UCAS

Changes to UCAS link systems

A technical guide for institutions

3 September 2014

This communication relates only to the odbc-link, xml-link and web-link – Products.

This year UCAS is moving odbc-link, xml-link and web-link to the cloud as part of our service improvement programme.

This document details the specific technical changes that institutions will need to make in order continue connecting to UCAS systems, use of the new systems is required by all HEIs for confirmation and clearing 2013.

Please note that only the cloud Link services are supported beyond the cut over and the existing Link services will be taken down so implementing the following change is mandatory.

For the purposes of clarity the diagram below provides a high level view of the new system architecture developed by UCAS in the cloud to support confirmation and clearing from 2013 onwards.

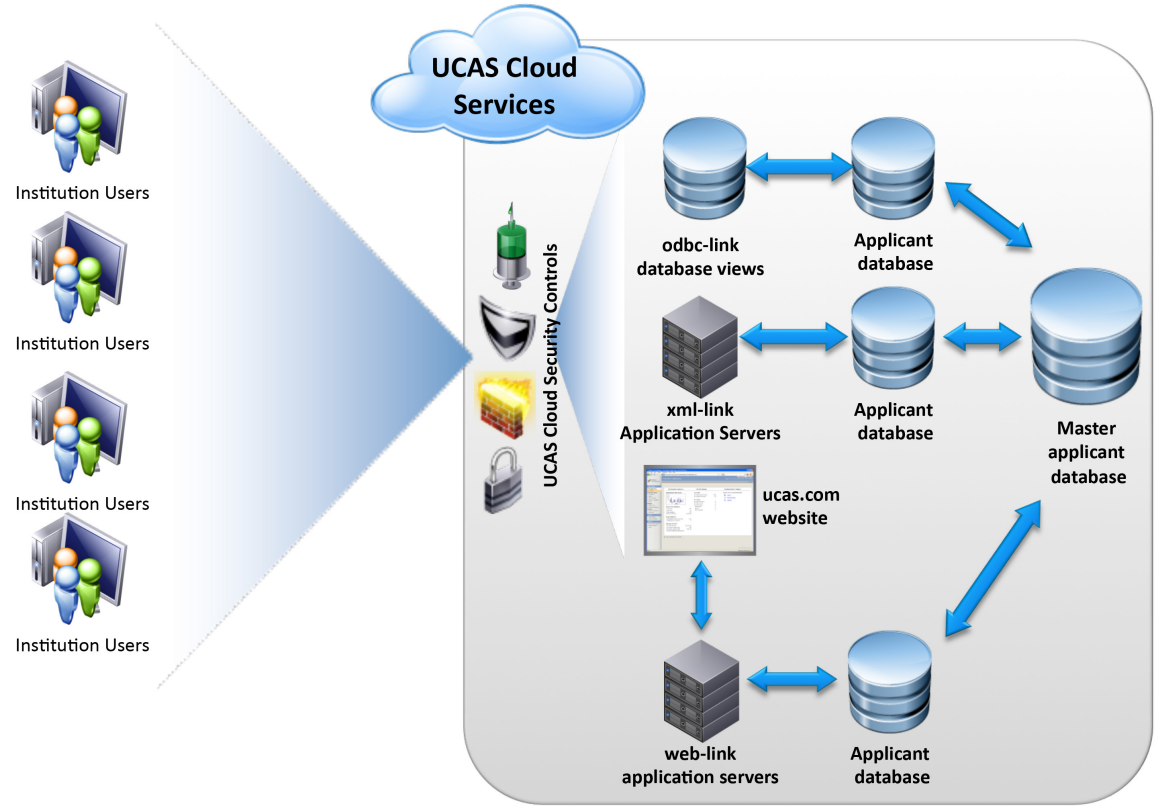


Figure 1 – High level view of UCAS' new cloud based Link systems...

odbc-link

If your admissions system is using odbc-link to exchange data with UCAS; your systems administrator will need to make the following changes to the way that your system(s) connect to UCAS.

