Joanne Tallentire (Queen Mary University of London), Katerina Emmanouilidou (Royal Agricultural University), Catherine Cole (Royal Holloway University of London), Stacy Lloyd (Sheffield Hallam University), Abbie English (Teesside University), Peter Derrick (UCAS), Kim Eccleston (UCAS), Louise Evans (UCAS), Alexa Gillett (UCAS), Bella Malins (UCL), Sarah Simms (University for the Creative Arts), David Howells (University of Bath), Mike Nicholson (University of Bath), Victoria Azubuine (University of Bedfordshire), Nicholas Ranford (University of Birmingham), Dida Chahal (University of Bradford), Helen Basterra (University of Brighton), Alexandra Dimmock (University of Bristol), Rachel Baker (University of Cambridge), Bob Savill (University of Chichester), Katy Scott (University of Dundee), Gillian Simmons (University of Edinburgh), Lucy Ghost (University of Essex), Kelvin Fawdrey (University of Greenwich), Jilly Crosby (University of Hertfordshire), Sarah Elstub (University of Huddersfield), Steve Holdcroft (University of Kent), Graham Rees (University of Leeds), Phil Dalby (University of Leicester), Julie Haveron (University of Lincoln), Dawn Mains (University of Northampton), Rachel Gillam (University of Nottingham), Louise Crispin (University of Oxford), Jayne Hines (University of Plymouth), Kathryn Whittington (University of Reading), Kathryn Matthews (University of South Wales), Nicky Stecker-Doxat (University of Southampton), Joanne Bainbridge (University of Sunderland), Rob Evans (University of Sussex), Gemma Pritchard (University of the Arts, London), Elizabeth Hough (University of Warwick), Ray Brown (University of West London), Andrew Carter (University of West of England), Katherine Synnott (University of Westminster), Emily Stevens (University of Winchester), Maxine Charlton (University of York), Dan Hurley (UUK), Dan Wake (UUK).

Apologies: Denise Dixon-Smith (Leeds Beckett University), Mel Williams (Imperial College, London), Jude King (University of Liverpool), Tony Flaherty (University of Sheffield), Rebecca Leach (UCLan).

20.01 Welcome to New Members

The Chair welcomed all new members to their first meeting, who were invited to identify themselves and which institution they represented.

20.02 Apologies for absence

Apologies were noted from 5 institutions (see above).

20.03 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (APG/19/18)

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2019 were approved as an accurate record with the removal of item 9.

20.04 Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

19.06 Changes to PG Teacher Training applications process

Chair of APG will follow this up with DfE.

ACTION: Chair of ARC APG

19.28 UCAS Hub

UCAS Hub

- UCAS representatives to consider offering webinars (recommended as best platform for engagement)

ACTION: UCAS

Completed: Specific webinar on Hub algorithm held in January, UCAS also established critical friends group and specific WG with HELOA.

- UCAS interested to know if no shows has increased for home UK applicants this year

Action: ARC APG members to feedback via UCAS Regional Managers

Feedback from members: less no shows than usual for almost all members, perhaps due to more self-release

20.05 UCAS update

Received: an update on current activities, new developments and responses to queries posed by members in advance of the meeting (written update APG/20/01 and presentation slides APG/20/03).

Noted and discussed:

Questions from members

- UCAS response to Coronavirus
 - Internal WG, meeting regularly
 - Aim to support customers to manage themselves
 - Don't know if will affect deadlines
 - UCAS interested to hear if institutions are communicating offers differently, also any other actions they are taking

Action: ARC APG members to feedback via UCAS Regional Managers

- Applications from China +34%, but uncertain if that translates to offers

2020 cycle update

- Early deadline:
 - UCAS quieter than usual
 - Lots of applications submitted on last day, also increased calls
 - Positive increase given at low point of demographics
- Shared summary of trends based on 15 January stats:
 - Non-EU Growth esp. in China, India, Africa, HK, record numbers
 - EU decline, traditional areas, but growth in Spain and Portugal
 - Highlighted new data explorers

2021 cycle

- Early dates in the cycle were highlighted.

Zero breach embargo

- Dates highlighted
- Pearson releasing results to students the day before A Levels again, even though the results are under embargo. UCAS will put clear guidance out to applicants and trying to get Pearson to reconsider
- Highlighted breaches
- All awarding bodies sensitive to embargo
- Training module refreshed, partly based on breaches lessons learnt from last year
- DfE convened round table to discuss the timing of lifting of the embargo
 - To consider needs of student – ensure they have support
 - Therefore embargo now lifted at 8am
 - Track will also not soft launch before then
 - Students won't have results until 8am
 - Advisers also embargoed to 8am (previously 6.30am, informed the status of placed and unplaced)
- Providers to consider the way they contact applicants
- Schools still receive results the day before under a different embargo

Satisfaction survey

- Responses down

- High proportion of admissions staff
- Increased satisfaction with some of the products
- Recognise some work to be done in ensuring consistency of advice across teams
- Current focus on provider section, involving input from HEPs
- Plans for more training to help inducting new staff in HEPs

UCAS Sync

- UCAS were not meeting their own deadlines
- Instead of big bang large scale approach, will now develop and deliver iterative smaller packages
- Noted that it takes many months for software providers to then develop systems and then be deployed in universities
- Thinking ahead:
 - Short-term focus
 - Mid-term focus
 - Also discussions about infrastructure
- Existing products are strongly interrelated, which creates integration challenges
- UCAS wants to create separate systems to increase ease of change = the product approach
- Disconnecting interconnectedness systems
- Clearing Plus is a separate infrastructure, so easy to implement
- Longer term, UCAS is conscious of the ability of institutions to adopt API and scale of workarounds
- Webinar on 27 February 2020

ACTION: ARC APG members encouraged to attend webinar

- Noted:
 - In 2014 HEPs were told the new system would remove inter-relatedness, but this hasn't happened. Instead the way that the new platform has been developed is to be able to touch everything. UCAS got tied up with business rules and built new version of the existing system.
 - WP data is easy to get into Apply but difficult to transfer it.

Clearing Plus

- Standalone product
- Intended for students who are struggling to start with knowing what to do in Clearing
- It is moving PMDS/DCS out of eternal pilot phase
- Hope is Clearing Plus will help students and HEPS
- Qualifications will not be published
- UCAS investigating the possibility of including:
 - combined qualifications
 - GCSE Maths and English
- Further workshops and information sharing
- Might include SIMD and POLAR criteria that we can set
- Basic service is free

- Enhanced service might include marketing messages
- Request made for UCAS to share information to help inform planning

ACTION: UCAS to provide information asap about the detail of what will be available

- UCAS will again not promote self-release this summer
- If applicant does self-release they will then see their Clearing Plus matches, but UCAS will not encourage that

Reform and Reimagine

- UCAS wanted to be responsive to changes and contribute to discussions
- UCAs has set up critical friends WG, to create ideas and thoughts about alternatives
- 4 potential areas for reform from the WG were shared
- Will come out to groups for discussion, also at forums and may be webinars

20.06 OfS update on review of admissions

Received: an update on the OfS review of admissions from the OfS Competition and registration Manager (presentation slides APG/20/04).

Noted:

- OfS regulating a very diverse sector
- OfS not taking a position on views, want to gather information and evidence first
- Scope of review broad, conscious of other activity at UCAS and UUK, want to avoid duplication
- Covers all students and all modes of study, including PG and direct applicants to HEPs
- Therefore consultation will be lengthy
- PQA and PQO (post qualification offers) mentioned
- Consultation opens soon (27 February 2020)
- Open to comments about what is being considered, ARC APG members invited to let OfS know, also which bodies to engage with

ACTION: ARC APG members

- OfS is having conversations with other devolved nations
- Consultation input welcome from other regions
- Review to be launched in July 2020

Questions from ARC APG members:

- How will OfS engage with international (e.g. students/advisers/agents)? OfS is talking to UKCISA about how to engage
- How will OfS engage with exam boards? OfS speaking with Ofqual and school leadership.
- Is there representation from HEPs? OfS have got analyst to run sample to organise initial roundtable events. Once start analysing data, OfS may decide to run events with particular providers or about particular responses.
- How will Art and Design programmes be considered? OfS talking to GuildHE to do events with Art and Design providers.

20.07 DfE update on new PG Teacher Training Admissions system

Received: an update from DfE representatives (presentation slides APG/20/05).

Noted:

- Pilot has now started.
- DfE will operate the only system from October 2021 for entry in 2022.
- DfE welcome suggestions of who to engage with to share the information.
- May involve ARC to help with this.
- DfE won't want big bang approach, but rolling out system over two years, increasing providers and services, using feedback to improve the service
- About 200 applicants signed up so far for the pilot, about 30 submitted applications, about 3 acceptances.
- Generally people apply in one region only.
- Provider interface allows you to look at the system.
- Being an early adopter will allow a HEP to help shape the design of the system. Enhanced customer support is promised.
- DfE want to have active engagement from HEPs, even if they are not part of the provider
- There is a marketing webpage – allows you to get in contact
- Next steps highlighted
- DfE want maximum engagement, our feedback is essential to help DfE to deliver the service we need
- DfE recognise SCITTS are different to HEPs
- Question raised about the Working Group of ARC APG members. There seem to be different perceptions of how the WG will work. There was been minimal contact from the DfE. DfE promised to improve this.

ACTION: DfE

- DfE talking to Tribal and HEPs, Tribal deployment due in May/June

Questions from ARC APG members

- Is the regional approach the best way – would subject not work? DfE accept it is not perfect. Subject not chosen as technical issue of needing to get everyone ready, too great a risk.
- How defining an institution (viz. Schools Direct) – is there a risk schools join and their university partner don't? At the moment only those who aren't accredited by a university are invited to be early adopters.
- Whilst communication is good with Schools of Education, admissions isn't involved so can this be improved with a better direct relationship? DfE promised to check their list to ensure they are reaching admissions.
- Noted that UCAS excellent at provider good data. What data will this new system bring? Plans even for early adopters will build in management information including your numbers, also your competition. The best way to be involved is in workshops with teams.
- What are the business rules? They will change, but no clarity given yet. DfE will be keeping Apply 1 and Apply 2 rules (3 in 1 then sequential in 2); those periods are staying for the transition period but may then change afterwards

20.08 Oxford Test of English

Received: an overview of the Test and its roll-out from the OTE Recognition Manager and Head of Assessment Research, Oxford University Press (presentation slides APG/20/06).

Noted:

- It is a modular qualification and individual modules can be taken separately
- Each individual gets individualised questions as the test is adaptive
- Rigorous commission process
- Content is regularly refreshed
- Security mechanisms are robust, including no print to screen
- Approved test centres deliver the test
- Members invited to consider whether they will accept OTE
- CEFR B2 = 5.5 to 6.5
- Members asked to identify to OUP who is best to review information about the OTE

ACTION: ARC APG members

- You can ask for results from one test sitting.
- You can set how long the shelf life is.
- Certificate shows best result.
- Can ask student to provide a module report card.
- Average of all four equals the average overall score. No limit on retakes, but needs to be a month gap between each sitting
- Launching in China in 2021. Want to explore the item bank first, up their security even more
- India, no plans currently
- Main markets so far Spain and North and Central South America
- Validation currently an email service. Working on an online verification service
- Pilot has now started.

Questions from ARC APG members

- Have they mapped to IELTS as well? B2 = 111-140. Why not CEFR C1? Launched in Spain, mainly B1 and B2. OUP in process of looking at test design for C1 as identified as a need.
- Is it clear from the certificate when modules were taken? Yes, date recorded for each module.

20.09 Update on UUK Fair Admissions Working Group

Received: an update from the practitioner member of the Working Group and a UUK Policy Analyst ((presentation slides APG/20/07).

Noted:

- Dan contact for any questions.
- Review is not just about PQA, also Schwartz, recruitment and pre-applicant experience
- Membership = all 4 devolved sectors, schools and colleges, universities from all types, UCAS.
- Recommendations to be published in Spring 2020.
- Student polling – got in news. Hard to disentangle student comments from press stories.

- Driver seems to be the Sutton Trust report of missing 2,000 but this was written when student number controls were in place.
- Engagement with IBO and Council for International Schools.
- Noted there was a danger that the international student perspective could be ignored.
- Strong concern about careers advice.
- Lot of pressure from schools on transparency of what students are accepted on. Might be a requirement to publish this.
- Clear understanding that when looking at change we should not abandon current system wholesale.
- Current system works well.
- Next steps are regional workshops, dates to be announced soon.
- OfS have a parallel stream looking at IAG.

Confidential Discussion (for HEI representatives only)

20:10 Chair's business

Received: a verbal summary of consultation prior to the UCAS Sync announcement.

19.31 Hot Topics

Noted and discussed: issues currently being faced by members:

Group 1: Coronavirus

- One challenge is the need for students to have a SELT, but test centres closed. Might other tests be accepted if can't get SELT test result? Is there a need collectively as sector to put pressure on this issue?
- Need to know what exam boards are planning. Collect and share.
- Students not able to prepare for exams, may not be able to take exams. Will we have any evidence of these current ability? Some qualifications that are terminal assessments, some will have already assessed some parts of the qualification
- Other parts of HEP coming up with plans. Admissions staff are feeling under pressure to do things too quickly, with worries about consequences of changes made too quickly.

Group 2: Clearing Plus

- Positive about idea but concern about speed of development
- Would help if we knew how many might be involved
- Interested in algorithm
- Concern that students will tick everything – will applicant behaviour lead to unintended consequences?
- Want some data afterwards about what use was made of the service
- Note this is not a paid-for service, unlike DCS
- IAG for applicants will be an issue. Are applicants going to understand it?
- We need to understand the IAG that is given to advisers and the applicants
- Suspicion that lots of unplaced people do not have any school or college to access
- Just because you have matches doesn't mean you can't contact other HEPs

- Limiting this down to certain qualifications but how clear is it going to be to others what is happening?
- Being precise limits your pool
- Group thinks UCAS will then use what applicants were accepted on to publish data
- Collective feeling we should be positive about this but recognise the limitations

Group 3: Free School Meals

- GDPR issues identified
- Challenge of being able to match DfE dataset and UCAS dataset. UCAS dataset doesn't include matching fields.

20.11 UCAS Groups

Received and noted: written updates from UCAS Groups (APG/20/02)

20.12 Any Other Business

None raised.

19.22 Dates of Future Meetings

12 June 2020 at Woburn House, London

Report – UCAS update (APG/20/09)

ARC APG

15th June 2020

1. Operational update

2020 Cycle

After the announcement of UK lockdown, a decision was made to extend upcoming RBD and DBD dates to allow applicants and providers longer to make decisions due to the current disruption to admissions. Changes were made as follows:

Original DBD date	Updated DBD
19 May (previously 5 May)	18 June
4 June	18 June

Original RBD date	Updated RBD
6 May	20 May

Preparation for Confirmation & Clearing (C&C) 2020

Weekly governance meetings will start in early June with the Delivery Confidence Review to be held 9 June, during which teams from across the organisation will present their confidence levels to the Executive and respond to any challenges that are raised. The team is preparing all C&C activities remotely with potentially a very small team on site at Rosehill at key points, providing that appropriate social distancing can be maintained.

2021 Cycle

- **5 May** – 2021 courses went live in Search
- **12 May** – Adviser portal 2021 launched
- **19 May** – Apply 2021 for UCAS Undergraduate launched

The 2021 cycle is now live and the ability for applications to be paid for and sent to UCAS is currently planned for 8 September. The aspiration is for UCAS to support advisers and applicants while keeping the key dates and deadlines for the 2021 cycle unchanged. However, government guidelines and lockdown easing measures are being monitored and the impact on all customers is being assessed. If changes to any key dates emerge, these will be communicated at the earliest opportunity to give as much certainty as possible.

Upcoming operational events include:

- **8 September 2020** - students can send applications to providers

- **15 October 2020**- Application deadline for all courses at Oxford or Cambridge, and courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science
- **15 January 2021** - Application deadline for all courses

2. Results and application services

2020 Results

UCAS is working closely with all Awarding Organisations to validate the dates UCAS will receive 2020 results, the timetable of delivery to UCAS, and onward to providers, is consistent with previous years which will help facilitate an efficient confirmation and clearing process. Pearson have confirmed that their BTEC results day is 13 August which now aligns with JCQ A level results day. The full schedule for 2020 results delivery is on the Provider Portal ([link](#)).

