

Confirmation and Clearing 2016

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Overview

The 2016 admissions cycle is progressing well and all milestones have been met successfully. Plans for Confirmation and Clearing (C&C) are well underway. Key themes are detailed to the left and are currently rated as green.

**Admissions Delivery
2016**

**Awarding Body
Linkage (ABL)**

Embargo

IT Readiness

Governance

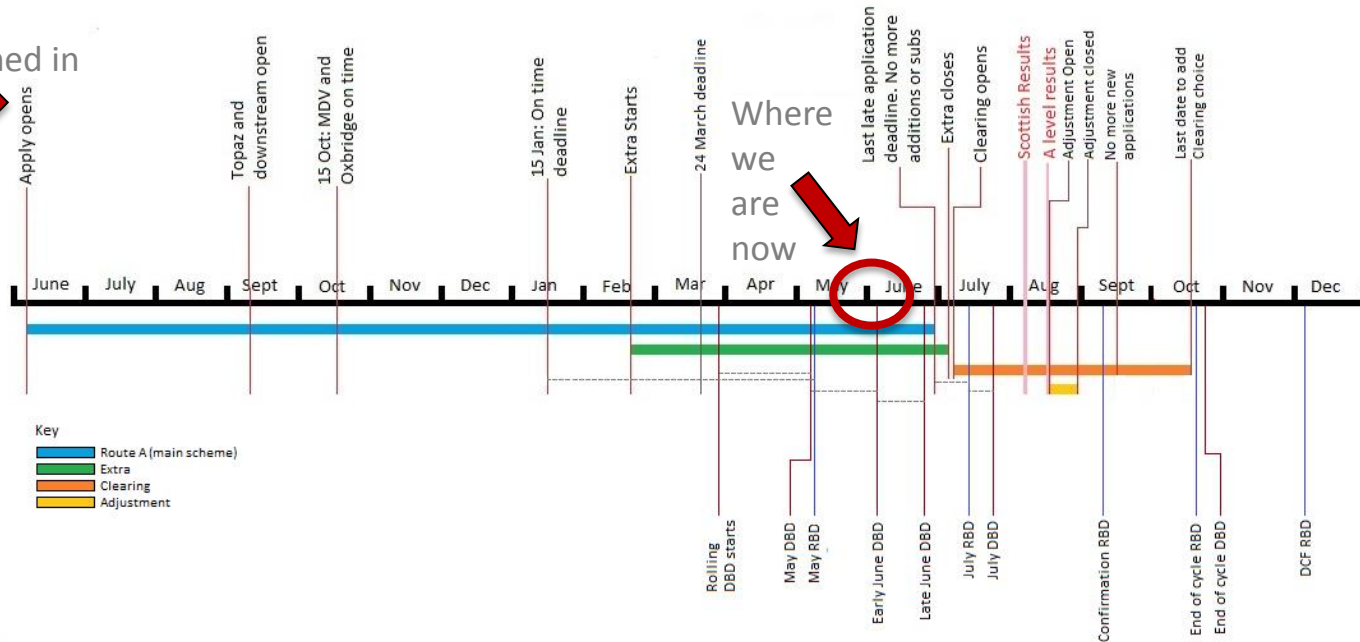
**Communications,
Customer Experience
and UCAS media**

Risks



Where we are in the cycle

Apply 2016 opened in May 2015



Coming up

June

- The "Are you ready?" campaign is a new initiative for 2016. The campaign started early June and was designed to stress the importance of early engagement to all audiences
- 30th June deadline – applications received after this date are submitted direct to Clearing.
- C&C training to be delivered to customer facing teams

July

- Advisory date for HEPs to make their Clearing vacancies visible
- Clearing Vacancies will be displayed
- Telegraph Media Group files will be issued

August

- Embargo Starts – during periods of results processing we will enter an embargo stage in which applicants must not be able to see status updates or confirmation of places before published result days
- Scottish Results day - Applicants able to add clearing choices from 10am
- A level Results day – Applicants able to add clearing choices from 3pm
- Adjustment opens
- GCSE results day
- Adjustment closes

