

Minutes

EPG/23/M1

English Policy Group meeting

Held on Wednesday 26 April 10.00 – 12.00, virtually through MS Teams

Chair:	Brian Lutchmiah	University of Law
Attendees:	Richard Garrett	Ofqual
	Adam Green	DFE
	Prof Claire O'Malley	Durham University
	Michelle Magee	Canterbury Christ Church University
	Rob Tucker	London South Bank University
	Simon Pick	Bridlington School
	Kate Wicklow	Guild HE
	Reena Kaur	HELOA
	Lizzy Woodfield	Aston University
	Eleanor Parker	Kings College London
	Paul Smith	SLC
	Anna Gates	EDF Energy, Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice
	Arti Saraswat	AoC
	Anita Ibrahim	QA Ltd
	Nick Hull	University Birmingham (joining from 10:30)
	Dan Hurley	UUK
	Gary Lindley	Durham Sixth Form Centre
Laura Mee	Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls	
Catherine Garstang	Runshaw College	
Emma Neill	The Open University	
Charlie Leyland	OfS	
Rosie McKenna	NUS	
Apologies:	Andrew Webster	CEC
	Harvey Church	BBC London, Broadcast Engineering Apprentice
	Kevin Gilmartin	ASCL
UCAS in attendance:	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator
	Carys Willgoss	Principal Policy Adviser
Observing:	Shauna Blake	Reform and Strategy Adviser
	Haleema Masud	Policy Adviser
	Joshua Farnham	Public Affairs Assistant

Commented [CW1]: He definitely attended!

Commented [CW2]:

A2/22/01 Welcome and apologies

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

Reena Kaur was introduced to the group as a new member.

A2/22/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

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

EPG007 – An optional demo session for the new entry grade tool is being arranged internally at UCAS and English Policy Group members will be invited to this when a date is confirmed.

EPG008 – Carys Willgoss gave the group a brief update on key activities at UCAS since the group last met, this included research into the impact of the cost-of-living crisis as requested by the group. It was noted there has been a decline from 2022 – 2023 in terms of applicants as of the January equal consideration deadline, but an increase from 2020 which was the final year before the pandemic. The rising cost-of-living is impacting expectations, applicants have been considering getting part-time work, and lessening extra-curriculum activities whilst studying. Disadvantaged students are cutting back on open days and mature students are looking into getting jobs.

UCAS/DfE/IfATE Apprenticeship News

Autumn 2023 - Apprenticeship routes available on ucas.com to view side by side UG opportunities.

Autumn 2024 - Students will be able to apply for Apprenticeships on ucas.com

A2/22/03 Chairs update

Feedback from the last UCAS Council meeting

Jane Dunn the Chair of the International Advisory Group gave an update on the UCAS Admissions Review Report. Key areas the group are working on include inclusive engagement across all applicant streams, data security and anti-fraud measures for ID documents and qualifications, better qualification database references, improved communications and application process for international student journey, and better search navigations for international students to cut down on unnecessary UK-centric information.

The Reform and Strategy Adviser fed back information on the Admissions Reform report. Members were asked to break into small groups and discussed themes and time scales for a new personal statement model and other areas of reform. Points included re-considering timeline for personal statements, embedding social advantage or disadvantage due to students having more (or less) access to information. Understanding the extenuating circumstance questions which could cause cultural sensitivity to international students and anticipating those needs.

Ben Jordan presented a summarised report on 'Journey to a million' essay collection. Applications for educational training in the UK are projected to increase significantly. Two main questions arose - What action should the sector look to undertake in response to this? what could impact the increase in students seeking to higher education?

The Council were notified of endorsement from the government to making UCAS the 'go-to' place for Apprenticeships. UCAS' search function will show parity between undergraduate education and apprenticeships by the end of 2023.

A2/22/04 Feedback for Council: Council will consider UCAS' emerging international strategy at its meeting in June

The key challenges and opportunities for international admissions and recruitment in England?

How could UCAS support the English sector in realising its international ambitions?

