

Report

UC/17/R2

UCAS Council

Report of the tenth UCAS Council meeting, on Thursday 30 November 2017 in Rosehill, New Barn Lane, Cheltenham, GL52 3LZ.

Introduction

The tenth meeting of the UCAS Council ('Council') was held on Thursday 30 November at UCAS' offices, in Rosehill, Cheltenham. The meeting was chaired by Christian Brodie (Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor of the University of Sussex), and was attended by 19 Council Members ('Members'); a UCAS Trustee, on behalf of the Board; the UCAS Chief Executive ('CEO'); and several members of the Executive Team. The full delegate list is attached to this report.

Report from the UCAS Chair and Chief Executive

Membership

Following consideration, the Members approved the following Council nominations:

- David Alder, Chief Marketing Officer, Plymouth University.
- Kim Eccleston, Chair of the Undergraduate Advisory Group (UAG); Assistant Director (Head of University Admissions), University of Warwick.
- Graeme Slater, Head of Admissions, UCFB.
- Jim Grant, Principal, Cirencester College.

The Chair noted that the following Members had agreed to serve a second term of office:

- Dr Tim Westlake, Chief Operating Officer, University of Sussex.
- Dr Matthew Andrews, University Secretary and Registrar, University of Gloucestershire.
- Martyn Annis, Chair of the Academic Registrars Council Admissions Practitioner Group; Director of Academic Services, University of Brighton.
- Marie-Noel Earley, Academic Registrar, University of St. Andrews.
- Rod Francis, (Headteacher at Cyfarthfa High School, Merthyr Tydfil (Wales).
- Heidi Fraser-Krauss, Director of Information, University of York.
- Professor Richard Harvey, Academic Director of Admissions, University of East Anglia.
- Dr Steven Quigley, Academic Registrar, Regents University; Member of the Association of University.

The full list of Members is available on ucas.com.

Welcome from the CEO

The CEO reiterated the value of the Council's advice and feedback to the UCAS Board in informing its decision-making and emphasised the importance of ensuring Council is kept fully updated about how its advice is used.

The CEO updated Council on several developments, including the new approach to releasing end of cycle data and insight in four reports, to increase its reach and impact, and looking at how UCAS could continually improve the timeliness and accessibility of data and analysis. The CEO also referenced the good progress made in the Digital Acceleration programme, and stated there would continue to be significant focus on this programme.

Board of trustees

Council was updated on the Board and Committee appointments since the last meeting – in July 2017, the Board approved the appointments of Professor Karen Stanton (Vice-Chancellor, York St John University), and Sian Carr (Executive Principal Skinners' Kent Academy) as trustees for the respective head of higher education provider (HEP), and senior leaders in secondary education vacancies.

Proposed pricing for 2019 cycle

Council was updated on the proposed pricing for the 2019 cycle, which would be recommended to the Board for approval at its meeting in December 2017. Council heard the proposals to freeze the UCAS Undergraduate application fee for multiple choices, and lever small increases elsewhere, which were designed to take account of the increasing financial pressures on students, universities, and colleges, as well as the rising costs of service delivery for UCAS.

Admissions delivery

The Director of Technology and Operations gave an update on the delivery of the 2017 admissions cycle, focussing on Confirmation and Clearing (C&C) 2017, and an update on the 2018 cycle.

They highlighted that the 2017 C&C period was the smoothest in its recent history, and, further to highlighting several key risks and issues to Council at its meeting in June 2017, the meticulous planning, preparations, and governance provided a critical foundation for the successful execution of C&C services.

In response to a question about the zero-embargo breach project, they noted that the significant programme of work carried out by UCAS had been welcomed by both JCQ and the SQA. Providers who had experienced a breach had been required to attend a mandatory embargo workshop. While a small number of minor breaches had occurred, these were less than in 2016, and no exam results had been exposed. A lessons learned and post-implementation of the project would be completed, with a view to continuing the programme of work, to help strengthen embargos further.

UCAS corporate strategy refresh

The Director of External Relations provided an overview of the work underway to refresh UCAS' corporate strategy, and outlined a number of areas where strategic advice from Council was requested to inform the Board's discussion.

Council discussed the proposed definition of UCAS' 'core purpose', the range of markets and opportunities open to UCAS, and where it should look to focus its energies, and the main risks and issues the business is likely to face over the next two years.

Council's advice would be collated and shared with the Board to inform its discussions on shaping UCAS' strategy refresh in December.

Student information tools

The Interim Director of Analysis and Research, and the Head of Customer Strategy provided an overview of the current landscape for student information tools, and an update about UCAS' offer rate calculator (ORC).