Embargo Preparations 2020

There are two embargo periods for UCAS applicant results; one for the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and one for the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). UCAS has an agreement with both organisations stipulating that the candidate results they provide for UCAS applicants will be under embargo until their results days. Privileged, early access to results to UCAS and Providers facilitates a prompt decision for UCAS applicants through the confirmation and clearing process.

It is important to note that UCAS will still be receiving results ahead of learners this year, which means there will still be an embargo for 2020. The embargo dates are as follows:

	Embargo begins	Embargo ends
SQA	18:00 - 27 July	09:00 - 4 August
JCQ	14:00 – 7 August	08:00 – 13 August (previously 6am)

2020 preparations include:

- A revised and refreshed training module was launched at the end of May with two streams, one for experienced practitioners, and one for those that are new to the Embargo
- UCAS has been seeking feedback from providers to understand how the JCQ embargo time change will affect providers and what UCAS can do to help. Provider webinars are planned in the coming weeks to provide additional support
- Similarly, UCAS has been seeking feedback from advisers to understand how schools intend to manage the distribution of results and how the JCQ embargo time change will affect registered centres
- A communications campaign and supporting collateral for all customer groups; Learners, Advisers and Providers
- New case studies will be shared – relevant to the experiences of 2019

3. Analysis and Insights Update

There is much discussion in sector and wider press about deferrals and a genuine concern from providers about what this might mean for the sector. Whilst UCAS has

managed queries from several applicants about the deferral process, and work with Youthsight has shown applicants are thinking about deferring, current statistics show that deferrals at this point this year, are in line with those at the same point in 2019. There has been a minimal increase of 1% with 26406 deferrals in 2020, in comparison with 26142 in 2019.

4. Policy update

Stakeholder update

UCAS has worked extensively with a wide range of stakeholders during the Covid-19 period. By the end of February UCAS had joined the Universities UK coronavirus working group and colleagues were in almost daily conversation with Ofqual and exam awarding bodies regarding scenarios planning. Through these engagements, UCAS sought to support all customers through these challenging times. This has included making regular communications to students, advisers and providers about developments across the cycle, including the issuing of the unconditional offer moratoriums across the UK, as well as indicating the wider support available. Furthermore, UCAS has connected students with these stakeholders via a series of Facebook live events, including panellists such as the Universities Minister Michelle Donelan and senior representatives from Ofqual and SQA.

Furthermore, UCAS has worked extensively with Ofqual and others to support students with the cancellation of summer exams, including private candidates. To this end, UCAS is currently producing good practice resources to support HEPs with the consideration of these students.

UCAS Teacher Training DFE update

The UCAS Teacher Training scheme is running as expected and has had no major issues since launch in October. On 20 March it was confirmed that all rolling decision-making deadlines had been put on hold until 01 June. This was to allow providers and applicants additional time to make decisions based on changes of circumstance that may have arisen during the pandemic.

UCAS will be continuing with the Summer RBD reduction (as in the past 4 cycles) and from 1 July, until close of cycle, the number of RBD days will be lowered from 40 to 20 working days to allow applicants to move on from any courses that have been closed, in a shorter time frame.

The DfE are continuing to develop their own admissions service for postgraduate teacher training provision in England, with a small pilot commencing in November 2019. The pilot has slowly been growing, and at present over c.107 schools and SCITTs have been on-boarded, with the number of applications in progress around 750 and at varying different stages.

On-boarding of new schools and SCITTs has been paused due to COVID-19 and school closures. The next phase of the pilot due is to commence in November 2020 with ten Universities signed up to take part in an early adoption programme. DfE has affirmed with UCAS, that their target date for adopting the entire system in England remains the 2021/22 recruitment cycle.

5. Services and developments for providers

Terms of Service

During the March and April, the UCAS Terms of Service and Business Rules were referenced in numerous external communications. UCAS took the opportunity to expedite work that was already underway ahead of the 2021 cycle and refreshed and reissued the Terms of Service for 2020.

UCAS appreciates the challenges facing colleagues across the sector during this time of change, not least in Admissions where the Universities Minister Michelle Donelan, and the OfS, have been increasingly vocal on ensuring a fair admissions cycle for all applicants. UCAS is grateful to providers for their feedback on the documents and the clarification sought on certain clauses.

UCAS noted the concerns raised in relation to the terminology around the 'right to audit'. Clare Marchant issued a clarification on 5th May, but the use of the term 'audit' is not meant to suggest any comprehensive regime or intrusion. Plans are in place to look to rephrase this clause with more appropriate wording for the Terms of Service and Business Rules that will accompany the 2021 cycle. If providers have further feedback on the Terms of Service, your Relationship manager will be happy to discuss this with you.

UCAS Sync

In May UCAS' communicated their existing link products will remain operational for the next two cycles (2021 and 2022) - retracting the decommissioning date of December 2022.

UCAS will work with providers and vendors to seek feedback and will tailor API development accordingly – ensuring every provider is able to access features as they're released. This may be via their user interface (currently weblink) or via other new accessible means which will be developed in addition to one or both of the existing link products to ensure development to student records systems is not a blocker to use.

UCAS is continuing work to progress its' long-term roadmap, taking into account the impact of Covid-19 and delayed admissions reviews. This will be shared with providers later this summer.

To engage with technical contacts (Vendors and in-house providers) UCAS will be reinvigorating their technology webinars this summer following the publication of the roadmap. These will align and complement UCAS' Technology user group and regular vendor meetings.

UCAS Conservatoires 2021 cycle enhancements

UCAS has implemented several technical development enhancements for conservatoires. Requirements were gathered in discussions with conservatories and the agreed list of deliverables remain on track for delivery by 16 July in advance of the 2021 cycle opening.

Collection Tool

Based on feedback from providers and in response to changes to course delivery as a result of Covid 19, ahead of Clearing 2020 a set of new fields will be added to the Collection Tool.

- A new field for a link to an online enquiry form
- The ability to add links to several social media channels
- A new field for a url link to specific information on providers website about changes to course delivery

New for Clearing 2020, for courses with few vacancies remaining, and which would attract a high number of applications in Clearing, a new flag will appear at course option level allowing the provider to set a 'Course code only application' flag. Selecting this flag will remove a course from displaying in both Search and in the Track drop down list. However, learners can still apply for the course in Track by selecting 'Other' from the list of courses and then entering the course code.

Clearing Plus

As UCAS continues to make improvements to services and in response to sector and student feedback, this year a new personalised service, Clearing Plus, will be launched. It will provide unplaced students with a tool to see matched courses. Users of the service can express their interest in courses available which will be flagged to providers in real time. Providers can select which courses are visible through Clearing Plus and set targeting criteria. The service will be available for providers from mid-June and for unplaced applicants from early July to the end of August.

6. Developments for students

Search

Improvements have been made to the messaging to applicants about how to apply to courses depending on the course start date. A new alert message will be introduced into Search to encourage students to check providers' websites for information about changes to course delivery as a result of Covid19 and the newly collected links to online enquiry forms, social media channels and a providers Covid19 information pages will be displayed on the course details page alongside other provider information.

UCAS is also looking at how improvements can be made to the searching experience for students by aligning Search more with the Hub, this is apparent from the recent changes that were made to the design in February.

Accommodation Search

UCAS has taken the decision to delay the launch of the accommodation site. The site will now launch on Tuesday 8 September, in line with the pay/send launch date for the 2021 cycle. This decision has been taken for the following reasons:

- The market currently is complex – for both students and those who provide accommodation.
- Whilst UCAS is ready to it is felt that doing so now would not be the right thing to do and would not add maximum value for our customers
- Launching the site at a time that is optimal for both students researching their options, and providers recruiting for vacancies is crucial.

For 2021 applicants, the accommodation search will feature as a primary service as part of the applicant journey. There is also an intention to reach out to those in year 1 and year 2 at university to support their early research into next year's accommodation. Those providers that have already booked space on the site will have their booking honoured for September.

UCAS Hub Live

Over the coming months, UCAS has organised a series of [live sessions](#) to help pre-applicants with their research for 2021. The business is keen to have a wide variety of presenters representing the full range of providers and would welcome offers of participation. Please contact l.evans@ucas.ac.uk if interested in taking part.

Virtual Exhibitions

UCAS virtual exhibition pilot was a great success taking place on the 20th May. With 1700 delegates (from approx. 70 invited schools) signed up and 1500 attendees, it is clear that there is demand and interest for students to engage in a much more digital and targeted way. 68% attendees stayed in the exhibition for up to 1 hour with 38% spending up to an hour and a half engaging with the exhibitors. This was UCAS' first subject specific exhibition, targeted to create better quality conversations between providers and students. UCAS has received great feedback from the pilot from both advisers and students which has indicated a real need for a virtual programme which will strategically complement our physical events. UCAS will shortly be releasing a summer/autumn schedule of virtual exhibitions which all universities and colleges will be encouraged to participate in.

Rescheduled physical exhibitions

The 2020 Exhibition cycle started as planned on 24 February with 6 locations successfully delivered. In March the decision was made to postpone all events up until July, and then subsequently the Scottish campus events, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the postponement, 13 events have been rearranged in the autumn and information regarding these events has been communicated to exhibitors. Whilst there are still uncertainties around the social distancing measures that will be in place, the UCAS Events Team are liaising with all stakeholders to try and run the autumn events so long as it is safe and financially viable to do so. Exhibitors are being contacted on an individual basis by the Events Sales team to discuss their credit amounts. Considering the postponements, the virtual events project has accelerated, and a successful trial took place on 20 May. The team are now working on several virtual events in the summer and autumn.

7. UCAS presentation

The following items will be covered in a pre-recorded presentation:

- **Operational update including plans for C&C**
- **CX Update**
- **Developments for providers and learners**
- **Exhibitions**
- **UCAS Customer Engagement and the impact of Covid-19**
- **Insight from UCAS and Youthsight**

Update from DfE on the forthcoming Teacher Training Apply Service

- We are progressing with the pilot of our new Apply service. The feedback continues to be positive from candidates and providers and we are working with them to develop the service, take on board their comments and further improve user experience.
- We are working with our 'early adopter' Universities who will start piloting the service from this October. If you are interested in becoming an early adopter and want to know more please contact becomingateacher@digital.education.gov.uk
- As planned we are working to complete the rollout of the new Apply service for the admissions cycle which starts in October 2021, although we will keep this under review in light of the current situation.
- Our intention, prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, had been to run a series of webinars for Universities – including one for the ARC group by now. However with the pressures that Covid-19 has put on the sector, and with members of the DfE team needing to support Covid-19 related work, we have had to delay these sessions.
- We are now intending to run the webinars from later this month. We will be in touch shortly to arrange a date for the ARC group.
- We appreciate your support and engagement during this difficult time, and if you want to know more you should contact Sarah Fisher: Sarah2.FISHER@education.gov.uk

Chris Davis

DfE

Apply for teacher training

Update



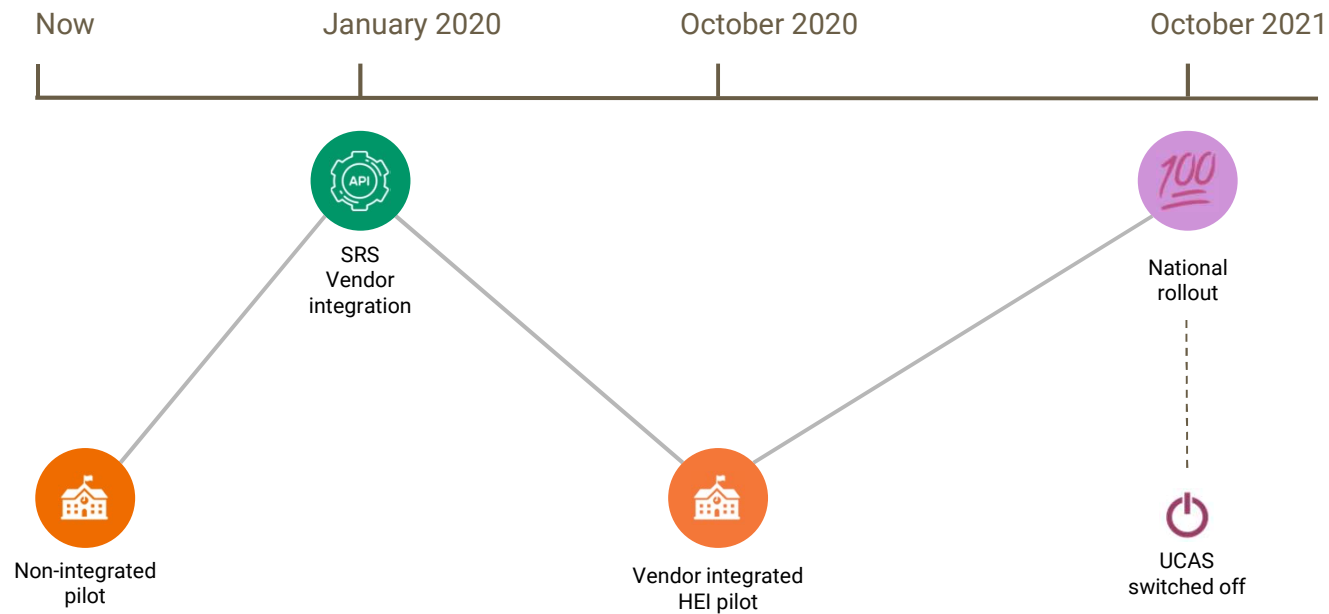
Department
for Education

Contents

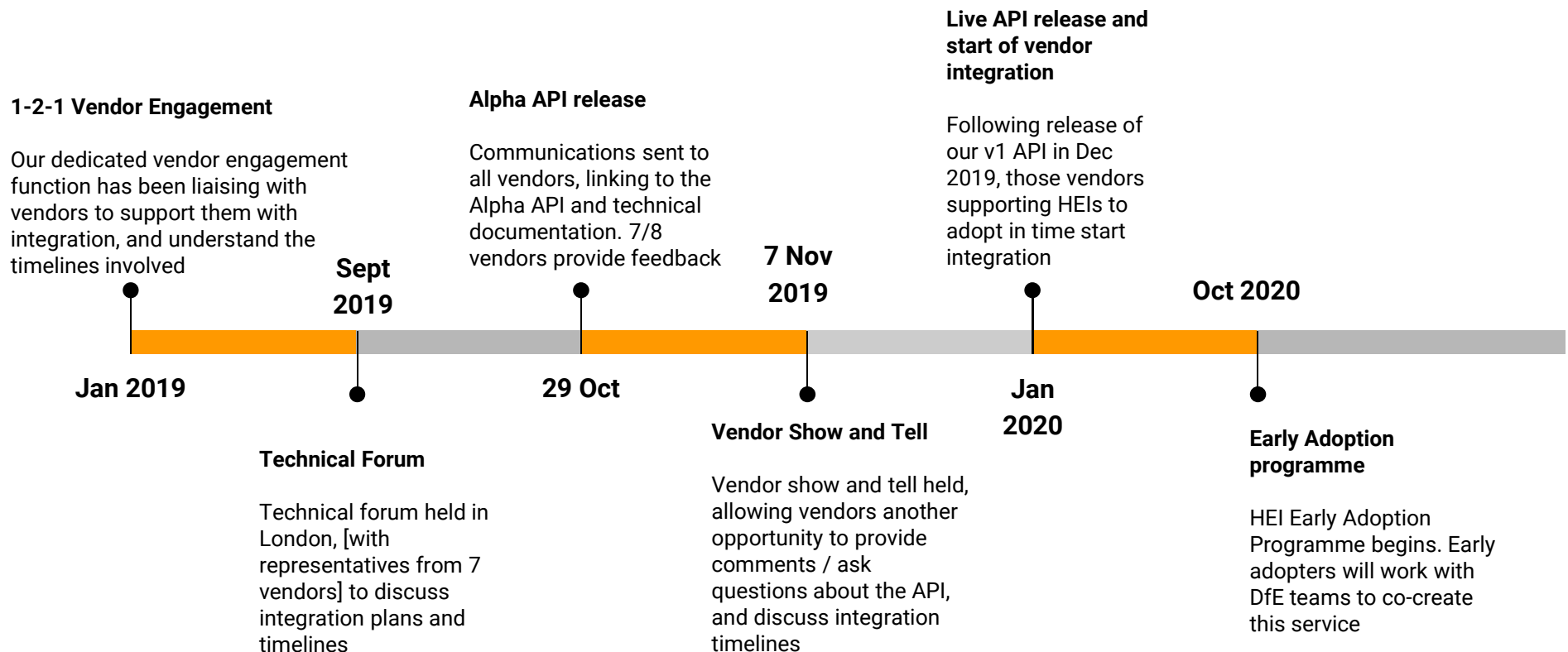
- Updates from DfE Apply
- New Features
- What's Next?

