

## minutes

DG/16/M2

Data Group meeting

held on Wednesday 2 November 2016, 11:00 – 15:00 , at UCAS, Cheltenham.

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Chair:	Wendy Webster	University of Dundee
Present:	Carolyn Charlton Daniel Farrell Helen Fawcett  James Brown Jo Hamilton Judith Davison Paul Ashby Steve Walsh Tania Smith	Keele University University of St Andrews Durham University (representing the Higher Education Strategic Planners Association) University of Glasgow University of Exeter University of Huddersfield University of Birmingham Aberystwyth University The University of Manchester
Apologies:	Christine Giles Gurjitt Nijjar Lisa Machin Richard Bartlett	University of Portsmouth University of Derby Nottingham Trent University University of Cambridge
UCAS in attendance:	Carys Fisher Christopher Pontac Clare Cozens Claire Howson Deniz Gosai Fiona Johnston  Helen Thorne Lee Watts Louise Cyprien Mike Spink Suzanne Campbell	Policy Executive (attended to present) Solution Architect (attended to present) Technology Relationship Manager Product Owner Groups and Forums Administrator Head of Analysis Products and Services (attended to present) Director of External Relations Product Owner (attended to present) Business Change Lead Enterprise Data and Applications Architect Education Account Manager (attended to present)

### **A3/16/01 Welcome and apologies**

The Group was welcomed to the meeting. Carolyn Charlton was welcomed to the meeting as the new representative from Keele University. Richard Bartlett could not attend the meeting, however he was now the representative from the University of Cambridge. Each member of the Group introduced themselves and apologies were noted.

### **A3/16/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting**

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

It was noted that the change in the time which Clearing choices could be added, from 17:00 to 15:00 on A level results day, had been perceived positively by learners. It had not yet been decided whether this would be continued for this cycle year.

The Group requested for further communication about whether the results of A levels taken by students in Hong Kong and Singapore were subject to the results embargo. Following the meeting, the following update had been provided:

‘Prior to this year, CIE results day [the results day for international A levels] had usually fallen on the day before A level publication day. UCAS received their results at the same time as UK A levels and therefore they were under embargo. However, this year CIE changed their results day to 11 August, a week earlier than A level publication day and therefore they did not fall under the normal embargo period.

However, the CIE results were not made available to providers until Friday 12 August alongside the main A level results, and although they were not under embargo at that time, Track was suspended for updates and therefore applicants would not have been able to view any Confirmation decisions that may have been made.’

It was requested that this information be communicated to the wider sector for future Confirmation and Clearing.

A question was raised regarding the collection of information about criminal convictions in Apply. It was confirmed that this would be built into the new Apply. This work was ongoing, and UCAS was aware that different parts of the UK had different requirements and that there were professional body requirements. The Group requested that UCAS informed providers as soon as possible when a decision had been made.

The Group noted that they did not use Yammer, and thought of it as another system they had to log into. Yammer should be an informal way of discussing items between meetings, however the Group confirmed that they would prefer important messages to be communicated through emails.

**A3/16/03 EXACT pricing principles, models, and example**

A presentation on EXACT was shared with the Group. A copy would be sent with the minutes. DG DG077

It was noted that most of the data requested from providers was already available, however, the data which wasn't, could be bought through EXACT.

The Group asked why POLAR 3 data was expensive, as it was not complicated to collate. It was confirmed that setting up the system to collate the data had been complicated initially, which was reflected in the price. The Group questioned whether the price would eventually decrease. Some members wanted a subscription model, with the option to buy data up to a fixed price. It was explained that the pricing of datasets by value meant that this was not practical. FJ DG078

From the discussions that took place, it was requested that more examples be made available onucas.com with prices listed. It was agreed that the most frequently requested data would be available on the website with the pricing, although the Group was reminded that individual requests would require personalised pricing.

In addition, it was noted, that new off-the-shelf EXACT products were being created, and would be launched shortly. The first product would be a set of outputs that would help providers look at offer making. Members asked how UCAS engaged with the sector to determine what is developed and asked how they could give feedback. It was confirmed that UCAS used the frequently asked questions when deciding which products to create.

**A3/16/04 Precision marketing data service update**

Precision marketing data service had been rebranded to direct contact service (DCS). It was the second year it was run, and so far the applicants' feedback on the service had been positive. The number of communications an applicants could receive was increased from five to nine, which was welcomed.

