

Minutes

DG/15/M2

Data Group meeting held on Wednesday 1 July 2015, at UCAS, Cheltenham

Chair:	Wendy Webster	University of Dundee
Attendees:	Daniel Farrell Emma Christmas Helen Reed James Brown Judith Davison Jo Hamilton Paul Ashby Stella Fowler Steve Walsh Tania Smith	University of St Andrews Keele University University of Cambridge University of Glasgow University of Huddersfield University of Exeter University of Birmingham University of Gloucestershire (representing the Higher Education Strategic Planners Association) Aberystwyth University University of Manchester
Apologies:	Christine Giles Daniel King Gurjit Nijjar James Ackroyd Nick Bhugeloo	University of Portsmouth University of Surrey University of Derby University of Reading Kingston University
UCAS in attendance:	Ben Jordan Chris Solley Denise Chaffer Fiona Johnston Fraser Nicoll Helen Thorne Lee Watts Mark Corver Mathew Evans Naga Jeenu Simon Robshaw Suzanne Campbell Tom Carr	Senior Policy Executive Data Architect Groups & Forums Administrator Head of Analysis Products & Services Strategic Product Manager Director of External Relations Product Owner Director of Analysis & Research Senior Data Steward Data Architect Enterprise Architect Education Account Manager Product Owner

01/15/M2 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed the attendees to the Data Group meeting and the apologies were noted.

Wendy also informed the group that James Ackroyd, University of Reading had tendered his resignation from the Data Group.

02/15/M2 Minutes and actions from the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as an accurate and true representation of the meeting.

The open actions were discussed:

DG004 new members – there was still a vacancy for a college representative on the Data Group. Helen informed the group that this had proved to be difficult and encouraged the attendees to pass on any suggestions for a representative. Helen agreed to increase the advertising for new members in the bulletin and on ucas.com.

DG023 development of new services – Wendy informed the group that the recent webinars had proved to be very successful and were very well attended. The webinars were available for the entire sector to participate in and were available on the [ucas](http://ucas.com) website.

The group also noted that further communications to the sector were needed to encourage those outside of postgraduate admissions to participate given that the technology developed for the new postgraduate service will form the foundations of the redeveloped undergraduate service.

The remaining actions were closed.

03/15/M2 Overview of UCAS service re-development

The group was taken to meet the UCAS teams working on the postgraduate initiative to demonstrate the progress of developments and collaborative working implemented by UCAS. Della Brooker, Senior Project Manager, outlined the development of the new admissions services to the group. Della highlighted the new agile practices adopted by UCAS, delivering value early and often. This allowed the teams to gain quick feedback on the products and meant UCAS could replay feedback to its customers to ensure they had addressed their needs. This helped to build confidence in the market, whilst being flexible and adaptable with clear visibility. UCAS had also utilised the 'scrum' approach, enabling software teams to operate more effectively and efficiently. The new products would be built in increments and customer feedback used to influence change in the

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products to ultimately deliver quality to achieve user-friendly products and services.

04/15/M2 Postgraduate service development

Wendy informed the group that at the recent Change Steering Group meeting which had taken place on 15 June, the group had given an action to all of the groups to come up with a list of ten efficiencies. These were to be submitted back to the Change Steering Group for consideration at their next meeting in November.

ALL
DG040

Fraser Nicoll, Strategic Product Manager, outlined that one of the aims of the new developments of admissions services was to make the application form a more dynamic process to feed into the learner journey and to improve the overall learner experience.

Wendy asked the group to think about the full range of uses that HEPs employed data collected and supplied by UCAS for looking at undergraduate as well as postgraduate.

Details of the lists of users, the purposes for which data was collected, and key data items were appended.

Fraser Nicoll, Tom Carr and Simon Robshaw agreed to write up the ideas suggested from the workshop sessions and submit to Wendy. Wendy agreed to write a top level list of requirements in Excel to be shared with the group for further comment and input.

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05/15/M2 Addressing data quality issues

Simon Robshaw, Data Architect, encouraged the group to utilise the Yammer group as a forum to hold discussions outside of the meetings. There were also future plans to survey the group and Simon had secured the support of UCAS' survey monkey experts to help conduct these.

SR
DG048

To ensure that UCAS had the correct contact details for HEPs, the UCAS Relationship Management Team had stated that they were planning to correlate the various places in the current UCAS systems where HEP contact details were captured and then review their existing advice to HEPs about how to update their contact details. This information would then be included in one of their regular HEPs bulletins, stressing the importance of keeping this data up-to-date. The Relationship Management Team would update the Data Group on this process. The group also stated that some correspondence needed to be issued to vice chancellors. Wendy suggested that communications should be issued to an institution group rather than just one person as often the communications may not be relevant and therefore missed. Tom Carr, Product Owner, informed the

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group that personalisation was not just for applicants but for customers too and stated that this could be covered in the identify work that UCAS would undertake.

The group raised an issue around UCAS Correspondent training. Simon informed the group that the Relationship Management Team had agreed to review the existing training and, from September, they would develop specific correspondent training that would be made available using the e-learning platform that was currently being implemented.

Simon informed the group that he would share the instructions UCAS provided to customers who input courses data to look for opportunities for improvement. Utilising the Yammer group and the survey option would aid these discussions.

SR
DG050

06/15/M2 Capture of qualification data

Ben Jordan, Senior Policy Executive, joined the meeting to discuss the capture of qualification data in UCAS Apply.

Ben informed the group that in recent years the qualifications landscape had changed significantly and continued to do so with applicants due to apply to HE with reformed A levels, GCSEs, vocational qualifications and Scottish qualifications between 2017 and 2021. During this period, a significant number of learners would be taking a mix of reformed and unreformed qualifications which could be challenging to capture accurately in Apply.

