

Minutes

DG/19/M2

Data Group meeting

held on Monday 17 June 2019 at UCAS, Cheltenham

Chair:	Peter Derrick	Head of Service Delivery (this meeting only)
Present:	Alex Ingold	The London School of Economics and Political Science
	Carolyn Charlton	Keele University
	Gareth Samule	University of Cardiff
	Kirsty Younger	Durham University
	Paul Ashby	University of Birmingham
	Sandrine Fabris	Aston University
	Sarah Barton-Place	University of Huddersfield
	Steve Walsh	Aberystwyth University
	Stuart Winters	University of Stirling
Apologies:	Amy Butterworth	University of Bristol
	Amy Cooper	University of Leicester
	Jo Hamilton	University of Exeter
	Judith Davison	University of Huddersfield
	Richard Bartlett	University of Cambridge
	Shabana Akhtar	HESPA (planning)
UCAS in attendance:	Deniz Gosai	Provider Engagement Coordinator
	Sarah Barr Miller	Head of Insights Sales, UCAS Media
Presenting:	David Best	Director of Analysis and Insights
	Finlay Willicott	Product Executive
	Hazel Rudge	Principal Data Scientist
	Jess Wadey	Data Scientist
	Kate Bevan	Product Owner
	Kate Westmacott	Service Delivery Manager
	Rich O'Kelly	Head of Analytical Data
	Vickie Phair	Head of Surveys

A2/19/01 Welcome and apologies

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

Peter Derrick, UCAS, was the Chair for this meeting, but Bella Malins, University College London (UCL), had agreed to be the new Chair.

A2/19/02 Minutes and action log from previous meeting

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

The open actions from the log were discussed:

DG120 – Teams across UCAS were meeting to understand how information and data could be shared more easily with schools. This action remained in progress.

DG147 – Data Futures was currently on hold. UCAS had met with HESA, and was looking to publish the data definitions used by both organisations where they aligned, and if they didn't align, to explain the rationale for this. This action remained in progress and would be discussed at the next meeting.

DG152 – The new data set for universities in the UCAS Postgraduate system would be delivered at end of July 2019. This action was closed.

DG156 – A reminder was included in the recent bulletin on how to access reference data in xml-link. This action was closed.

DG157 – No suggestions had been received by the Group on the questions they would like added to the student survey. This action remained open.

DG158 – UCAS was still asking for feedback on data uploads. This action remained open.

DG160 – A webinar on digital space was delivered, and more would be given between meetings. This action was closed.

DG166 – Due to the uncertainty with Data Futures, this action could not be completed. UCAS would revisit this action in future, if necessary.

DG171 – A webinar would be held when options had been identified on how subjects would be categorised against the ATAS flag regarding research courses. Action remained open.

DG172 – As the Group had new members, it was agreed that the synonym and stemming lists would be recirculated.

DG174 – The Tracker list of dimensions was still a work in progress. UCAS was hoping to launch it in October 2019. Eight providers, who used the tool regularly, had been contacted for feedback. This action remained in progress and would be included in future meetings.

DG175 – Confirmation on what this action related to was needed. The action remained opened.

DG176 – The new application management service (AMS) test and training environment had looked into how providers could differentiate between undergraduate and postgraduate data. It was agreed that there would be an agenda item at the next meeting on test data in the AMS.

All other actions were covered during the meeting or were closed.

A2/19/03 Discussions around the priorities for courses data and the collection tool – open discussion

A presentation on the collection tool and courses data was given to the Group, and a copy was sent out after the meeting.

Group members confirmed they were supplying their data to various sources. Providers had different departments, who fed the data to the different places, as the information was not currently centralised, although the aim was to have a single point of delivery. Some members had a single source catalogue, but the issue was how they would disseminate data to the different sources, as each required a different data set. Issues also occurred when new courses were implemented. This process typically took approximately a year to create a new course. UCAS would need to consider when they would appear in the process, and the impact of it. Providers did not usually put courses on ucas.com until sure they would be validated, but some noted that validation could be linked to recruiting students.