A survey had been sent to higher education providers on the 24 October 2016, and UCAS was awaiting the feedback. The feedback that had been received through meetings indicated that some HEPs had liked the new filter features, whereas others found it more challenging.

Additional feedback received included that the service would work well with Extra, as well as Clearing.

It was confirmed that 110 providers participated, although only about 30 – 40 providers used it to any significant degree. Subject areas which were more generic, such as business studies, were easiest to fill. There was an excess of demand from HEPs for building and architecture, and not enough applicants in Clearing to fill these spaces.

Additionally, there was a mixture of success, with some providers recruiting up to 110 applicants, whereas others only recruited one or two applicants.

A more detailed update would be provided at the next meeting, after the survey results had been analysed.

FJ DG079

### **A3/16/05 Application services update and discussion**

A presentation on document uploads was shared with the Group. A copy was sent with the minutes. The Group was encouraged to feedback their thoughts and opinions. DG DG080

It was confirmed that all vendors had been informed about files being brought into HEPs record system, and had confirmed that they could support this.

It was asked whether applicants could see documents that HEPs added to files, and was confirmed that access levels could be provided to restrict what applicants saw.

The Group raised the concern that applicants could potentially send the same document numerous times to the same provider, if they were applying for multiple courses. Additionally, different flags should be set for different applicants (i.e. home and international students).

Other points noted included:

- Issues with file names – Personal ID, course reference, etc.
- Many documents had to be in the HEPs own system, and could not be on a third party's system e.g. for UKVI purposes.
- HEPs needed verification activities which confirmed that documents were both valid and appropriate.
- Bulk upload was critical in UKPASS. Encryption had to be handled at both ends.
- A flag to inform HEPs that a document has been uploaded would be important. Although it was confirmed that this would be available, the Group requested that UCAS consulted with the sector on this area, as they would not want an email each time a document was amended.
- Could there be an overlap between the shared services and the documents which applicants were asked to submit.
- Document types would be required in document uploads.

The Group was asked whether meta data could be a way forward. It was noted that consumers could end up using two systems, and working with a mixed economy. Adam Glaudot, Technology Relationship Manager, agreed to speak to software vendors about meta data and file types, and would report back at the next meeting.

AG DG081

The point was raised that if an applicant was asked to submit an additional document, if it was done separately to each provider, it would not be user friendly; however, if it was uploaded once, and submitted to all providers, it could flag up with the other providers

**action**

that the application was being processed. It was confirmed that providers could choose which information they required. If it was a provider-specific question, it would only go to the provider, however, if the applicant updated details it would go to everyone. The Group unanimously agreed that a provider should also be able to flag when they did not want any more documents from an applicant, as their application had been undoubtedly rejected.

Wendy Webster informed the Group that she had a table listing the document uploads requirements, which would be circulated with the minutes.

WW  
DG082

The Group was reminded to engage in the fortnightly webinars. In addition feedback would be sought from all advisory groups and forums, and the HEP team would also be speaking to providers. It was reiterated that the developments would be ongoing.

### **A3/16/06 Update on link services end-of-life roadmap**

A presentation on the link service end-of- life roadmap was given to the Group. A copy would be sent with the minutes. DG DG083

The key dates were shown, as well as the roadmap. It was confirmed that the decommissioning of the postgraduate link product would begin in September 2020, and the undergraduate link product decommissioning would begin during December 2020. These dates would not be moved, and the software providers were happy with the timeframe. The Group requested that providers should be notified at the earliest opportunity to ensure that the switch over was successful.

The Group was also encouraged to start thinking about the data aspects as soon as possible, and an item would be included on the next agenda.

DG DG084

### **A3/16/07 Collection service – course data structure**

A new course data collection service was being developed, and the proposals were shared with the Group.

Many of the fields shown would not be mandatory for completion. It was asked why some fields were not generic (such as location, if there was only one campus). It was confirmed that these fields had not been highlighted previously, however, there was room for flexibility, if required. It was also confirmed that distance learning would come under study mode, although this had to be looked into in more detail.

The transition with HECoS would be looked into, however, this would not be immediately.

The postgraduate course list was looked at. It was noted that currently a new course had to be created for each start date. The Group noted that they would like different start dates, just not for the same data set.

It was confirmed that UCAS had not taken postgraduate courses data from Graduate Prospects since June 2016, and that this relationship had now ended.

