

English Policy Group Minutes

EPG/23/M3

English Policy Group meeting

Held on Thursday 11 October 2023 at University of Law, London and virtually through MS

Teams

Chair:	Brian Lutchmiah	University of Law
Attendees:	Adam Green	DFE
	Andrew Webster	CEC
	Charlie Leyland	OfS
	Dan Hurley	UUK
	Danielle Cartwright	Ofqual
	Eleanor Parker	Oxford Brookes University
	Harriette Cradock	Office for Students (Ofs)
	Kate Wicklow	Guild HE
	Kevin Gilmartin	ASCL
	Laura Mee	Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls
	Richard Emborg	Durham University
	Michelle Magee	Canterbury Christ Church University
	Lizzy Woodfield	Aston University
	Reena Kaur	HELOA
	Rob Tucker	London South Bank University
	Simon Pick	Bridlington School
Apologies:	Anita Ibrahim	QA Ltd
	Arti Saraswat	AoC
	Anna Gates	EDF Energy, Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice
	Harvey Church	BBC London, Broadcast Engineering Apprentice
	Emma Neill	The Open University
	Nick Hull	University Birmingham
	Paul Smith	SLC
UCAS in attendance:	Carys Willgoss	Principal Policy Adviser
	Nicola Turner	Fair Access Programme Lead
	Emily Bennett-Cox	Lead Data Scientist
	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator

A3/23/01 Welcome and apologies

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

A3/23/02 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:

- EG007 – Kim Eccleston has suggested that UCAS reach out to members suitable for the update as the Tool is provider focused.

A3/23/03 Campfire session:Chair Feedback from Council Meeting

- It was Clare Marchant's last Council meeting – UCAS' newCEO, Dr. Jo Saxton, will join in January 2024.
- Jon Bentley spoke about key student identifier digital data attached to students – Unique Learner Number (ULN), and the challenges of tracking young people and the data that comes with them.
- There was discussion on admissions reform at UCAS and key milestones such as changes to personal statements and admissions.
- There were concerns raised around increasing accommodation costs and the effects it has on those studying, particularly in city-based locations. It was asked what the sector can do to prepare students for the rising cost of living.

Feedback from the group for Council

More work needs to be done on cost of living and preparing students for realistic financial expectations, especially international students.

- Can UCAS build on existing research to publish further insight about how this is affecting decision making and student choice? See the [UCAS Blog](#) for further information.
- There are hidden costs, particularly in courses such as Nursing and Teaching, where travel to a placement is required. Can UCAS support with awareness raising around this?
- A member asked whether UCAS has evidence on students who start the application process but drop out before accepting a place due to concerns over cost of living. It was noted that UCAS research suggests that students aren't put off HE altogether, although different choices are made, such as studying different subjects (those where the financial return is more guaranteed) and/or different (less expensive) locations geographically.

A3/23/04 UCAS insights:

Carys Willgoss gave the group an update on UCAS' data from results day and Day 28, as well as new unpublished regional analysis. A presentation was shared and will be circulated with the minutes.

It was asked how much usage there was of Clearing Plus – UCAS will be able to share this data at the next EPG (it is not available until End of Cycle). EPG008
CW

Members welcomed the regional analysis due to its potential to inform actions to support equality of opportunity, contribute towards levelling up agenda etc., given big disparities that the analysis unveils.

A possible enhancement would be to look at who makes up the applicant cohort who choose to leave their 'home' region i.e. their IMD, qual group etc. to understand more about why this might be - is it choice driven or by necessity. UCAS will look to bring this updated analysis to the next EPG. EPG009
CW

A3/23/05 Your opportunity to inform UCAS' next strategy

Shauna Blake delivered a presentation on informing UCAS' next strategy. There has been great progress made towards the six objectives that comprise 'Discover Your Future'.

'The UK needs a single, personalised portal for FE, HE and Apprenticeships in the UK for young people and adults.'

The group were asked to discuss the value UCAS can add, and the risks it may bring.

- Students would benefit from timeline of what steps are next in the application process for different pathways (e.g. Apprenticeships Assessment Centre's for Apprenticeships). For pathways into medicine, when does UCAT need to be done?
- This needs to be accompanied by greater IAG in and around the portal (i.e. 'a scaffolded approach').
- Clarification is needed around being in the space as a HE-delivering FE college.
- National and regional skill sets need to be considered.
- Not every HE institution is a member of UCAS - how they are included as a part of it if we enter a 'single portal'?
- 'Single portal' will continue to push narrative of seamless support for students to apply for all pathway and will encourage providers and advisers to think this way – could be positive.
- Who has access to the 'single portal'? UCAS need to ensure this does not exclude any group of applicants.
- How would UCAS be a single portal for lifelong learning pathway, credentials stacking, modular learning etc.? Lots to consider.
- What would be the different offerings for devolved nations?
- Single route can be a single point of failure and has risk to consider.
- Should UCAS focus on what it currently does well?

- What would **not** happen because of this? And the impact it has on other things we already recognise as important (e.g., International fraud and services to combat these).

A3/23/06 UCAS' support for widening access: Update on the Fair Access Programme and time for discussion

Nicola Turner gave an update to the group on the Fair Access Programme and Outreach Connection Service.

Refer to the [Next Steps series of reports](#) for further information.

The group requested data on the entry rate to higher tariff universities, split by level of disadvantage.

EPG010
NT

- For now, the parental responsibility question is only asked of domestic students – UCAS is aware that this could add additional benefit to understanding the background of international students but would need to engage with the sector prior to any change.
- UCAS is actively working with TASO and recognises their work in understanding what works in widening access and participation.
- Members commented that the sector's approach to widening access and participation is likely to become increasingly personalised due to the direction for travel of the Office for Students (OfS) in England.

The group were encouraged to reach out to access@ucas.ac.uk with any questions regarding widening access at UCAS, or if they would like to do a case study to contribute to information and guidance for students.

A3/23/07 Any Other business and Close

The group were reminded to fill out the [Members Survey](#) on Policy Groups and the link was shared via email.

The dates for the 2024 meetings have been agreed:

Wednesday 1 May 2024.

Autumn date will be agreed after the meeting, offline.