Updates: timelines

Work on DfE Apply for Teacher Training continues as normal and we are still working to our original timelines



We have been working closely with vendors of SRS systems



Update: Rollout

Current pilot

- We continue to work closely with the providers currently taking part in the pilot.
- We have paused User Research with SCITTs and Schools for the time being, unless they proactively approach us. However, we are looking at other options to get feedback from this group.
- We are continuing to run User Research sessions with candidates who are using the service

October 2020 integrated pilot

- Tribal is on track to release its product very shortly and Oracle is on track to release in July
- We are working closely with our early adopter HEIs, running regular readiness sessions with them to support them to integrate.
- Our first early adopter HEI has started testing the integration.

Update: Rollout - grant offer letters

- In March, UCET sent communications on our behalf to all members, announcing that DfE will make a one-off contribution of £8k towards early adopter universities' costs.
- Grant letters have been sent to universities that expressed an interest.
- If you are interested in finding out more, or signing up as an early adopter, we are still accepting expressions of interest.

Feedback from candidates

“Has a nice flow to it. I just found it a bit more to-the-point”

Career changer, aged 35

“The questions were easy and comprehensible”

Recent graduate, aged 23

“Very easy to use and understand, overall it’s a very good service”

Final year university student, aged 21

Feedback from providers

“I like the fact that the layout is very clear, easy to read. I like how it’s set out with work history and the tick when they’ve worked with children. Like the personal statement split into Why and Subject Knowledge, it really makes a difference. I was singing it’s [Manage’s] praises after the initial meeting and ever since!”

SCITT user

“We’ve had a few applications in via Apply this week which is great! Our HEI provider have been really impressed with the clarity and look of the Apply applications too.”

School direct user

“We’re delighted to be one of the providers taking part in the pilot for DfE Apply. We’re passionate about improving the application journey for candidates, so we jumped at the chance to test and shape this new service.”

SCITT user

Policy design

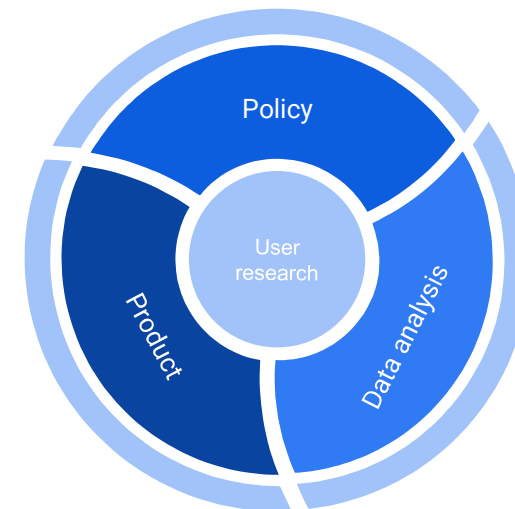
We have been working to bring policy development closer to our other areas of work to ensure that our policy intent and needs of our users are aligned.

We conduct **pre-discoveries** where we speak to internal and external users to understand how policy currently impacts them and identify areas where we want to learn more about the policy outcomes we're seeing.

What policy will we be exploring?

- Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses - what is the current candidate experience of SKE?
- Diversity - how can we support diverse candidates into teacher training?

We take a user-centred approach, enabling user insights to improve the service as a whole, encompassing **policy, data analysis** and the **product**.



**We've built some new features into
the service**



Department
for Education

Offer a different course/provider

The need: to move great candidates around networks to make sure they're offered the places that are right for them

You can now:

Make an offer of

- A different course
- A different location
- A different training provider

GOV.UK Manage teacher training applications

[← Back](#)

Elise Briggs

Respond to application

- Make an offer
- Make an offer but change course
- Make an offer but change location
- Make an offer but change training provider
- Reject application

[Continue](#)

[Cancel](#)

Access Management

The need: to better support provider users to manage applications across different organisational structures

What we've done:

Built in different levels of access e.g. read only, take action

Given 'main' users the power to set access levels themselves

The screenshot shows a web interface for managing teacher training applications. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the GOV.UK logo and the text 'Manage teacher training applications'. To the right of the navigation bar are links for 'Applications', 'Organisations', and 'Users'. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail with a left arrow and the text 'Back'. The main heading is 'Set up relationships for Aston Manor Academy'. Below the heading is a section titled 'For courses ratified by Titan Partnership Ltd'. Under this section, there are two sub-sections: 'Titan Partnership Ltd can' and 'Aston Manor Academy can'. Each sub-section has two checkboxes: 'Make decisions' and 'See safeguarding information'. At the bottom of the form is a green 'Continue' button.

GOV.UK Manage teacher training applications Applications Organisations Users

← Back

Set up relationships for Aston Manor Academy

For courses ratified by Titan Partnership Ltd

Titan Partnership Ltd can

- Make decisions
- See safeguarding information

Aston Manor Academy can

- Make decisions
- See safeguarding information

[Continue](#)

Adding notes to an application

The need:
To support different members of providers' teams to add notes / recommendations on applications

What we've done:
Tested our feature with providers to ensure it is as useful and intuitive as possible, and helps streamline internal processing of applications

The image displays three overlapping screenshots of a web application interface for a candidate named Samantha Hilton. The top-left screenshot shows the 'Notes' tab selected, with an orange box highlighting the 'Notes' tab label. Below the tabs is a green 'Add note' button. The top-right screenshot shows the 'Notes' tab with a note added: 'SKE Recommend candidate takes SKE in Maths Sarah Fisher, 5 May 2020 at 9:55am'. The bottom-right screenshot shows the 'Timeline' tab selected, displaying a vertical timeline with two events: 'Note added by Sarah Fisher 5 May 2020' and 'Application submitted by candidate 29 Apr 2020'. The leftmost screenshot shows the 'Application' tab selected, displaying a form with the following details:

Application submitted	29 April 2020
Reference	QG9685
Full name	Samantha Hilton
Date of birth	12 February 1999
Nationality	English
Phone number	07333888555
Email address	samantha.hilton@mailinator.com
Address	18 Orchard Lane Sheffield Yorkshire S4 8HH

Asking for support

The need: To support candidates to ask for help and make sure they know their rights

What we've done:

Tested lots of options with candidates

Research showed that candidates like seeing examples of different kinds of support

Asking for support if you have a disability or other needs

You might benefit from extra support if you're disabled, have a mental health condition or educational needs.

If you choose to tell us you need support, we'll let your training provider know. They can then make adjustments so you can attend an interview or do the training.

Examples of support could be:

- organising equipment like a hearing loop or an adapted desk
- putting you in touch with support staff if you have a condition
- making sure classrooms are wheelchair accessible

If the help you need is not covered by your provider, you might also be able to get support from [Access to Work](#) grant to help cover the costs of practical support in the workplace.

We've also included a section reminding that it is against the law to discriminate

It's against the law to discriminate

If you're disabled, [it's against the law to discriminate against you](#). Training providers must not:

- ask disability or health questions if they're not relevant to your ability to become a teacher
- reject your application because you're disabled

Do you want to ask for help to become a teacher?

- Yes, I want to share information about myself so my provider can take steps to support me
- No

Continue

Declaring safeguarding issues

The need:

To encourage early disclosure of any safeguarding issues

What we've done:

Tested our wording to make sure that candidates understand the importance of declaring safeguarding issues but understand that they may still be eligible to train to teach

Declaring any safeguarding issues

Teacher training providers need to check that it's safe for you to work with children and young people.

As well as confirming your identity and your right to work in the UK, providers will check:

- your criminal record in the UK (they'll do an enhanced [DBS check](#)) and abroad where relevant
- whether you've been banned from teaching or working with children
- your professional behaviour, such as whether you've been removed from teacher training and what your referees say about you

Tell your provider about any potential safeguarding issues, such as offences, cautions, reprimands and final warnings. They can give advice about whether this will affect your application.

It won't necessarily stop you becoming a teacher.

What's next for Apply for Teacher Training?



Department
for Education

Apply 2 / Apply Again

Apply 2

- We are currently building the 'Apply 2' function in our service.
- We are currently calling this 'Apply again' and are getting lots of feedback from candidates and providers on how we can encourage more candidates who don't get offers as part of Apply 1 to reapply.

Do you want to apply again?

Your first application did not lead to a place on a course.

If you apply again we'll:

- copy your application so you don't need to start again
- let you make changes to each section
- keep your references so you won't need to request new ones

You can only apply to 1 course at a time at this stage of your application.

[Start now >](#)

We've copied your application. Please review all sections.

Your new application

Last saved on 23 April 2020 at 7:58 AM

[▶ See feedback from your previous application](#)

Course choice

[Course choice](#)

NOT STARTED

Need help?

Email: becomingateacher@digital.education.gov.uk

Monday to Friday (except public holidays)

We aim to respond within 5 working days, or one working day for more urgent queries

Rollout

Preparing for October 2020

- The Tribal release is on track to be released very shortly.
- Oracle have announced that they are on track for a July release
- We're continuing to run readiness sessions with our early adopter HEIs, to prepare them for October.

- We would like to re-start onboarding SCITTs, at a point that is right for them, to ensure we get as much feedback as possible before full rollout.

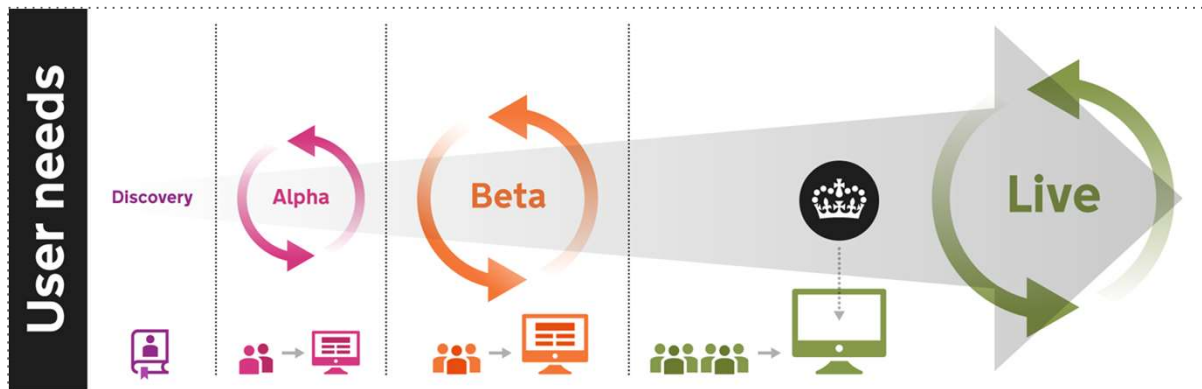
Planning for October 2021

- We are starting to think about onboarding our 'non-early adopter' providers, and are working through what support they'll need.
- If you're not an early adopter and want to know more about when you can begin work on integration contact us at becomingateacher@digital.education.gov.uk

User Research

UR

- Our User Research team are currently looking for ITT providers to take part in research on some of the features we're developing for Apply at the moment
- These areas include:
 - Access control within networks of providers;
 - International candidates;
 - HESA data;
 - Apply 2
- We're also doing joint end-of-cycle research with Find



If you or anyone in your team would like to be involved in this research please let us know or email becomingateacher@digital.education.gov.uk

Thank you

If you have any questions or want to get involved in research please contact becomingateacher@digital.education.gov.uk



Department
for Education

Minutes

DG/20/M1

Data Group meeting

Held on Wednesday 12 February 2020 at UCAS, Cheltenham

Chair:	Bella Malins	University College London
Present:	Amy Butterworth Amy Cooper Alex Ingold Gareth Samuel Hannah Chilvers Jonathan Aubrey Kirsty Younger Matt Birkett Melanie Simpson	University of Bristol University of Leicester The London School of Economics and Political Science Cardiff University University of East Anglia (Microsoft Teams) University of Nottingham Durham University Lancaster University University of Stirling (Microsoft Teams)
Apologies:	Andy Fidler Richard Bartlett Sarah Banton-Place Sandrine Fabris Shabana Akhtar	Keele University University of Cambridge University of Huddersfield Aston University HESPA (planning)
UCAS in attendance:	Deniz Gosai Peter Derrick Sarah Barr Miller	Provider Engagement Coordinator Head of Service Delivery (Operations) Head of Insight Sales, UCAS Media
Presenting:	Carys Fisher Charlie Brown Fiona Johnston James Harley Richard O'Kelly Sam Dolman	Senior Policy Executive Lead Data Scientist (Microsoft Teams) Director of Operations Principal Data Scientist Head of Analytical Data Data Scientist
Observing:	Lynsey Hopkins	Sync Adoption Manager

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves.

A1/20/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

DG157 – the Group was encouraged to think about which type of questions they would like included in the student survey. This action remained open.

DG158 – UCAS was still keen to find out what restrictions providers put in place for document uploads. This action remained open.

DG174 – the Group confirmed that they would still like a demonstration of Tracker, and if possible, a document. Data would be live shortly, and more information would be available in upcoming webinars. This action remained open.

DG176 – an item on test data would be on the next meeting's agenda.

DG184 – an update on surveys would be added to the next agenda.

DG186 and DG188 – multiple equality measures (MEM) was covered later in the meeting, and UCAS was in conversations with the Office for Students. This action was closed.

DG187 – Transparency data was discussed later in the meeting. This action was closed.

DG189 – the full list of Sync Pioneers was available on ucas.com.

DG190 – UCAS would still like to receive feedback on providers retention policies. This action remained open.

A1/20/03 Sync update and discussion

It was confirmed that Fiona Johnston, Director of Operations at UCAS, was working full-time on Sync, along with Kim Eccleston, who was on secondment from University of Warwick.

A presentation on UCAS Sync was shared with the Group.

Due to UCAS not meeting their own internal deadlines, providing vendors more time for their developments, and the announcement of two admission review, UCAS made the decision to pause the developments of Sync. In addition, the sector had said that although the changes to Clearing was welcomed, they would not be able to use the functionality in their student record systems without support from the student record system vendors, and so would need to rely totally on web-link, which in some cases was not a viable option. The plan was now to adopt a product-based approach,

breaking the development into smaller pieces. There was then the option to potentially release them as and when they were ready, or if the change would affect fairness, hold them back for release at the start of the cycle. A further update would be provided at the Admissions Conference.

The short-term focus aims were shared with the Group.

The following points were noted or stated:

- It was confirmed that more communications with vendors would take place, and a UCAS vendor team had been put together. UCAS would be asking providers and vendors the best working approach. In addition, more readiness and testing would take place ahead of the cycle.
- Providers were unhappy with the delay, as they had secured budget funding for internal change projects or support teams, which they would now lose.
- UCAS was dedicating a lot of resources and recruiting colleagues from the sector to help develop Sync. UCAS' advisory groups were one of the communication channels providers should be using to give their feedback to UCAS.
- The UCAS Board was being kept informed of Sync reset progress, and the executive commissioned a 3rd party review to share with the Board, to assess options for moving forward. It was noted that there was a member of the Board with significant technology expertise to bring to bear, but that changes to the corporate governance, could support the recruitment of additional digital expertise in the future.
- The Group was keen for UCAS not to forget about the providers who did not use vendors but developed in-house. It was confirmed that UCAS would be working closely with these providers, but it would also be helpful for UCAS to understand the wider financial planning timelines for all providers. Some members of the group confirmed that many providers had to complete budget requests by February, and so would not secure any funding for the following cycle.
- Many of the short-term priorities were not provider-centric given the short time until the start of the 2021 cycle. Moving forward, an API-first approach would be adopted, and provider priorities would be considered more. It was agreed that an update would be provided at the next meeting including the set of priorities of development.

DG DG191

A1/20/04 Update on Multiple Equality Measure

A presentation on the Multiple Equality Measure (MEM) was shared with the Group.

The following MEM reports were available on ucas.com:

- [Full report: MEM – technical report.](#)
- [MEM – summary report.](#)
- [Annex – MEM model output.](#)
- [Data for figures used in the report.](#)

Discussion questions at the end of the presentation.

- Awareness of MEM was good.

- There was concern expressed that while the Office for Students would not use MEM as a measure of inequality to demonstrate progress in widening participation, adoption in the sector would be low.
- MEM was good for providers if they didn't have capability to create a model. However, for providers who could do it themselves, then MEM wouldn't be as useful, as some factors considered in an institutional measure would not be taken into consideration in MEM.
- One member didn't use an initial version of MEM as all ethnically Chinese applicants were categorised as Quintile 5, regardless of other factors. UCAS confirmed that they did want to refine both ethnicity classifications and geographical factors used in MEM and would also carry out some further research.
- In response to specific concerns using postcode based geographical measures in London, UCAS was considering doing a separate iteration for the London region. It was noted that it would be beneficial to have an idea of factors that differed to other regions. It was agreed that this would be discussed between meetings.

