UCAS

International Advisory Group Agenda

IAG/24/A1
International Advisory Group meeting
To be held on Wednesday 7 February 2024 hybrid at British Council
Meeting scheduled to start at 11:00 until 14:00

Chair:	Jane Dunn	Aston University
Attendees:	Ady Yong	Aston University
	Anne Marie Graham	UKCISA
	Rachel Kimber	Kaplan (online)
	Catriona McCarthy	Ulster University (online)
	Charley Robinson	UUKI (online)
	Colin Bell	COBIS
	Jenifer Birtill	British Council
	Rachael Parsons	The University of Edinburgh (online)
	Ruth Wootton	Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
	Ruth Jones	NCUK
	Ryan Moran	MPW (online)
	Tolani Jaiyeola	Study Affairs (online)
Apologies:	Jacqui Jenkins	British Council
	Ula Tang	University of Central Lancashire
UCAS in attendance:	Becka Horsley	Customer Success Partner – International
	Holly Newman	Marketing Manager International (online)
	Laura Hawkins	Customer Engagement Coordinator
	Teona Droc	Customer Experience Manager (online)
Presenting:	Carolyn Mindos	Principal Admissions Reform Lead (online)
	Chris Kirk	Director of International
	Clare Cozens	Group Product Manager
	Dwayne Jones	Research & Insights Manager
	Emma Cole	Product Owner
	Haleema Masud	Policy Adviser
	Felicity Lloyd	International Partnerships Manager
	Ricardo Suarez	Research & Insights Manager

A1/24/01   Welcome and apologies

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

A1/24/02   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:

- IAG270 - UCAS worked with UUKi colleagues led by Andy Howells, before he left, to become a content partner as part of the revised #WeAreInternational campaign. During phase 1, this included messaging across UCAS' customer network – applicants, advisers, and providers – and across public corporate social media channels. One highlight was hosting an Adviser Live with UUKi and one of the #WeAreInternational student ambassadors, watched by UCAS advisers in over 20 countries. The team is working with UUKi colleagues around support for phase 2 of the campaign, which coincides with the launch of the 2025 UCAS cycle.

- IAG271 - The group requested year on year data over 5+ years, inclusive of states and cities. Insights for Hong-Kong, Nepal and The Philippines were particularly desired. This is still outstanding.

- IAG277 - Deadlines data points for exam dates from previous research pieces will be circulated with the minutes to check alignment with UCAS.

A1/24/03   EOC and Global Insights China Report Review and discussion

Haleema Masud presented key insights from 2023 end of cycle (EOC). Slides will be circulated with the minutes.
It was agreed that in the future a breakdown of Irish applicants by region, and Northern Ireland vs the rest of the UK due to the funding arrangements, would be useful.
COBIS has offered to assist with introductions to organisations to support international targeted training and support for various regions was discussed.

The recent China report UCAS developed delved into reasonings behind Chinese students choosing to study in the UK. The link to the report is available to read here.

A1/24/04   International Strategy Overview & Update

Felicity Lloyd and Chris Kirk gave an update on UCAS' international admissions development which has been split into 4 major steps. Presentations will be circulated with the minutes.

1. Grow adviser channel and impact

UCAS have been increasing the number of registered centre's around the world which means they are on track for 3,500 by equal consideration deadline (ECD) 2025. UCAS' partnerships with COBIS and the British Council support raising awareness of UCAS and what being a registered centre entails. UCAS are focusing on more engagement and information, advice, and guidance for registered centre's to ensure more quality applications, better conversion rates and reduce the workload and administration at the higher education providers (HEPs) end.

It would be useful for the group to see a breakdown of where the registered centre's are, and where to direct growth. It would also be helpful if UUKi knew where recruitment comes from.

IAG278
FL/BH

The International Conference 2024 will be hosted in London on 17th, 18th, and 19th June 2024.
The invitation for speakers has been sent out, and members are encouraged to reach out if they would like to have a slot on the agenda. UCAS will send the agenda to IAG members before it is finalised for extra input.

IAG279
FL/GM

2. Unlock all routes to UK

Since the launch of Myriad back in 2022, there have been positive figures such as over 200,000 Android and iOS downloads from over 200 countries, and none of these had direct applications through UCAS.com.
Myriad by UCAS is no longer in use after a rebrand in December to the UCAS for International App. Students are using it as a discovery tool, and there are plans to improve the information and guidance and to support HEPs to use this as a marketing tool. The new app allows undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) international applicants to have their own space and a single sign on to the Hub for UG applications, ensuring a more streamlined experience.

