

Welsh Policy Group Minutes

WPG/23/M3

Welsh Policy Group meeting

Held on Wednesday 4 October 2023 at Cardiff University.

Chair:	Andrew Jackson	HELOA
Attendees:	Amie Field Andy Phillips Chris Laity Cliona O'Neill Dafydd Trystan Elaine Carlile Jeff Protheroe Julie Elliott Lesley Jones Lesley McDowell Lisa Bowen Ruth Williams-Sharp Steven Minney Yusuf Ibrahim	Careers Wales Wrexham Glyndwr University Universities Wales HEFCW Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol Qualifications Wales Colegau Cymru Seren St Cyres School SLC Cardiff Metropolitan University Cardiff University Swansea University Cardiff and Vale Group
Apologies:	Chris Williams Craig Greenland Eithne Hughes Jon Jones Maxine Thomas Mike James Rachel Cable Sharon James	Welsh Government Welsh Government ASCL Wales Henry Tudor School Pembrokeshire college Cardiff and Vale Group Colegau Cymru Cardiff and Vale Group
UCAS in attendance:	Carys Willgoss Haleema Masud Laura Hawkins Nicola Turner Philippa Always Shauna Blake Georgia Marks	Principal Policy Adviser Policy Adviser Customer Engagement Coordinator Senior Fair Access Adviser Senior Policy Adviser Reform and Strategy Adviser Public Affairs Adviser

A3/20/01

Welcome and apologies

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

A3/20/02

Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting.

All actions on the action log were closed.

A3/20/03

Updates from the Council

- It was Clare Marchant's last Council meeting.
- Jon Bentley spoke about key student identifier digital data attached to student. Unique learner number (ULN), and the challenges of tracking young people and the data that comes with them.
- There was discussion on Reform and key milestones such as changes to personal statements and admissions.
- Concerns were raised around increasing accommodation costs and the effects it has on students living at home whilst studying. It was asked what the sector can do to prepare students for the increasing cost of living.
- Positive engagement of UCAS with Welsh Language Commissioner was noted on supporting Welsh speaking applications.
- Regional forums will be reintroduced, and focus on operational challenges and changes for providers.

A3/20/04

Regional Insights – Deep dive into Wales

Carys Willgoss gave the group an update on UCAS' regional analysis and data from results day. A presentation was shared and will be circulated with the minutes.

- Day 28 after JCQ results day shows fall in overall Welsh domiciled applicants.
- Wales had a higher proportion of students getting accepted to their first choice as compared to the rest of the UK
- The regional analysis is first of its kinds, using parliamentary regions in Wales to highlights areas of intervention and priorities for providers and the Welsh government

The group asked for the following data sets:

- Data on the split between Welsh domiciled student's staying in Wales vs being placed at other UK institutions was requested.
- Parliamentary regions in Wales may change so future statistics may need alignment accordingly

WPG008
HM

- Can UCAS explore whether it's possible to include an ethnicity split for Welsh regional analysis. It was noted that a lot of students from backgrounds of ethnic minorities have to stay locally. WPG009 HM
- What proportion of those studying foundation degrees in FE apply through UCAS. WPG010 HM
- Joining up of data sets, e.g. What students want to do in year 10 and correlation of what the students end up doing. Careers Wales is going to explore potential for joined-up research pieces. WPG011 HM

A3/20/05

Your opportunity to inform UCAS' next strategy.

Shauna Blake delivered a presentation on informing UCAS' next strategy. There has been great progress made towards the six objectives and moving forwards 'Discover Your Future' for 2025 and beyond is underway, and the discussion regarding a single portal has been posed.

'The UK needs a single, personalised portal for FE, HE and Apprenticeships in the UK for young people and adults.' _

The group were asked to discuss the value UCAS can add, and the risks it may bring._

- The strength of UCAS brand would be a positive start.
- Raising aspiration for young people viewing UCAS other than just university and can support parity of esteem
- Challenges regarding it replacing careers services
- Separation of information, advice and guidance is critical and how would UCAS ensure the guidance is deployed in a dynamic area
- There is a risk that well resources companies will be able to navigate the system better and ability to do so creates a monopolised market.
- Tertiary provision of education in Wales presents a challenge, it is not the same as it is in England
- Entry criteria to all those qualifications and parity, potential discrimination due to not being regulated in the same way, especially regarding apprenticeships.
- Why does UCAS need a single personalised portal? What would this mean? There are structures within Wales operating within this space. Could cause extra confusion to navigate
- Questions around post-16 and post-18, and understanding at what stage in the journey is this pitched at?
- Employability provision should be presented. Some students will not have the level of support who need to access a system to apply for apprenticeships and other pathways outside of the application reference.
- Youth engagement progression network explored a single pathway. Current structure, funding and competitiveness created problems.
- Could be seen as UCAS trying to make money.
- Devolution through nations
- Scotland systems are different, being able to apply through the portal.
- Providing impartial advise without bias.

- Considered beyond digital, recognising not everyone has access to online. How does this fit in with UCAS' widening participation goals?
- Institutions set up as charities may be protective over resource. Good in theory but practicality will require resources that are limited.
- A centralised UK wide system of application to HE seems to work. Where would the advantage be if Wales built a separate platform for other choices given cross border migration in both directions.
- Concerns with applicants having to pay a fee to access FE were noted

The group emphasised the importance of wider consultation on this.

A3/20/06

UCAS' support for widening access: Update on the Fair Access Programme and time for discussion

Nicola Turner gave an update to the group on the Fair Access Programme and Outreach Connection Service.

The Next Step series on insights and discoveries will focus on what is happening with students from different groups across the sector, and what that means for educational pathway. These reports can be read here:

<https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-reports>

The group are encouraged to answer the following questions:

Anything that UCAS can improve within gaps in fair access?

Are there any emerging priority groups that are being missed?

Members suggested a piece of work on intersectionality with older students locally and those who study far away and how to support them.

A-level results are received at different times depending on whether they are attending a private or comprehensive school.

Members are encouraged to reach out to Nicola n.turner@ucas.ac.uk with any further suggestions.

A3/20/07

AOB and Close

The group were reminded to fill out the members survey on Policy Groups and the link was shared.

https://ucasresearch.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4ORRklpO1mJcEfk

Dates of the 2024 meeting dates were agreed

Tuesday 30 April 2024

Wednesday 2 October 2024

The next Welsh Policy Group meeting is Andrew's last meeting as Chair of the group, so all members were asked to reach out to Laura Hawkins

l.hawkins@ucas.ac.uk if they wish to submit an expression of interest for the role.