CB/CF
DG192CB/CF
DG193

A1/20/05 Transparency data and discussion

A discussion on Provider EXACT Records Supply (PERS) data and transparency data was had. The Office for Students (OfS) had built a tool, which exported transparency data. UCAS also provided PERS data, and was happy to do more, if there was a need from the sector.

In-cycle, the provider view of some characteristics of data (i.e. ethnicity) was restricted. UCAS confirmed that they did not expect providers to do anything with the aggregated in-cycle data.

UCAS was also working with the Welsh Government to expand MEM and would like to expand data on high schools. The Department for Education owned the data for England on free school meals and there were currently restrictions on UCAS sharing this data with the sector at the most granular level.

UCAS had published reports on gender, education, and background since 2015 with a methodology in place. These reports highlighted that there were some differences in gender and POLAR, and the UK had unfavourable admissions processes to some ethnic groups. UCAS was looking at carrying out further research in this area.

PD/RO'K
DG194

It was noted that providers were asked to produce similar reports to UCAS to the OfS. UCAS agreed to investigate why this was.

Group
DG195

The Group was asked to send any feedback they had on the usability of the end of cycle report to Richard O'Kelly, at r.okelly@ucas.ac.uk.

PD/RO'K
DG196

Finally, UCAS was asked to find out whether PERS included tariff-able qualifications, why it was banded, and why BTECS were only achieved grades and not predicted.

A1/20/06 Representing qualifications applicants have on entry

In response to the UUK and OfS reviews of admissions, UCAS had established a Reform and Reimagine project to consider both what changes could be made to the current cycle to improve fairness, transparency, benefit all customers, and to consider how a PQA model could be adopted. A small group of critical friends made up of providers (both from advisory groups and the wider sector), secondary sector colleagues, and students had been formed. The work completed by the group was now being brought to the established governance groups of UCAS, including the advisory groups.

One proposal was on representing qualifications applicants had on entry to higher education. A presentation on this was shared with the Group, with the outlined proposal.

Feedback on the proposal included:

- Concerns with the data being potentially misleading, due to the changing applicant population potentially with providers being more selective. Provider behaviour did change year on year, potentially causing an issue with a three-year aggregation of the data.
- The data would only be shared for courses with an intake of 50 or more over three years. UCAS had not yet carried out analysis on courses which did not meet this threshold. UCAS would like to receive feedback on how to aggregate courses together to reach the proposed threshold. It was noted that the size and shape of every university was different, and could lead to issues with aggregation being meaningful to applicants.
- There was the potential to discourage WP applicants from applying to the most selective universities if the 'average' achievement of other applicants was higher than they were predicted. Advice and guidance to applicants had to be provided and widening participation applicants would need additional support and information, with potentially a separate iteration for them.
- There was also concerns that too much information would be ignored by applicants, and applicants would not be able to interpret the data correctly. The role of advisers was critical in supporting the use of any potential tool.
- Additional work with students would be taking place.
- It was noted that there is a clear demand for increased transparency in the qualifications used to gain entry to HE.

UCAS' next step was to run with real data and send the results to providers. The Group was very keen to help UCAS with this. It was also suggested that contextualised/widening participation data should be visualised, possibly, overlapping on the distribution curve data.

A1/20/07 Update on student profiles

A presentation on student personas was shared with the Group, and the links to the webinars could be found [here](#).

The Group stated that using a set of personas across the whole sector might not be useful for providers, as they each would like to attract different types of applicants. However, in the future, UCAS might be able to personalise personas for specific providers. The Group liked this idea, as they could use it within marketing (for

example, use the right language for individual personas). In addition, they could see if a specific persona was declining their offers, and look into why. The number of personas was discussed, and it was agreed that student personas would be discussed at a future meeting. DG DG197

A1/20/08 Any other business and close

UCAS had partnered with Civitas Learning in order to gain more student data, including quantitative data on student retention, and those that drop out through combining HESA return data with UCAS application data. Civitas had already worked with some UK organisations, and UCAS would limit the amount of engagement to begin with.

This partnership was still in the early stages, and would be made public on Tuesday 18 February 2020. A pilot would be carried out first with a small number of providers. A more detailed update would be provided at the next meeting. The Group were asked to share their experiences of working on retention. SBM DG198

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 10 June 2020. The venue would be confirmed.

Minutes

HEMSAG/20/M1

HE Marketing Services Advisory Group meeting

Held on Tuesday 11 February 2020 at UCAS, Cheltenham.

Chair:	Sam Uzzell	University of Surrey
Present:	Anna Keogh David Moyle Demetria Maratheftis Samantha Armstrong Donald McLeod Charlotte Wilson Kate Blake James Ackroyd Peter Simpson-Leek	Leeds College of Music (TEAMS) Aberystwyth University London Metropolitan University Edge Hill University University of East London Lancaster University The University of Aberdeen University of Reading University of Bedfordshire
Apologies:	Beverley Hoare Carys Roberts Emma Leech Iain Morrison James Seymour Joan Concannon	University of Bedfordshire Bangor University Nottingham Trent University University of Greenwich University of Gloucestershire University of York
UCAS in attendance:	Adam Mitchell Deniz Gosai Mike Adams Suzanne Campbell	Head of Business Development Provider Engagement Coordinator Principal Insights Consultant Senior Insights Consultant
Presenting:	David Penney Courteney Sheppard James Durant Lauren Cooper	Head of Marketing, Content and PR Customer Experience Manager Senior PR and Corporate Communications Manager Product Manger

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves.

A1/20/02 Chair update and future of the Group

Sam Uzzell was welcomed to the Group as the new Chair. The efforts and dedication by the previous Chair, Emma Leech, were noted, and her support and enthusiasm appreciated by all. The HE Marketing Services Advisory Group (HEMSAG) was to be a meeting with two-way communication, and the Group was asked whether they had any items they would like including on the agenda. Suggestions included:

- feedback from the other advisory groups. The structure of UCAS' groups and forums was explained, and UCAS was working on how to improve communications with the UCAS Board and Council, as well as the advisory groups. A copy of the structure would be sent with the minutes
- more statistics. The Group was asked to let UCAS know if they wanted to delve deeper into any of the statistics shared

DG
HEMSAG75

At the suggestion of the new Chair, a timeline would be added at the start of each product presentation, so the Group was clear on where UCAS was with development.

A1/20/03 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

HEMSAG65 – questions relating to mental health provision had been added to the freshers' survey. This action was closed.

HEMSAG68 – UCAS was in discussions with JCQ to align the embargo timings. As soon as the timings were confirmed, they would be communicated to the Group. This action was closed.

HEMSAG69 – the release process was the provider's responsibility. Self-release would be discussed during the meeting. This action was closed.

HEMSAG70 – the question relating to an applicant's GDPR preferences in UCAS Sync would be discussed offline. This action was closed.

HEMSAG73 - advertising strategies in the Hub were discussed during the meeting. This action was closed.

A1/20/04 15 January data highlights – including end of cycle and self-release data

A presentation on the 2019 end of cycle and 15 January 2020 statistics was given to the Group.

The following points were noted:

- EU applicants were protected by Brexit for two years, so the effects would not be seen until after then.
- The coronavirus was causing concerns for international teams. Providers had sent their applicants communications, however they would also like an update from UCAS. It was suggested that modular start dates could be offered for the applicants affected. Following feedback from the Group, this issue was immediately raised at Executive level at UCAS.
- Self-release had not caused providers any issues. Although UCAS had not actively communicated the option to applicants, providers had encouraged them to use it. It was confirmed that the number of applicant errors when using the service was low. Statistics showed that around 9% of applicants took a course through Clearing which they had previously been offered but declined, and around 70% reverted back to one of their original five choices.
- One in four applicants received conditional unconditional offers. UCAS and the Office for Students (OfS) often note statistics in their reports, but no definitive processes had been released. Members noted that providers would like guidance on the matter before they prepared to stop offering conditional unconditional offers.
- It was noted that the number of applicants would be increasing from 2021.
- More international applicants were applying to providers before the 15 January deadline, although the reason for this was unclear.

A1/20/05 Updates of UCAS' media projects

Unibuddy

The Unibuddy partnership presentation was shared with the Group. Feedback included that, due to budget restraints, could the pricing model be a package cost, and not separated by activity.

The Group asked for statistics on how many applicants enrolled to a university, after speaking on Unibuddy. It was confirmed that UCAS would need to wait a full cycle before gathering this information.

AM
HEMSAG76

A further update would be provided during the next meeting.

DG
HEMSAG77

Civitas

UCAS was partnering with Civitas Learning to gain more student data, including qualitative and quantitative data on student retention, and those who drop-out. Civitas had already worked with some UK organisations, and UCAS would limit the amount of engagement to begin with.

The partnership was still in its early stages, and would be made public on Tuesday 18 February 2020. A pilot would be carried out first with a number of providers.

The Group had a concern that this could be viewed as excluding a number of students, although in theory these students would receive greater support.

Application and Decision Tracker

A presentation on the Application and Decision Tracker was shared with the Group.

Decision Tracker would be broken down into reasonably size developments, and improvements would be released when ready. From 2021, the new Tracker would include two years of historical HECoS data.

It was confirmed that providers would be able to export Power Bi data, initially in a PDF, and custom groups would roll cycle-on-cycle.

Following on from the meeting, a webinar was held where members of the Group were invited to attend.

A1/20/06 Clearing Plus

A presentation on Clearing Plus was shared with the Group. There was a discussion on targeting, and it was confirmed that if providers were interested in only one set of applicants, then they would be able to specify this. It was confirmed that if an applicant didn't hold a selected qualification, they would still be able to see the course in Clearing Plus if they matched to another criteria (such as location). Distance from provider would be a target option.

The wireframe was shown to the Group. Access to Clearing Plus would first be given to the UCAS Correspondent, and they would then be able to give access to colleagues.

The Group requested that courses should be grouped into subject areas, and SIMD should be used instead of POLAR. In future, UCAS would like to build in specific subject grades.

Providers would be able to update entry course criteria or remove courses, and this would show to the applicant in near real-time.

Logo and text, in the enhanced package, could be applied to all courses. UCAS had not yet agreed on the deadline for providers to decide whether they would like the enhanced package, but it was likely to be in May 2020. The enhanced package would not affect where the listing appeared (i.e. would not push the course nearer the top).

A webinar was taking place on Monday 17 February, and the Group was encouraged to take part.

A1/20/07 University profiles on ucas.com/the Hub

The 'inspiring choice' presentation was shared with the Group. It was confirmed that the number of cities would be expanded, and UCAS would like to discuss with the Group what constituted a city.

The Group suggested the following should be considered for inclusion:

- Listings should not be alphabetical, as this was unfair on providers lower in the alphabet.
- Templates should be editable.
- Unibuddy should be part of a basic package.
- The content of what was included was key.
- Could UCAS pull information from elsewhere, as this would be additional work for providers.
- UCAS was in talks with the BBC around bitesize content, in the hope that it could reach a younger audience.

The Group was asked what they would like to see if this was a paid for service. Suggestions included:

- use existing surveys to establish social verification
- expand leads into Clearing
- end user business managements
- virtual tours and live events
- harvest existing content and add to ucas.com
- postgraduate course listings

UCAS had not yet started discussing pricing for this service.

A1/20/08 UCAS PR – the story of our story

UCAS was changing its PR stories and approach. Through specialist publications and websites, such as WonkHE, UCAS was trying to make data more relevant and visual to applicants and students. Instead of UCAS putting information out to the public, and allowing journalist to make their own league tables, it had tried to control the predictions, by making messages more relevant and purposeful.

The Group confirmed it had picked up on the shift in UCAS' messages. It was confirmed that UCAS would continue to provide information and evidence, but would remain neutral.

The Group asked if UCAS could comment more on distance/blended learning, and would like UCAS to carry out more early analysis, such as how school courses affected university course choice.

The following content pages were shared during the meeting:

www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2019-end-cycle-report

www.thetimes.co.uk/article/now-is-an-ideal-time-to-get-a-university-place-ucas-says-x76lrxh0p

wonkhe.com/blogs/sqa-confirmation-and-clearing/

www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/2020-vision-aiming-high-while-population-low

[inews.co.uk/news/education/strings-attached-university-offers-set-to-fall-1379695](https://www.inews.co.uk/news/education/strings-attached-university-offers-set-to-fall-1379695)

www.thetimes.co.uk/article/universities-lock-in-quarter-of-students-with-guaranteed-place-3vbfm2bsl

A1/20/09 Any other business

It was asked whether an update on postgraduate trends could be provided at the next meeting.

DG
HEMSAG78

The next meeting would take place at Lancaster University in June. The date was still to be confirmed.

Minutes

IAG/20/M1

International Advisory Group meeting

Held on Thursday 6 February 2020, at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Chair:	Annie Brunt	Manchester Metropolitan University
Present:	Anne Marie Graham Anthony Manning Charley Robinson David Bailey Jane Dunn Jenny Oxley Oliver Phillips Tessa Bell Tino Santonocito Tom Snell	UKCISA University of Kent (by Skype) BUILA Nottingham Trent University Aston University Leeds Arts University British Council The University of Edinburgh University of Buckingham Teesside University
Apologies:	Chris Chang Lamberto Caccioli Stephanie Harris	Portsmouth University Royal Birmingham Conservatoire UUK
UCAS in attendance:	Aaron Powell Deniz Gosai Mark Wilson Simone Drinkwater	Chief Technology Officer Provider Engagement Coordinator Customer Experience Manager – Agents Head of Implementation (New Business)

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves.

A1/20/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

IAG160 – communications on what consent information was sent to applicants still had to be sent to the Group. This action remained open.

IAG164 – Mark Wilson was still speaking to UCAS' Finance Team to obtain statistics on applications fee.

IAG165 – a communication was included in the provider bulletin during January for expressions of interests from private colleges and Northern Irish providers. No response had been received. A further communication would be sent out, as well as some information in the BUILA newsletter.

IAG167 – UCAS had spoken to a number of agents and universities and understood that the process between agents and providers had room for improvements. This was discussed in more detail during the meeting. This action was closed.

IAG168, IAG169, IAG170, and IAG172 – An update on these actions had not yet been received. UCAS agreed to send the Group the update as soon as possible.

IAG173 – While international application dates and deadlines were being regularly discussed at UCAS, no current amendments were taking place at present. Non-EU applicants were more likely to meet the 15 October deadline compared with EU and UK applicants. However, there was also more 'late' applications from this set of applicants.

A1/20/03 Aims and purpose of the Group (objectives of the group), and ways of working

Paper IAG/20/001 was shared with the Group prior to the meeting. An overview of the purpose of the Group was provided, and it was asked whether the Group would like to consider an alternative way of working.

Firstly, the set of objectives outlined in the paper was discussed, and it was agreed that the Group's core objectives would include:

- Support the development and rollout of the UCAS' agent portal to undergraduate applications.
- Develop concrete proposals and identify a joint approach between UCAS and the HE sector to engage with international adviser associations.
- Contribute to the development of UCAS' international strategy 2020 – 2025.

Action

However, the Group strongly believed that the students' voice should not be forgotten when discussing the objectives. It was noted that UCAS had set up a Student Advisory Group, which included representation from international applicants, and it was agreed that a report from this Group would be fed back to the International Advisory Group. Additionally, it was noted that UKCISA was also recruiting for student ambassadors, who would be able to report into forums such as IAG.

MW
IAG175

Along with the three core objectives approved, the Group suggested that the remaining objectives should be allocated to members of IAG, for them to consult with the sector between meetings. It was also requested that the voice of the agent could be considered within the objectives.

MW
IAG176

It was confirmed that unless specified, any paper shared during the meetings could also be shared externally. All papers and minutes from the meeting were available on the provider site – ucas.com/international-advisory-group. If a member of the Group could not access this page, they were asked to contact Deniz Gosai – d.gosai@ucas.ac.uk.

Group
IAG177

The Group was asked to vote on their preferred ways of meeting, as outlined in the paper. After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that the meetings would continue in the current format, with three face-to-face meetings per year. However, the October meeting would be rescheduled for November. In addition to this, virtual sub-groups would be set up to discuss the above objectives, and if this way of working was successful, then meetings could potentially be reduced to two physical meetings per year.

