

minutes

Data Group/16/M1

Data Group meeting

held on Wednesday 2 March 2016, 11:00-15:00, at UCAS, Cheltenham.

Chair:	Wendy Webster	University of Dundee
Present:	Alex Ingold	The London School of Economics and Political Science
	Christine Giles	University of Portsmouth
	Daniel Farrell	University of St Andrews
	Helen Reed	University of Cambridge
	Jo Hamilton	University of Exeter
	Judith Davison	University of Huddersfield
	Lisa Machin	Nottingham Trent University
	Paul Ashby	University of Birmingham
	Tania Smith	The University of Manchester
	Steve Walsh	Aberystwyth University
Apologies:	Emma Christmas	Keele University
	Gurjitt Nijjar	University of Derby
	James Brown	University of Glasgow
	Nick Bhugeloo	Kingston University
	Stella Fowler	University of Gloucestershire (representing the Higher Education Strategic Planners Association)
UCAS in attendance:	Deniz Gosai	Groups and Forums Administrator
	Claire Howson	Product Owner
	Clare Lutwyche-Loveday	User Experience Researcher
	Fraser Nicoll	Strategic Product Manager
	Helen Thorne	Director of External Relations
	Kate Bevan	Product Owner
	Mat Evans	Senior Data Steward
	Mike Spink	Data Architect
	Peter Derrick	Head of Service Delivery
	Rob Edmondson	Strategic Product Manager
	Sam Wathen	Product Owner

A1/16/01 Welcome and apologies

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

A1/16/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

Bullet point four on page three of the minutes was amended to read 'Option to close courses early by fee status'. The remainder minutes were approved as a correct reflection of the meeting.

It was noted that conversations had not taken place on the Data Group's Yammer page. The Group was encouraged to use this as a form of communication between meetings.

The open actions on the log were discussed:

DG004 – membership of the Group was still to be reviewed. This action remained open.

DG043 – it was noted that providers were still experiencing issues with a lack of information about the pricing of the EXACT service. They would like to know approximately what a data supply would cost before engaging in more detail and asked if it could be clearer on ucas.com. It was agreed that Fiona Johnston, Head of Analysis Products and Services, would be invited to the next meeting to explain the pricing in more detail. This action remained open.

DG052 – it was noted that although details of upcoming webinars were added to the provider network on Yammer, the Data Group's closed Yammer group was not receiving the updates. Deniz Gosai, Groups and Forums Administrator, agreed to speak to UCAS' Communications Team to ensure that the Data Group Yammer page received all updates.

DG060 – the Group requested that UCAS ensured that HECoS codes held in UCAS' systems aligned with those held in HESA systems – so comparable data could be obtained from both organisations. It was noted that the contract had been signed for the HECoS implementation project and a session on this would be held at the Admissions Conference in March. This action remained open.

A1/16/03 Development of UCAS' services

3.1 Admissions portfolio update

A presentation on UCAS' admissions portfolio project was given to the Group and a copy was sent with the minutes. The Group was reminded of the developments UCAS was making to its products and services, and the reason for the changes. The developments were currently at the vision board stage. There were no questions from the Group on the developments.

DG DG062

3.2 Beta collection tool demo and prioritising next steps/features

The beta collection tool demo was shown to the Group and the additional fields explained. Some data had not yet been migrated completely, but the Group was assured that no data had been lost. The following was noted:

- Venues would be renamed to locations. Any study locations such as campus, schools, colleges, etc. could added here.
- Items could be edited but not added or deleted.
- The dashboard link was not on the Course Management page. It was confirmed that this would be added shortly.
- Filters would soon be added. If the Group had any recommendations for filters they should email Claire Howson – c.howson@ucas.ac.uk.
- Some course options could be added, with more to follow shortly.
- Postgraduate taught and research courses would always come under different umbrella titles. Different levels would be required at undergraduate level, for example, full- time three years, full-time sandwich. UCAS was interested in the provider's entry level, however the system could be flexible enough for them to decide if they wanted to input entry or exit levels.
- UCAS would like to give ownership for choosing and publishing courses, level codes, etc. to providers.
- A field currently labelled as 'course code' would now be an internal reference code for provider's (field name to be confirmed, but would be something similar to 'HEP internal course reference'). This would not be visible to applicants. Providers were concerned their staff might input non-unique reference codes, so it was agreed that UCAS would do some further research in when developing this section.

