

## International Advisory Group Minutes

IAG/23/M2

International Advisory Group meeting

Held on Thursday 1 June 2023 virtually through MS Teams

---

Chair:	Jane Dunn	Aston University
Present:	Ady Yong	Aston University
	Anne Marie Graham	UKCISA
	Colin Bell	COBIS
	Jacqui Jenkins	British Council
	Ruth Jones	NCUK
	Rachel Kimber	Kaplan
	Rachael Parsons	The University of Edinburgh
	Ryan Moran	MPW
	Charley Robinson	UUKI
	Ruth Wootton	Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
	Ula Tang	The University of Nottingham
	Tolani Jaiyeola	Study Affairs
	Catriona McCarthy	Ulster University
Apologies:	Tessa Bell	The University of Edinburgh
Resigned:	Patrick Cosh	Cardiff University
UCAS in attendance:	Teona Droc	Customer Experience Manager
	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator
	Chris Kirk (Presenting)	Director of UCAS International
	Haleema Masud	Policy Adviser
	Kate Bevan	Product Owner

**A2/23/01 Welcome and apologies**

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

Rachael Parsons and Tolani Jaiyeola were welcomed as new members.

Felicity Lloyd, UCAS International Partnerships Manager was introduced as a new attendee of the group.

**A2/23/02 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:

- *IAG219* – The group would like a breakdown of further C&C data insights, based on country, sector and tariff level. It would be beneficial for updates to be given to the sector in advance to allow them to be more proactive of where UCAS are in the cycle.

**A2/23/03 UCAS International Update**

UCAS International have been focusing on streamlining and improving the journey of international students applying for undergraduate and postgraduate study in the UK. Two research projects have been commissioned, which support the International Admissions Review 2023. These pieces of research will support the prioritisation of solutions that will enable admissions teams to manage the increased demand from international applicants, to make more timely, reliable and robust decisions.

Feedback sessions are a big part of these pieces of research. The agencies commissioned are conducting interviews with providers looking at their pain points and needs regarding application processes, fraud, and verification services. The research results will feed into the Product roadmap and work related to this (e.g., document upload) aims to be released for the 2025 cycle. Teona Droc and Clare Cozens delivered the update.

**1) Education and Qualification data**

The advice and guidance available to a student determines whether the correct data is added within the application process. It was noted that references will remain the same in this cycle. Changes such as an international address lookup tool, refreshed qualifications reference data (e.g., country of qualification, qualifications drop-down list etc.) and school reference data (e.g., more granular data regarding international schools and colleges such as province and city) are currently in development.

**The group gave the following feedback -**

- An increase in digital pathway study will be positive.
- An opportunity to input the type of school or provider that is sending students to UK education (e.g., British, international, or local school).

- There needs to be better data in the application process to support providers with fee assessment (teachers and head teacher retention in British international schools are so low due to home fee status for their children).
- The product team conducted focus groups looking at residency and fee status, with a focus on Irish and British families who live abroad.

## 2) Data UCAS collect

The three main areas of development include document submission, redesigning fees, residency, nationality and address related questions, and changing the education and qualifications section.

It was noted that applicants need to select the nationality on their passport for where they are applying from, not the dual nationality. This is an area covered by the focus groups.

GM  
IAG268

UCAS welcomes support from the group. If anyone would like to give feedback and advice on this, contact [c.cozens@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:c.cozens@ucas.ac.uk) to discuss further.

The group agreed that a technical conversation is required, to share additional guidance on the information admissions teams need to make decisions about home or international fee status.

## 3) Document management

Providers have their own portals for document collection and management, but 50% are managing this via email. UCAS' long-term goal is to have the documents uploaded during the application process and in the future the ability to verify identification documents such as passports, proof of address and qualifications data. The group were asked how UCAS can make the admissions process trusted? This is because storing the documents meets a data protection issue with cyber security.

The group were informed about UCAS' International Admissions Development Group currently in the formation stage. Members will be made up of recruitment admissions specialists who have been in the sector for at least 2 years.