DG IAG178

UCAS' corporate strategy would be circulated to the Group once it had been published.

MW
IAG179

A1/20/04 Discussion on Sync and revised timeframes, including the implications of the full range of international activities

An overview of UCAS Sync was given to the Group. Paper IAG/20/002 was shared with the Group prior to the meeting.

Originally, UCAS had communicated that development changes would be in a 'big bang' approach, so that a new application system would be introduced in one go. However, due to internal factors, including pace of development, and external factors such as possible change in light of admissions reviews from OfS and UUK, the Group was informed that this would not now happen. A more incremental approach, involving greater flexibility and less risk for all, would be adopted. It was confirmed that UCAS would be implementing some changes that would work with the old system, therefore, some changes would be on the old 'legacy' system and others built new. However, UCAS would promote consistency as much as possible.

There was a strong emphasis in UCAS' corporate strategy on international – one of the six objectives of UCAS' 2020 – 2025 strategy would be 'to connect the world to UK higher education'. The UCAS' international approach was highlighted in the paper, and three options were put forward to the Group.

Option 1 – UCAS controlling share acquisition or joint venture with an international student recruitment agency or other commercial organisation through which UCAS could deliver advice, support, and placement services to prospective international students, and generate revenue for students placed.

The Group raised concerns with this option, especially around how it would be financed, and that agents might view it as direct competition. It was suggested that UCAS first had to decide which was the best option for the applicant. In addition, some larger agents were already very powerful, and if they worked with UCAS could have a bigger share of the market.

Option 2 – UCAS application centres in key markets, enabled by a partnership or JV approach. Establish partnership(s) giving access to venue and marketing/outreach infrastructure to offer seasonal or ‘pop up’ application centres at peak times in key markets.

The Group was not sure what would be offered differently to that already available during the British Council fairs, and other fairs that were already taking place. It could also be risky running partnerships seasonally, as UCAS would only be reaching out to a number of applicants. It was noted that providers already spoke about UCAS during their presentations and conversation, and so UCAS should utilise this more.

Option 3 – UCAS adviser franchise model, in which we seek to establish a UCAS-accredited independent adviser network in key markets or online.

The UCAS adviser franchise model was based on the adviser being self-employed. This option also raised some concerns, as some countries did not accept agents well. It was suggested that UCAS could partner with the British Council with this, when the adviser would be salaried by UCAS, but staffed by the British Council. The Group was clear that the burden of cost should not be put on the applicant.

MW/OP
IAG180

The Group also suggested that there might be a fourth option, where the applicant paid a different fee, depending on the service they received. The only concern with this was that some providers already paid their agents to carry out additional work.

Overall, it was agreed that UCAS had to consider the benefits for the students from the different options. Additionally, the same approach would not work for all countries, and so different scenarios might need to be considered for different markets.

A1/20/05 Agent portal update and discussions

The agent portal was outlined in IAG/20/002. It was confirmed that the undergraduate agent portal would not be ready for the 2021 recruitment cycle.

MW
IAG181

The Group felt that if UCAS could solve the problems with the portal, it would help increase international applications. Improvements asked for in the portal included adding international qualifications and verifications checks, as well as a Tariff calculator for international qualifications. Post-study work had increased demand from international students and was an area providers were focusing on. It was suggested that UCAS should obtain feedback from agents who had used the postgraduate portal, as well as agents who had registered interest in undergraduate portal.

MW
IAG182

Overall, it was concluded that UCAS had to think more broadly about the international journey, as there was value in solving individual problems one at a time.

A1/20/06 Statistics update – end of 2019 cycle and 15 January deadline statistics

A presentation on the end of cycle report and January 15 deadline statistics was shared with the Group. Members were asked to indicate what their own sources of market intelligence were saying and if there was a consistent picture with the UCAS statistics.

Application numbers from the USA had been flat, and conversion rates were lower. Although it was not clear why this was, it was suggested that Brexit had a negative impact within the USA market, creating an image of an unwelcoming study destination for international students. In contrast to this, anecdotal evidence suggested that Scotland had seen a different picture and had an increase in applications from the US. Applications and conversions for traditional courses had also dropped, but medicine had increased.

Providers had increased their interactions with China, which might have contributed to the growth seen there.

A special report on international matters would be published on the 20 February 2020. The report would be circulated to the Group for their feedback. It was also suggested that a session could be held at the BUILA conference on 8 and 9 July, and UKCISA could possibly do something similar.

The January 15 deadline report did not include data showing whether particular subjects had seen growth, but this would be available in the end of cycle report.

The group would expect to see an increase in demand for courses at providers located in Scotland from EU applicants, as this was the last year that tuition fees were paid for by Scottish Government (for the moment). Generally, the group was inclined to think Hong Kong increases (despite demographic decreases) could be because applicants want to study outside of HK due to political uncertainty.

The analysis and insights information was available – ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2019-end-cycle-report

MW
IAG183
BUILA/
UKCISA
IAG184

A1/20/07 Follow up on UCAS Hub

Paper IAG/20/003 was shared with the Group prior to the meeting.

It was asked how UCAS could help with providing information on scholarships and bursaries to international applicants. Feedback included:

- Providers who used financial incentives to attract international students would find this helpful as a marketing tool.
- Some providers had no/few financial incentives and information on this was hidden on their website.

- Scholarships often attracted large numbers of underqualified applicants, hence application to offer conversion rates were low.
- Many applicants who were in need of a scholarship would not attend a course, CF IAG185 unless they were offered a full scholarship.
- Many providers offered scholarships after an offer had been made. It was suggested that this information could be made available on the information and advice section onucas.com.
- It was suggested that it would be beneficial to include government loans from different countries. Information needed to be pushed to sponsored students.
- It was suggested that UKCISA could improve the work around scholarships and bring together case studies to promote on the website.

Once established, it would be up to each individual provider how they wanted to make use of the collection tool to promote their scholarships.

UCAS was keen to engage with providers as critical friends on this area. It was agreed FW IAG186 that some information would be sent to the Group with further details.

A1/20/08 Roundtable updates

Updates from sector bodies was given:

UKCISA

- Currently selecting first cohorts of international student ambassadors. These included students from Scotland, Wales, NI, EU, and Non-EU. UKCISA would be in touch with the Group to see if could feed into UCAS channels.
- Working on the 'we are international' campaign – especially around Brexit.

BUILA

- Conference being held on 8 and 9 July in Newport Wales. They were inviting proposals for breakout sessions.
- Regional interest groups had been set up. The next group was to be held in India, Dehli. Africa interest group would be held in March 2020.
- Inputted in UUK graduate input projects.
- International Director forum was taking place 24 March 2020.
- DfE was seeking input to measure international students experience and satisfaction.
- Supporting UKCISA with the 'we are international' campaign.

British Council

- Aligning towards their 2025 refresh strategy. They were keen to understand from the sector what the value was with what the British Council did.

Providers were also being questioned on what they were doing to compensate environment offsetting, in terms of their international students.

A1/20/09 Any other business and close

Coronavirus

A short discussion on the coronavirus was had. Points raised included:

- The British Council was in process of communicating information, which would be circulated shortly.
- BUIA was meeting with the British Council China on 12 February 2020, and was happy to take any questions the Group might have.
- China and Taiwan were putting online provisions in place for school and university teaching and assessment, Hong Kong had yet to do this.
- IELTS test centres in affected areas (China, HK) were closed for much of February and possibly longer.
- Some applicants were not able to get back to UK to complete their studies.
- Admissions team would need to carry out some of their work later in the cycle than they would normally do.

MW
IAG187

The Group asked whether UCAS could track the affected markets, to see if applications had slowed down.

UCAS other updates

Which? University

UCAS had teamed up with Which? University resources to bring students tools, information, and resources, which would be available on ucas.com. Such tools would include the student budget calculator, city guides, subject specific personal statement advice, the complete guide to higher and degree apprenticeships, as well as peer-to-peer insights into different careers, and a full library of teacher resources and lesson plans.

Accommodation platform

A centralised accommodation service would be launched by UCAS Media in spring 2020. The aim of this service was to bring together private and university student accommodation for the first time. This was developed as a result of direct student feedback. The aim was to create a channel for students to understand what was available in the context of the local market, and provide the clarity and parity of search the students have asked for. The service would compliment existing marketing with a strong focus on data accuracy and quality. Accommodation teams would also be fully supported in managing their own vacancies.

Communication would be sent to providers on 6 February 2020, and a webinar would also be held on Tuesday 25 February 2020. UCAS was keen to hear providers' feedback.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 4 February 2020, and various aspects of the Board were discussed. It had been agreed that the Chair of the Board would be independent. The proposal to rebalance the representative of the board, to include a mixture of HE and those with specific skill sets (digital, data, and technology), had also been passed.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on Thursday 11 June 2020. The venue was TBC.

Minutes

PAG/20/M1

Postgraduate Advisory Group meeting

Held on Tuesday 25 February 2020 at UCAS, Cheltenham

Chair:	Michelle Magee	Canterbury Christ Church University
Present:	Bhavesh Varsani Jayne Hines Jo Faulkner Kelvin Fawdrey Owen Lords	University of Westminster Plymouth University University of Bristol Greenwich University Buckinghamshire New University
Apologies:	Alex Malin Cassandra Buckingham Lorraine Hodgson Nick Hull Alistair Garmendia	The University of Warwick University of Essex Lancaster University University of Southampton University of Winchester
UCAS in attendance:	Clare Cozens Deniz Gosai Louise Deer Harry Haines	Relationship Manger Provider Engagement Coordinator Insight Consultant Service Delivery Partner
Presenting:	Fiona Johnston Helen Puerta-Terron Kate Bevan Kate Westmacott Mark Wilson	Director of Operations Product Owner Product Owner Service Delivery Manager Agent Experience Manager
Observing:	Linda Morris	Service Delivery Manger and People Manager (Collect and Search)

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves.

A1/20/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

PAG097 and PAG098 – these actions were covered during the meeting and were closed.

PAG101 – all ‘lunch and learns’ were currently on hold at UCAS. They would be revisited again in the future.

PAG102 and PAG103 – qualification and English language competency tools had been put forward as an enhancement.

PAG104 – the postgraduate backlog was being reviewed by the product owners. The Group noted that they still wanted to see the postgraduate backlog.

PAG106 – a business rules and admissions principles (BRAP) item would be included on the July 2020 agenda, as a more detailed update would be available then.

A1/20/03 UCAS Sync update

Fiona Johnston, Director of Operations, confirmed she was the UCAS Executive sponsor for UCAS Sync, and was working on the project full-time. UCAS apologised for not delivering UCAS Sync on time, and not being able to answer all questions immediately, although providers were encouraged to continue asking questions.

A UCAS Sync presentation was shared with the Group. It was noted that it had been paused for a number of reasons, including the fact that UCAS’ engagement with vendors had been too late. In future, vendor engagement would be earlier. In addition, some providers had not been in a position to update their software, and it was not palatable for the sector to be managing Clearing through web-link.

UCAS was aware of what providers wanted in terms of postgraduate, but wanted to understand the sequencing. UCAS’ short-term focus was explained to the Group:

- Self-release enhancements –this would include new questions for reporting purposes.
- Widening participation questions – data governance had advised it would not have been appropriate to collect data on a short-term pilot. However, UCAS was looking at whether widening participation content could be added to the Hub.

- Single sign-on and user interface enhancements – these changes came hand-in-hand, as you could not have single sign-on without enhancing the user interface. Postgraduate applicants would use the new Apply.

The Group noted that changes had been made to shared services, such as the collection tool, which had impacted postgraduate services and caused unintentional consequences. It was asked whether changes could be communicated better with provider and vendors, as more lead time was required for testing. A critical friend's group had also been set up, and details would be passed on.

The next detailed UCAS Sync update would be at the Admissions Conference, and a further update would be given at the next meeting.

A1/20/04 Operational update

UCAS had asked the Department for Education if providers should advertise their teacher training courses, but a response had not yet been received. UCAS currently understood that it was acceptable for providers to continue advertising teacher training courses through the postgraduate search tool, as well as through the DfE service. UCAS was also working closely with the DfE to assist the transition, and ensure it ran smoothly. It was noted that the DfE was transitioning non-HE accredited schools and SCITTS for the current cycle, and HE and vendors would be transitioned for the next cycle.

UCAS would start a project shortly to look at how teacher training in Wales and Scotland would look in the future. A UCAS Teacher Training Forum was held at UCAS on Thursday 27 February.

A1/20/05 Postgraduate course listings

Some courses were listed in the undergraduate search tool, but had a postgraduate outcome. The Group was asked what their thoughts were on the best way of displaying postgraduate courses. Feedback included:

- Some applicants applied for undergraduate courses but were more suitable to a postgraduate course. If a provider advertised through the undergraduate search tool, course changes would be easier.
- Defining a postgraduate course was not straightforward, as some were not postgraduate although they had a postgraduate outcome (e.g. integrated master's).
- UCAS Undergraduate Apply was not always suitable for postgraduate courses, as providers needed to know the applicant's degree details, not their GCSEs, and so more information was often requested.
- The applicant experience was poor, due to lack of consistency. Applicants were told to apply to some postgraduate courses through UCAS Undergraduate Apply, and others through UCAS Postgraduate Apply.
- Due to using two systems, providers had difficulties in their reporting.
- It would be helpful if applicants could 'switch' between the undergraduate and postgraduate systems easier, without needing to reapply.
- Information required for marketing was different compared to admissions, and it was questioned whether different business rules could be set depending

on the course. The Group noted that April start dates were not popular with admissions teams.

- The Group liked that applicants still could select five choices.
- Some providers did not know which of their applicants would be studying part-time, until at the point of registration.

Overall, the Group could see benefits and negatives for listing courses in the same place.

UCAS' next steps were to work closely with other providers on how course listings could be improved. Conversations would also take place at regional forums, and with colleagues at UCAS who worked on admissions. The Group reminded UCAS that the student perspective should also be considered.

KW/KB
PAG110

A1/20/06 Agent portal update

A soft launch of the agent portal had been run with UCAS Postgraduate. While the approach had its advantages, it also put a ceiling on the benefits which UCAS could offer to agents.

The soft launch had seen an increase in agents using the portal (as of October 2019, 120 agents had onboarded, which was around 90% of postgraduate applications). Following the announcement that UCAS Sync was to be put on hold, the aims were revised, and the success measurement would be calculated by the volume of applications, instead of the number of agents onboarded. In addition, it was noted that 244 individual users now used the portal.

The following new features had been enabled:

- Agents could create new applications, or link to existing ones.
- With the appropriate consent, agents could have the same abilities as applicants.
- Agents now received an email notification when a change had been made, to prompt them to sign in and update the application.
- A tag feature had been introduced for managing group applications.

Filters had also been added to the provider view, so they could see which applicants had been supported by an agent.

Although the agent portal developments were being factored in with regards to the UCAS Sync project, it was unclear as to when agents would be able to use the portal for UCAS Undergraduate applications.

The Group noted that agents would not use the portal if they could not receive their commission through it. Positive feedback had been received from agents about the specific features it offered. However, it was noted that UCAS' portal was GDPR dependent, whereas providers portals were not as much – agents were finding this difficult to understand. UCAS was working closely with the International Advisory Group, to ensure it was fully fit for purpose.

Action

Information and guidance had been produced for the portal, including a full guide, online modules, and short video guides for new functionalities. Links of these guides would be sent to the Group.

MW
IAG111

A1/20/07 Recent/upcoming feature delivery

The new search tool was due to go live on Friday 28 February 2020. This would be linked to the Hub, and have some new features.

A demonstration of the new search tool was given to the Group. Future improvements included:

- Enhanced map feature. (UCAS was ensuring the pins were in accurate positions.)
- Fixing the bug so that applicants could select taught and research at the same time. An email was sent to the Group directly after the meeting for feedback.
- Improving the university or college filter.
- Providers who had not yet uploaded an image were being chased.

A modal, informing applicants that more than one course option was available, had been implemented, although, UCAS was considering removing this, and reviewing back to the course summary page. The relevancy of courses was also be revisited.

It was confirmed that the Unibuddy service had been implemented in the undergraduate search tool, and would be expanded to the postgraduate search tool in the future.

CC IAG112

There was a short discussion on the filters. Updates included:

- Reference status filter was now available. This allowed providers to filter applications where at least one reference had been completed. Completed references was defined as one or more.
- Date boxes was still available. However, providers could also now see applications which had transitioned within date range. This filter would only work for applications submitted after the filter was implemented (4 December 2019).

Finally, it was noted that if providers wanted a document upload as a specific filter, they should contact Claire Howson at c.howson@ucas.ac.uk.

