

Report

UC/14/R1

UCAS Council

Report of the third UCAS Council meeting held on Thursday 19 June 2014

Introduction

The third meeting of the UCAS Council ('Council') was held on Thursday 19 June 2014 at Woburn House, London. The meeting was chaired by Paul Jagger MBE, Pro-Chancellor and Council Chair, University of Bradford, and was attended by 23 Council members (including two alternates), the UCAS Chief Executive, Finance Director, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Policy and Research, and Interim Director of Operations. Professor Sir Steve Smith, Chair of UCAS, and Dr David Ashton, UCAS Trustee, also attended the meeting. The full delegate list is attached to this report.

Meeting report

Membership

New Council members Hilary Boulding (Chair of Conservatoires UK (CUK) and Principal of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama), and Mike Nicholson (UK Chair of Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA) and Director of Undergraduate Admissions University of Oxford), were appointed to Council on 6 June 2014. They replaced Professor Wallace (previous CUK Chair) and Liam Owens (previous HELOA Chair) respectively, who had resigned from Council. The full composition of the Council can be found at

www.ucas.com/about-us/inside-ucas/ucas-board-executive/ucas-council

Report from the UCAS Chief Executive and UCAS Chair

Governance review

The UCAS Chair informed Council that the Board had recently undertaken an effectiveness review, including an assessment of UCAS' governance arrangements, 12 months after implementation of the new corporate governance structure. The overall feedback on the relationship between Council and the Board had been positive, recognising that the relationship was still evolving and would be developed further.

Advisory groups

Council was informed that following the implementation of UCAS' new advisory group structure, the groups and forums had been meeting regularly and had been providing valuable feedback to UCAS, which was welcomed and encouraged.

These groups and forums provide a means for higher education providers (HEPs) and secondary education providers to discuss the operation of UCAS' admissions services; to share and debate issues; and to help the business to prioritise requirements for changes to specific schemes and associated products and services. This is distinct from the Council's role to focus on UCAS' longer term strategic agenda, and to provide the UCAS Board advice on strategic issues and major operational change.

New Corporate Strategy

Council was advised that the UCAS Board was holding a discussion about UCAS' new five year Corporate Strategy at its meeting in September 2014. This would include consideration of Council members' earlier feedback on the strategic framework underpinning the new strategy, which had been gratefully received. Thereafter, Council will be given a further opportunity to input to the new strategy, anticipated to be signed off by the Board in December 2014.

New Tariff

Council members were thanked for their helpful contribution to the new Tariff feedback exercise, the results of which were anticipated to be published in July 2014.

The 2014 admissions cycle / Confirmation and Clearing 2014

The Interim Director of Operations gave an overview of the delivery of the 2014 admissions cycle, including preparations for Confirmation and Clearing (C&C), which were progressing well for all schemes with no significant issues anticipated. The preparations for C&C were building on the activities delivered successfully in 2013 and included a number of lessons learnt from that year.

The Interim Director of Operations described the significant enhancements which were being introduced, building on last year's successful move of C&C related systems to the 'Cloud' – designed to provide high levels of resilience, minimise the impact of any component failure, and optimise flexibility to meet changing levels of demand throughout the cycle.

Following testing, it was expected that the above system changes/enhancements would be implemented in early July; customers would be regularly informed of progress.

It was also noted that UCAS Apply 2015 had been successfully launched to advisers, and went live for applicants on 19 June.

Exam results data and students' confirmation status

Following negotiations with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), it was anticipated that A level results would be made available to HEPs earlier this year, giving admissions teams more time to make decisions ahead of Results Day.

Council was notified that UCAS had engaged with JCQ to explore the possibility of schools receiving exam results data and students' confirmation status the day before A level results day. This would give advisers more time to prepare for supporting students who had been unsuccessful in securing a place. However, the conditions of the embargo around the release and usage of results data preclude this option.

UCAS funding model

In advance of the UCAS Board's annual discussion of the levels of capitation and application fees, Council members were asked to share their perspectives and views on the issues they would like the Board to consider regarding UCAS' sources of funding.

Council noted that UCAS' funding was primarily from application fees paid by students applying to HE; capitation fees paid by universities and colleges (levied per student accepted); and profits gift aided to the business by UCAS' trading subsidiary UCAS Media Limited.