The UCAS ODBC Link server (now **odbclink1.ucas.com**) provides SQL*net services through the SQL*net port (**1524**), using an Oracle SID of **ODBCFE1**

The TNSNAMES.ORA settings for the new production odbc-link environment are below. These settings are for use with Oracle9i client and beyond.

Update TNSNAMES.ORA to have the following configuration, note a SID "SID=ODBCFE1" entry should be used in place of the SERVICE_NAME:

```
ODBCDB.UCAS.COM=
  (DESCRIPTION=
    (ADDRESS_LIST=
      (ADDRESS=(PROTOCOL=TCP)(HOST=odbclink1.ucas.com)(PORT=1524))
    )
    (CONNECT_DATA=
      (SID=ODBCFE1)
    )
  )
```

Note that the port is now 1524 and not 1521.

In some case the host name will be an IP address e.g. `HOST= 192.168.11.245` this IP address will no longer work and **must** have been replaced as above.

In addition to this we request all institutions to configure their firewalls to allow TCP port 1524 through to the IP address ranges below. This is to enable institutions to take advantage of the new connection point if outbound firewall rules are used and also to use UCAS' Disaster Recovery capability in the unlikely event that we need to deploy systems at our secondary site.

79.125.0.0/17 (79.125.0.0 - 79.125.127.255)
46.51.128.0/18 (46.51.128.0 - 46.51.191.255)
46.51.192.0/20 (46.51.192.0 - 46.51.207.255)
46.137.0.0/17 (46.137.0.0 - 46.137.127.255)
46.137.128.0/18 (46.137.128.0 - 46.137.191.255)
176.34.128.0/17 (176.34.128.0 - 176.34.255.255)
176.34.64.0/18 (176.34.64.0 – 176.34.127.255)
54.247.0.0/16 (54.247.0.0 – 54.247.255.255)
54.246.0.0/16 (54.246.0.0 – 54.246.255.255)
54.228.0.0/16 (54.228.0.0 - 54.228.255.255)
54.216.0.0/15 (54.216.0.0 - 54.217.255.255)
54.229.0.0/16 (54.229.0.0 - 54.229.255.255)
54.220.0.0/16 (54.220.0.0 - 54.220.255.255)
54.194.0.0/15 (54.194.0.0 - 54.195.255.255)
54.72.0.0/14 (54.72.0.0 m 54.75.255.255)
54.76.0.0/15 (54.76.0.0 m 54.77.255.255)
54.78.0.0/16 (54.78.0.0 m 54.78.255.255)
54.74.0.0/15 (54.74.0.0 - 54.75.255.255)
54.170.0.0/15 (54.170.0.0 - 54.171.255.255)
185.48.120.0/22 (185.48.120.0 - 185.48.123.255)