Group
IAG113

A1/20/08 Any other business and close

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 1 July, potentially at the University of Westminster. It was agreed that Jessica Trahar, Office for Students, would be invited.

Minutes

QAG/20/M1

Qualifications Advisory Group meeting

Held on Tuesday 3 March 2020 at UCAS, Cheltenham

Chair:	Amy Smith	Nottingham Trent University
Present:	Anna Rogers Clare McNicholl James Seymour Michael Upton Phil Bloor Rob Evans	Tonbridge School CCEA (by video conference) University of Gloucestershire London Metropolitan University Sheffield Hallam University Qualifications Wales
Apologies:	Alison Matthews Bethany Hughes Lisa Littlewood Liz Wyman John McNerara Marian Curran Suzanne O'Farrell	University of Oxford Ofqual Bournside School and Sixth Form College Association of Colleges FAB St Brendan's Sixth Form College, Bristol ASCL
UCAS in attendance:	Ben Jordan Deniz Gosai Jo Boyd	Senior Strategy and Insights Manager Provider Engagement Coordinator Service Delivery Manager (Results)

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves.

A1/20/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

QAG068 – UCAS had requested HESA did not include international qualifications in league table calculations. No further feedback had been received from providers regarding this.

QAG069 – An item on apprenticeships was on the Student Advisory Group meeting agenda, which was taking place on Wednesday 18 March 2020.

QAG073 – It was agreed that discussions about ESOL qualifications should be deferred until Ofqual was able to attend.

QAG075 – The T Level action plan was discussed and this action was closed.

QAG076 – UCAS was still looking into obtaining data on the use of Functional Skills in the application process, including the number of students who present them. UCAS was also exploring how it could understand the level of provision of these qualifications.

QAG077 – Information on SPA guidance on native language qualifications was sent to the Group prior to the meeting. It was noted, however, that a handful of queries on this had been received recently. Group members confirmed that schools would often advise that the applicant should study three+ A levels, as not all universities would accept the native language qualification. Universities confirmed they would take into account the predicted grades of the other subjects studied, before making a decision. It was asked if UCAS could produce some guidance on this, and incorporate other courses such as general studies, Extended Projects and the Welsh Baccalaureate. The Group would also review SPA's guidance to determine if it was still fit for purpose.

QAG078

Discussion on Guided Learning Hours (GLH) (related to action QAG074)

A GLH graph was shared with the Group. The Group agreed that, for zero GLH, it would consider the TQT and specification of the qualification, to understand the outcome. However, generally, providers would consider it as band size one, regardless of the TQT.

A number of options relating to the 4,000 GLH were given to the Group. Overall, it was agreed that a student could not complete 4,000 GLH within two years, and so the Tariff should be capped at 4+4+4.

A1/20/03 End of Cycle Report

Security Marking: PUBLIC

Document Owner: Provider Engagement Coordinator

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Last updated: 21/04/2020

The End of Cycle Report was shared with the Group. It was noted one in five applicants in the 'other' category held an OCR Cambridge Technical.

When discussing the predicted grades work as part of the reform and reimagine project, the group noted that schools could previously predict a range of grades (such as B/C), but this raised concerns relating to contextualised offers, and whether providers would look at the top or bottom of the range. The idea to reintroduce this was discussed at a critical friends' meeting. Ben Jordan, Senior Strategy and Insights Manager, agreed to find out how it would be recorded if someone was predicted BBB, BJ QAG079 but they achieved ABC (for example).

The Group requested further data on the presentation of the EPQ qualification and how this related to the decline of the AS. BJ QAG080

A1/20/04 Confirmation of the UCAS Tariff points for the May 2020 update

Three new qualifications had been added to the Tariff since the Group last met. The Group approved the new Tariff points.

It was noted that UCAS had been in initial discussions with the Ministry of Defence regarding the inclusion of its qualifications, and that this would be likely.

A1/20/05 T Levels: Feedback received from the sector

UCAS had recently requested that providers send them suitability statements for T Levels, in line with previous qualification reform statements. The feedback received to date was shared with the Group. One provider had released a statement on T Levels, and it was hoped that other providers would follow. UCAS would be collating the statements and adding them to ucas.com.

Additionally, the DfE specification was nearly complete, and would be published shortly – UCAS would communicate this once ready.

There was some concern regarding the post-16 review, and potential impact on the qualifications students presented. It was noted that OCR was due to host a conference on this issue on 7 April. However, this event had now been postponed due to COVID-19.

The Group agreed to review the qualification reform guidance, and feedback on what was valued, what was missing, etc. Group QAG081

The T Level action plan was shared and approved. It was noted that, if QIPs were to be continued, they should be added to the plan.

A1/20/06 Acceptance of Level 3 apprenticeships survey – interim findings and next steps

An [apprenticeship survey](#) had been sent to providers to find out what their acceptance rates for apprenticeships would be. The responses received, to date, were shared with the Group. The Group was encouraged to complete the survey. A workshop with the DfE was to be held on Wednesday 18 March 2020 to discuss how students undertaking Group QAG082

apprenticeships could be encouraged to progress to HE. UCAS had not yet received a request from other home nations to do the same.

Providers noted that currently they had only seen a small numbers of applicants applying with apprenticeships, and so there hadn't been the need to review their approach/processes. Additionally, the approach would also be considered non-standard as apprenticeships were so diverse. It was also questioned how many applicants would enter HE after completing their apprenticeships, as many would continue working.

A1/20/07 JCQ embargo

This cycle, the embargo lift time would change from 06:00 on A level results day to 08:00. Initial feedback received was that changing the time was in the best interest for applicants.

In previous years, the Pre-HE sector would receive a list of students who were placed or unplaced at 06:00, but this year they would receive this at 08:00. Some advisers had raised concerns, and the Group was asked how UCAS could help support them. One Group member noted that the schools list was a relative new concept, and they had managed previously. It was also suggested that UCAS could implement a 'UCAS embargo' with schools, and offer the list earlier.

It was noted that the list only included placed/unplaced applicants, and did not indicate which had obtained their insurance choice. These applicants could also be vulnerable and would need support, along with those who had chosen to go through Clearing. The Group was more concerned that advisers should inform parents of the change in the embargo time, as some applicants might receive their results after their parents had left for work.

The Group was notified that the change in the embargo included postal communication. Therefore, any post received by the applicant before 08:00 would be counted as a breach.

The Group agreed that the timings should be aligned.

A1/20/08 Admissions reviews

The Office for Students admissions review consultation had been published. The review was focusing on the whole student journey, for England only, and would include all domiciles. Ten issues across the journey had been identified, and some cross-cutting issues highlighted.

It was agreed that the next meeting would feature a deep-dive on the reform and reimagine proposals.

A1/20/09 Future of Qualification Information Profiles

UCAS was in the early stages of planning a summer review of the Qualification information Profiles (QIPs). The review would look at the value of QIPs and what the interest/efficiency in them was. Initial feedback from the Group was that it was in

favour of Tariffs being added to the register, but it should not replace QIPs. UCAS was asking awarding bodies for their feedback.

A1/20/10 Discover Your Future: UCAS' corporate strategy 2020 – 2025

An overview of UCAS' new corporate strategy, Discover Your Future, was provided. The strategy can be found at www.ucas.com/2025.

A1/20/11 Any other business

Coronavirus

There was a discussion about coronavirus and its impact on education. However, this had been superseded by the suspension of the examination season. Please see www.ucas.com/coronavirus for the latest information.

Date of the next meeting

The next meeting would be held in the first or second week of November 2020. A calendar invitation would be sent out when the date was agreed.

Minutes

SEAG/20/M1

Secondary Education Advisory Group meeting

Held on Thursday 13 February 2020 at UCAS, Cheltenham

Chair:	Beth Linklater	Queen Mary's College
Present:	Alison Woolley Anthony Fitzgerald Dan Bishop David Ruck David Stone Elliott Newstead Fiona Beresford Guy Nobes Hannah Wallis Hilary Munday Jenny North Justine Hale Liz Allan Nikki Foster Shoonagh Hubble Steve McArdle	The Sixth Form College Farnborough Careers Development Institute South Wilts Grammar School for Girls (Microsoft Teams) Bristol Grammar School Stockport Grammar School HELOA Swansea Gower College Marlborough College Ash Green School Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe Birmingham Metropolitan College Cheltenham Ladies' College James Allen's Girls School, London Anglo European School Barton Peveril Sixth Form College Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) (Microsoft Teams)
UAG member:	Paul Featonby	Hartpury University
Apologies:	Jonny Atkinson Mhairi Moore Sally Armstrong Tom Quayle	HELOA School Leaders Scotland Bishop Wordsworth' School Winchester College
UCAS in attendance:	Callie Hawkins Deniz Gosai Hash Patel Louise Evans	Adviser Experience Manager Provider Engagement Coordinator Business Customer Service Manager Interim Head of Customer Operations
Presenting:	Courteney Sheppard Ben Jordan	Customer Experience Manager Senior Strategy and Insights Manager
Observing:	Alison King Annie Thompson James Galloway Sam Sykes Simone Drinkwater	Product Manager Marketing Manager Data Scientist – Analytical Product Development Professional Development Executive Head of Implementation (New Business)

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves.

A1/20/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

SEAG166 – this action referred to sending applicants communications on release into clearing during 2019. This action was closed.

SEAG176 – the Group was asked to contact Callie Hawkins, c.hawkins@ucas.ac.uk, if they had any pre-submission requirements for the key statistics report which could be fed into developments.

SEAG178, SEAG179, and SEAG182 – if the Group had any comments on what should be included in the help text for estranged students, had any suggestions which could be included in the outreach data field, or could highlight any help text guidance links, then they were asked to contact Callie.

SEAG187 – it was confirmed that the contacts for UCAS Media campaigns (e.g. adviser reporting) was the same as the one used for UCAS registered centre correspondents.

A1/20/03 Advisory Group survey response

The Group was thanked for completing the advisory group survey, and the consensus was that the meetings were working well. A couple of points were noted:

- The Group stated that they were satisfied with the frequency and timings of the meetings, however, agenda items often felt rushed, with the Group running out of time for discussions. It was suggested whether the Group could hold pre-meetings, and Callie was looking into creating a SEAG Microsoft Teams.
- The Group was unsure who they could share the minutes with. It was confirmed that the minutes could be shared internally and with members of networking groups unless identified as confidential. The minutes would also be available on Eventsforce, for easy access – [Secondary Education Advisory Group](#). In addition to this, UCAS was looking at improving how feedback raised during advisory groups was shared with the UCAS Board and UCAS Council, and likewise, how information can be passed to advisory groups.
- The Group liked that a university provider attended the meetings, but asked whether an adviser should attend the Undergraduate Advisory Group (UAG). It was confirmed that Louise Evans, Interim Head of Customer Operations, was the voice of advisers at this meeting, however the idea of putting together some bullet points which could be shared with the Group was welcomed.

CH
SEAG190

A1/20/04 Adviser experience update and discussion

An operational update presentation was shared with the Group.

The following points were noted on 15 January deadline date:

- UCAS received 23% more calls from students compared to the previous year. UCAS was unsure of any specific reason why there was an increase as queries were similar to last year, although it was noted there had been an increase in payment failures, which are being investigated.
- There was 28.8% increase of social media interactions, and an increase of 17% of calls to the HEP and Schools Teams.
- Peak time for applications received was 17:00 on 15 January, with over 9,500 applications received.
- In the last 24 hours before the deadline, UCAS received about 12% of total applications received in the cycle so far
- EU applications saw a decrease of 2%, with the biggest decrease in applications from Italy and France.

There was a discussion as to whether the 15 January deadline date was still valued, and whether it should be changed to a specific day to avoid the deadline date falling over weekends. Advisers agreed with the statement that A level results day was a day, and the date changed each year. However, advisers preferred a specific date and offered the following reasons:

- applicants could remember a date much more easily
- often schools spoke to different year groups about the 15 January deadline at the same time, whereas, results day was discussed with single year groups at a time
- by not having a set date, it would not help ex-students, who already struggled submitting their applications in time for references to be added
- would not affect applicant behaviour, they would still continue submitting applications at the last minute, regardless of the day

Overall, it was noted that UCAS was considering deadlines as part of the 'review and reimagine' project led by Ben Jordan, Senior Strategy and Insights Manager, and Peter Derrick, Head of Service Delivery.

The Group asked whether UCAS had carried out any research on the type of applicant who submitted late applications, as word had spread that they would still receive offers, even if they submitted late. It was stated that the 15 January was an equal consideration deadline, and so universities were still able to offer places after the 'deadline'. Additionally, with the increase in applicant population from 2021 onwards, this practice might change.

In view of the above discussion the group asked UCAS that the following be considered:

- Schools' internal deadlines could be linked to students' applications.
- To reinforce the message if an applicant required a reference from a school or college, then they must link to them first, and abide by their deadlines.
- Review wording/advice to applicants when starting an application to ensure applicants (especially ex-students) were aware upfront a reference is required and to request/notify the referee as early as possible.

It was also highlighted that the [End of Cycle](#) Report was available on ucas.com, with interactive tables, and links were available through the presentation.

It was noted that the progression reports currently put the previous year before the current year, and with the competitor reports, the advisers' school was not top. It was asked whether these could be changed.

CC
SEAG191

2021 cycle

The decision to pause and review the delivery of the complete redesign of Apply was driven by changes within the HE landscape – two admissions reviews (UUK and OfS), and an updated government manifesto all transpired in 2019. Plus, UCAS' delivery schedule also wasn't quite where they wanted it to be at the end of December. All of these factors made UCAS recognise that a 'big bang' delivery wasn't appropriate within the current HE climate.

Instead the changes for Apply 2021 would be more cosmetic, and improve usability, with the introduction of mobile usage first. The Group commented that any changes would require a lead up time, as schools/colleges would require time to practise.

The Group was happy for UCAS to use them in a pilot for a complete redesign with additional questions on Apply. Due to fairness and transparency, no live data/applications would be used but it was acknowledged end-to-end user testing would be very beneficial. It was also suggested that UCAS could visit schools, and speak to year 12 students, to hear their thought processes first-hand.

Adviser portal

The continuous improvement: prioritisation for 2020 entry slide was explained to the Group. A member of the Group fed back that this application cycle had been the worst they had experienced and reported numerous issues with the adviser portal from performance issues, lack of access to applications near the deadline, and endless scrolling. Another large FE college also confirmed performance issues near the deadline and although staff didn't initially take to the adviser portal, by the end liked it.

In response UCAS acknowledged

- There had been performance issues, and fixes had been completed and centres, especially large centres, should absolutely see a difference in performance.
- There needed to be a review of parts of the portal and user experience (UX) have been commissioned to optimise experience.

It was agreed that screenshots would be sent to the Group before developments began.

CH
SEAG192

A wireframe of potential 'dashboards' for the adviser portal was shared with the Group. The following was highlighted:

- coloured bars would be hyperlinked
- pie charts would be preferred instead of progress bars

Action

- UCAS were working towards a dashboard for pre- and post-submission, and this would change during Clearing to show placed/unplaced applicants to mirror the unplaced applicant email on result days. UCAS' initial thoughts on what this could look like would be sent to the Group for comments

CC
SEAG193

UCAS would also like to produce a report which showed which of a centre's students accessed the UCAS Hub and their activity. A wireframe was shown to the group and confirmed this matrix type report would be valued. The Group was asked to feedback, to Callie Hawkins, if there was any specific activity you would value seeing.

Group
SEAG194

Continuous improvements in May 2020 for Apply 2021 slide was explained. Staff and groups would be automatically rolled over, and information would be easier to edit. Buzzword and payment options would still need to be added. The email facility to students/groups would also be re-introduced, which the Group liked.

UCAS was also looking at whether the process for adding staff members could be improved. It was hoped that the staff member could be added to a group, permissions set, and whether they would be a referee indicated, all up front. A blanket email to the staff member, at this point, was also being considered.

Embargo

The group received information relating to an update to the embargo timings which directly affect students, advisers, and providers. Further, more formal communication would be forthcoming from the JCQ awarding body directly followed by communication from UCAS.

Offers and decisions

UCAS acknowledged that SEAG's feedback, on the potential to align Cambridge offers and decisions, to be communicated to through UCAS to both advisers and students at the same time, had been passed on for consideration.

