

## Minutes

WPG/23/M1

Group meeting held on Wednesday 10 May 2023, virtually through MS Teams

Chair: Andrew Jackson HELOA

Attendees:

Amy Starling	Cardiff University
Chris Williams	Welsh Government
Elaine Carlile	Qualifications Wales
Aimie Field	Careers Wales
Craig Greenland	Universities Wales
Jeff Proteroe	Colegau Cymru
Taz Jones	HEFCW
Chris Laity	Universities Wales
Julie Elliott	Seren Network
Andy Phillips	Wrexham Glyndwr University
Lesley Jones	St Cyres School
Lisa Bowen	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Steven Minney	Swansea University
Maxine Thomas	Pembrokeshire college

Apologies:

Eithne Hughes	ASCL Wales
Cliona O'Neill	HEFCW
Jon Jones	Henry Tudor School
Mike James	Cardiff and Vale Group
Ruth Williams-Sharp	Cardiff University
Leslie McDowell	SLC
Dafydd Trystan	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
Rachel Cable	Colegau Cymru

UCAS in attendance:

Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Co-Ordinator
Shauna Blake	Reform and Strategy Adviser
Georgia Marks	Public Affairs Adviser

Presenting:

Carys Willgoss	Principal Policy Adviser
Haleema Masud	Policy Adviser
Sarah Derbyshire	Marketing Manager

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

The Policy Group was welcomed to the meeting and the apologies were noted. The group members introduced themselves. New members were welcomed to the group – Amie Field, Jeff Proteroe in place of Rachel Cable and Craig Greenland.

**A2/23/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting**

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The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting *WPG005* – UCAS will be giving Welsh teachers advice and guidance on career apprenticeships in this meeting under agenda item 7. Action will be closed.

**A2/23/03 Chairs update•Feedback from the last UCAS Council meeting•Any issues/feedback Group would like raised at the next Council meeting**

Andrew updated the Group on the previous Council Meeting.

The last Council Meeting took place on 7 March 2023 at Rosehill, Cheltenham.

The meeting started with an external speaker Jennifer Kupland, CEO for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. She spoke about UCAS embracing apprenticeship as alternative options for students' choices.

The Northern Irish update shared the news of three new colleges exploring joining UCAS which was welcomed.

The Admissions Reform exercise reviewed proposed changes to Personal Statements and References and how to make them accessible for everyone. UCAS gave a Policy update and presented the Journey to a Million and Department of Education essays. The discussion was around the potential impact on the sector regarding applicants increases, and how to deal with the growth.

Clare Marchant, CEO of UCAS gave an update on board 'strategy J' held in 2022 on the six 'discover your future' developments. It has been piloted with 13 different institutions. The first wave of T-Level students are now in higher education.

The next UCAS Council meeting will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> November. Chair has encouraged members to raise any concerns to be brought forward as an item.

- Enquiries from school and internal widening participation staff about communication of changes to personal statements and references. The group would like some guidance on what to tell people.
- They would like a discussion on the role UCAS can have within HE, SPF funding and the general election.
- Would like comms to stakeholders to reflect on the devolved nature of apprenticeships

**A2/23/04 Feedback for Council: Council will consider UCAS' emerging international strategy at its meeting in June.**

How could UCAS support the Welsh sector in realising its international ambitions?

- UK has a joint application process for applications however this is not the case in other countries. What role can UCAS play in admissions outside of the UK
- As an institution trying to grow internationally and globally there is a misconception about international applicants taking up spaces of UK students. What role can be played to mitigate that.
- It was noted that FE provider international recruitment is less of an issue with colleges in Wales.
- University of Swansea have received more international applications (post-graduate) than from within the UK, with the burden and resources needed to handle those increased.

**A2/23/05 What does 'Journey to a Million' mean for Wales?**

Carys Willgoss delivered a presentation on changes within UCAS since the last meeting. Presentation has been attached with the notes.

- Data was delivered on statistics UCAS saw from applicants in January ECD 2023.

A comparison from 2022 – 2023 January deadline (Wales) shows fewer total applicants, 18-year-old applicants, number of disadvantaged applicants (POLAR) but an increase in proportion applying to Welsh providers. However, since 2020 (last pre-pandemic year of entry) there has been a big increase in on all these categories. The overall drop in statistics from 2022 – 2023 is likely down due to a number of factors including adjustment for some subjects from peak during covid, likely impact of cost of living and other geopolitical factors.

UCAS/DofE/IfATE Apprenticeship news : Autumn 2023 – Apprenticeships options will be available on [ucas.com](https://ucas.com) to view side by side alongside undergraduate opportunities.  
Autumn 2024 – Students will be able to apply to Apprenticeships on [ucas.com](https://ucas.com)

UCAS' goals include creating commonalities with the apprenticeship application service. The Employers' advisory group are working with stakeholders and announced a partnership with the Department for Education in England, but the vacancies will be UK wide.

