Technology Advisory Group Minutes

TAG/23/A3
Technology Advisory Group meeting
To be held on Thursday 9 November 2023 at University of Nottingham and hybrid MS Teams

Chair:

Attendees:	Aaron Otubu	University of Greenwich
	Ann-Marie Cancemi	Nottingham Trent University
	Danielle Kirk	Aberystwyth University
	David Harman	Lancaster University
	Erin Edwards	University of Birmingham
	Fiona Sanders	University of Leicester
	Garry Main	University of the Highlands and Islands
	Glyn Jeffries	University of Sheffield
	Paul Dawson	The University of Nottingham
	Peter Fox	The University of Manchester
	Rob Tucker	London Southbank University
	Sarah Graham	Bournemouth University
	Susan Morgan	University of East Anglia
	Wendy Webster	University of Dundee
Apologies:	Alex Mortby	Bedford College Group
	Ben Stone	University of Wolverhampton
	Nicola Rossall	The University of Nottingham
	Suzanne Grosvenor	Newcastle University
Resigned:	Sion Pennant Jones	Aberystwyth University
	Steve Green	University of Lincoln
Presenting:	Adam Glaudot	Service Delivery Manager (Technical)
	Andy Frampton	Service Delivery Manager (Results)
	Genia Garrity	Lead Product Manager
	Jenny Garner	Product Owner
	Kate Bevan	Product Owner
	Louise Cyprien	Service Delivery Manager (Admissions)
UCAS in attendance:	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator
	Nick Quinn	Service Delivery Partner and People Manager

A3/23/01   Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and the apologies were noted. The Technology Advisory Group are accepting expressions of interests. Adam Glaudot covered chairing duties with the agreement of the group following apologies from Nicola.

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:

TG227 – Star X won't be running by default this year, providers will have to opt-in.

TG214 – UCAS are overhauling qualifications (both applicant and ABL) which will close the action. When UCAS have implemented these changes, Jon Brook will be invited to give an update to the group at the next meeting.
A question was raised regarding the possibility of marrying up an applicant's submitted qualification with ABL for system verification.

TAG229
AF / JB

TG225 – There is ongoing work at UCAS to align reference tables in the production environment on ODBC-Link and XML-Link. Schools' data has been aligned, but an update will be given at the next meeting.

TG226 – UCAS have been invited to contact the apprenticeships team at Nottingham Trent University for an agenda item at the next meeting.

TG228 – UCAS have added the Clearing Choice date to the admissions calendar.

A3/23/03   Operational Update Confirmation and Clearing

Louise Cyprien and Andy Frampton delivered an update on Confirmation and Clearing. A presentation was shared with the group which will be circulated after the meeting.

The group were invited to bring forward any issues that came up on results day.
- The consensus was that everything ran smoothly for the group on both result days.

C&C / ABL Technical Review
Most student vendor systems have confirmed the 'reason for' functionality will be available on student record systems by 2024.
It was noted that since the change of Clearing time from 1pm to 3pm, availability of ABL results from Clearing Applicants are refreshed overnight, so HEPs won't receive the student record system until the following day. A lesson learned has been opened to look into possible ways to address this.

Feedback on ABL Delivery 2023
Releasing JCQ Resultsat 18:30 worked well for the group but moving this timing back earlier would be favoured.

Other upcoming developments at UCAS can be found here

Feedback on the new gender question options
Sex has been used in reporting so gender validations and codes for ITT applicants are different. New values for HESA data and different values for DFE applicants causes HEPs some time to go map between them.

The group are invited to give feedback on the 2024 key dates timeline to smdtech@ucas.ac.uk

Adam Glaudot gave an update on technical developments. The presentation will be circulated after the meeting.

XML- Link Developments – 2025 cycle
UCAS are making some changes to Education details, Applicant addresses and the Nationality section.
The Technical Briefing Document details these changes. There will be updates in the correspondence bulletins moving forwards.

A Student Record System (SRS) development Webinar
This will now be taking place monthly to allow technical feedback to be given on changes that have been made.
This will be open to in-house developers, and the group are welcome to share the link with their teams.

A3/23/04   ODBC-Link

Adam Glaudot delivered an ODBC-Link migration update and 'lessons learned'. The presentation will be circulated after the meeting.

Feedback on ODBC-Link migration
- One member is running an old version of SITS which has caused some issues on XML
- The activation of the applicant login portal and account has caused issues with the use of test data from UCAS.