A1/20/05 Clearing Plus

A presentation on Clearing Plus was shared with the Group. The following was highlighted:

- Clearing Plus is a new product UCAS is offering to providers and students for Clearing 2020.
- Clearing Plus will automatically be available for all **unplaced** applicants in Track (no opt-in required).
- Providers will be able to choose which courses, entry, and acceptance criteria they want to feed into a matching algorithm.
- The matching algorithm will show relevant and available courses to unplaced students from early July through to the end of August.
- Unplaced students will be able to view the matched courses via a secure portal, that they can access via Track.
- Students will then indicate whether they want to express an interest in a course or not, with their details being passed on to the course provider if they choose to express an interest.

- Students will still need to add a Clearing choice in Track.
- Six different types of qualifications would be initially be included (A levels, Scottish Highers, BTEC, IB, Welsh Bacalaureate, Access to HE Diploma).

In addition, it was highlighted:

- Students should be advised to also use the normal Clearing alongside Clearing Plus.
- Self-release and Adjustment would continue to operate for Clearing 2020.

A provider member requested that the algorithm used by UCAS is shared with providers. A webinar specifically to share the algorithm has been scheduled for. *Correction – there is going to be a video that is published that outlines how the algorithm works. This will be made available mid-March.

The Group asked that as there was an increase in applicants accepting offers in Clearing, was the number of students dropping out of university also increasing, and if so, should some information and advice be available? It was noted that universities did look at their retention rates, as this was reported to HESA.

A1/20/06 Reform and reimagine (R&R) project

Over the course of the last six months, UCAS has worked extensively with a group of universities, colleges, schools, and students to challenge ourselves and the sector to reform and reimagine the admissions cycle. In addition, our new corporate strategy, Discover your future, highlights our commitment to delivering a more flexible, personalised, and transparent admissions service.

The R&R project is exploring how to broaden student choice and raise aspirations as well as considering how admissions can be more transparent, flexible, and personalised.

Through our work with this group, we have identified a package of reforms that offer significant benefits to students, and would enhance their decision making and promote aspirational choice:

- publication of information on the level of attainment students achieve when entering HE
- developing data-driven support for predicted grades
- promotion of student choice by allowing students to swap offers at Confirmation
- allowing multiple offers within a single offer
- reforming the personal statement and reference

It was agreed that a further update and discussion would take place during the June SEAG session. In the meantime, if the Group had any innovative ideas, then they should contact Ben Jordan, b.jordan@ucas.ac.uk.

DG
SEAG195

A1/20/07 Roundtable updates

ASCL – changes to post-16 funding were taking place, as the DfE was looking to uplift courses such as maths, science, and technology. There was also a reform to post 16 discretionary funding in order to fund T Levels. There may be a fall in bursary funding for some centres, which could result in applicants being encouraged to take T Levels and not A Levels. The impact on widening participation had been raised.

HELOA – HELOA had recently held their annual conference, which saw around 250 delegates attend. External organisations attended, including UCAS who spoke about Clearing Plus and UCAS events. A range of key speakers were also present including the OfS, who spoke about their ‘Discover Uni’ software, which was aimed at providing applicants a variety of search options, and WonkHE talked about mental health. It was asked whether UCAS could promote HELOA’s outreach programme on their website and in the newsletters. The Group noted that they did not find ‘Discover Uni’ as helpful as UniStats, and in some instances advisers had stopped recommending using it to parents. The main reason for this was because it was no longer user friendly, hard to compare courses, and felt basic compared to other tools available. HELOA agreed to feed this back.

CH
SEAG196HELOA
SEAG197

Careers Development Institute – were pleased that universities were offering placement degrees, and degree apprenticeships were increasing, although they would like more higher tariff universities to offer more apprenticeships. They were also interested in seeing how some higher education providers thought they would gain high TEF rating, but it had instead highlighted areas for development. CDI were concerned with unconditional offers, as they had affected A level grades, and receiving an unconditional offer just changed the type of pressure the applicant was under. In addition, CDI would like applicants to get value for money, and destination information. UCAS confirmed that they were carrying out some research on offer making. Additionally, a key word search on ASR could be done, and screenshots on how to do this would be sent out.

CH
SEAG198

Undergraduate Advisory Group – UAG met just after UCAS’ Annual General Meeting. Changes to UCAS’ corporate governance were discussed, and the following changes were approved:

- Chair of the Board would be independent to the sector.
- More flexibility with the representation on the Board. There would be no more than six senior leaders of higher education. It was hoped that this change would help improve the recruitment of members with specific skill sets.
- Many representatives, moving forward, would not need a background in higher education. To allow a wider range of skill sets on the Board, with a focus on technical, data, and digital expertise.
- If a representative on the Board changed employment or left the sector, then the Board had the ability to ask them to vacate their office, as the representative may not be using the skill set that they were originally recruited for.

UAG also had a detailed discussion on UCAS Sync. The rest of the agenda mirrored SEAG’s agenda.

A1/20/08 Any other business and close

Callie Hawkins agreed to find out whether applicants needed a different code for the nursing bursary. Following the meeting it was confirmed that NHS bursary applicants can select the Fee code '05 DH/Regional Health'.

CH
SEAG199

If the Group had any suggestions on how UCAS could re-energise their marketing to advisers, including non-UCAS information, they should email Annie Thompson, a.thompson@ucas.uk.

AT
SEAG200

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 24 June 2020.

Minutes

TG/20/M1

Technology Group meeting

Held on Tuesday 4 February 2020 at University College Birmingham

Chair:	Liz Shillito	Lancaster University
Present:	Ben Stone	University College Birmingham
	Fiona Sanders	University of Leicester
	Garry Main	University of the Highlands and Islands (by Teams)
	Glyn Jeffries	University of Sheffield
	Judy Wilson	De Montfort University
	Karen Grant	University of Aberdeen
	Kirsten Black	University of Sunderland
	Lisa Machin	Nottingham Trent University
	Mike McConnell	University of Aberdeen (by Teams)
	Rebecca Freir	Imperial College London
	Richard Wilcox	Coventry University
	Sarah Swindell	Sheffield Hallam University
	Sion Pennant Jones	Aberystwyth University
	Suzanne Grosvenor	Newcastle University (by Teams)
	Peter Fox	The University of Manchester (by Teams)
	Will South	University of East Anglia
Apologies:	Alex Prescott	University of Portsmouth
	Amy Butterworth	University of Bristol
	Joy Bate	Liverpool John Moores University
	William Napier	University of Southampton
UCAS in attendance:	Adam Glaudot	Technology Relationship Manager
	Clare Cozens	Relationship Manager (Provider and Technical)
	Deniz Gosai	Provider Engagement Coordinator
	Stuart Baker	Technical Specialist
Presenting:	Andy Irving	Head of Technology Transition (by Teams)
	Kate Bevan	Product Owner
	Kate Westmacott	Service Delivery Manager (Collection and Search Service)
	Kim Eccleston	Customer Adoption Lead (UCAS Sync) (by Teams)
	Peter Evans	Customer Adoption Manager (Sync) (by Teams)

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves.

A1/20/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

It was noted that, due to Sync being on hold, actions TG173, TG174, TG175, and TG176 were no longer relevant, and so were closed. If necessary, they would be picked up again in the future.

TG178 – Group members were still to receive their individual provider statistics relating to the embargo training. This action remained open.

All other actions were covered during the meeting and so were closed.

A1/20/03 Round table discussion

Each provider member of the Group gave a short update on what their individual university was working on. These included:

- Correspondence was being reviewed, particularly emails, and workflows were being streamlined to improve efficiencies.
- In-house postgraduate systems were being developed. CRM solutions and admissions systems for undergraduate were now on hold, due to the delay with UCAS Sync.
- Working towards phase two of the integration of Banner with student admissions.
- Some universities were going through a restructure.
- CRM project to improve the workflow structure was being implemented.
- Resources were being reprioritised due to UCAS Sync delays.
- Student information systems were being upgraded.
- Relooking at scenario planning for Confirmation and Clearing.
- Developing new online registration system.
- Tendering for an admissions direct entrance system.
- Undergraduate data migration had been completed, and now working towards the postgraduate data migration.
- New international system was being trialled.
- Building an agent portal and API system.
- Working on student accommodation information.
- Looking at British intelligence and cyber security.

A1/20/04 UCAS collection tool API discussion

UCAS was considering developing an automated data collection service for courses data, through APIs. An open group discussion was had on this idea. Comments among the Group were mixed, but included:

- Some providers had a central, structured, and controlled process for collecting course data, whereas others did not. The latter providers were looking to improve their process, as it was currently very manual.
- Undergraduate course process was more structured, compared with postgraduate.
- Providers uploaded different information to ucas.com and their own websites. They did not want to duplicate web pages.
- Smaller providers might still want a portal to upload courses manually themselves.
- Providers would like an easier way to request information, such as interviews, DBS checks, etc.
- The student record system was very academic based. The Group noted that not having ongoing rollover dates would be helpful.
- Marketing teams had to update different pages at different times of the year. These were not managed by admission staff. In addition, marketing teams' information requirements were different to admission teams' requirements. The Group strongly agreed that the student management system was the 'source of truth', and marketing fed into this system, which in turn fed into their prospectuses.
- There was a discussion on the need for a common data model to be agreed, as this may differ in existing HEP systems. It was agreed that vendor input would also be essential.

It was asked whether XCRI (exchange of course relations information) would work for providers. It was confirmed that not all providers used XCRI, and those who did often used it as an international format for virtual learning. UCAS had looked at XCRI previously, and it was agreed they would revisit this for consideration.

The Group also asked whether all course data should be removed after the closing date, as this would help students understand which courses still had vacancies.

Overall, it was noted that UCAS would like a data model that would work broadly with all providers, and the Group was encouraged to discuss this with their colleagues, and feed any comments back to Kate Bevan, k.bevan@ucas.ac.uk or Kate Westmacott, k.westmacott@ucas.ac.uk. In addition, UCAS would like to visit some providers to see first-hand how their systems worked, and working closely with a few to establish the needs in further detail.

Group
TG179**A1/20/05 How the Technology Group could be improved – discussion**

A survey was sent out to the Group after the previous meeting, to gather feedback on how the Technology Group meetings were run. Despite the low response rate, the feedback had been positive. The Group was asked whether they had any further suggestions on how the meetings could be improved. These included:

- Could software providers be invited to attend the meetings? It was noted that UCAS had to remain impartial, and so having one software provider attend might not be relevant for providers in the Group who didn't use this vendor. Additionally, each vendor had their own user group, and members of the Technology Group were encouraged to use these meetings to obtain vendor feedback. Alternatively, if a vendor did not have a user group, providers were asked to contact their technology relationship manager, who would suggest a group to be set up.
- The Group confirmed that at times they did hear the same message more than once, although they were happy with this, as the conversations which followed differentiated.
- It was asked whether the Group's Terms of Reference should be reviewed, so UCAS was achieving what it wanted from the Group.
- The Group was happy for conversations to take place between meetings, whether this be through Teams, webinars or emails. It was very important for the Group to have input into how they managed changes.
- Roundtable discussions were useful. One Group member asked if a member of the Group could do a 30-minute presentation at each meeting.
- Group would like to hear from the student/applicant perspective.

DG/AG
TG180Group
TG181

A1/20/06 UCAS Sync update

It was confirmed that UCAS Sync had been paused, and plans were currently being reviewed, which meant that the 'big bang' approach to delivery products and services in May 2020 would not happen. Instead, UCAS was aiming to deliver smaller developments, at different times of the year. For example, self-release had been implemented in 2019, and further enhancements would be made for 2020, based on feedback received.

Additionally, there had been some architectural issues which contributed towards UCAS not getting work done in the desired timeframe, so pausing the work was the better option. UCAS would communicate a revised roadmap to providers and vendors as soon as possible.

It was confirmed, that due to the delay, the scheduled end date of odbc-link and xml-link would be extended, possibly to December 2023.

The Group asked if moving towards a more agile approach would be easier for vendors and in-house developers. It was confirmed the initial response from vendors was that they preferred the smaller releases. One reason for this was that testing could be carried out in smaller, more manageable proportions.

The Group's main concern, from a data point of view, was that mid-cycle changes would be hard to match up. Additionally, if a change was only implemented in the new product, then providers would have no choice but to use the new products, which again raised some concerns. UCAS would need to carefully consider whether running changes down two channels was the better option. For example, providers would not be able manage Confirmation and Clearing through web-link, as this would be too risky and challenging.

It was asked if providers were going to see an increase in products, such as Clearing Plus, which was not supported by any products. It was agreed there was a need to balance out the products which customers were asking for, but to implement them with existing systems. Although Clearing Plus was a new name, it was developed from the direct contact service (DCS). Clearing Plus was not expected to have any impact on student records. One member of the Group noted they had built an in-house Clearing system that used to feed from DCS, and was not happy there had been no technical consultation before Clearing Plus was announced. Adam Glaudot agreed to follow this up with the provider. AG TG182

It was confirmed that the modifications for self-release would affect some existing fields in odbc-link, such as the reason why an applicant had self-released being captured and fed back to the provider. In-house providers and vendors would be consulted on this.

A number of lessons had been learned, such as an increased consideration of providers' needs when implementing change. In addition, UCAS would be working closely with vendors, so they understood when to allocate their technical resources to the project.

There was a discussion around providers pulling reports, and UCAS pushing data. The Group was also asked to commit to helping shape the future of APIs. It was noted that providers did not need to allocate developer resource yet.

Stuart Baker agreed to put together some broad questions to send to the Group. If possible, a demonstration would also be given at the next meeting. SB TG183

A1/20/07 Any other business and close

The next meeting would be held at Lancaster University on Wednesday 17 June 2020.

Minutes

UTTAG/20/M1

UCAS Teacher Training Advisory Group meeting

Held on Wednesday 22 April 2020, virtually through Microsoft Teams.

Chair:	Lisa Bowen	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Present:	Emma Hollis	NASBTT
	James Noble-Rogers	UCET
	Jan Rowe	Liverpool John Moores University
	Julie Lambourne	University of Exeter
	Karen Hudson	Northumbria University
	Paul Barnes	AGCAS
	Phil Bloor	Sheffield Hallam University
	Simon Smith	Nottingham Trent University
	Suzanne Lawson	University of Worcester
	Tim Connole	Gloucestershire Initial Teacher Education Partnership & St Peter's High School
	Ursula Clarke	University of Cambridge
Vanessa Combeer	University of Reading	
Apologies:	Chris Whitehead	All Saints' Primary School Teacher Training Partnership
	Matt Jackson	Cromwell School
UCAS in attendance:	Deniz Gosai	Provider Engagement Coordinator
	Harry Haines	Service Delivery Partner
	Lynsey Hopkins	UCAS Sync Adoption Manager

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted.

A1/20/02 Minutes and action log from the previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

UTTAG152 – the efficiency list would be passed to the DfE for their developments. This action was closed.

UTTAG153 and UTTAG154 – Julie has not heard from DfE. Harry Haines, Service Delivery Manager, agreed to follow these actions up directly with the DfE.

UTT156 – a discussion on the Terms of Reference was included on the agenda. This action was closed.

UTT157 – Feedback on the applicant pages on ucas.com had been received from Welsh providers. A full review of applicant pages would take place shortly. The Group was encouraged to feedback improvements as and when required. This action remained in progress.

All other actions were closed prior to the meeting.

A1/20/03 Terms of reference discussion

A copy of the Group's current Terms of Reference was sent out prior to the meeting. The Group was asked whether the Terms of Reference was still relevant in light of the transition taking place over the next 18 months.

The Group agreed that they found the meetings valuable and useful, in particular relating to hearing about the DfE transition and networking with other providers.

The Group agreed that the representation of the Group was correct, and UCAS would encourage the DfE to attend all future meetings. UCAS also confirmed that they found the meetings useful, especially from an operational point of view. The Group was asked to review the Terms of Reference and send any additional comments to groupsandforums@ucas.ac.uk. Some member's term on the Group had expired a couple of years ago. Membership had been discussed at a previous meeting, and the Group had agreed that membership changes would not be beneficial to the Group due to the transition, however, if a member felt that they could not commit the time anymore, they were asked to email groupsandforums@ucas.ac.uk.

DG
UTTAG158

Group
UTTAG159

Group
UTTAG160

A1/20/04 Procedures in place regarding the Coronavirus outbreak

It was confirmed that UCAS and the Department for Education (DfE) had agreed that all reject by default (RDB) and decline by default (DBD) dates would be paused for six weeks, which meant that no offers would be declined or applications rejected until Monday 1 June

2020. This was to ensure that providers had enough time to consider applications, and applicants were able to consider any offers they received.