It was asked if providers were aware that UCAS Media sold the data. The Group felt there was an issue around why UCAS Media sold data which providers were generating. Additionally, some members of the Group felt that as the data was sold to competitors, providers were then having to buy their own data, to keep up with the competition. It

was noted that UCAS had to ensure data was available to whoever required it, to keep in line with the Competition Act. In addition, UCAS Media had its own Board which providers sat on, to ensure all rules were followed correctly.

It was asked whether all the data was required, but if providers were not giving it to UCAS, they would still need to supply it to HESA. UCAS had been in discussions with Health Education England, about sharing course data with providers, and wanted to continue discussions with other sector bodies. It was noted that some bodies only want specific sub-sections of the data, which currently UCAS could not supply.

Providers would like a system to upload their data, as it would simplify the process. They preferred an automation system (for example, downloading a spreadsheet, make a change and then reupload it).

Finally, members noted that providers complied with the Freedom of Information Act differently, depending on what their lawyers had advised them.

A2/19/04 EXACT pricing for next financial year

A presentation on EXACT pricing was given to the Group.

It was confirmed that data requests would have price parity compared to the cost of them previously. Further analysis would be conducted to analyse if widening participation variables would be cheaper.

SBM
DG178

Repeat data requests would generally be 'winners' in the new EXACT pricing structure.

The Group liked both the transparency and subscription part of the pricing structure, but asked whether a Heidi Plus type interface could be used.

It was noted that the subscription price would start at the beginning of the financial year, and last for the remaining 12 months. The price for a 'bundle' of EXACT requests would be for 12 months only, and would run at the start of the financial year. However, the Group suggested 12 months from purchase would be the better option, so that bundles could be bought mid-year without penalty.

SBM
DG179

It was agreed that UCAS would check if data sets for Data Filter would be included in the subscriptions.

Some providers did not use EXACT, as they did not have the budget to do so. Overall, the Group was happy that most prices were similar.

It was agreed that a final version of the pricing work would be shared as soon as possible, and a follow-up webinar would be organised, if members thought this necessary. Alternatively, the Group was asked to email Sarah Barr Miller at s.barrmiller@ucas.ac.uk.

A2/19/05 Analysis and Insights data release and end of cycle data reporting (including unconditional offer-making)

UCAS was voluntarily adopting the Code of Practice for Statistics. This would mean that the publication schedule would be maintained during the year, and if there were any changes, stakeholders would be given at least four weeks' notice.

Two main areas would be looked at:

- Code of Practice – limits audience for pre-release practices.
- User friendliness of data published would be improved.

A report on unconditional offers would be published on Thursday 25 July. This would be similar to the report published in 2018, but would also include unconditional and conditional offer-making. Providers would be given access to view the report on Tuesday 23 July. It was confirmed that only sector-level data would be disclosed. The final End of Cycle Report would be available in January 2020.

UCAS had looked at minimum entry requirements, but would not be looking at offer-making conditions for the current cycle. This was mainly because it was too complex, as providers could choose their own coding for offer-making conditions. There was a discussion on a few inconsistencies with the data set, and it was confirmed that from now on, the data should be consistent. It was also noted that the file size was too large for some providers. UCAS was aware of this, and would be improving it, along with the user friendliness of the data.

If the Group had any questions, they were asked to email Rich O'Kelly at r.okelly@ucas.ac.uk.

A2/19/06 UCAS' corporate strategy discussion and data strategy

A presentation on the corporate strategy 2020 – 2025 was given to the Group before the meeting. Feedback included:

Markets:

- UCAS' core provision (undergraduate admissions) must not be compromised.
- Happy to explore other markets, providing the core provision was priority.