## **A2/23/04 2023 Admissions Review – Round Table**

A general cycle review was delivered by Chris Kirk and opened to the table for discussion. Applications overall are down 2% since last year. The decrease for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland has been driven primarily around certain subjects and age. There have been hits in nursing and teaching due to strikes and news on public service mixed with applicants gaining awareness of the job market. Department of Education (DfE) presenting choices that applicants have will help admissions for both universities and apprenticeships.

International applications are up 4%. Providers are taking on more international students, and domestic students are talking positively about this. The Middle East (Saudi Arabia) have given more undergraduate scholarships. Although Nigerian and

Indian applications have increased, applications from China and the EU have decreased.

The following questions were raised by the group

- How do we manage messaging around international displacement narrative?
- Is there a slight bias towards higher tariff providers for international applicants?
- How do we focus on widening participation whilst growing internationally?
- Are subjects like nursing in higher demand internationally?
- Can we see devolved nations included in statistics – Northern Irish specifically?

The members questioned whether there is a forum whereby data can be shared? Having access to different data sets and insight lens, rather than institutional, would be welcomed.

UCAS will investigate the possibility of delivering a pre-released data webinar for further detailed insights ahead of public dashboards being released.

RO'K  
IAG269

AM  
IAG270

'We are International' campaign content point is looking at the narrative around places for domestic vs international students, UCAS will work offline with this.

## **A2/23/05 Journey to a Million**

Haleema Masud presented an update on Information and Guidance Policy. Slides are shared with the group.

The group were invited to answer the following questions:

- How will Journey to a Million affect your work?
  - What challenges and opportunities do you foresee?
  - What insights will support the work you are doing?
- There is a concern for how higher tariffs will impact students in 4-5 years' time with such large class sizes.
  - Is there any data split on international applicants applying through universities and UCAS?
  - Providers are going to have to expand services of teaching and learning, and of other parts of student experience, to meet growing demand.
  - There has been a lack of reference/update to student experience in the updated International Education Strategy which is concerning for the group.

## **A2/23/06 Pre-sessional, Pathways and Foundation Year routes**

Chris Kirk delivered a presentation on volumes of international applicants across key stages of the cycle. Slides are shared with the group.

The group were invited to answer the following questions:

- Should non UCAS member's pathways fall within the UCAS application cycle?
- Do UCAS members want their own foundation years to form part of the cycle?
- Do you think UCAS should explore promotion of UK Transnational Education options?
- What UCAS support on pre-sessional would be of most value to providers?

### The group's feedback

- National database on journeys and pathways that international students take would be useful.
- Members favoured exploring students' journeys to choosing UK TNE options but 'promoting' TNE options caused some concerns.
- Pathway provision within the UCAS application. Could pre-application data be given more visibility on prior qualifications as an interim measure. Improving the RPA rate and making it more flexible remains an important area of development.
- A sustainable, inclusive business model needs to be considered.

## **A2/23/07 Expanding UCAS school agent and counsellor network to increase applicant diversity.**

The group reacted in a positive light to the increase in the network. The following questions were raised:

- From an agent's perspective, in an overseas country, what space would UCAS systems be filling, and how would the legislation work? Recruiting agents comparing to systems in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, so if these systems change and evolve how could UCAS remain a part of this?
- The topic is something that should be looked at on a national level for the whole of UK higher education, not just UK undergraduate education or UCAS admissions.
- Cross promotions to trusted agents was discussed in a positive light.

## **A2/23/08 Entry Grade Tool Demo**

Kate Bevan delivered a demo of the new entry grades tool. This is currently in a user testing environment with students. Slides were shared with the group. The data found will be available for providers, with the HEP test environment.

The date for launch is planned for after C&C. At this point in time, it is focused on domestic qualifications with a view to expanding to international qualifications in the future.

The group agreed they would like to see an international grade development such as the International Baccalaureate within the tool.

**A2/23/09 Any other business and Close**

The date of the next meeting will be agreed offline, and a placeholder invitation sent.