Groups and Forums

UCAS

TAG/22/M3

Group meeting

Held on November 24, virtually through MS Teams

Chair:	Ben Stone	University of Wolverhampton
Present:	David Harman	Lancaster University
	Ann-Marie Cancemi	Nottingham Trent University
	Alex Mortby	Bedford College Group
	Bobby Gor	Imperial College London
	Judy Wilson	De Montfort University
	Kirsten Black	University of Sunderland
	Rob Tucker	London Southbank University
	Sarah Graham	Bournemouth University
	Steve Green	University of Lincoln
	Suzanne Grosvenor	Newcastle University
	Sarah Swindell	Sheffield Hallam University
	Sion Pennant Jones	Aberystwyth University
	Glyn Jeffries	University of Sheffield
	Peter Fox	The University of Manchester
	Fiona Sanders	University of Leicester
	Garry Main	University of the Highlands and Island
	Anne-Marie Cancemi	Nottingham Trent University
Apologies:	Nicola Rossall	The University of Nottingham
	Aaron Otubu	University of Greenwhich
	Amy Butterworth	University of Bristol
	Mike McConnell	University of Aberdeen
UCAS in attendance:	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator
	Adam Glaudot	Service Delivery Management
	Richard Leeman	Solution Architect
Presenting:	Louise Cyprien	Service Delivery Manager
	Clare Cozens	Lead Product Manager
	Andy Frampton	Customer Success Director
	Jenny Garner	Product Owner
	Kate Bevan	Product Owner

Action

A2/22/01   Welcome and apologies
The Group was welcomed to the meeting and the apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves.

A2/22/02   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:
- Personal statements, Reference updates and reform
- Myriad update for how it works.
- RPA update was presented.

A2/22/03   Group membership and new chair - Thanks – EoI
Ben was thanked for serving as Chair.   TG220
Expression of Interests have been sent out on the bulletin for new Group members. The Group have received some Expressions of Interests. Everyone is encouraged to come forwards if they wish to extend their membership or nominate themselves or a current Group member for the role of Chair.

A2/22/04   Operational review and forward look – Including review and feedback C&C 2022

Adam delivered a presentation on Operational Review.

Operational review
SQA results were made available on the 9th August.
There were 86,425-page requests on UCAS.com between 9-10am. Throughout the day 150,000 log ins were received.

Changes implemented (that will be kept going forwards)
- A timer to manage applicant logins was implemented.
- Emails were sent to applicants with details of the place offered.

JCQ Results
References data was updated in the morning before the results release to help HEPs to prepare their systems. UCAS released the results 10 minutes before the target time. Some ODBC-Link operators reported connection failures and long running report times. This correlated with success at UCAS however and tri-partite calls were made over the weekend to resolve the issues.

The group agreed that early results were positively received.

It was noted that T-levels at UCAS regarding the reference data for pass grades were unclear. The offers were unable to be made in time especially due to universities which were based solely on Tariff points. This is on UCAS' radar.

Andy Frampton delivered a presentation on Embargo.

There has been an increase in Providers breaching and applicants effected by them. A workshop was run with colleagues who suffered a breach. Some were due to IT teams

and CRM systems, and some human error from academic staff themselves. The breaches were communicated to the award board. Many came from job securing. UCAS' goal is to work towards zero breaches again.

The Group are advised to keep in mind that they are not immune from breaches, as there were no repeats from 2021.

Primary correspondence upheld embargo well. The challenges came on technical aspects of enforcing embargo. The following steps will be taken by UCAS -

- Additional training resources specific to IT and CRM. However, it is noted all systems are different, even a vendor system will be different internally.
- An internal checklist to ensure the correct systems are shut down and share this message going forward.
- Share best practice and enable colleagues to share experiences with vendors.
- Turning the breach examples into case studies to implement in different institutions to allow planning for the year ahead.

Group members are encouraged to share Ideas/thoughts/things that UCAS can do, or resources that can be used.

Comments were as follows
- The workshops have been helpful for breaches.
- Changes to systems have noticed a correlation with breaching.
- Group members have turned off comms and shut off other systems to prevent crossovers.
- If there are some things set up such as risk assessments
- A checklist to follow such as JIRA as an annual task tool.
- Automated email guard functionality has been useful.
- Disable any access to any admissions.
- Students are starting during embargo / international students are applying and visas are being processed and so everything can't be 'turned off'.