- UCAS needed to act quickly if they wanted to get into the apprenticeship market, and should be looking at new schemes that would be happening in the next five years. It was felt that UCAS had 'missed the boat' for UCAS Postgraduate AMS.
- UCAS needed to offer something outstanding for providers to use UCAS Postgraduate, as they already had their own working systems.
- UCAS Undergraduate was not just a system, but a timeline, which defined how providers work. Providers could not see a timeline solution for UCAS Postgraduate.
- UCAS would need to have a large number of providers signed up to any new scheme for it to be a success.
- The Group thought that modular learning would be a benefit, but would be really hard to set up. If UCAS could do it, then this would be where the efficiencies would be. As physical space was limited, blended learning would be good too. Providers were also already partnering with others, and probably would not need UCAS. However, they would require a light touch data system, to gather the data providers needed.
- Overall, the Group agreed that UCAS should invest more in the undergraduate market, and become excellent at it, instead of trying to deliver lots of little schemes.

Differentiation:

- The Group liked the idea of a 'pick-and-mix' service package, and would like data sources to be available in one place.
- Not all providers were aware of the data packages UCAS provided.
- A lot of emails from MOVEit were sent to providers, but the recipients often did not know what to do with the information.
- Functionality should be there for everybody, even if it wasn't used by everyone.
- The information on ucas.com was not easy to find.
- Smaller providers used the free data as they did not have the budget for additional data.

Flexibility within AMS:

- The Group was worried that applicants were heavily marketed to already (in terms of surveys), but would like UCAS to target information, advice, and guidance.
- Providers were concerned that too much customisation could become a barrier for applicants.
- There were mixed views on whether geographical targeting on ucas.com was a good idea.
- Admissions (e.g. interview dates) were currently done manually outside UCAS, and it was asked if these could be incorporated into the new AMS.

Due to time constraints, the data strategy would be discussed at the next meeting.

A2/19/07 Career Explorer – sharing the alpha version of the tool

A presentation on information and advice was given to the Group.

There was a detailed discussion on the mapping of the rural and motorway junction data. It was noted that some universities would class themselves as rural, even though they were close to motorway junctions. It was advised that UCAS should be cautious over the terminology used for this, and collegiate universities. There was also a discussion about the data and how it should be explained to applicants – it was asked whether campus university data could be investigated.

HR DG181

It was confirmed that this was the first iteration, and UCAS would be consulting with the wider sector on it before any decisions were made.

A live demonstration of Career Explorer was shown to the Group. There was a discussion of what the prerequisite was. It was confirmed that the data used was based on what applicants had when they received an offer within the last five years. However, if providers had changed their offer-making process within this time, this data would be disregarded. The Group felt the tool was meaningless for selective universities, as it did not take into account contextualised data. It was also noted, that the applicants who would probably use the tool, would be those who were the hardest to obtain the correct outcome for. Currently, UCAS did not have a go-live date. It was agreed that this would be included on the next meeting agenda.

DG DG182

A2/19/08 Surveys – strategy ongoing (timings of existing surveys and opportunities for efficiency)

A presentation on the survey data services was given to the Group.

It became apparent that new applicants not only received a new applicant survey from UCAS, but were also receiving them for each of their chosen providers – so in some cases could be receiving up to seven surveys. UCAS would be happy to run the survey for providers, although the Group was concerned that they would then be asked to pay for the data. There were some benefits in UCAS running the survey, as it would be anonymous for the applicant, and providers would also be able to see results from applicants who did not select them. UCAS also had an incentive system, where the more surveys the applicant completed, the more points they received when they were entered into a prize draw.

Action

It was suggested that a comparison of response rates between UCAS and providers would be good, and UCAS could ask providers when they carried out their surveys, so they did not go to applicants at the same time. VP DG183

It was agreed that surveys would be discussed further at the next meeting. DG DG184

A2/19/09 Any other business and close

Member of Data Group to join Technology Group

The Data Group and Technology Group had agenda items which often crossed over, so it was asked if a member of the Data Group could join the Technology Group. A copy of the Terms of Reference was sent to the Data Group. DG DG185

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 10 October 2019 at LSE.