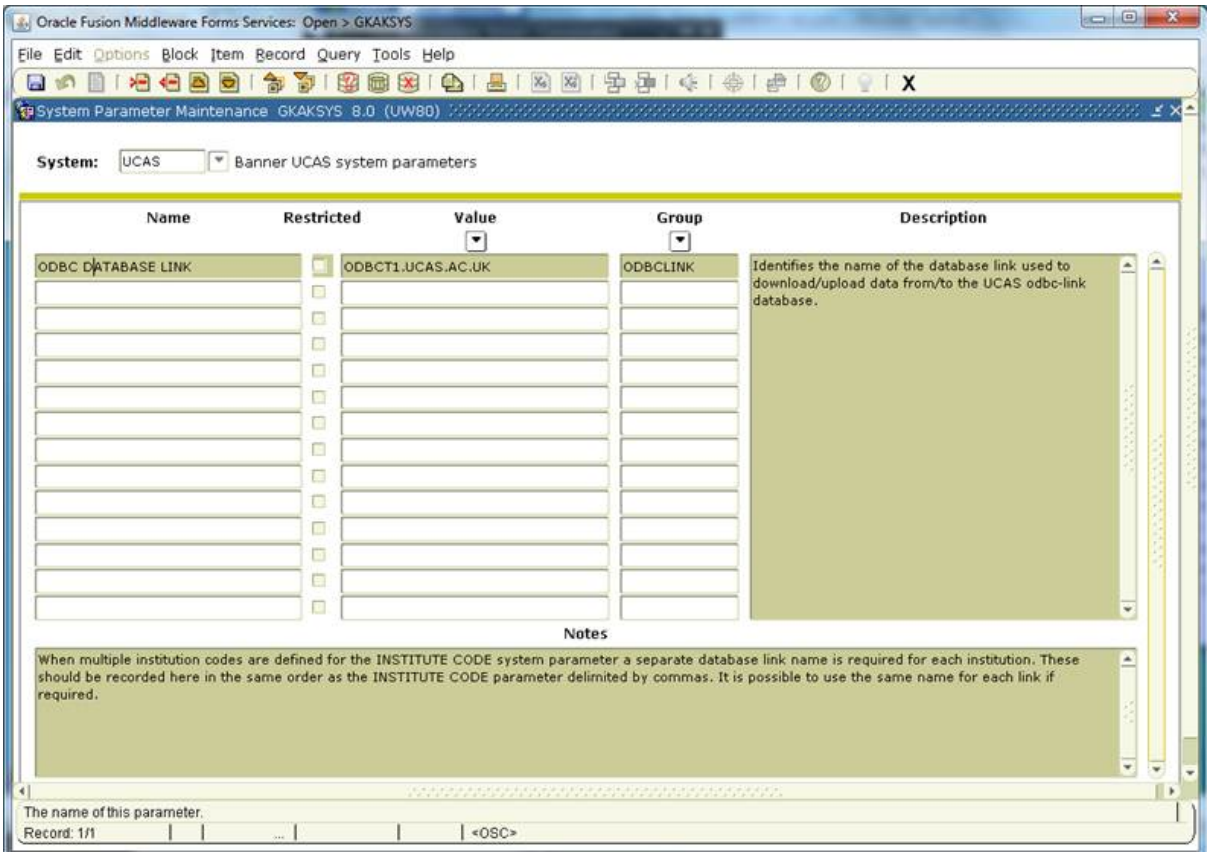
Note for Ellucian Banner user institutions on the ODBC Database Link from Banner

The Banner system uses a Database (DB) Link as well as the TNS Names connection to the new ODBC Link cloud database; in some instances the DB Link name will need changing. This is because in some deployments of the Ellucian Banner system a global database setting “GLOBAL_NAMES”, is set "= TRUE”. ***Note there is no need to change the GLOBAL_NAMES parameter itself.***

In this scenario there are 2 methods of implementing the requisite change, in most circumstances either of the following methods can be followed, however if you are operating “Joint Admissions Processing” you must use method (2) below.

1)

a) Drop and re-create the DB Link with the DB link name equal to the new SID so “**=ODBCFE1**”
b) Set the corresponding parameter on the Banner System Parameters Maintenance screen.



2) (Alternatively) Perform an alter session on the Database Link, this will for the database link have the effect of changing the Global_Names setting but will not alter the underlying parameter. To do this use the alter session function in module (SKAUHDO):

```
EXEC SQL ALTER SESSION SET GLOBAL_NAMES = FALSE;
```

See the following example for context of use, where the Alter Session statement is being used on the DB Link to enact the Global_Names change for the link only.

```
SQL> show parameter global

NAME                                 TYPE        VALUE
------------------------------------ ----------- ------------------------------
---
global_context_pool_size             string
global_names                         boolean     TRUE
global_txn_processes                 integer     1

SQL>  create database link kalh123
connect to integrationview
identified by ********
using 'AWS';

Database link created.

SQL> select * from dual@kalh123;
select * from dual@kalh123
                  *
ERROR at line 1:
ORA-02085: database link KALH123.UCAS.AC.UK connects to CRSAWS2

SQL>  alter session set global_names=false;

Session altered.
```

xml-link

If your admissions system is using XML Link to exchange data with UCAS:

xml-link is a web service provided by UCAS for Institutions to retrieve reference data, the details of an applicant and their application and to then make decisions on their applicants through the xml-link transactions. These transactions are done in real time and are processed immediately.