The Group agreed it would be helpful to have exemplary templates from lots of providers to create a piece of good practice that collectively analyses similarities and differences of what each provider is doing.
The question was raised Could UCAS create a risk assessment or guidance and checklist available to use?

TG221

The Group are encouraged to reach out to a.frampton@ucas.ac.uk with any embargo materials they use which work for them.

A2/22/05   Development of Services

Clare Cozens delivered a presentation on Infrastructure.

UCAS are going through a migration process changing the web services description languages (WSDL) for the XML link and have sought feedback from vendors and Providers. XML Link will be capable of managing the demand when everyone is moved over. UCAS have some database upgrades including oracle – a test environment will be provisioned at the end of December.

TG222

Phase 1
UCAS-link is the RESTful based service for vendors to build against to integrate with UCAS software.
- UCAS are currently focusing on the behind-the-scenes work such as the bulk processor (a component that allows data to be shared in bulk such as updates and referenced data).
- The RPA API is being built which is the first customer facing platform which allows students to be shared directly with UCAS. This will be available to use in the new year.

Concerns were as follows
- What is the link between decommissioning and the UCAS link.
- Providers would like to receive an update on database Hep2.

HESA (Star J) 2023
The following data changes are being made to the new XML-Link.
If providers are late with converting to XML-link will they still receive the HESA updates. The data feature codes and return no values will automatically be updated through ODBC-Link.

Reform update

References
The new format will be three separate sections for referees to complete. There will be no link product changes. The new format will feed through in the existing reference field with clear sections found.

Personal Statements
No changes are going to be made within 2023-24. The consensus from advisers and providers is that they are open to change. UCAS recognised the existing format isn't delivering what Providers need to be able to make an informed decision.

Gender
Applicants will now have multiple gender options available to choose from - 'Male' and 'Female' to 'Man', 'Woman', 'Prefer not to say' and 'Identify in other way'. It was noted that UCAS recognised the benefit for inclusion of a question on legal sex, but there were major legal and GDPR challenges.
UCAS are working with HESA for allowing post submission changes to gender and sex questions. This will be spoken about at the annual provider update next month.

Choices
- There will now be a 'decline my place' functionality for conditional and unconditional choices.
- Admissions development Group are having conversations about choices being made in the space including insurance choices.

A2/22/06   ODBC link update

All vendors have confirmed delivery of XML-link functionality for the 2024 cycle. A conservatoire has gone live, and four other pilots have, but rolled back. The feedback from pilot user groups are allowing UCAS to make the migration process smoother.

- The leap feature for providers to be able to produce their own data is being developed.
- A hub on UCAS.com and a training course on the professional development course has been created by UCAS. This is for any providers to use.

A2/22/07   Round table updates

Members were working on the following areas with their providers-

- C&C planning for 2023 entry.
- All members are preparing for embargo.
- Post covid digital development inclusive of integration of XML-link and moving Banner/StarRez to the cloud. Newer versions of Oracle have been updated.
- The role of automation is being explored with admission processes.
- Many providers are implementing UCAS widening participation questions.
- Student self-service portals are being developed by multiple group members
- CAS shield has been rolled out in the hope for better customer engagement.
- CAS shield has been used with HESA data features compatible with XML-link.
- Integrating a new letter production into SAP.
- Improvements have been made to applicant portals. They have been having discussions with the international office regarding agent hub.

Many Group members noted problems caused by changes to Media Control Interface (MCI) table in SITS

It was noted that one vendor transitioned to XML, back to ODBC and after pulling back, it was found that data had moved to various locations. This could be problematic for automated offers through qualifications.

Adam let the Group know that if anyone needs to generate some test data that includes responses to the new WP questions, it is advised they raise an individual application using the UI in the test environment.

The Group responded positively to the idea of using a UCAS application for a logging in to HEP portal.

A2/22/08   Journey to a Million

Adam Glaudot delivered a presentation on Journey to a Million.
Both international students, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and applicants interested in Apprenticeships are looking to bring the numbers higher. There are expected to be
- +27% applicants

- +35% 18 year olds
- +70% international

HEP will factor in the following demand and whether they have the capacity to respond to applicants
- Admissions team resources
- Contextualised admissions (WP)
- Clearing
- Alternative pathways   AG
- Essays invited from the sector   TG223
- Liase with vendors/HE development teams

Any other business and Close

A2/22/09   **Feedback on communications from UCAS**

Has UCAS included all implements and historical data in the technical briefing document on the website?
Will a calendar be put in place for updates through Outlook?

A placeholder has been for the next meeting 16 February 2023.