Changes and Initiatives: 2016

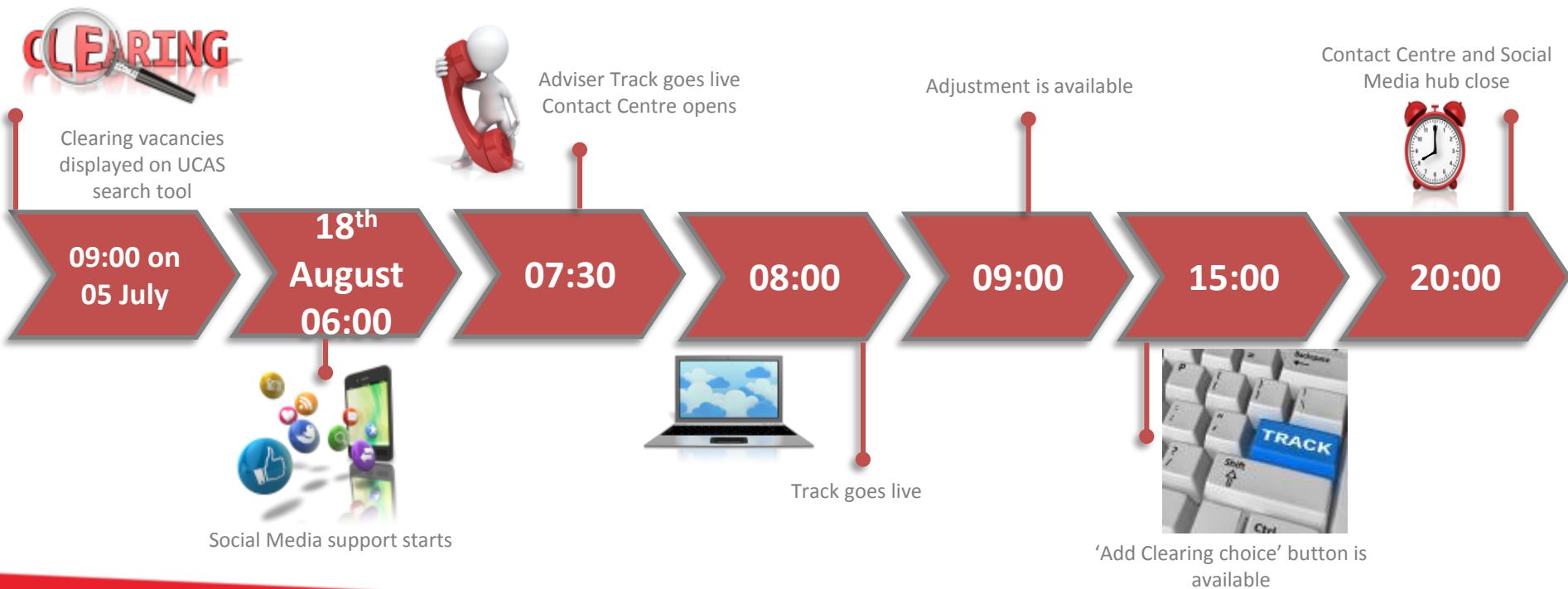
- Clearing vacancies will be displayed on Search from 9am on 05 July 2016 -the vacancy list will remain dynamic and open until 30th September and can be updated daily. In previous cycles we have displayed only Scottish vacancies between SQA results day and A level results day.
- Applicants will be able to add a clearing choice from 3pm on A level results day, this will allow the applicant to add a clearing choice two hours earlier than in previous cycles.
- This year will see the return of Precision Marketing Data Service (PMDS) and the introduction of the Digital Identification service (DIDS)



What happens on Scottish results day?



What happens on A level results day?



ABL (Awarding Body Linkage)

- ABL is the name given to the method of exam results processing. This complex process started in November and will continue through to August and requires working to strict deadlines. This activity is the most critical part of successful delivery of C&C.
- New Service Delivery Manager (Jill Eyes) - A new role has been created within UCAS to provide management and accountability for the delivery of the full end to end ABL service.
- Jill joins a team of ABL experts from operations and IT who have a wealth of experience and understanding of the process and its time line. The majority of UCAS and Infosys colleagues who were key in delivering a successful C&C last year will once again drive through this critical process.

Awarding Body Engagement

- Bi-annual meeting take place with the main awarding bodies and new for 2016 specific workshops for non A level and Access Validating Agency (AVAs) to improve their understanding of the importance of the role they play in the ABL process and to encourage them to deliver better quality results data.
- Post Results Service – following a review additional support was provided to the sector by means of improved advice and guidance for advisers and providing a designated area of UCAS.com for awarding bodies.



