

## Minutes

AG/23/M1

International Advisory Group

Held on Thursday 9 February 2023 in person at Burlington House, London, and hybrid through MS Teams

Meeting scheduled to start at 12:00 until 14:00

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Chair:	Jane Dunn	Aston University
Attendees:	Ady Yong	Aston University
	Anne Marie Graham	UKCISA
	Catriona McCarthy	Ulster University
	Charley Robinson	UUKI
	Colin Bell	COBIS
	Jacqui Jenkins	British Council
	Patrick Cosh	Cardiff University
	Ruth Jones	NCUK
	Ruth Wootton	Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
	Rachel Kimber	Kaplan
	Ryan Moran	MPW
	Ruth Wootten	Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
	Tessa Bell	The University of Edinburgh
	Ula Tang	BUILA
UCAS in Attendance:	Chris Kirk	Director of UCAS International
	Teona Droc	Customer Experience Manager
	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator
Presenting:	Rich O'Kelly	Head of Data Reporting and Research
	Carys Willgoss	Principal Policy Adviser

Action

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

### **A3/20/02 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:

IAG204 – a yearly round up summary report of IAG objectives will be shared by Chair on behalf of IAG at the UCAS Council.

IAG206 – Some applicants were having challenges paying UCAS due to an Indian bank issue which has now been resolved, it will continue to be monitored by UCAS.

IAG208 – International Career Quiz is being put to the side as UCAS currently have different priorities.

IAG217 - TNE is going to be included in the Alumni Project. UK Qualifications as opposed to UK physical ability.

### **A3/20/03 UCAS International Update**

Richard O'Kelly delivered a presentation on 2023 ECD deadline analysis.

Overall UCAS have seen an increase in non-UK applicants. The EU sharp decrease of the last two years has now bottomed-out. There has been growth across all International Education Strategy priority nations, particularly in Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and India.

There has, however, been a noticeable drop from Hong Kong and China. This has likely come from uncertain economic pressures and educational disruption from COVID. There will be a paper circulated on the differences in market strength – reviewing the divide between applicants and acceptances from UK schools. Hong Kong and China are moving to UK schools rather than pathway providers or international schools. Factors that play a role include the type of school, location, and sponsorship status. IAG266

There has been a growth in the number of students from across different regions applying to UK independent and boarding schools.

The choices of study from Nigerian students have been changing – since COVID engineering and math's routes have transitioned to medical and nursing-based courses.

Some of the UK Government interventions are said to have made an impact to applicants.

In the Middle East there is a restriction of service scholarship schemes for undergraduate students. It leaves the question of how much of the growth is

coming from funded students. There will be further focus on UG scholarships – Saudi vision 2030.

Some high-quality UK schools are setting up boarding schools in Tokyo. Similarly to the UK, Australia is going through a shortage of student accommodation, in particular university housing stock. The Chinese student demand is increasing – there is a return to Australia through traditional degree routes and two plus two programs. There are also discussions around additional work rights for international students who wish to work after studying in different regions and territories.

### Myriad

Chris Kirk delivered an update on Myriad in conjunction with its 1<sup>st</sup> year anniversary.

- 80k downloads in 12 months
- 5k website referrals a month to providers (leads)
- 450 applications in draft today

Many customers wouldn't have found UCAS.com without Myriad. It is currently available on iOS and Android everywhere but China. Currently China uses a separate app store which UCAS are looking to make it available on. UCAS are launching a Chinese language website for both UG and PG students.

York, UCL and University of Durham have recently opted into course listings 2023, and the course selection tool process is underway. Students can't submit an incomplete application through Myriad which is beneficial. Cardiff University and Jimmy Choo London Academy have joined the 'Apply with Myriad' service.

Agent portals has been soft launched in January, and access to this is currently restricted to UCAS registered centre's until quality checks have been completed.

### Feedback from Universities

The application form lacks quality and checks which creates immediate workload for admission teams. They have requested UCAS embedding tools e.g. personal statements, verified documents, useable data.

The following questions were raised by the group:

*Do students pay if universities haven't paid? What's the commercial model? Whilst building the interface and reputation it will remain free to all stakeholders, but there will be an application fee further down the line?*

*Where do the referrals and nationality come from? Is there any data on the 450 applications?*

*Where are the bulk of students from on the database?*

### **Carys Willgoss delivered a presentation on Policy Agenda at UCAS.**

The group are encouraged to deliver feedback to [c.willgoss@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:c.willgoss@ucas.ac.uk).