As applicant's now login through the Hub instead of Apply and Track this isn't something that can be changed. The process has already been tuned to remove as many inconveniences as possible.
- The old version of Thesis QL doesn't directly talk with XML-Link. This has caused a 3 steps process through two different databases. The time it takes to refresh is slow and sometimes hours. This raised concerns around C&C – AG to contact the member raising this to see if UCAS can support them in any way

When importing ABL data UCAS can help with contingency options.
- ABL download ran slowly for some providers during C&C.
- For more mature XML-Link users the ABL has been faster.
- Moving systems mid-cycle faced issues with importing previously created ODBC-Link documents to XML-Link.

UCAS have made a change to our fire wall policy so that IP Addresses from Republic of Ireland no longer need to be added to an exception list for XML-link access.

The group are invited to contact Adam a.glaudot@ucas.ac.uk with any more feedback or problems they have experienced.

A3/23/05   Product Update

Genia Garrity, Jenny Garner and Kate Bevan gave an update to the group on Product Roadmap developments. Presentations were shared which will be circulated after the meeting.

UCAS Collect
The product is looking to be launched for the 2026 cycle. Technology Advisory Group members have been invited to join the UCAS Collect development group and to contact Genia g.garrity@ucas.ac.uk if they are interested.

TG230
GG / GM

Apply Changes
The nationality and visa questions are conditional. Help texts are being developed around these to guide applicants in selecting the correct answers.
UCAS hopes to get these developments into a test environment early 2024.

Feedback on Apply Changes
- It would be helpful if uploads could be converted to PDFs, as word documents automatically download to the computer.
- Documents coming from UCAS, both applicant and technical caused issues for providers. Applicants were repeatedly uploading files with several documents included. It would be useful to have a breakdown such as naming documents and types.

Adam and Jenny to investigate the best methods to gather feedback from the group on document management solutions.

Document Retention
- Some providers retain documents for successful applicants in case of fraud. Unsuccessful applicant's documents are kept one year after applying, to not have to ask for the same documents again.

TG231
JG / GM

Changes such as sexual orientation, Disability coding, and Highest qualification field length are being postponed from the 2024 to 2025 cycle. Members are asked to give feedback on whether this will cause issues and send to j.garner@ucas.ac.uk.
- Some concerns were raised in the meeting regarding this.

A3/23/06   Round Table Member Updates

Members delivered an update on technical developments
- There have been discussions around representation of different working groups when undergoing user testing.
- Banner upgrades including 'confirmation delay reasons' have been ongoing.
- Building a new admissions system through Microsoft dynamics. The HEP has integrated into dynamics so building out REF data is being developed.

- A new IT strategy is underway at Lancaster University.
- Issues with XML-Link integration seem to be coming from Oracle. Moving to a new document management system, whilst a new application form and developing an agent's portal for direct admissions using CY2.
- HESA data futures are being integrated by some providers. Some got their submissions in on time and others earlier.
- Embargo training pilot went well for some users however when users had marked that has been completed provider wasn't notified.
- 10.5 – 10.7 SITS upgrade will be underway by 2024, but Windows2016 servers need to be updated.
- 10.4 – 10.6 SITS live. Moving cloud integration outside of Salesforce.
- Moved systems into cloud with AWS.
- Some providers are using CRM for a new Salesforce system.
- A new accommodation system using StarRez has gone live and is working well.
- Student data transformation project is underway.
- Working with Tribal to use Edge admissions system. UG Domestic are being taken off and although beneficial for PG, UG is the main focus.
- XML-Link is slower than ODBC-Link.
- Implementation of Tribal blueprints. This will mean moving away from Marvin code, adding an offer library, and using all new portals.

Once everyone has migrated to XML-Link the group agreed it would be useful if the free text part of offer texts could be increased from the current 592-character limit. | TAG232 AG

A3/20/07 Address Fields

Wendy Webster dsicussed the change to the address lines for international applicants. The address structure in SITS is different in Blueprint which has raised issues in postal address lines. The systems are mapping international addresses differently to home. There was a suggestion for more designated address fields, so it is easier to match addresses in existing systems.
UCAS confirmed that the change of address fields was to help international applicants with inputting the correct address. UK applicants use postcodes to add this data.

Adam and Wendy to draft a proposal on how UCAS changing addresses would benefit providers. Group members will be invited to comment and agree. This will then be fed into the UCAS ideas process. | TAG233 WW / AG

A3/23/08 Any other business and Close

Members have been asked to contact Adam a.glaudot@ucas.ac.uk if they wish to be a part of a document management working group. This will be a subgroup of members with experience of document upload/management systems both in their institutions and previous services from UCA. | TG234 JG / AG

Date of the 2024 meetings have been agreed.
Thursday 29th February
Thursday 13th June
October date TBC.