As part of the SPA National Expert Think Tank (NETT) the Policy Team had worked with SPA to produce guidance in terms of the current and future landscape. A list of customer requirements was also produced and Ben asked the group to identify the most important requirements to influence future developments.

An internal working group had been established and Ben encouraged the group to direct any queries to on b.jordan@ucas.ac.uk

Ben informed the group that he was working on information and advice that was designed to enhance the accuracy of qualifications input in Apply. This would cover a number of areas, including how to accurately identify the qualification a learner was taking, how to influence the qualifications viewed by a learner and the importance of a referee verifying the data input. This would be available in September.

Ben stated that Ofqual was seeking HE feedback about their RITs register as part of their wider improvements. UCAS was already making suggestions for improvements and would welcome input from the group.

The group suggested that it would be helpful for UCAS to use information about the dates during which qualifications were actually available for study to limit the

information shown to applicants with pending qualifications to only those it would have been possible for them to take. This was something which could be explored with the new platform.

The group queried why there was not a drop-down box in Apply. Ben stated that this could not be changed in the current technical estate but could be look at as part of the development of the admissions services, the group would all support this improvement.

The group also asked why it could not be made mandatory for schools and colleges to have to confirm that they had verified that the qualifications students had listed in their application as those they were actually taking (completing the tick box).

Ben explained that the tick box could not be made mandatory as UCAS did not want to stop the learner from making the application. However, the guidance emphasised how important this check was.

07/15/M2 Income generation of EXACT and HEP's experiences of this new tool

Mark Cover, Director of Analysis and Research, joined the meeting to discuss the plans and service of EXACT.

Mark explained the strategy of the soft launch of EXACT and how the automated approach had delivered benefits in terms of higher throughput of requests, lower costs and a more rational pricing model, and improved quality. New variables continue to be added with SIMD and POLAR3 in June. He commented that the lack of documentation about the service meant that some users were finding difficult to frame their queries. UCAS was addressing this.

Mark informed the group that UCAS had recruited extra resources to cater for the anticipated demand for EXACT once it became a fully operational service.

The group felt that the rounding of the data to five was problematic. Mark explained UCAS' policy on access to personal data and the need to provide data which was non-disclosive.

Mark reported that in a recent UCAS survey UCAS had scored the highest level of trust with data, higher than the NHS, GPs, schools, banks, student accommodation and the government. Applicants also made it clear that they did not want their data to be available to third parties without their consent.

The group queried the pricing structure of the Exact service with some HEPs reporting that the cost of supplies they had received previously had increased by more than four times. This felt more like a new way of generating income.

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Mark stated that the average price of a supply through EXACT was actually cheaper than previously and explained that the logic of the pricing structure was linked to the specification of data and outputs with more aspects of data available than ever before. The group requested that the standardised pricing structure and filtering policies needed to be conveyed in a clear and concise way to the sector.

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Fiona also agreed to investigate and follow up the pricing quotes with Daniel Farrell, Paul Ashby and Jo Hamilton, to ensure accurate quotes and specifications had been provided.

FJ
DG044

Mark reminded the Group that UCAS would be supplying every HEP customer with a full set of EXACT data about their own institution, covering ten years, free of charge. This will be the largest transfer of data ever to take place in the HE sector. The data supplies had been prepared but had not yet been released as there technical issues with the secure file transfer. This which was being resolved. Mark confirmed that UCAS Correspondents would be the only person authorised to receive the data transfer and would need to agree to terms and conditions before the transfer would take place.

Group members were concerned that UCAS had not communicated the delay in supplying the data, and questions to Relationship Managers had gone unanswered. Mark confirmed that UCAS aimed to supply the data in the next couple of weeks.

Mark introduced Fiona Johnston, Head of Analysis Products and Services, to the Group. Fiona would be a point of contact for all UCAS analysis products and services and encouraged the group to email if they had any questions or queries to f.johnston@ucas.ac.uk

08/15/M2 Higher Education Data and Information Improvement Programme (HEDIIP) update

Helen Thorne, summarised the current position on the HEDIIP programme and UCAS engagement.

Helen stated that by the next Data Group meeting in the autumn there should have been significant developments with the landscape and timetable of improvements along with the outcome of the consultation of the New Subject Coding Framework (HECoS). Following the consultation of HECoS there would need to be a well-planned implementation period and debate to ascertain the timescales of implementation to ensure that the sector moved to the new system at the same time. Therefore it was agreed to invite Andy Youell, HEDIIP to the next meeting.

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09/15/M2 Any other business

UKPRN's information in the *J transaction would be helpful if this came through on the information for schools and providers. Mathew Evans stated that it would be possible to do this as a flat file and stated that requests for this would need to be directed to DQA@ucas.ac.uk

It was also suggested to put a notice in the bulletin to communicate this more clearly to the sector.

MS
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The group raised a query about the cap on student numbers for initial teacher training being removed; were there any plans for the UCAS Teacher Training scheme to open earlier, possibly in early September. Tom Carr stated that the search tool may open earlier but NCTL set the allocations.

It was also stated that there were concerns about the visibility of non-QTS post-16 training and requested that these were made more visible on the website. Tom agreed to pass these onto the UCAS Teacher Training Relationship Manager.

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Wendy thanked the group for their interesting discussions and suggestions, and encouraged the group to use the Yammer group for further discussions as things were changing rapidly in the sector and quick feedback was needed to aid the developments.

10/15/M2 Date of next meeting

It was agreed to hold the next Data Group meeting Wednesday 4 November at UCAS. Denise Chaffer to issue meeting invitations to the group members.

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DG047