- UCAS' International Review of 2014 still resonated
- Agents often feel they are lacking support on the process and therefore ask if they can make direct applications.
- Geopolitics are a concern with China being a major market for the majority of universities, especially in relation to postgraduate and PHD students.
- There is a challenge in communicating the reality of studying in the UK and to applicants with factors such as rent, cost of living and high transport costs. A couple of providers articulated how the monthly VISA amount required by UKVI to evidence funds is insufficient for London living, specifically – a suggestion that UKVI needs to update its policy and how UCAS can influence this.
- Students are turning up who haven't booked accommodation in advance expecting they can live out of London and travel into London without realising expense of travel in the UK. International students also want to bring dependents, but again haven't considered costs.
- International guidance counsellors and careers advisers need to all be informed of changes to UCAS processes in an effective manner.

A2/22/05 What does 'Journey to a Million' mean for England?

Carys delivered a presentation on UCAS' Journey to a Million national discussion and the impact it will have on the English education sector..

Growth is driven largely by 18-year-olds across UK and international student number. Both in England and NI growth is forecasted; whereas, Scotland and Wales see a decline overall, as the proportion of mature students is larger. Regional variances showed a 65.7% increase in the number of 18-year-olds applying to higher education from London, making it the fastest growing source region.

What could disrupt the growth?

- Changes to the pipeline of international students e.g. more Chinese students remaining in China for HE
- Shift in HE Policy
- Demand for HE hits a natural ceiling
- Economic boom period, or buoyant job market leading to a reduced demand for HE from mature students
- Prolonged recession with a worsening job market, triggering greater demand from mature students.

UCAS are looking at what the forecasted growth means for widening participation, supply and demand, competition, choices and pathways and student experience.

Three group members reported how their institutions are likely to be affected by applicant growth.

At Birmingham University, there has been a decline in subjects including languages and arts and humanities, whilst subjects such as computer science and medicine are growing aligning with government bursaries. Where demand in subjects is falling, students are more likely to be accepted with borderline grades and to be in Clearing. Whereas where demand is growing, there will be an increase in entry requirements, a more highly selective admissions process, and a likely January deadline course closure.

The Open University has seen an increase in number of students wanting to study online at a younger age, but on a full-time basis. The expectation is that the introduction of the lifelong loan entitlement will be a critical step in reforming post-secondary education.

Bridlington School have many disadvantaged students with 70% who are entitled to free school meals. They are looking to start careers education from as early as primary school. They are also looking to bring universities in to talk about careers choices and pathways to broaden aspirations as competition for places grows.

A2/22/06 Breakout Rooms

The members were invited to explore the resulting 'five big questions' posed by the 'Journey to a Million'.

- The group questioned whether the regional forecasts for London will work through as anecdotally sense that many families are leaving London due to rising cost-of-living.
- Birmingham has increased entry requirements six times over past few years and will increase for another course this year, though are looking at keeping standards for WP the same, which will result in a widening gap between the two. This will likely bring issues for transition and support for students effecting the widening attainment gaps once enrolled.
- There is an ongoing lack of support for some students with personal statement changes.
- Reducing choices for applicants could be less overwhelming.
- Do policy makers need to a more planned/interventionist approach to managing high demand and matching demand for HE with England's skills needs?

Re. UCAS' approach to equality of opportunity risk register (EORR), UCAS has responded to the TASO evidence review and its data is quoted. UCAS feel there is potential for providers to make use of UCAS' data as part of the EORR work when designing new access and participation plans.

A2/22/07 Campfire – member updates

The following updates were provided by members:

Ofqual updated the group on the upcoming summer exam season. It was suggested there will be an increase in media comments and student interest around May-June. The International

Baccalaureate and some versions of qualifications take place slightly earlier. Some changes have been made in GCSE modern foreign languages with vocabulary testing. Timetables have been given greater spacing for students in case they are unwell and miss exams. There will be an allowance in results by examiners and auditing organisations if national performance is lower to match the disruption students have faced by the pandemic.

Eleanor Parker announced to the group that she will be moving role and institutions in June but will remain as a member of the English Policy Group.

A2/22/08 Any other business and Close

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be discussed offline – the preference is for this to be held in person.