ALL DG063

It was confirmed that, currently, the qualification level was derived only from the qualification level itself. However, in future it would be from the qualification level and the country.

The Group asked if help text would be available in the new system. If it was required, it would be provided, however but the aim was for the system to be self-explanatory. The Group confirmed that user manuals would be useful.

Reports would not be produced for providers to inform them of changes made to their courses data. However, the dashboard would flag up the date of any changes and who made them.

Providers would be liable for all their data on ucas.com. The option to delete courses would not be available unless the course had never been published. However, old courses could be moved into archive and retrieved at a later date if needed. UCAS would look at bulk uploads, bulk updates, and bulk edits, which would minimise the amount of manual changes providers needed to make.

The Group noted the current review of the Key Information Sets, and requested an integrated approach with Collect and Search.

The feedback received from the beta collection tool was shared with the Group and a copy was sent with the minutes. It was noted that all feedback received from providers was essential – it could be submitted to UCAS by clicking on the feedback button on the beta site. All feedback was then assigned a ticket, so it could be grouped together. This was then sent to the Development Team. Feedback was also collated from webinars and UCAS' groups and forums. DG DG064

A1/16/04 Data spreadsheet update

A central spreadsheet for data feedback had been collated and a copy was sent with the minutes. The terminology of some fields might change after consultation with learners. DG DG065

A number of areas on the application centric view were discussed:

- Personal information – this would include five fields. The name field had to match what was on the applicant's passport.
- Contact information – it was still to be decided whether proxy (responsible person) could be included under this section.
- Contextual information – would also include whether the applicant was a carer.
- Education and life experience – the Group agreed that these categories should be kept separate:
 - education – the awards listed on the application were not consistent, therefore often creating inefficiencies on the form. It was confirmed that UCAS was reviewing the list of qualifications provided. The Group suggested that the list of qualifications available to choose from could

change depending on the applicant's age and/or school, so only relevant qualifications appeared. UCAS was also investigating if the Skills Funding Agency could build a system to allow UCAS to validate Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs) on point of application. There was a discussion on whether the ULN box should be a mandatory field and if applicants should have to tick a box to confirm if they didn't have one. It was agreed that this could become confusing for applicants and lead to inconsistency, so further research was required.

- life experience – it was suggested that enhanced work experience should also be separated in this category, with the option to switch this section off. Clear guidance would need to be given to applicants so they knew what information they had to submit. A free text box at the end of the section for applicants to declare the reasons for any gaps in their timeline would be helpful
- Residency and nationality – this would be discussed in detail at the Admissions Conference.
- Provider-specific and course-specific questions – the Group confirmed they were happy with these questions, and the option to upload attachments should be given
- Protected characteristics – it was confirmed that questions on pregnancy and maternity leave were not relevant for applicants. There had been a great deal of discussion on the gender question within UCAS. After consulting learners, it had been agreed that UCAS would ask applicants what gender they were, rather than their sex identification. HESA, however, asked for an applicant's sex identification. Applicants had to fully understand the reason why UCAS was asking these questions, and to be assured their response did not affect their application. At the time of developing this question, UCAS would carry out further research and consultation on it.
- Safeguarding information – the Information Commissioner had confirmed the way the criminal conviction question was asked could not be changed. UCAS would look at ways to increase applicants understanding of this question to minimise the number of incorrect responses.
- Agents – there are plans to implement an agents' portal to capture their details, and this would also include partnership organisations.

The Group confirmed the applicant's title was used solely in communications to them, and not for reporting purposes. It was agreed that the current list was too long. A list of the top six titles and 'other' was preferred, with the option of a free text box for 'other'.

