

Minutes

DG/17/M3

Data Group meeting

held on Tuesday 14 November 2017 at LSE

Chair:	Daniel Farrell	University of St Andrews
Present:	Alex Ingold	The London School of Economics and Political Science
	Amy Butterworth	University of Bristol
	Jo Hamilton	University of Exeter
	Judith Davison	University of Huddersfield
	Paul Ashby	University of Birmingham
Apologies:	Carolyn Charlton	Keele University
	Christine Giles	University of Portsmouth
	Helen Fawcett	HESPA
	Lisa Machin	Nottingham Trent University
	Richard Bartlett	University of Cambridge
	Steve Walsh	Aberystwyth University
	Wendy Webster	University of Dundee
UCAS in attendance:	Andy Harrison	Head of Analytical Development
	Deniz Gosai	Provider Engagement Coordinator
	Mike Spink	Enterprise Data and Applications Architect
	Peter Derrick	Head of Admissions and Service Delivery
	Fraser Nicoll	Strategic Product Manager (by Skype)

A3/17/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and apologies noted. Alex Ingold was thanked for hosting the meeting in London.

A3/17/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

The minutes were approved as a correct and accurate reflection of the last meeting. Clarification over 'with regards to embargo breaches, it would need to be decided whether the breach caused harm to the individual, and only if it did would it need to be reported' was sought. It was confirmed UCAS would be looking at further details around this in the near future.

The open actions from the log were discussed:

DG103 – the Group asked to see an updated list of mandatory and non-mandatory fields. CC DG114

DG109 – this was covered under UCAS reference data and Microsoft MDS on the agenda. This action was closed.

DG111 – Daniel Farrell agreed to follow this action up.

DG113 – Data Futures was covered during the meeting. This action was closed.

All other actions were closed.

A3/17/03 Corporate Strategy refresh

A presentation on the UCAS Corporate Strategy refresh was given. The Group was asked whether they thought the UCAS core statement was correct, i.e. to provide a fair and trusted undergraduate admissions service. It was suggested that if UCAS wanted to continue branching out to postgraduate, conservatoire and teacher training, then the word undergraduate should be removed. In addition, the words 'fair' and 'trusted' were also very important elements, and could do with elaboration. DG DG115

The Group was asked for its opinion on the statements about data as a capability to underpin the UCAS core purpose statement. It was asked if some of the items listed in the presentation slide should/could be delivered through Heidi Plus. It was suggested that UCAS could do further partnership work.

Action

UCAS was currently very busy delivering current ambitions, and therefore, future ambitions should be moved to a future Corporate Strategy. In addition, it was questioned whether UCAS had committed to delivering now irrelevant areas which should be halted, to concentrate on more relevant issues.

Many datasets were not published, or made available to providers, in a suitable timeframe. It was asked if these timeframes could be reconsidered.

It was confirmed that UCAS was carrying out a GCSE pilot with one exam board, concentrating on maths and English, and focused on previous exam results. In future, the pilot could be extended to other boards, and other schemes, such as UCAS Teacher Training.

The Group stated that Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were becoming unmanageable for providers. Many had been informed to direct the majority of requests to UCAS or HESA. The Group asked if UCAS could produce a best practice guide, and include it in the bulletin.

PD DG116

A3/17/04 Application management service (AMS) update

It was confirmed that the launch date for postgraduate AMS had been pushed back to spring 2018. The launch date for undergraduate AMS had not yet been agreed, and this would be discussed at the UCAS Board in December. All updates had been communicated through bulletins. However, feedback from the Group suggested not all messages were cascading, or being targeted at the relevant providers.

PD DG117

The Group was encouraged to sign in to the AMS test environment, have a 'play around' with it, and then give their feedback, using the button provided. The test environment can be accessed at www.ucas.com/providers/services/our-products-and-systems/test-and-training-environments/our-new-test-training-and-development-environment. A demonstration of AMS was given, and it was confirmed that everything available in the AMS environment would be available through APIs. The links to odbc-link and xml-link would be removed two years after the release of the APIs. Additional non-statutory questions, not currently available through odbc-link, would not be added, and would only appear in APIs.

PD DG118

The Group asked for further details on document uploads. File types and size would be restricted. The file type list was not online, but would be circulated to the Group. All files would be scanned periodically.

Some courses required certain types of documents – currently, all documents were optional. In future, AMS could be developed to include mandatory document uploads at course level, although this would not be ready for launch. Questions could be made

mandatory, and a question type was available to request a document. Finally, it was confirmed that questions could not be 'turned off' as such. But they could be made non-mandatory.

It was asked whether an up-to-date backlog could be made available to providers, so they did not continue requesting items already on there. It was suggested that it might be more helpful to keep receiving the same requests, as it would help push those items up the backlog list.

A3/17/05 Service catalogue update

A new version of the service catalogue was not yet ready to share with the Group. The content was agreed, and would be written up shortly. This would include which services would be included in capitation fees, and which would be paid for. The Group asked for an update on this at the next meeting.