3. More efficient admissions

UCAS' Product team has been developing key sections of the application process such as nationality, address history, qualifications, and education.
New help text boxes are being added to assist with new questions regarding visa and immigration status, settled status and pre-settled expiry dates, levels of previous studies, and why someone may not need a visa to study in the UK.
Applicants will now be asked to give three years' worth of address history with the purpose and duration of why they live there. The home address will be confirmed to enable fee status to be correctly identified.
Applicants will be able to filter categories of qualifications. COBIS and KAPLAN expressed interest to help ensure the qualifications on the form are listed correctly to help providers.

IAG280
RK/CB

4. Building greater trust in the system

As part of the product roadmap UCAS are looking to build greater trust into the system, such as releasing independent impartial data to defend assumptions from the

press. UCAS colleagues have been speaking at different networks events through the help of UUKi and are exploring how UCAS can best operate and support the sector.

International Admissions Development Group
The international admissions development group is recruiting new members, and the deadline for submitting expressions of interests is Friday 16th February 2024. The group's purpose is to include HEPs and industry voices in shaping the UCAS offering to ensure that the products and services are fit for purpose. Contact Felicity Lloyd f.lloyd@ucas.ac.uk for further information.
UCAS has promoted the International Admissions Development Group to primary providers. Direct emails have been sent out and it has been shared in UCAS' Correspondence bulletin.

A1/24/05 **Shape of the Cycle**

Carolyn Mindos presented an update on the shape of the cycle which will be circulated with the minutes. Before Christmas UCAS met to discuss the equal consideration deadline (ECD) and reject by default (RBD) deadlines. The feedback resulted in the deadline remaining the same but other areas of reform came to light during the research. In May 2024, this deadline consultation will be released.

The group were asked to answer how they would like the international admissions process to be approached.
Feedback included:
- When UCAS goes offline in the summer, international students have their results and wait during the embargo period which can cause distress, can this be avoided?
- Predicted grades to be reviewed.
- Consider the Clearing 'timeline' for international students is different, e.g. it starts in May and can continue until September.
- Be clear with deadline flexibility, so international applicants are aware that they can still apply after ECD.
- Look at removing international references.

For any further feedback members are encouraged to contact reform@ucas.ac.uk

A1/24/06 **UCAS: TNE and International Education Strategy**

Chris Kirk discussed TNE and International Education Strategy.

The group were asked to reflect on, outside of UG, what would be helpful in the International Education Strategy (IES) 2.0?
The government does not have to respond to data in parliament and advice UCAS can give for the sector to tell a different story.
- Helping pathway providers into the current UCAS system, and ways students can bring them into the UCAS journey.
- Assist providers who are looking to deliver UK higher education outside of their country.
- Positive wording to reinforce different routes being equal.

- Carry out and release data analysis to clearly express students are not being chosen because of fees.

A1/24/07   Personal Statement reform

UCAS are making changes to the personal statement driven by a reform project. Clare Cozens and Emma Cole presented the upcoming changes to UCAS' personal statement strategy. The UX and Insights Teams will work closely with advisers and students on how to best present the three questions and to build information and guidance best practice support.

These changes aim to be in place for the 2026 admissions cycle which opens in May 2025, to enable students to have time to prepare over the summer. Any extenuating circumstances will sit outside of the personal statement.

The group were asked to review the three questions and the wording for the personal statement sections:
- Career goals and modules compliance checker used by providers should not be used in a personal statement.
- Language for section two 'preparedness for course' could be reviewed due to complicated wording especially for international applicants. It could be changed to 'What research did you do on this course?' As this is free and readily available for anyone no matter what the background.
- A free text help box for extra guidance on answering the questions would be useful.
- Can UCAS concentrate the emphasis on the applicant and what makes them stand out?
- The 'preparedness for course' should be exaggerated as an opportunity for applicants to show their studies/academic knowledge.
- Section three could be changed to 'Tell us why your experience in your qualifications have prepared you for this course'.

Feedback on Character counts:
- Could the characters be increased from 4,000?
- Some people 'characters' rather than word count confusing.
- Some students have limited experience outside of academic studies, and some systems don't see extra-curricular activities as important.
- If the character was open to use 4,000 on any section, could applicants be disadvantaged by applying to providers that favour a particular section?
- Does work need to be done on information and guidance from providers with expectations? Although, this could be disadvantageous to applicants who apply independently.

Feedback on Position on format:
- Many international students won't include sensitive data or a disability in case it may be seen as a negative on their application and lessen their chances of getting into their chosen provider.
- Extenuating circumstances could be simplified as the phrase is complex for international applicants.
- There were suggestions for a help text box to explain what extenuating circumstances do for the application and how it affects it, to alleviate the stigma or concern for it being disadvantageous.

A1/24/08   Any other business and Close

The date in the diary for the next meeting is 12th June 2024, but it was suggested the date be rearranged to tie in with the International Conference (16th – 18th June). This will be discussed offline.