Student Advisory Group Minutes

SAG/23/A3
Student Advisory Group meeting
To be held on Wednesday 25 October 2023 virtually on Microsoft Teams

Chair:	Wayne Gouro	University of Oxford
Attendees:	Abishek Saha	University of Oxford
	Alex Dunn	University of Bristol
	Amy Vince	University of Hertfordshire
	Danyal Hussain	Ermysteds Grammar School
	Emilia Edwards	IT Apprentice & Project Pioneers Founder
	Emma Berwick	University of Birmingham
	Habil Alam	Ermysteds Grammar School
	Lamin Tarawally	School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS)
	Millie Gallimore	Stockport Grammar School
	Nawal Sheikh Bin-Sheikh	Solicitor Apprentice
	Nitish Tamhankar	Marshall Aerospace Degree Apprentice
	Oyindi Adeniyi	Hull York Medicine School
	Reeva Sharma	Coventry University
	Rubin Poku	Amazon Degree Apprentice
	Samantha Croucher	TUI Degree Apprentice
	Shah Yaseen Ali	Newcastle University
	Taylor Watson	IT Apprentice & Project Pioneers Founder
Apologies:	Holly Cobb	University of Oxford
	Maya Blackmore	Swansea University
UCAS in attendance:	Courteney Sheppard	Director of Customer Experience (Interim)
	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator
	Sunil Parshotam	Customer Success Manager (Students)
Presenting:	Carolyn Mindos	Principal Admissions Reform Lead
	Emma Cole	Product Owner
	Genia Garrity	Lead Product Manager
	Jenny Garner	Product Owner
	Phil Bowell	Senior UX/UI Designer
	Rachel Harris	Product Owner
	Finlay Willicott	Marketing Product Lead
	Simone Drinkwater	Lead Partnerships Manager

A3/23/01   Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and the apologies were noted. The Group introduced themselves. Courteney Sheppard discussed the networking opportunities being offered by UCAS to the Student Advisory Group.

A3/23/02   Minutes and action log from previous meeting

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

A3/23/03   Product Update

Emma Cole and Phil Bowell took the group through admissions development. A presentation and wireframes were shared with the group which will be circulated after the meeting.

The following feedback was provided on additions for the wireframes:
- The sub-headings down the left column are small and could be clearer to show progress of application.
- Is there any scope on the home page to add snapshot of where the deadline is in the application cycle.
- Add a progress bar to demonstrate how far the applicant is through the process.
- Dark mode was a desired function.
- To improve accessibility, for applicants with dyslexia it could feel overwhelming, so help texts would be useful.
- A QR code for phones so the application can be accessed and continued via a mobile device.
- With regards to Residency, could a direct link to UKCISA for information and guidance be present within the help text.

The application has the ability to export information which has been input to collate information for future use.
UCAS are in conversations with the International Advisory Group and organisations such as to ensure the wording and information is clear for international students.

Feedback on Residency and Addresses
- Instead of asking 'Is English your first language?' Could applicants add any other language they speak fluently.
- Include a study mode such as hybrid or in-person/online.
- Ensuring that schools that no longer exist doesn't impact the application.
- Is there any scope for information such as exam centre numbers to be pulled via Buzzword link to the school?
- Is there any link with the buzzword to qualifications and shortlists from the school? E.g. Exam or candidate numbers.

It was noted that help texts will be provided for those applicants living across two addresses, and those not in a fixed address.

Feedback on Entry Grades Data
- When an applicant clicks the calculation can the help text explaining the tool is just a guide pop-up as a box that needs to be actioned, so it draws attention.
- Can the 'This doesn't mean you can't apply for this course' text be in bold. And positive rewording for example 'You can still apply for this course.'
- Change the colours so 'the most common grades' and 'student who applied but got offered a place' rings are different from one another.
- There were concerns that grade data could influence student's choices of provider/institution and impact potential success in a negative way.
- Counter to this, it was recognised as a powerful tool for influencing students' decisions positively in sixth form and younger.
- Context on where the grade information comes from would be insightful.

If the group have any other ideas for developing the Entry Grade Tool Product, then they are encouraged to reach out to g.garrity@ucas.ac.uk

Feedback on Career Tool Demo and what additional benchmarks could be used.
- How much of the course is practical, and theoretical.
- The percentage of ethnic backgrounds who are employed.
- Contact hours vs non-contact hours on the course.
- Terminology could be altered as it is unclear what determines a 'highly skilled worker'.
- Could the tool be available on every course insight page to add to personalisation.

A3/23/04 Updates on changes I&A / Student Hub

Finlay Willicott and Simone Drinkwater took the group through a demo of the Student Hub

Feedback on Course Recommendation Engine on the Student Hub:
- Some members feel it should be a standalone tool due to students using it at different parts of their journey. Concerns were raised regarding the tool becoming commercialised and that it could lose its authentication and partiality.
- Could each slider e.g. 'Courses' be added to a Bucket to give several university options, rather than choosing one university for a certain course.
- Add Information help boxes to explain what each slider is based on.
- UCAS to consider National Student Survey (NSS) to collect the data for the tool.

Student Budget Calculator:
- Timescale and salary required when paying back the student loan.
- Specify where, and when the data derives from.
- Building societies outside of high street branches would be favoured by students due to diversifying where they hold their assets.
- Ethical elements of the companies that UCAS are affiliated with.

SAG036 SP

UniBuddy
- Admissions Teams or Tutors as 'buddies' could be added to the future developments.
- Adding a static lecturer page with an FAQ Chatbot to answer questions. Some concerns were raised with this regarding realistic expectations on availability of tutors during the course.

Springpod
The consensus from the group was extremely positive. The group saw the benefits of allowing students to access work experience, organisations and pathways especially in the apprenticeships light for current and future University students.
- Will UCAS screen the content and information for it to be realistic, transparent and not what industries or recruiters want students to see. It was suggested that early Careers people could test the content.

It was noted that UCAS' development plan is to have a link to the application via Springpod.

A3/23/05   Reform

Carolyn Mindos presented a Reference update for 2023 and asked the group for input on 2025 Dates and Deadlines Consultation.

The group were invited to feedback the Equal Consideration Deadline (ECD) and Reject By Default (RBD) dates:
Is the January deadline best placed?
- Pressure of applications during mocks could impact predicted grades and in turn the student's future.
- A January date would be favoured by mature students applying later to give them time alongside balancing work / family commitments during Christmas time.
- Early application in December could manage emotional impact prior to exam season.
- Moving the date back to December could rush student's decisions.

Personal Statement
The three-box format was favoured by the group.
- Can UCAS provide Information and Guidance on Portfolios for those students applying outside of school or independently.
- 5 choices felt limited for the decision-making process for some applicants.
- If the opportunity of more decisions is added, students could submit a justification for applying for more options e.g. if they are interested in two different degrees/pathways.
- More decisions don't always help, and some limitations need to be applied to set realistic expectations.

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UCAS were requested to share the proposed PQA Consultation from Department of Education (DofE) with the group.

A3/23/06   AOB and Close

The group are being sent round the following questions to consider and respond to.
<u>What are your day-to-day uses of any AI? Think Chat GPT, chatbots.</u>

1. What are your views of using AI to support with the UCAS Personal Statement?

2. Where are the opportunities to use AI within the UCAS journey?

Dates of the 2024 meeting dates will be agreed offline.	SAG038 LH/GM
The next Student Advisory Group meeting is Wayne's last meeting as Chair of the group, so all members were asked to reach out to Laura Hawkins. <u>l.hawkins@ucas.ac.uk</u> if they wish to submit an expression of interest for the role.	SAG039 LH/GM
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