

Higher Education White Paper and Higher Educational Bill

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Helen Thorne, Director of External Relations

For discussion

1. Issue

This paper summarises the relevant implications for UCAS, the admissions community, and learners from the Higher Education White Paper and the associated Higher Education and Research Bill.

2. Recommendations

The Data Group is invited to note and discuss the issues highlighted in the paper, and any other particular issues that UCAS should consider.

3. Report

UCAS has reviewed the provisions in the HE White Paper “Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, social mobility, and student choice” and the HE and Research Bill, to understand the potential opportunities and impacts for learners, higher education providers (HEPs) and our business. Those areas of particular relevance to the Data Group are:

- The data transparency duty and its intersection with the Freedom of Information Act
- Power to require application to acceptance data
- Teaching Excellence Framework
- Credit transfer and facilitating the switching of courses and providers

3.1. Transparency duty and the Freedom of Information Act:

The Bill places a duty on HEPs to provide to the Office for Students (OfS) and publish data on applications, offers, acceptances and course completion by sex, ethnicity and socio-economic background for English HEPs. UCAS is offering a service to HEPs to pre-empt the legislation by publishing a standard report for each provider including data on the numbers of applications, offers, and acceptances from UK domiciled students by characteristics such as sex, ethnicity, and area background (POLAR3, and SIMD for providers in Scotland).

Based on the feedback received, the reports include new statistics which should enable a more informed public debate about admissions. In particular, we have provided a way to place applicant numbers in the context of population differences, and to view differences in offer rates in the context of the different predicted grades and courses applied to. These

reports will be published on 9 June. We will also be working with HESA over the coming months to consider how we might develop our reporting services to include student retention data.

The White Paper also describes the creation of the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset that will look at employment outcomes and returns by courses and HEPs. The LEO dataset will be available for reuse by other organisations so UCAS will wish to consider how this might be used to offer information and advice services to learners.

With regard to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the White Paper confirms that current designations will remain. This creates a mixed model in respect of FOIA coverage and the data transparency duty. UCAS will need to address this when publishing or providing data.

	Covered by data transparency duty	Covered by FOIA
Registered provider	No	No
Approved provider	Yes	No
Approved provider (fee cap)	Yes	Yes

3.2 Power to require application to acceptance data:

As signalled in the HE Green Paper, sections 71 and 72 of the Bill set out the provisions to require UCAS to provide data to approved persons for use for qualifying research. UCAS is currently considering these provisions in conjunction with stakeholders and BIS.

3.3 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF):

The introduction of the TEF and the proposed linkage to tuition fee increases creates additional complexity for learners and providers. UCAS will want to help learners and advisers understand what the TEF is and its impact on tuition fees, particularly since fees could change whilst a student is studying. This will necessitate changes to the course search service and to information and advice.

3.4 Credit transfer and switching courses and providers

The government is keen to enable students to be able to change courses and providers more easily and has launched a call for evidence on credit transfer and switching arrangements. UCAS has experience of supporting displaced students in finding alternative places and will be responding to the call for evidence.