Any further questions relating to course data structure should be sent to contact Claire Howson, Product Owner – [c.howson@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:c.howson@ucas.ac.uk).

### A3/16/08 Use of contextual data

A presentation on how UCAS might further support providers with contextualised admissions was shared with the Group. A copy would be sent with the minutes.

DG DG085

This was a holistic review, which would look long-term at UCAS' role in the context of the redevelopment of its products and services. However, small, tactical changes were already in train, such as cleansing school and college contact details, and proactively adding centres that were not UCAS registered to the database to facilitate the 'matching' of contextual data to an applicant record.

It was confirmed that qualification reform and associated changes to school performance measures were key drivers behind this review. For instance, some of the school accountability measures included with the current UCAS contextual data service would not be available for the 2018 admissions cycle. The frequently asked questions developed with the DfE to help providers understand the new school accountability measures in England could be found here:

[www.ucas.com/file/77306/download?token=wxHNt6h0](http://www.ucas.com/file/77306/download?token=wxHNt6h0).

In addition, a news item confirming the contextual data available for 2015 could be found here: [www.ucas.com/providers/services/news/2015-contextual-data-now-available](http://www.ucas.com/providers/services/news/2015-contextual-data-now-available).

### A3/16/09 HE Data Landscape Steering Group update

A HEDIIP/HESA update paper was provided to the Group prior to the meeting. The key points noted included:

- The new HE Data Landscape Steering Group had been set up, with their first meeting scheduled for Friday 4 November 2016. It was confirmed that the first collection of HECoS data by UCAS would be aligned to the collection of 2019 undergraduate course details.
- The Data Language Project – UCAS was working with HESA to make sure they were aligned.
- HESA Data futures – UCAS was meeting with HESA to discuss the \*J files, and the implications for UCAS.
- The conversation on ULN seemed to have slowed down.

Further update to be provided at the next meeting.

### A3/16/10 Offer rate calculator

The beta offer rate calculator went live on Tuesday 1 November 2016.

The background as to why the calculator was developed was explained. UCAS' analysis has shown that most applicants received offers from all their five choices, which suggested the potential to make more stretching applications. It was confirmed that this tool was only to be used with an adviser, and should not be the sole factor when making the decisions.

The tool currently was a beta version and only worked for A level results.

Contextualised data was not factored into it. HEPs could access all of their own underlying data. In the future, it could be extended to other qualifications. In discussion members commented that:

- it could put off some applicants from applying, particularly WP students as it did not take account of contextual offers
- it may not be appropriate for highly selective courses, for which interviews and factors other than predicted grades significantly influenced whether or not someone received an offer
- the methodology doesn't appear to reflect year on year changes in the likelihood of receiving an offer. It was agreed that UCAS could confirm if the offer data had been averaged or weighted in any way.
- it might make more sense to develop a calculator that gives students an indication their likelihood of securing a place

### A3/16/11 Any other business

#### 11.1 New Tariff reminder

Although a lot of questions had been asked to universities and colleges, they had felt equipped to answer them, and the feedback received had been positive.

It was asked whether UCAS could provide a list of providers who continued to only make offers based on Tariff points. It was confirmed that this would be difficult as a number of providers make Tariff offers for some courses and not others, or make Tariff offers and grade offers. There were few providers who made solely Tariff offers, and some were switching towards grade offers.

#### 11.2 Survey to Group

As part of the advisory groups and forums health check a short survey would be sent to all existing group members to hear their thoughts on how the advisory groups worked. The survey would take no longer than five minutes to complete, and the Group was encouraged to complete it. DG DG087

### 11.3 Gender question

It was confirmed that, at present, UCAS would be using the three options for gender – male, female and other. The Group was asked to contact Helen Thorne after the meeting if they wanted UCAS to look into other factors. A detailed update would be provided at the next meeting. DG DG088

### 11.4 Student Loans Company

The Group was informed that the Student Loans Company was interested in putting together a workshop and would like a member of the Data Group to be part of the workshop. Wendy Webster would forward the email to all Group members after the meeting. WW DG089

### 11.5 New Chair

Wendy Webster's chairmanship term had come to an end, and this was her last meeting as Chair. Wendy would, however, remain a member of the Group. Daniel Farrell, University of St Andrews, would now take up the role of the Chair, and James Brown, University of Glasgow, would deputise. Wendy was sincerely thanked for her work over the past three years on the Group.

### 11.4 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 March 2017 at UCAS.