FN DG119

A3/17/06 UCAS reference data & Microsoft Master Data Service (MDS)

Reference data is currently held in multiple systems, but in future all reference data would be held centrally. UCAS was working with HESA to pull these master lists together, and these would then be made available in the AMS. These would also be accessible to providers and students, to search for their qualifications.

UCAS had some NARIC datasets, which would be used in the AMS. It was confirmed that the UCAS contact database would cease, and information would be added to the new UCAS CRM system.

UCAS always tried to locate national and international reference data, and used HESA information as much as possible. However, UCAS did not use HESA's reference list for titles.

PD DG120

The Group asked if the school ID list from NCTL could be circulated. It was also requested whether UCAS could feed back the difficulty providers have in keeping local information up-to-date when there are varying or different qualification names provided by HESA. However, UCAS could not change this.

PD DG121

UCAS had invested in Microsoft Master Data Service (MDS), which was originally intended for use by data stewards to manage references. In future, MDS would publish all master reference data to other datasets, and effectively connect all systems together.

A3/17/07 Pearson Edexcel issue

During the summer, there was a problem with the Pearson Edexcel science practical. The process was explained: results files had been released to providers on the Friday. On the Sunday, UCAS begun receiving queries from providers asking if Pearson's science practical results were correct. UCAS confirmed the data received from Pearson had been correctly uploaded. On the Monday, UCAS carried out further analysis, which showed Pearson's failure rate was 10%, compared to 1 – 2% from other providers.

Pearson also carried out its own investigation, and identified that the science practical results were incorrect. Pearson then sent UCAS an amended file, and each affected applicant was contacted. All disadvantaged applicants were then individually 'unpicked' by UCAS.

PD DG121

In future, UCAS would carry out an audit on failure rates, but it was unlikely to be before results were released. It was agreed that UCAS would check how many applicants per provider were affected by this error. UCAS was meeting with Pearson Edexcel shortly, and this issue would be on the agenda.

A3/17/08 HECoS implementation

The HECoS codes and fields for collection were now live, and in the collection tool. These codes will be mandatory for all courses. Webinars had taken place, UCAS had produced FAQs for providers, and a page of tips would be available shortly. UCAS would also work with HESA, to direct providers to all the information. Providers needed to update their codes in time for the release of the 2019 search tool next May.

It was noted that student records did not require these codes yet, and therefore had not yet engaged with this change. Jo Hamilton agreed to send out communications encouraging student record teams to speak to their admissions team.

JH DG122

UCAS had implemented the HECoS codes in MDS. It was confirmed that the old JACS code and UCAS application code would still be visible as read-only in the collection tool. The application code would still be visible in the search tool.

There was an in-depth discussion on how UCAS used HECoS and JACS codes for reporting. UCAS was looking in to how to streamline the two in their reports. It was stated that providers needed to be made aware of the reports in advance, as they were often picked up by the media.

It was agreed that Application Tracker would be included on the next agenda.

DG DG123

A3/17/09 GDPR update

A GDPR paper was sent to the Group in advance of the meeting. Nigel Parr was unable to attend, so it was asked for this item to be on the next agenda, as providers were receiving a lot of questions. More guidance was requested from UCAS on data sharing agreements. The paper was currently for the Group only, and could not yet be shared, but the sector would be informed when UCAS was intending to publish a document.

DG DG124

PD DG125

A3/17/10 Forecasting

A presentation on forecasting was shared with the Group. The Group had not seen UCAS' forecasting previously, and would like this information shared. It was also asked whether UCAS had carried out analysis on nursing, or had looked at Clearing forecasting. The Group felt strongly that providers needed to have all the information in advance of it being released by UCAS.

AH DG126

The Group was reminded that feedback, like the above, should be noted through advisory groups and relationship managers. The Analysis and Research Team would also be visiting providers to understand their needs. Both Paul Ashby, University of Birmingham, and Jo Hamilton, University of Exeter, volunteered to hold a meeting with A&R colleagues. All members agreed they would be happy to test out new ideas.

Release dates for the end of cycle can be viewed at www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources.

A3/17/11 Any other business and close

Judith Davison, University of Huddersfield, was appointed as the deputy chair for the Group.

Concerns were raised regarding the increase in subscription fee for Application Tracker. It was questioned why a) the increase in fee hadn't been discussed with the Data Group, b) there had not been an explanation as to why there was an increase, and c) why the increase had not been communicated in advance, as provider budgets for the coming year are likely to have been set. The lack in communication would be fed back to UCAS, and this item would be discussed in detail at the next meeting.

PD DG127

The Group also requested the overseas report was broken down further by domicile/country. It was agreed that this would be investigated.

AH DG128

Action

The next meeting would be held at UCAS in Cheltenham, on Wednesday 21 March 2018.