The option to turn sections of the application on and off was initially welcomed by the Group. However, there were concerns that having information later in the process (for example, if an applicant went in to Clearing or Adjustment) could hinder or delay an application, when speed was essential. The Group confirmed that, ultimately, it would

like a more structured reference section so schools knew what details were required. The Group recognised the benefit to providers in tailored personal statements, but noted that schools would not like to ask their students to complete up to five different statements. The suggestion was made that the core of the personal statement could be the same for all choices, with a short choice-specific section where applicants could add a few sentences about why they were applying to a particular course at that provider (hybrid personal statement).

The Group was asked to contact Sam Wathen at s.wathen@ucas.ac.uk if they had any further questions or feedback on the data spreadsheet.

A1/16/05 Data reporting

A data reporting presentation was given to the Group and a copy was sent with the minutes. UCAS currently offered providers a variety of different reporting tools and functionality, and would like to better integrate this.

DG DG066

A number of different data requirements had already been established in discussions with providers. These included:

- topical data, such as who was looking at which courses, who applied to which courses, and where the applicant lived
- trend data – comparing against competitors
- download and exporting data

UCAS would begin by looking at data reporting for the postgraduate scheme, although the reports would cross over to all schemes. UCAS would not stop publishing current data.

The Group advised that further reporting on the following areas was desired:

- modelling reports – for example, if a provider introduced a new course it would like to see where its competitors were pricing the same/similar course at (in terms of fee, entry qualification, English language, etc.)
- national data on qualifications take-up and attainment – particularly for new course developments. For example, the shift in A level take-up and achievement
- gender break down for courses
- annual data sets to have filters so providers could export the required data

It was noted that, if UCAS was going to offer postgraduate data reporting services it need to be over and above the data providers could already get from HESA. The Group commented that UCAS' data was more up-to-date and independent.

In addition, providers had in-house systems built already to run reports. The Group agreed there needed to be a mechanism for these providers to feed their data into UCAS so that a national data set could be constructed. Providers could self-serve their needs for data, and obtain reports from UCAS as and when required.

A1/16/06 Update on the English Higher Education Green Paper

The Group was provided with paper DG/16/001 prior to the meeting. Helen Thorne, Director of External Relations, thanked the Group for taking part in the name-blind consultation. 120 responses had been received and analysed. A meeting with UUK had been scheduled for Thursday 3 March 2016, to discuss the outcome of the consultation. Discussions with UUK, Guild HE, AoC and technology vendors (to establish the capability of masking identity) needed to be carried out. A further update would be provided at the Admissions Conference in March. After this, a summary of evidence gathering would be published, and UCAS would consult with the sector again.

A1/16/07 HEDIIP update

A summary of paper DG/16/002 was given to the Group. The following points were noted:

- five regional workshops would be run for data capability
- a thesaurus of terms would be produced for data language
- the new subject coding system was now in stage three and would come to an end by July 2016
- the Unique Learner Number (ULN) for applicants under 20 years old in the UK (excluding Scotland) was analysed. It was concluded that the number of ULNs being provided by students was increasing slowly each year. There were currently no quality checking facilities for accuracy
- a large amount of work was being carried out with the Data Futures programme – more information would be available during the Data Group's meeting in June

A1/16/08 Any other business and date for next meeting

It was stated that, as a matter of principle, UCAS should give providers the data they needed to respond to press interest, when UCAS itself published national level analysis. Recently there had been an issue when UCAS published data on ethnicity and offer-

HT DG067

action

making, but providers were informed it would be three months before they could have the associated institutional level data. Helen Thorne agreed to investigate this.

The Dates and Deadlines Working Group met in January and February. An update would be provided at the Admissions Conference in March and the Group would meet again after the Conference. The Dates and Deadlines Working Group focused on undergraduate dates, although it did have members who were experienced with the postgraduate scheme.

Wendy Webster, Chair, thanked the Group for attending. The next meeting date would be confirmed after the meeting.