

Minutes

TAG/23/A2

Technology Advisory Group meeting

To be held on Thursday 15 June 2023 virtually on Microsoft Teams

Meeting scheduled to start at 10:30 until 14:30

Chair: TBC

Attendees: Ann-Marie Cancemi Nottingham Trent University
Sarah Graham Bournemouth University
Rob Tucker London Southbank University
Wendy Webster University of Dundee
Susan Morgan University of East Anglia
David Harman Lancaster University
Fiona Sanders University of Leicester
Erin Edwards University of Birmingham
Nicola Rossall The University of Nottingham
Glyn Jeffries University of Sheffield
Sion Pennant-Jones Aberystwyth University

Apologies: Alex Mortby Bedford College Group
Peter Fox The University of Manchester
Steve Green University of Lincoln
Ben Stone University of Wolverhampton
Aaron Otubu University of Greenwich
Garry Main University of the Highlands and Islands
Laura Watson Newcastle University
(covering Suzanne Grosvenor)

Presenting: Adam Glaudot Service Delivery Manager (Technical)
Louise Cyprien Service Delivery Manager (Admissions)
Andy Frampton Service Delivery Manager (Results)
Jenny Garner Product Owner

UCAS in attendance: Laura Hawkins Customer Engagement Coordinator

A2/23/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and the apologies were noted. Nicola Rossall introduced herself as the new Chair 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:

- *TG223* - A page on UCAS.com shows the technical briefing documentation. The goal is to keep the main pages to the current cycle pages and link to previous changes.
- *TG227* – Preferred names on Star X issues experienced in ODBC-Link will be avoided with how it's been coded in XML-Link. This year won't be generating Star X for everyone in default until this alignment is in place. Vendors now need to opt in for Star x data for the 2023 cycle. If members don't want to bring it into their student system interface, they can have it as a CFV file.

A2/23/03 Operational Update

Louise Cyprien delivered an Operational Update to the group. The presentation was circulated to the group. It was noted that the recent May and June RBD, and DBD had been successful.

The group were asked if they experienced any disruption to ODCB-Link during the 8 June DBD process and no one responded.

Key dates were noted on applications received by the 30 June.

RBD – 12 July

DBD – 17 July

A member questioned whether UCAS knows the current accept rate nationally?

Confirmed decisions are up 0.48% on last year.

Adam Glaudot gave a technical update to the group. Slides were circulated.

The group agreed they experienced no issues with regards to XML-Link certificates updating.

Recently a MOVEit vulnerability was detected and UCAS shut down access immediately. Cyber security partners ensured there were no indicators of compromise.

XML-Link developments

The production deployment of Reason for Delayed Confirmation Decision functionality is expected to be on 25 June, confirmation will be in the bulletin. Developed JISC/HESA/Star J data changes including WP fields for Scottish HEPs, enhanced gender options and technical briefing documents are available on UCAS.com and functionality is in test environments.

UCAS have launched the UCAS-Link RESTful API in a restricted test environment to a pilot group of users (including a TG member). API design documentation is available on UCAS.com. Once the pilot is complete, the test environment will be made available to all users, then Modernised Contextual Data Service (MCDS) will be available, with existing XML-link functionality and the other new admission functionality to follow.

A member expressed they have received their credentials to log onto UCAS-Link, however they experienced some problems connecting to the service via postman. A new incident ticket will be raised.

ABL/C&C Preparation

General training for Embargo is available on UCAS.com, the group are reminded to complete this and share amongst colleagues. Best practice examples are shown within the training. If additional materials are needed, or members need to check their processes they are encouraged to get in contact.

The Embargo 'best practice' webinar will be presented at 14:00 on 27 June. Links to the webinars can be found here. <https://www.ucas.com/providers/help-and-support/provider-engagements/confirmation-and-clearing-webinar-series>

The collection tool for adding 'text alerts contacts' is open, and members are encouraged to contact sdmtech@ucas.ac.uk if they need help with this. Key dates in the timeline are shared with the group.

Andy Frampton delivered an update on Confirmation and Clearing 2023. Key dates in the Cycle, Embargo Day, SQA Results day (Tuesday 8 August) and JCQ Results (Thursday 17 August) day were presented. The slides were circulated to the group.

