

Scottish Policy Group Minutes

SPG/23/M2

Scottish Policy Group meeting

Held on Wednesday 27 October 2023 in person at SQA Offices and through MS Teams

Chair:	Forbes Maginnis	Clackmannanshire Council
Attendees:	Carina MacRitchie	SFC
	Carol Baverstock	University of Aberdeen
	Daniel Proudfoot	SFC
	Frances Rowan	SQA
	Graham Hutton	SLS
	Karen Frew	Scottish Government
	Kirsty Knox	University of Strathclyde
	Kier Robinson	HELOA
	Kirsty Wadsley	LEAPS
	Martin Gibbons	University of St Andrews
	Michael Scott	SAAS
	Myles Mackintosh	Grove Academy
	Sandra Cheyne	SDS
	Shona Barrie	University of Stirling
	Sian McBennett	Grove Academy
	Peter Murray	Education Scotland
Apologies:	Aoife Keenan	SFC
	Alison Train	LEAPS
	Caroline Davies	Fettes College
	Claire Bannister	Universities Scotland
	Kirsty Conlon	Universities Scotland
	Lorna Caldwell	Students Award Agency Scotland (SAAS)
	Margaret Antonson	University of the Highlands and Islands
	Stacey Heather-Brash	Students Award Agency Scotland (SAAS)
UCAS in attendance:	Ellie Rowley	Fair Access Programme Lead
	Carys Willgoss	Principal Policy Adviser
	Georgia Marks	Public Affairs Adviser
	Holly Brown	Policy Adviser
	Shauna Blake	Reform and Strategy Adviser
	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator

A2/23/01 Welcome and apologies

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

Keir Robinson was welcomed as the new representative for HELOA Scotland, Kirsty Wardsley, who was standing in for Alison Train at LEAPS and Michal Scott standing in for Lorna Caldwell and Stacey Heather-Brash for SAAS.

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 group requested the data link to the number of care-experienced young people from Scotland entering HE. SPG009
LH

A recent Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Care Leavers took place which included presentations and agenda items on care experienced students on their experiences of FE and HE. Minutes have been requested from the group. SPG010
SC

A2/23/03 Campfire Discussions:

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. The presentation has been requested by members. SPG011
FM /LH

There was discussion on Reform and key milestones such as changes to personal statements and admissions.

A2/23/04 Regional Insights – Deep Dive into Scotland

Holly Brown presented a deep dive into data insights for Scotland.

The groups made the following comments:

- Least to most disadvantaged students SIMD in Scotland is referred to as 1-3 rather than 1-5 in a school and college perspective so the group requested both bits of data be shown and compared.
- The importance of various campuses which are included in regions haven't been acknowledged.
- There was a discussion regarding how the regional data was constructed—parliamentary areas may not represent the most commonly used regional configuration in a Scottish context.
- There could be merit in meetings such as council meetings looking into having some time for each nation.
- Transport infrastructure and geographical location are factors affecting how students progress to higher education. Anyone outside central Edinburgh and

Glasgow being unable to access public transport or ways to get to the institution.

It was noted that UCAS uses ONS definition for for classifying the difference between rural and urban areas in Scotland and England.

A2/23/05 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 progress of apprenticeships being added onto UCAS' portal is currently behind in Scotland than in England, though UCAS are working closely with SDS on this. This might pose an unfair disadvantage for students living within the devolved nations.
- Utilising the UCAS service would pose a huge cultural shift for colleges in Scotland, there were particular concerns around funding and resource., This again raises the issue of parity a between the four nations.
- As UCAS are projecting a million higher education applicants by 2030—would UCAS have the capacity to process more applications?
- Practical considerations such as data infrastructure, and a lack of funding.
- Ensuring that the data doesn't conflict with existing systems such as apprenticeship sites poses funding and legal issues.
- Having a single portal could broaden pathways for young people and raise awareness of FE options for potential students.
- Staying local in Scotland could be looked at as a more viable option for students rather than leaving the nation and relocating.
- The length of time it would take to integrate all institutions, universities, colleges etc. from the application, it would have to be a slow-moving process.
- Aligning dates and deadlines across all FE/HE providers could be challenging.
- Charging the UCAS application fee for Scottish colleges could result in profit making for UCAS. Paying the application fee could pose a challenge for disadvantaged students..
- Members asked whether the single portal needed to look the same in each nation and whether any tailoring could take place.

The group are encouraged to contact Shauna Blake on s.blake@ucas.ac.uk with any further insights.

A2/23/06 UCAS' support for widening access: Update on the Fair Access Programme and time for discussion

Ellie Rowley 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?

SDS noted that they are working with advisers with voice of young people to be included.

Members agreed that most areas are represented. However, those that aren't within IMD20 still face disadvantage may be missing.

Student representatives felt information and guidance from advisers and support navigating the website would be helpful.

Members are encouraged to contact Ellie Rowley e.rowley@ucas.ac.uk with any enquiries.

A2/23/07 Any other business 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
Longer time for each discussion point would be favored, and to have presentations circulated in advance.

The University of Strathclyde virtual head teachers' group (Celcis) are looking for representation from UCAS Widening Access / Scottish Policy Group member to attend SPG012 as a representative to sit and feedback UCAS. GM / CW

The dates for the 2024 meetings have been set. They will take place on Wednesday 8 May 2024 and Wednesday 25 September 2024.