Council was asked to consider several questions, including the role UCAS should play in developing or hosting student information tools, and what kinds of information these should contain, given that other organisations offer a variety of services, including offer and acceptance rate data, provider ratings, and student reviews and features, which UCAS research says that students want.

Members expressed differing views about the scope of UCAS' role in this area. Student representatives noted that UCAS should do more to help students narrow down their choices to create an initial shortlist. Council was advised that UCAS would be initiating a review of its information and advice strategy, and Council's advice would feed into this.

The new regulatory landscape for England

The Senior Policy Executive gave a presentation, providing an overview of the new regulatory framework for HE in England, the potential implications for admissions to HE and UCAS services, a number of areas where strategic advice from Council was needed to inform the Board's discussion, and UCAS' response to Department for Education's consultations.

Council was invited to discuss how UCAS can best support students, advisers, and providers, whether this posed any particular challenges for UCAS in providing a national admissions service, and if the right issues had been identified. Members made a number of helpful comments and suggestions, which UCAS would consider.

Chair's business

Christian Brodie, Chair of Council, thanked Members for their contributions, acknowledging the value of Council's consideration of the substantive issues, and reiterating that Council's feedback would be shared with the Board at the strategy day and meeting in December 2017. The outputs from these meetings would be shared with Council in due course.

Next meeting

The next Council meeting would be held on Wednesday 13 June 2018.

Delegate list

UCAS Council meeting held on Thursday 30 November 2017

- Present: Christian Brodie, Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor of the University of Sussex; Chair of the Student Loans Company
Martyn Annis, Chair of the Academic Registrars Council Admissions Practitioner Group; Director of Academic Services, University of Brighton
David Alder, Chief Marketing Officer, Plymouth University
Emily Andrews, Education Officer, Student's Union, University of Gloucestershire
Dr Matthew Andrews, University Secretary and Registrar, University of Gloucestershire
Lisa Bowen, Head of Admissions and Enrolment, Cardiff Metropolitan University
Emily Chapman, Student Union President, Leeds City College
Jennifer Dwyer, Head of Admissions and Access Service, Queen's University Belfast
Marie-Noël Earley, Academic Registrar, University of St. Andrews
Kim Eccleston, Chair of the Undergraduate Advisory Group; Assistant Director (Head of University Admissions), University of Warwick
Heidi Fraser-Krauss, Director of Information, University of York
Professor Richard Harvey, Academic Director of Admissions, University of East Anglia
Michelle Magee, Assistant Director, Admissions, Canterbury Christ Church University
Mhairi Moore, Adviser, Higher Education, School Leaders Scotland
Andrew Parkin, Principal, St. Dominic's Sixth Form College
Robbie Pickles, UK Chair of the HELOA; Head of UK and EU Student Recruitment, University of Bath
Dr Steven Quigley, Academic Registrar, Regents University; Member of the Association of University Administrators Board of Trustees
Dr Millan Sachania, Head Master of Streatham and Clapham High School
Graeme Slater, Head of Admissions, UCFB
Prof. Martin Stringer, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Swansea University
Alastair Wilson, Head of HE, South Devon College
- In attendance: Dr David Ashton, UCAS Trustee; Vice-President and Registrar, University of Surrey
Clare Marchant, Chief Executive, UCAS
Kate Butland, Head of Customer Strategy, UCAS
Louise Evans, Head of Provider and Adviser Experience, UCAS
Fiona Johnston, Interim Director of Analysis and Research, UCAS
Ben Jordan, Senior Policy Executive, UCAS
Matt Lazell, Data Scientist, UCAS
Fatuma Mahad, Director of Technology and Operations, UCAS
Helen Thorne, Director of External Relations, UCAS
Deniz Gosai, Groups & Boards Admin Support, UCAS
Sara Smith, Corporate Governance Coordinator/Council Secretary, UCAS
- Apologies: Professor Sir Steve Smith, Chair of the UCAS Board; Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of Exeter
Lysandre de-la-Haye, Deputy Registrar, Newman University
Rod Francis, (Headteacher at Cyfarthfa High School, Merthyr Tydfil (Wales))
Deirdre Gillespie, Principal, St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt

William Hammonds, Programme Manager, Policy Group, Universities UK
Dr Mark Mabey, Principal of the London College UCK
Shakira Martin, President, NUS
Linda Merrick, Principal of the Royal Northern College of Music; Chair of Conservatoires UK
Enzo Raimo, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement), University of Reading
Dr Tim Westlake, Deputy Council Chair; Chief Operating Officer, University of Sussex