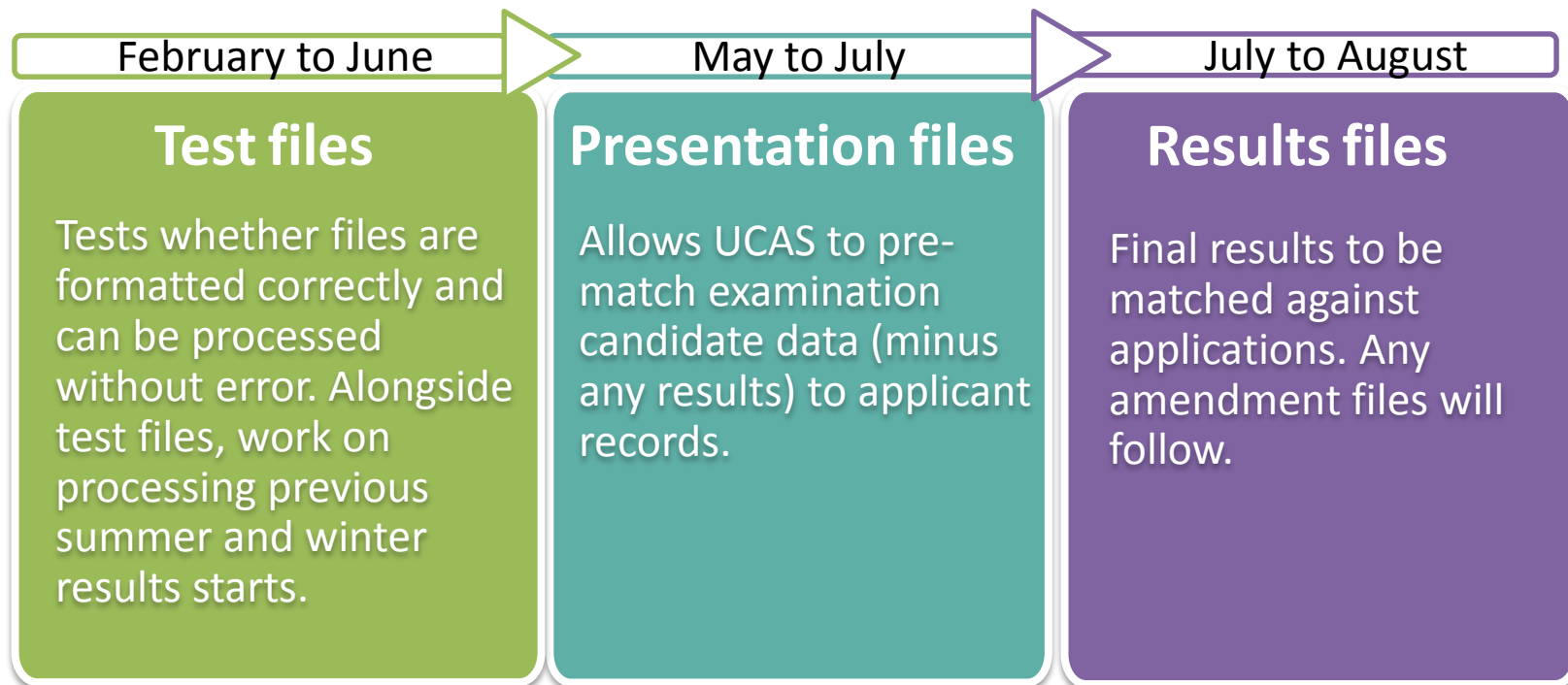
Embargo

As part of C&C, providers receive exam results in advance of Scottish and A level results day. These results are not disclosed to other parties including applicants prior to the relevant results day. In order to ensure this, embargo agreements are put in place with the awarding bodies and providers.

- This year communication surrounding the embargo periods has improved, including a workshop held at the annual UCAS Admission Conference. This involved Higher Education Providers (HEPs) and Awarding Bodies (ABs) providing their perspective. The workshop was designed to share best practice and stress the importance of the consequences of an embargo breach.
- The embargo agreements for 2016 have been sent to providers with a deadline for agreement to be received by the end of June.