UCAS are going to be publishing 'Journey to a million' essay collections. It will include a set of data which covers the anticipated demand in undergraduate UK higher education to the end of the decade. Experts from the sector will be asked to contribute to what it means for their area of expertise e.g. accommodation, teaching, student experience.

Annual UG demand from the international applicants could exceed 200,000 by 2026.

- Competition in the global space is due to increase further, so UK can't be complacent about its academic and cultural offer
- Student voice is significant
- The importance of admissions and career support within the sector

New research: what's the experience of Chinese students in UK?

More people apply from China than Wales and Northern Ireland. There was however a 4% decline seen in the January deadline data, so we shouldn't be complacent with mature markets. There will be upcoming reports on India and Nigeria too.

UCAS' objectives include supporting UK HE by building a nuanced understanding of critical student populations. We plan to do more deep dive research into key countries, and in the first report, we aim to get a deeper understanding of Chinese students who choose the UK as their UG study destination and track their mindset and experiences in the UK once enrolled as students. UCAS will also be looking at upcoming trends in demand from China and work with stakeholders to build coalitions of support for data-led recommendations. They are already working with BOSSA to integrate their data around internet searches and combine with forecast data.

### **A3/20/04 2023 International Admissions Review**

A formal review of how UCAS supports undergraduate applicants, Integration API and sharing data to integrate more with other organisations. The tension between a student, school and agent needs to be relieved.

IAG267

Five main points for feedback from the group

- 1) All routes to UG (foundations / pathways)
- 2) Proactively grow new Registered Centre's and better support existing ones.
- 3) Personalised communications and IAG providing personalized help and guidance to student's journey and needs. Improve signposting at the right time.
- 4) Quality and Fraud Focus – ID, document and qualification management and verification
- 5) Improved Data for All – Reference data on schools and qualifications.

The groups comments were as follows:

Admissions as it stands is more provider focused rather than student, point four and five were favorable to focus on. Particularly making the process easier for students and prioritising them within the process. The length of application is very time consuming, so streamlining this to prevent students looking elsewhere outside of the UK and by focusing on other competing countries. Providing materials in student's native language – Myriad currently has dual language, and they can choose from 19 languages, however the application is all in English.

Strengthen UCAS' relationship with regulators, ministries of education and scholarships/bursary providers. Could UCAS work with exam boards during student's pre-higher education stage to allow a link before they make their decisions? Young people who are considering higher education are getting younger and involving parents in the loop which is just as important.

One challenge, as a pathway provider, is the connection with technology, as they have their own system there is no way of connecting that to UCAS. There will be some improved guidance on embargo this year for providers. Verification with exams taken overseas, or taken a long time ago is currently an issue. UCAS should remain an impartial international platform, and so should not show preference to any platforms.

The students may not understand their equivalent qualifications from their country when it comes to GCSE's etc. Clarity needs to be provided to encourage universities to be transparent to students prior to A level or foundation courses and get these transcripts onto UCAS. Change the way the UCAS portal acts e.g. qualification input.

Something in place to help international students and parents or guardians to go through and not have to navigate anything to do with the UG UK domestic market. The rise of TNE (Transnational Education) across institutions and how an undergraduate applies - will the platform be able to navigate this?

Two thirds of international students applied via UCAS, roughly 30,000 didn't. Agents have good relationships with universities. It was questioned whether the international market is growing away from UCAS rather than towards it.

### **A3/20/05 International Communications and IAG**

UCAS are planning the annual International Teachers & Advisers Conference in June with the objective of how they can help schools, agents and universities work together. There is discussion about content accessible post-event due to budget restrictions for some of the smaller international schools or agents. UCAS International is keen to work with British Council on hosting in-country smaller events for those unable to travel to the UK.

### **A3/20/06 AOB Close**

A request was raised for UCAS to include data protection details going forward – communicating with the parents rather than the students could be easier for international students. More information about selecting a proxy / third party contact.

The date of the next meeting is being held on Thursday 1 June 2023 at Aston University.