

Minutes

HEMSAG/22/M3

HE Marketing Services Advisory Group meeting

Held on Thursday 29 September 2022, Hybrid – at UCAS, Cheltenham and virtually through MS Teams

Chair:

Present:	Ailie Ferrari	University of Bradford (in person)
	Clare Martin	University of Plymouth (in person)
	Dan Charles	University of Gloucestershire
	Demetria Maratheftis	Point Blank (in person)
	Emily Knox	Leeds Conservatoire (in person)
	Fiona Morrison	University of Aberdeen (in person)
	James Ackroyd	University of Reading (in person)
	Lorraine Westwood	Bangor University
	Melissa Nurcombe	University of York (in person)
Apologies:	Adam Sturch	Sheffield Hallam University
	Erin Walmsley	University of Nottingham
	Ioan Evans	Aberystwyth University
	Mark Jackson	University of Greenwich
	Richard Bengree	University of Chester
	Sam Uzzell	University of Surrey
	Sarah Bostock	University of Bristol
UCAS in attendance:	Becky Hopwood	Head of Customer Growth – Education (in person)
	Deniz Gosai	Project Support Officer (in person)
	Sarah Underwood	Customer Success Director (in person)
	Vickie Phair	Lead Product Manager (in person)
Presenting:	Fin Willicott	Marketing Product Lead (in person)
	Dan Brookes	Principal Data Scientist (in person)
	Mike Adams	Principal Insight Consultant (online)
	Ben Jordan	Head of Policy (in person)
	Gabriela Geeson	Customer Insight Lead (in person)
	Richard O’Kelly	Head of Data Reporting and Research (in person)
	Cheri Toyne	Salesforce Marketing Cloud and CRM Manager (in person)

A2/22/01 Welcome and apologies

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

A2/22/02 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:

HEMSAG086 – members were asked to inform Rebecca Hopwood if they would like any agenda items added to future meetings. This action was closed but an additional action was added to include an update on Course Search Trends and website data opportunity at a future meeting. BH HEMSAG102

The other actions were all closed prior to the meeting.

A2/22/03 Course personalisation engine

A presentation was shared during the meeting.

It was confirmed that the provider pages should be live by December 2022. Members were asked to contact Fin Willicott – f.willicott@ucas.ac.uk if they would like further information.

An overview of the course personalisation engine was provided. The following was points were noted:

- The algorithm used in the course personalisation engine would not take into account the outcome of the qualification. A decision had been taken by UCAS to initially only push the courses and show all levels within the course.
- Members stated that accommodation could be a driver for an applicant choosing a university and it was asked whether this had been factored into the engine. It was confirmed that UCAS did not have accommodation information for all providers and so adding this might not be fair on providers without the information, however, if the Group felt that it was an important area to include, they would look into including it.
- It was confirmed that universities would not be put into categories. They would be grouped based on attributes.
- It was asked whether drive time would push a course result higher. The order would be based on what the applicant favoured and their personal preferences. Applicants would be able to prioritise what was more important to them and then this would be weighted.
- UCAS had not yet decided on how many results should be presented but was likely to be based on how much the applicant had favoured. Although students would be able to filter results, UCAS currently thought that more than 25 results could be too overwhelming.
- It was asked whether there could be a lot of matches for similar courses at the same provider. This was an approach which could be taken.

It was noted that UCAS was still in the early engagement stage for the engine and would not be implemented until spring 2023 at the earliest. Although it was being called 'course personalisation engine' it would not be a specific tool, but instead embedded in the applicant journey.

A2/22/04 Data points around day 28 data

A data points around day 28 data presentation was shared to the Group.

In relation to applicants reapplying to university, it was noted that UCAS did expect to see an increase in demand for applicants reapplying. This would be because more applicants would be missing out first time. It was confirmed that the unplaced cohort was mainly made up of higher number of medical applicants as well as fewer deferrals made last year. Members confirmed that they would like to understand more about reapplicants.

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It was asked whether UCAS has any intelligence to how providers would behave due to the government announcing that they would move grade points down to 2019 levels. Although UCAS hadn't heard anything yet, they were expecting to see providers firm up offers and level analysis.

Further information could be found on the [Clearing dashboard](#) on ucas.com.

A2/22/05 Policy update

UCAS' policy reports could be found [here](#).

A verbal policy update was provided.

Ben Jordan, Head of Policy, talked through the contents of UCAS' recent [WonkHE blog](#).

Other policy updates included:

- UCAS was currently producing 'A Journey to a Million' essay collection looking at what the increase in UG applicants could mean for the whole student lifecycle and those who support, including CIAG, accommodation, widening participation, graduate outcomes, student choice (including apprenticeships and HTQs) etc.
- Next Steps reports – a 'Next Steps: What is the experience of disabled students in education?' was released in July 2022. A 'Next Steps: Care Experience' report would be released on Thursday 17 November 2022.
- Next year a 'Where Next: Apprenticeship' report would be released, focusing on when the light bulb moment is for would be apprentices.
- UCAS continues with their Fair Access programme looking at what more could be done to support these students. A key output here is the Outreach Connection Service, which would seek to aggregate across outreach initiatives to allow for greater awareness and targeting. More information was sent with the minutes and the Groups thoughts were welcomed.

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- UCAS had written to schools regarding announcements linked to qualification grading in 2023 in Wales and England, along with insight on how they could best support students in an increasingly competitive environment.

The Group was reminded to send any feedback on any of the policy reports to Ben Jordan – b.jordan@ucas.ac.uk.

A2/22/06 2023 entry cycle key priorities and concerns

A small workshop was held to establish the Group's key priorities for the cycle.

Priorities included:

- Converting more efficiently – providers would like more insight on how to do this.
- Acquisition
- Ensuring the message was being received by advisers and teachers that Russell Group providers were tightening up on how many applicants they could take, so that applicants could ensure that they used their other choices wisely.

Areas the Group noted UCAS could help with achieving the above included:

- The student experience – reviews could make an impact on the next cohort and them making their decision. All parties were conscious of the number of surveys which students receive and so were doing more short, quick pulse surveys.
- Building a community – students want to feel part of something / not feel isolated.
- Cost of living – what did it mean when students arrived on campus. Staff and students mixing together. Provider would like some insight on how students had been affected by the cost of living and what support they would like.
- More intelligence on decline my place and why applicants move away from their firm choice. It was asked whether UCAS could benchmark this for the sector.
- UCAS to send the right information to the right provider contact.
- UCAS to share with providers the information they were sending to students so that providers can get some ideas on best practice.

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A2/22/07 Cycle update and decline my place

Some slides on the 2023 cycle were shared with the Group.

It was confirmed that more providers were choosing to use their own tests and/or assessments to make offers and not just looking at applicant grades.

UCAS would also be publishing unconditional offers by December 2022 but could confirmed that they had seen a drop in unconditional offers.

Rich O'Kelly agreed to send the Group analysis on decline my place.

A2/22/08 Clearing review and insight

A presentation on UCAS' email campaign over confirmation and clearing was shared with the Group.

Members noted that the email templates UCAS had designed look good. UCAS confirmed that providers could use their templates for their campaigns if they wished.

It was noted that the email 'click rate' on results day was the highest since 2019. Although it depended on targeting, it was confirmed that campaigns generally were more successful the earlier they were sent. Analysis detailing the peaks of email campaigns would be shared with the Group.

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A2/22/09 Product update

Due to time a product update was not provided. A short Teams call would be arranged to provide the update.

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A2/22/10 Any other business and Close

The date of next meeting would be confirmed soon.