It was noted the Clearing choice time has been moved from 15:00 to 13:00. The adviser portal will be available from 7:00 this year. A member requested that the clearing choice time is added to the admissions calendar.

For those institutions whose first time it is using XML-Link during C&C, support from UCAS and Tribal will be available.

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A2/23/04 ODBC-Link Update

Adam Glaudot reminded the group of UCAS link product strategy for the ODBC-Link migration.

Two more providers have migrated from ODBC-Link since the last update. 140 HEPs are connecting to XML-Link in test and 52 in production environments. Start of cycle communications will include reminder of the timescale and resources.

[Tribal's case study](#) which was shared at [UCAS Conference](#) is available.

The group are invited to answer, is there anything that UCAS can do to get the message across?

- Some institutions expressed concerns about going live starting XML-Link whilst on ODBC-Link during the application cycle. Taking the end of applications of switching between the two could be better supported by UCAS.

To receive IP addresses for firewall configuration see [UCAS.com](https://ucas.com)

- Concerns were raised whilst looking at many of the field systems e.g., Yes-No in ODCB and Yes-Null in XML. Does UCAS have a link to this difference?
- HESA file data and load testing are still in process for some student record vendors. Bugs around clearing were found and raised with ORIGIN.

A soft decommission after the release of data for HESA (star J) will take place in December 2023. As it is a major change for institutions a member questioned whether a Teams or other channel be made to make communications easier. UCAS confirmed this is something that is being investigated.

A2/23/05 Round Table

The members delivered a round table update

- Some member have successfully moved all systems into the cloud.
- XML-Link dual running with their ODBC-Link set up.
- Clearing system and technical support for C&C is underway.
- Embargo training has been completed by some of the members
- Implementing reason for delayed confirmation and enhanced gender is in the testing environment
- Most members planning a 2024 cycle go-live for XML-Link.
- Implementing a new version of direct application form.
- D365 platform for UCAS (Banner) & PGT (currently using SITS) and started investigations into creating a direct link between XML-link and D365.
- Attempted to update Banner with the Reason for Delay decision, and it's not gone well.
- Hosted embargo training within institution.
- Problems with test data: If A-levels are asked for the data is good, but not if BTECs are requested.
- SITS users upgrading to SITS 10.5 but experienced some performance issues.
- A member has moved to Tribal edge, with an issue with building an offer library.
- Most members have submitted a HESA Data Futures return by the first deadline; not a full cohort, but more than a 50% file.
- Development work on salesforce.
- Implementation of tribal blueprints for direct application system
- One member has hosted the embargo training locally as part of a pilot

A2/23/06 Development Update

Jenny Garner gave a development update to the group with regards to Education and Qualifications, Fees and Residency and Extenuating Circumstances amendments. Slides were circulated.

The following comments were raised by the group

A member offered to work with UCAS in showing how their university processes the current residency as it is an automated process that runs based on current data. Will there be a way to identify Irish applicants? Vendors are welcome to be involved in the discussion of changes and invited to webinars on the developments.

Document Management Phase 1

UCAS-Link will likely be used for this development. A scanning feature to prevent viruses is in the development roadmap. When importing the application data, institutions will have an option to not upload the documentation with it.

The group gave the following feedback.

- Applicants have to send in documents due to a lack of portal.
- Some institutions are using Ellucian Document Management product which links to their in-house applicant system and then links into the student records system.
- A direct pre-application form via a Tribal document management portal. Post-application documents are requested in various ways.
- Documents and actions are checked and double checked after they are received as part of processing the application.
- Document types are fundamental to how institutions manage records and follow up where they are missing.
- Issues with applicants uploading duplicate documents.
- Converting documents to PDF would be useful.
- The address field within the application form is different across all of the systems which is disenabling projects to move forwards.

The email address providerdevelopments@ucas.ac.uk can be used for comments on development webinars.

A2/23/07 Any other business and Close

A placeholder was set for Thursday 2 November 2023 set to be held in-person. Nicola Rossall from University of Nottingham has offered to host.