The Future of Undergraduate Admissions reports UCAS' reform with references, personal statements, grades on entry, personalisation and widening access and participation. These will be circulated to the group. The group were advised to contact [reform@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:reform@ucas.ac.uk) for any further questions.

#### Haleema Masud informed the group of Journey to a Million projections

The forecast shows a slight decrease in domiciled applicants from Wales (-3.9%) and Scotland (-4.4%), a larger increase from England (+26.8%) and slight increase from Northern Ireland (+1.1%). The growth will significantly be present in 18-year-olds across the UK and international students. With this UCAS forecast a stabilising trend in EU students with a growth in non-EU International students. .

What could disrupt the growth?

- Changes of the pipeline of international students e.g. more Chinese students remaining in China for HE.
- Shift in Policy e.g. a number cap or student funding changes.
- Demand for HE hits a natural ceiling.
- Economic boom period, or buoyant job market leading to a reduced demand for HE from mature students
- Prolonged recession with a worsening job market.

UCAS are looking at the forecasted growth for widening participation, supply and demand, competition, choices and pathways and student experience.

Two members from the group are invited to share what these challenges mean for the Welsh context- Amy Starling (University of Cardiff) and Taz Jones (HEFCW)

- With the forecast of growth, widening participation is more difficult to achieve when trying to accommodate students who don't achieve high grades because of their background. The challenge of maintaining the right level of students from WP background whilst also working in a more competitive arena is a concern. This is inclusive of number limits from the government on healthcare placements which creates difficulty for WP. Estate & lecture theatres are also a finite size
- Unless there's movement on tuition fee caps for domestic students, may be forced towards int'l market.

- The pandemic has led to increased interest in distance learning and part time courses. More students are studying at open universities on a full-time basis. HEFCW will be exploring motivations, perceptions of full time/ part time HE for students
- Ethical approach to admissions requires having the appropriate support in place for widening participation including mental health support.
- Student experience for UK domiciled applicants in comparison to international students and awareness on how that can differ.

**Breakout Rooms – We invite members to explore the 'five big questions' posed by the 'Journey to a Million'**

- How can we help them to be prosperous students and prepare them for HE and opportunities available for them.
- Every institution has a slightly different way of defining the difference between WP, minority and contextual circumstances, consistency can be defined here.
- Promotion of equality of opportunity is key. Role for CTER to promote and support opportunities and also target 16-19 cohort.
- When it comes to exposure to opportunity, role models could be shown to students as it is important to see people within those categories succeed.
- Practical steps alongside theory. Previously advice not always very aspirational. Engagement is better now.
- Qualifications Wales are looking into full offer for qualifications. The idea was discussed on messaging for alternative qualifications at GCSEs as there are various routes.
- Improved Careers information advice and guidance (CIAG) needs to take place: make students more aware of support available within universities, choosing the right course for them, and the right university.
- Expectation of student experience needs to be more aligned especially as it becomes more competitive. Students are very aware of value for money now, and as such expectations needs to be made more realistic and a broader meaning of value of HE should be promoted. The group were invited to read Carys Willgoss' blog on understanding and value for higher education that students perceive. This will be circulated after the meeting.
- Growth can mean different things for different courses: there are some courses that are more competitive than other such as health courses that are already seeing an incredible growth and competition.
- What are the answers to the imbalance of supply and demand? / How do we support students in a more competitive environment? Not limiting students physically by looking at physical capacity and online capacity supporting the supply and demand.

**A2/23/06 UCAS' support for Welsh teachers, with a focus on Apprenticeships**

The marketing team at UCAS have supported advisers and parents on the operational cycle to enable them to support their students down the FE path. This has been developing into providing a wider landscape providing information on different pathways and content but also advisers internationally.

Rather than broadcasting, information, advice and guidance will be targeted through what they already have access to. Within the hub lives teachers dial in and ask experts questions. There are targeted sections about apprenticeships from different stand points - an employer, university, apprentice, and a parent.

UCAS will be promoting teachers at schools and will also be revisiting to talk about apprenticeships. Careers Wales and Colegau Cymru have offered their insight and connections.

The group are encouraged to get in touch with Sarah at [s.derbyshire@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:s.derbyshire@ucas.ac.uk) if they wish to get involved.

Group  
members  
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**A2/23/07 Campfire – Updates from members of the group**

None of the members had any updates to give that hadn't already been discussed within the meeting.

**A2/23/08 Any other business and close**

A placeholder for the 4<sup>th</sup> October has been put in place. Qualifications Wales have offered to host the next Welsh Policy meeting in-person.