ABL improving the process



Changes for 2016

A number of changes to ABL have taken place including:

- New Board - WJEC Eduqas offering Ofqual reformed qualifications to secondary schools and colleges in England, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and the independent sector in Wales who will specialise in the marking of reformed AS and A level qualifications.
- Changes have been made to support Reformed AS Level and Core Maths which is a new post GCSE qualification for learners that have achieved grade C or above
- Changes have been made to make processes more robust and help HEPs with the processing of results.



Results processed so far.

The ABL process has already begun, so far the following have been processed:

- IB winter results: 3,354 results matched
- Previous Results: Applicants who are applying for entry in the 2016 admissions cycle who sat qualifications in 2015 – 280,913 results matched.
- CIE Winter results: 5,745 results matched
- BTEC Match process 1 was completed by the end of April. BTEC Match process 2 began early June and Match Process 3 will begin at the end of June. This is a test activity completed in advance of receiving results to improve the matching process during the summer.
- All subject and unit reference data (Access to HE) have been provided by Access Validating Agencies (AVAs).

Results processing (ABL) 2016 timeline

BTEC and IB

04/05 July Main results file received

06 July Results available to HEPs (amendments weekly onwards until October)

SQA

02 August SQA results file received

03 August Results available to HEPs between 10:00-12:00hrs

AVAs

01 August AVA results file received

12 August Results available to HEPs between 19:00-21:00hrs

(tbc -
dependency
on the arrival
of SQA results)

Small boards

08 August Small boards results files received

12 August Results available to HEPs between 19:00-21:00hrs

CIE

11 August CIE results file received

12 August Results available to HEPs between 19:00-21:00hrs

Main boards

11 August Main boards results file received

12 August Welsh Baccalaureate files received and loaded

12 August Main and Welsh Bacc. results available to HEPs 19:00-21:00hrs

Communications and Marketing

- **From April**

Early communication to all audiences about key changes for C&C 2016.

- **‘Are you ready?’**

A coordinated campaign approach across all audiences.



- **Awarding Body Linkage**

Continue to build on messaging and resources available for providers and advisers.

- **Multi-channel**

Expanded applicant and adviser comms channels throughout May, June, July and August.

- **Planning**

‘One view’ communications planning to ensure great applicant and provider experience

Customer Experience Centre

How we communicate



UCAS Media

Precision Marketing Data Service (PMDS)

- Working closely with our A&R and IT colleagues to improve the service after feedback from last year's pilot test.
- Currently 60 providers who have shown an interest in using the product for C&C 2016

Digital ID Service (DIDS)

- New service provided to financial service customers for C&C 2016
- Colleagues working together to bring the service to life for C&C 2016
- NatWest, HSBC, RBS and Nationwide all signed up to use the service this year, with other UK High Street banks showing interest in the service.

Telegraph Media Group (TMG)

- Working in partnership with The Telegraph who are the official Clearing listing partner for 2016. Clearing listings to be published on 18 and 20 August