Council asked the Board to consider the following points:

- applicants get good value for money from the current service
- index linked fee increases may be reasonable; any significant increase in applicant fees should be accompanied by measures to ensure that UCAS remains accessible to all
- additional fees should not be levied for Clearing
- there are diverse views about the means for charging HEPs for the provision of admissions services

Unconditional offers

The Director of Policy and Research provided an overview of UCAS' analysis of the extent and nature of unconditional offer-making, and outlined the issues about the practice raised by HEPs and the secondary education sector. Council was clear that students' interests should be at the forefront of this debate and offered a range of advice to be considered by the UCAS Board.

UCAS Council effectiveness review

In addition to the above Board effectiveness review, Council members had been asked to complete a Council evaluation survey on the anniversary of its inception. Members discussed the findings and recommendations for further development, noting that a number of changes had already been made to facilitate greater engagement between meetings.

Next meeting

The next Council meeting will be held on Friday 28 November 2014 at UCAS, Cheltenham.

Delegate list

UCAS Council meeting held on Thursday 19 June 2014

- Present:**
- Paul Jagger MBE, Council Chair; Pro-Chancellor and Council Chair, University of Bradford
Dr Tim Westlake, Deputy Council Chair; Director for the Student Experience, University of Manchester; Chair of the UCAS International Advisory Board
Matthew Andrews, Academic Registrar, Oxford Brookes University
Lucy Bannister, Cleveland College of Art and Design
Hilary Boulding, Chair of Conservatoires UK (CUK); Principal of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
Chris Carpenter, Assistant Registrar, Loughborough University; Chair of the Undergraduate Advisory Group
Marie-Noël Earley, Assistant Registrar, University of St. Andrews
Rod Francis, Head of Milford Haven School (Wales)
Heidi Fraser-Krauss, Head of IT Services and Deputy Director of Information, University of York
Bobby Georghiou, Headmistress of Bury Grammar School for Girls
Christine Giles, Deputy Academic Registrar, University of Portsmouth
Janet Graham, Director of Supporting Professionalism in Admissions
Sir Mike Griffiths, Head of Northampton School for Boys (England); Immediate Past President of the Association of School and College Leaders
Dr Richard Harvey, Academic Director of Admissions, University of East Anglia
Professor Nigel Healey, Pro Vice Chancellor (International) Nottingham Trent University
Dr Mark Mabey, Principal of the London College UCK
Donna McMaster, Head Teacher of Inveralmond Community High School
Mike Nicholson, UK Chair of the HE Liaison Officers Association (HELOA); Director of Undergraduate Admissions, University of Oxford
Steven Quigley, Academic Registrar Regents University; Member of the AUA (Association of University Administrators) Board of Trustees
Fiona Waye, UUK Policy Adviser
Robert Wilson, Principal of Limavady Grammar School (NI)
- Alternates:**
- Anna Connell-Smith, Research and Policy Officer (Further Education) deputising for Victoria Winterton and Joe Vinson
Michelle Magee, Senior Admissions Manager, Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing Services, University of Westminster deputising for Dr Wendy Webster
- Apologies:**
- David Adelman, Principal of Godalming College; member of the Sixth Form Colleges' Forum National Council
Martyn Annis, Chair of the ARC (Academic Registrars Council) Admissions Practitioner Groups
Rod Francis, Head of Milford Haven School (Wales)
Christine Giles, Deputy Academic Registrar, University of Portsmouth

Jennifer Dwyer, Head of Admissions and Access Service - Queen's University Belfast

Jennie Murray, Principal Lecturer, University of Gloucestershire; Chair of the UTT Advisory Group

John Ryan, University Secretary & Pro Vice Chancellor Students, University of Worcester

Professor Alan Speight, Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Experience, Swansea University

Ellen Thinnesen, Assistant Principal 14-19 and Higher Education, University Centre Grimsby

Joe Vinson, NUS Vice President Further Education

Dr Wendy Webster, Operations Manager, University of Dundee; Chair of the Postgraduate Advisory Group

Victoria Winterton, University of Hull NUS Higher Education Zone Committee

In attendance: Professor Sir Steve Smith, Chair of the UCAS Board of Trustees;
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of Exeter
Dr David Ashton, UCAS Trustee; Vice-President and Registrar, University of Surrey

Mary Curnock Cook, Chief Executive UCAS

Philip Blaker, Interim Director of Operations UCAS

Fatuma Mahad, Director of Corporate Services UCAS

Paul Robinson, Finance Director UCAS

Helen Thorne, Director of Policy and Research UCAS

Kathryn Honeywill, Marketing and Events Coordinator UCAS

Danya Young, Corporate Governance Manager UCAS