Institutions are required to provide their own web service client to make use of xml-link created directly or indirectly from the WSDL (Web Service Description Language) file provided by UCAS.

The URL for xml-link has changed for the cloud service and therefore any institution systems that connect to xml-link will need to be updated to make use of this new connection.

Your systems administrator will need to make the following changes to the way that your system(s) connects to UCAS – this change is limited to a modification of the (SOAP) end-point to which you connect.

UCAS CUKAS GTTR Web Service:

- LIVE Environment: https://xmllink.ucas.com/xml-link/XmlLinkWS

web link

web-link is a web application provided by UCAS for Institutions to retrieve reference data, the details of an applicant and their application and to then make decisions on their applicants through the web-link interface. As part of the changes to our systems we have made a conscious decision to split the end user functionality and the management / administration web-link users into their own applications, both applications will function as previously but each will have its own location.

UCAS intends to simplify this in subsequent years as a part of our service improvement programme. There are now separate log in mechanisms for:

- web-link has a new URL (**"Live Environment"** below) for its main functionality – the running of reports, retrieval and update of application and applicant details.
- An additional URL for the maintenance and administration of user by HEIs (**"web-link User Administration"** below)

web-link is accessed through a links on the UCAS.COM website or directly by entering the URLs below:

- Live Environment: https://weblink.ucas.com/ucaslinkauth/index.do
- Web-Link User Administration:
  Either to the web site landing page at http://www.ucas.com/members-providers
  Or direct to : https://update.ucas.co.uk/netupdate2/Welcome.htm

Frequently asked questions for UCAS-link in the Cloud

Here are the top questions requested from the UCAS Service Desk for the link-products and answered by the UCAS Product Development Team:

Why have you moved to the Cloud?

- As institutions are aware, UCAS has suffered performance and availability issues during the Confirmation and Clearing period. This move to the Cloud is intended to stabilise the service and ensure that institutions have a high quality of service from UCAS' IT systems.

What do I have to do to use the link-products in the Cloud?

- UCAS is providing new connection details for xml-link, web-link and odbc-link in a separate briefing paper. This will cover the connection changes required to enable access to the new systems.

Will we need to update the TNSNAMES.ORA file and allow access to our servers via the firewall to ODBCLINK:1524? Will we need to do any of the following once the tnsnames.ora file is updated: restart Oracle? Restart urouter?

- If you mean the Oracle Client tools – no, you do not need to restart this. Just add the tnsnames.ora config file with the TNS name entry in or add it to thought the UI.

- If the Uniface 'urouter' caches your TNS connection string, then it will need to be restarted.

Will users who are logged into SITs need to log out and back in again for the UCAS connection update change?

- We do not know enough about SITs to provide you with a definitive answer on this. Generally applications will need a reboot or a flush of cached meta data after something like a data source change. Your SITs / Tribal representative will be able to answer this for you.

Will the system be faster than the previous system?

- We have designed our system to accommodate the full stress placed upon it by Confirmation and Clearing. We have made specific optimisations to the system to ensure it can handle this load; however UCAS is not guaranteeing a specific improvement in performance for institutions.

Do I need to alter any of my batch jobs?

- By following the changes outlined in the technical change note, you will be able to connect to the new UCAS systems. The running of batch jobs against these new systems remains unaltered. Should you encounter issues with batch jobs, raise a call with the UCAS Service Desk, as normal.