

Terms of Reference

UCAS Variable Start Dates Working Group

September 2018

Background:

A Variable Start Dates Working Group was initially commissioned by the Undergraduate Advisory Group in February 2017 at the request of the Change Steering Group. A group of interested providers met in April 2017 to work with representatives from UCAS to review the current challenges posed by variable starts and developed a high-level proposal that was submitted and approved by the Undergraduate Advisory Group in June 2017. As development of the UCAS Undergraduate Application Management Service (AMS) was still in its early stages, it was not possible to deliver detailed recommendations at this time.

As work on AMS continued, the Change Steering Group requested in November 2017 that the group be reformed, formalised and to extend the scope across all schemes.

Scope:

The group will consider the current challenges presented by courses with Variable Start Dates across each of the schemes, along with the initial recommendations for the UG scheme delivered in 2017.

The work of the Variable Start Dates Working Group assumes that the proposals of the Dates and Deadlines Working Group are implemented; which included the retention of 15th October and 15th January as the main cycle application deadlines for September/October start courses.

Timelines:

The group is expected to meet three times between October 2018 and March 2019, before presenting its findings to the Admissions Conference in April 2019. The subsequent recommendations will then be approved by the Undergraduate Advisory Group in June 2019.

Membership:

The group will be chaired by Susie King, Head of Admissions at Middlesex University who sits on the Undergraduate Advisory Group.

The group will also engage with representatives from other Advisory Groups. Opportunities to join the group will be available to the Postgraduate Advisory Group, UCAS Teacher Training Advisory Group and the College HE Advisory Group, although there is no requirement for formal representation in the membership.

Expressions of interest will be sought from the sector, from providers who have courses with Variable Start Dates, and will include a range of provider types including representation from

each region of the UK wherever possible. The group will have between 10 and 12 members.

Clare Cozens (relationship manager) and Peter Derrick (head of admissions and service delivery) will attend and support this group from UCAS.

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1. To review the current complexities of using UCAS products and services to recruit for courses that do not start in September/October, across all schemes.
2. To assess potential existing alternative options such as those already developed for the UCAS Postgraduate and UCAS Teacher Training schemes.
3. To identify alternative cycle models, considering the impact of business rules and UCAS processes, including equal consideration and other deadlines.
4. To consider the requirements of specific and specialist sectors of the HE market, including Art & Design, Medicine, Nursing, HE in FE, private providers, international students, and the UK regions.
5. To ensure that any recommendations result from consideration on the impact on applicants and providers and are of benefit to all stakeholders, from qualitative and quantitative evidence.
6. To develop a number of alternative models for discussion and consultation with the HE sector and other key stakeholders, including applicants and advisers.
7. To lead consultation on alternatives to the current process with key stakeholder groups, including ARC APG, UCAS regional forums for HEPs, the UCAS Secondary Education Advisory Group, and representative groups of applicants and advisers.
8. To lead discussion and consultation about alternatives to the current process at the Annual UCAS Update and Admissions Conference.
9. To ensure protection of the principles fair admissions in the implementation of any process changes to support Variable Start Dates alongside consideration of the rules and principles for members of the UCAS scheme.
10. To report and make final recommendations about improvement and/or replacement of the current process to the Undergraduate Advisory Group and Change Steering Group.