Feedback from the Group, on the extensions, included:

- Extensions were causing recruitment issues for some providers, as they were noticing that applicants were now taking longer to make decisions. It was agreed that Harry Haines, Service Delivery Manager, would work with the relevant teams, to produce communications to applicants, asking them to inform providers of their decisions as soon as possible. HH
UTTAG161
- It had been useful for provider's school partners with all the challenges they had faced. It had been useful for them to have a bit of breathing space with recruitment, and so they were grateful for the changes to the RBD date.
- The extension had helped short term, as providers adapted to virtual interviews.
- Applicants were still applying for places (through all schemes).

On balance, providers thought that the impact of the extension was positive, however, it should be kept under review, and UCAS would be willing to move the date forward if providers felt that this was the right decision.

The Group was asked whether they still felt that the change in the RBD date during the summer period, should remain at 20 days, or be changed back to the 40 days. Overall, the Group agreed to maintain the 20 days RBD date.

There was a discussion over how providers were overcoming DBS checks which were previously paper-based. The majority of providers were completing DBS checks online, such as using GB Group (GBG).

It was noted that exam boards were not currently issuing copy certificates, so applicants who could not supply GCSE certificates (because they were lost) were concerned as to how they would meet this condition. It was hoped that [equivalencytesting.com](https://www.equivalencytesting.com) would go live in mid-May 2020, and would also advise on replacement certificates. This was being discussed with DfE. Other providers were asking applicants who had lost their certificates to get an official letter from their school/college with full details. For non-UK applicants, needing an IELTS, providers were accepting the online IELTS and TOEFL. The Group was also asked to look at the BCU offer - <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/education-and-social-work/initial-teacher-training/gcse-equivalency-tests-non-bcu-applicants>.

A1/20/05 Update on the UTT forum

On 27 February UCAS hosted a UCAS Teacher Training customer forum, giving attendees the opportunity to hear updates from UCAS, DfE and UK NARIC, network, and share best practices in the workshop sessions. UCAS received excellent feedback on the day, with attendees grateful for the opportunity to talk to other providers and hear updates from the DfE. Some key statistics from the forum included:

- 65 attendees from Schools, SCITTs, and Universities attended
- 95% satisfaction of the event
- 41% of attendees said the event exceeded their expectations (59% said it met their expectations)
- Highlights included:

- Updates from DfE and having the opportunities to ask the DfE direct questions.
- Roundtable discussion on the skills test and for DfE to hear the direct feedback.
- Attendees felt they learned more than expected from the NARIC session and appreciated the opportunity to ask questions.
- The best practices sessions were well received, and attendees appreciated the networking opportunity.
- Attendees would like to see it repeated next year.

As a result of the feedback, UCAS would like to do another similar event next year and would come to the Group with any further proposals.

Feedback from the Group on the event echoed the feedback noted above. It was also suggested, if room permitted, that more than one colleague from the same provider could attend the event. The Group was asked to contact UCAS if they had any additional feedback, or discussion ideas for future breakout sessions.

UCAS
UTTAG162
Group
UTTAG163

A1/20/06 Update on the DfE Apply pilot

It was confirmed that the DfE was continuing to develop their own admissions service for postgraduate teacher training provision in England, with a small pilot commencing in November 2019. The pilot had slowly been growing, and at present over c.110 schools and SCITTs had been on-boarded, with the number of applications processed minimal. On-boarding of new schools and SCITTs had been paused due to COVID-19 and school closures.

The next phase of the pilot was due to commence in November 2020 with nine universities signed up to take part in an early adoption programme, the majority being Tribal Users.

DfE were continuing with their show and tell sessions with those early adopters.

Given COVID-19, UCAS was in continuous discussions with DfE regarding the Transition project. Following a recent conversation, DfE had affirmed that their target date for adopting the entire system in England remained at the 2021/22 recruitment cycle. DfE were, within the transition period, required to request UCAS to prepare for the 2021/22 cycle in August 2020, with DfE covering all costs incurred. UCAS was actively exploring what their future offer might be in other nations.

UCAS and DfE were in the final stages of working through the data-sharing agreement for the Transition.

Some key statistics, as of 14 April 2020, were shared with the Group:

- 879 applicants had registered, of these 488 were in progress; 170 were in submission; 27 had accepted, and 19 had rejected.
- 109 providers had onboarded, with 1,594 courses added (it was noted that this had reduced due to school closures in responses to COVID-19).

Finally, it was noted that UCAS Teacher Training end of cycle reporting for 2019 was due for release in May 2020. Latest monthly statistics were available here - www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/ucas-teacher-training-statistical-releases

A1/20/07 Any other business and Close

Members agreed that the format of the meeting worked very well and would like a follow up meeting at the end of June/beginning of July 2020.

Minutes

UAG/20/M1

Undergraduate Advisory Group meeting

Held on Wednesday 5 February 2020, at UCAS, Cheltenham.

Chair:	Claire Pryke	University of Bradford
Present:	Charlotte Harrison-Smith David Moyle Dawn Bell Dominic Davis Gemma Aggett Graeme Slater Helen Basterra James Marczak Joanna Labudek Paul Featonby Pete Edge Racheal Decieco Tracey Stewart Victoria Azubuine	Liverpool John Moores University Aberystwyth University University of Newcastle City University University of East London ICMP University of Brighton University Centre Myerscough University of Birmingham Hartpury University University of Law University of Plymouth University of Aberdeen University of Bedfordshire
Apologies:	Jennifer Geary Louise Foster-Agg Rob Evans Ross Agnew Shirley Lui	Goldsmiths University Aston University University of Sussex University of Cambridge ESCP Europe
UCAS in attendance:	Andy Frampton Aaron Powell Deniz Gosai Genia Garrity Louise Evans Peter Derrick	Senior Strategic Relationship Development Manager Chief Technology Officer Provider Engagement Coordinator New Products Engagement Manager Interim Head of Customer Operations Interim Head of Operations Transformation
Observing:	Simone Drinkwater Katie Ashforth-Shaw	Head of Implementation (New Business) Professional Development Executive
Presenting:	Ben Jordan Carys Fisher Fiona Johnston Jill Eyes Louise Cyprien Sam Sheppard	Senior Strategy and Insight Manager Senior Policy Executive Director of Operations Service Delivery Manager (Results Service) Service Delivery Manager (Admissions Service) Product Owner

A1/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted.

A1/20/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

UAG213 – the recommendations from the Variable Start Dates Working Group could not be progressed at present, as these were linked to UCAS Sync.

UAG218 – If providers wish to know which of their applicants had used self-release prior to adding them as a clearing choice, they will need to contact the HEP team. This information will be included in the next correspondent bulletin.

UAG221 – a draft guidance document of course listings had been put together. This would be shared with the Group once it had been finalised.

UAG222 – UCAS has discussed internally about collecting provider feedback on criminal convictions. UCAS had agreed that their current best practice guidance was still relevant, and this document would not be changed. Sessions would be delivered at the Admissions Conference for providers on this.

All other actions were closed prior to the meeting.

A1/20/03 Chair's business

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Tuesday 4 February 2020. A number of special resolutions were considered, primarily around the structure of UCAS' Board. The changes approved by members included:

- Chair of the Board would be independent to the sector.
- More flexibility with the representation on the Board. There would be no more than six senior leaders of higher education. It was hoped that this change would help improve the recruitment of members with specific skill sets.
- Many representatives, moving forward, would not need a background in higher education. To allow a wider range of skill sets on the Board, with a focus on technical, data, and digital expertise.
- If a representative on the Board changed employment or left the sector, then the Board had the ability to ask them to vacate their office, as the representative may not be using the skill set that they were originally recruited for.

It was noted that UCAS was pleased with how the meeting had gone and that the attendance rate was positive.

The Chair advised that the 15 January deadline statistics report would be communicated under embargo through the bulletin on the 5 February 2020. The main headlines included:

- UK 18 year old application rate had increased.
- Rate of application to provider types (high, medium, and low tariff institutions) had remained relatively steady.
- Non-EU applicants had increased by 14.9%, with the largest increase being from China and India.
- The top international markets were China, India, Hong Kong, USA.
- An additional international report would be shared on 20 February 2020.
- EU applicant numbers had slightly decreased overall, but with significant variations between different EU countries.
- Mature students' applications had increased, especially amongst those over 30.
- Overall, applications had increased by 1.2%.

UCAS had also distributed a number of end of cycle resources, including sector data and specific reports on unconditional offer making in recent bulletins, which were brought to members' attention.

The Admissions Conference was taking place on 28 and 29 April 2020. The Group was encouraged to attend and sign up to the seminars. UCAS was trying to limit attendance to four colleagues per provider to enable the best representation possible.

A1/20/04 Sync update and discussion

A presentation on UCAS Sync was shared with the Group. Developments for Sync had been paused, and UCAS apologised that providers would not be receiving the benefits originally agreed for the 2021 cycle.

It was noted that Sync was constantly evolving, and so developments outlined in the presentation could change. Fiona Johnston, Director of Operations, confirmed that she was working full-time on the project. Kim Eccleston, Customer Adoption Lead (UCAS Sync), had also been recruited to work on the project from a provider perspective.

March 2020 was the deadline to confirm any developments for the 2021 cycle, due to the amount of testing required.

The following points were confirmed:

- Some changes could not be added during mid-cycle, however, UCAS was looking at whether some smaller changes could be implemented mid-cycle.
- A provider facing webinar on Sync would be held Thursday 27 February.
- Vendors reaction to the delay had been supportive, especially with senior leaders, although it was clear that they would like APIs to be completed first. Vendors were also using the delay to speak with UCAS and providers to really understand what was required.

A session would be held at the Admissions Conference titled 'UCAS developments – your opportunity to find out what's next'. Conversations at the conference would be more focused on customer values. Group members noted, that with the agile

approach, it was harder for providers to obtain resource for the project, as and when it was required.

A1/20/05 Operational verbal update

January 15 deadline statistics

From UCAS' perspective, the 15 January deadline went well. Calls had increased by 23%. Calls were mainly focused around payment problems. Social media contact had increased by 28.6%, and calls to the HEP and Schools Teams had increased by 17%.

A lesson learned update would take place within UCAS on Thursday 6 February 2020, to discuss how UCAS's response to the deadline could be improved.

It was not clear why the peak in applications had been later this year. UCAS monitored large sending centres. The Secondary Education Advisory Group noted that many applicants were still missing internal deadlines, so this could account for more later applications.

It was asked whether the deadline date should be a fixed day, as opposed to a fixed date, so to prevent the deadline falling on a weekend. However, having a set date did achieve stable reporting. This was being considered as part of the R&R project.

The Group commented that forecasting and reporting, prior to the two weeks before the deadline, were not as accurate anymore. The Analysis and Insights Team at UCAS work with providers on forecasting. It was agreed that a member of the team could attend the next meeting, or information could be sent out to the Group on how they would advise to forecast.

AF UAG224

Embargo update

Ten providers breached the results embargo in 2019, with 13 applicants directly affected. However, over 500 applicants could have received communication which would have been a breach, however, it was unknown whether these applicants read the communications. A workshop was held during November 2019 for providers who had breached. The number of staff completing the embargo training doubled last year, and feedback received was that providers would like the training again this year, albeit with a fresher look. Relationship managers would be in touch with providers during March to share the first draft of the training and obtain feedback, with the final training being launched during April 2020.

In addition to the training, two workshops would be held at the Admissions Conference on the results service, including one on the dates and times of the embargo.

UCAS was also in discussions with JCQ and examining bodies about the timing of the end of the JCQ embargo. The outcome would be communicated within the next few weeks. It was confirmed that if the time did change, it would be up to each provider to determine what time they opened their call centres. The group raised concerns about the use of postal confirmations which are timed to arrive on JCQ results day, but could be delivered before the end of the embargo.

Self-release

UCAS had gathered feedback relating to self-release, and was looking to make enhancements to the service. Changes included adding faculty and campus codes to the reports, as well as reporting on the reason for applicants self-releasing themselves. More awareness about the service would be communicated this year, and improvements to the information and advice would be made too. The date for when self-release would close was still being reviewed by UCAS.

Clearing Plus would only be visible to applicants after they had self-released, to avoid confusion.

A1/20/06 Reform and reimagine (R&R) project update

A presentation on 'reform and reimagine' was shared with the Group, and some discussion questions were asked of the Group:

What were the opportunities and challenges posed by the insurance options?

- Clearing model allowed applicants to consider their options without making rushed decisions.
- Agreed option would benefit applicants and would not be a burden to providers.
- Would not want to add complexity to the process.

How can UCAS represent to potential applicants what previous applicants' grades were when accepted to a course?

- Concerns from providers on how courses could be allocated.
- Providers would like to see what their data sets would look like, to see if there were any gaps in the data.
- Could lowest and highest grades for acceptance be shown, without showing the frequency of those who had been accepted with these grades.

A critical friends meeting would be held again to look at some additional proposals. This would be concluded in March 2020. Sessions would also be run at the Admissions Conference. Finally, UCAS would also prepare data for each provider, for them to analyse.

A1/20/07 Clearing Plus

A presentation on Clearing Plus was shared with the Group. Clearing Plus was intended as a targeting tool. The following points were confirmed:

- There would be no restrictions on the number of users at a provider who could access Clearing Plus.
- UCAS was looking at different qualifications, and whether Tariff points could be used in the first year. It was noted that if Tariff was not included, Clearing Plus could be of limited use for some providers. UCAS was also considering adding specific subjects and grades, and it was hoped that GCSE maths and English could be included in the first year.
- The matches would run as close to real-time as possible.

- Courses would be pulled through from the collection tool. Providers would be able to open and close courses independently to search.
- UCAS was unable to confirm whether bulk uploads would be available for this cycle or the next, but feedback received during webinars clearly revealed that providers would like this function.
- UCAS would not be publishing the algorithm used, but would hold a webinar on how it works.
- In addition to webinars, updates would also be provided during the regional forum in May. UCAS was confident that it would be ready by Clearing.
- If an applicants had an unusual set of qualifications, their matches would not be as good (in first year). UCAS hoped to increase the breadth of qualifications in the future.
- UCAS would like to do some testing with colleagues at providers who hadn't seen Clearing Plus at all.
- Courses which require interviews or auditions would need to go through the normal Clearing process.
- UCAS would like to improve, hopefully by the next cycle, the date and times of interviews.

A1/20/08 Financial support I&A: how UCAS can help

A presentation on finance support was shared with the Group.

Scholarships and bursaries had been discussed, without the input of recruitment, for some time, and providers were trying to align the two subjects. The vision was to have better control over them, to provide enhanced information to applicants and to tie them in with admissions cycle.

The Group noted that the problem with bursaries was that they were intended to encourage applicants to apply to higher education, however, applicants only find out what they could receive after they had submitted an application. It was suggested that it would be more valuable to get the information out to applicants before they applied.

Many providers had links on their website to this information, but were not including these on ucas.com. The main reason for this was that admissions staff wanted to get everything uploaded at the start of the cycle, however bursaries were not agreed until later in the cycle.

Members were asked to contact Carys Fisher, c.fisher@ucas.ac.uk, if they would like to work with Carys on developing this area further.

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UAG225

A1/20/09 Any other business and close

Update on UCAS' capitation fee

UCAS confirmed that there would be an inflationary increase in the capitation fee by 0.51p, to £32.35. Communications on this would be going out to the sector shortly.

With regards to the longer-term pricing strategy, UCAS had explored different avenues, but currently the strategy would remain as it was.

Providers who were not at the AGM would still receive a personalised impact report.

Accommodation search

A centralised accommodation service would be launched by UCAS Media in spring 2020. The aim of this service was to bring together private and university student accommodation for the first time. This was developed as a result of direct student feedback. The aim was to create a channel for students to understand what was available in the context of the local market, and provide the clarity and parity of search the students have asked for. The service would complement existing marketing with a strong focus on data accuracy and quality. Accommodation teams would also be fully supported in managing their own vacancies.

Communication would be sent to providers on 6 February 2020, and a webinar would also be held on Tuesday 25 February 2020. UCAS was keen to hear providers feedback.

It was asked how the accommodation would be assessed and was confirmed that accommodation would need to be approved first. The Group was encouraged to ask any additional questions at the webinar.

Corporate strategy

The new corporate strategy, titled 'Discover your future', would be published shortly. The three main areas the strategy would be focusing on included:

- Greater personalisation in the admissions process.
- International – recognising the importance of increasing international market.
- Post-18 destinations – including apprenticeships, part-time, and distance learning.

Graeme Slater was thanked for his time and commitment to the Group. The next meeting would be held at UCAS on Wednesday 3 June 2020.