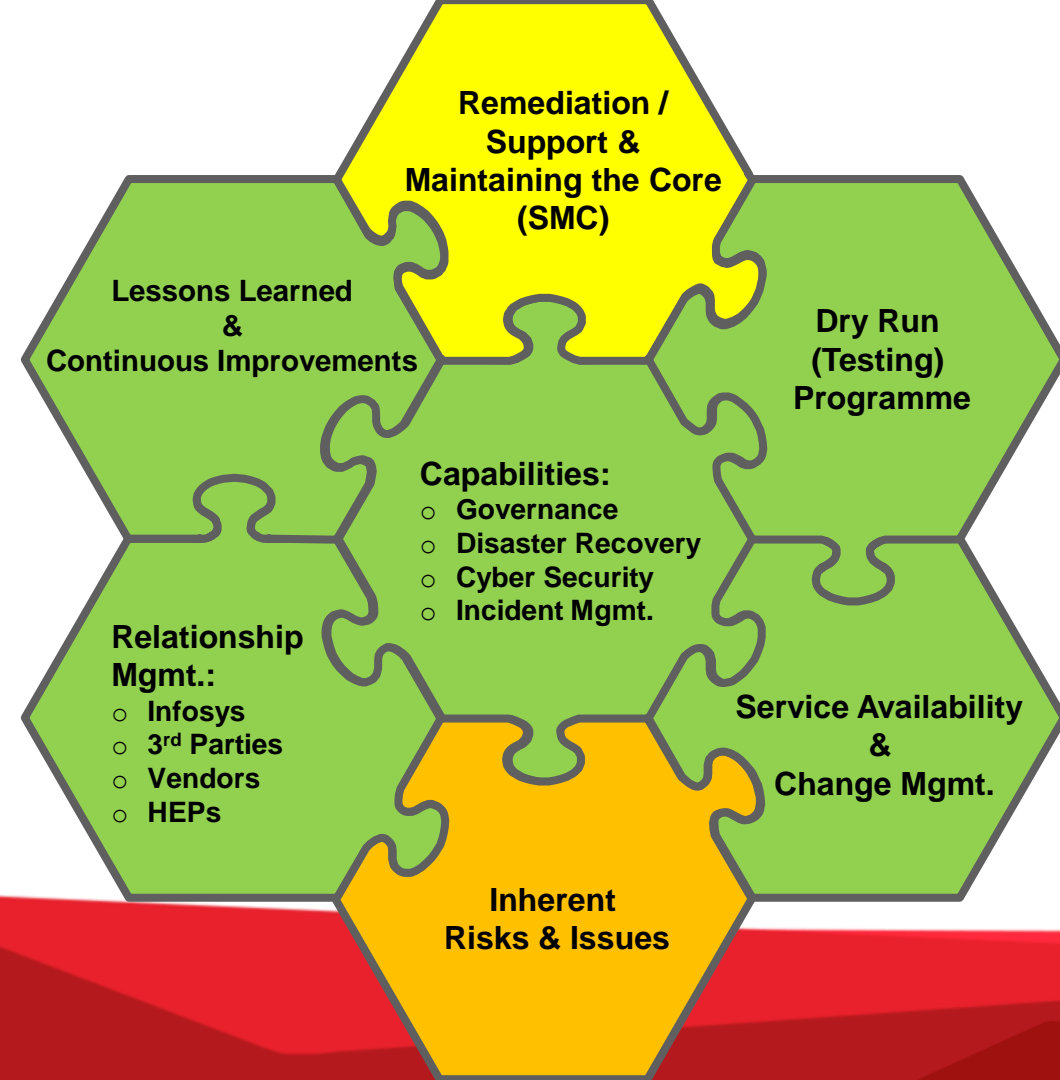


IT C&C Readiness

Confidence is currently green with the majority of streams ahead of schedule.

Dry run activities are now underway with a number of High Availability tests being completed. The data refresh in Pre-Prod has completed ahead of time and is now being verified prior to the commencement of the performance testing.

There are some SMC activities that are due to complete in June which we have still not finalised release dates for as well as some security tasks that are still being worked on.



Remediation / Sustain & Maintaining the Core (SMC)

A number of known IT risks are being remediated as part of the SMC programme as follows:

- Move to Office 365 to remove on-premise reliability issues.
- File storage upgraded to new resilient hardware with no space constraints
- Security monitoring of all IT systems implemented to provide intrusion detection and event monitoring capabilities.
- Removal of unreliable third party reliance for key systems.
- Rosehill internet traffic load balancers moved onto supported high availability hardware.
- A large amount of other remediation activities will continue to be worked on over C&C and will be ready to migrate post change freeze.



Testing programme

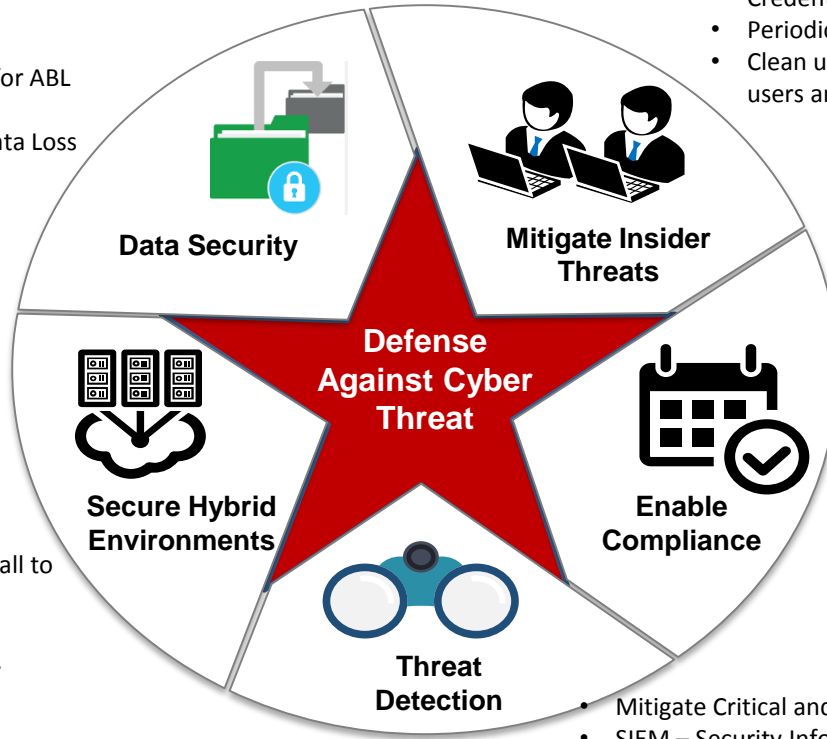
As in previous years we will be carrying out a number of activities from mid May until the end of July to ensure systems and processes are ready as follows:

- Individual load testing of all C&C critical systems.
- High Availability/failover testing.
- Infrastructure and application penetration testing.
- Incident management simulations.
- Peak business event testing:
 - All systems run at maximum load simultaneously to simulate peak activity and behaviour during C&C.
 - Targeted event tests for Apply, Track switch on and Clearing.
- Dance preparation, agreement and rehearsal.
- Preparation of JOC and monitoring screens.
- Disaster recovery service at STAR to be terminated by the end of June and replaced with a “recover to the cloud” solution with Sunguard.



Security risk and mitigation

- MOVEit secured option for ABL file sharing.
- Email Encryption and Data Loss Protection.



- Credential Threat Mitigation.
- Periodic User verification.
- Clean up of Web link , Topaz GUI, Track Support Tool users and password reset.

- System Center End point protection.
- Access Control using Websense.
- Renewed all SSL Certificates for Key applications.
- Enhanced Secure Architecture for PCI/DSS compliant Transaction.

- Introducing additional Firewall to enhance security.
- Sophos AV and Encryption.
- Malicious Software removal.
- Security Essentials -Harden Infrastructure.

- Mitigate Critical and Major Vulnerabilities identified by Penetration Test
- SIEM – Security Information & Event Management implemented
- IDS/IPS- Intrusion Detection and Prevention system implementation in progress.
- SOC- Security Operations Center extension to JOC(Joint Operations Center)

Vendor Readiness

- Technical Relationship Managers (TRMs) have started C&C readiness engagement with the vendors and this will continue until August.
- Most vendors do not have releases planned before C&C so no testing is scheduled. Oracle and Ellucian do have summer releases that contain AD2017 changes but are not expecting any deployments due to providers change freezes.
- UCAS support times shared with vendors on 1 June 2016 to allow them to map support accordingly.



Governance

Governance

- Admissions Management team meeting weekly
- Functional checkpoint with all business units, weekly
- Executive delivery confidence review for each function
- Organisation-wide C&C planning sessions

UCAS teams

- C&C-specific business-wide resourcing defined for July and August
- Joint Operations Centre (JOC) set up for results processing and results days
- 24/7 shifts for results days

Third party suppliers

- Key suppliers on site for results days
- Increased support from other suppliers
- Visibility of third party schedules of change ahead of C&C

Risks & Issues

Complexity of ABL supply chain.

- Impact: HIGH / Likelihood of risk materialising: LOW.
- Mitigation: Workshops held, improved communication and encouraged sending of test files.

Supplier Management.

- Impact: HIGH / Likelihood of risk materialising: LOW.
- Mitigation: Key suppliers on site at key times, visibility of 3rd part change schedules.

Cyber Security.

- Impact: HIGH / Likelihood of risk materialising: MEDIUM.
- Mitigation: introduction of additional firewall, identify critical vulnerabilities with testing.

Removal of I AM Cloud authentication service

- Impact: HIGH / Likelihood of risk materialising: High.
- Mitigation: Migration away from this service will happen before C&C

Existing legacy infrastructure security issues still exist for unsupported hardware and operating systems.

- Impact: HIGH / Likelihood of risk materialising: MEDIUM.
- Mitigation: Accept and continue to remediate as part of SMC

Secure file transfer service support model is not yet fully defined for new services this year e.g. DIDs; TMG; Clearing Vacancy Reports etc.

- Impact: HIGH / Likelihood of risk materialising: MEDIUM.
- Mitigation: Service assurance model is being defined

