Minutes

SAG/20/M2

Student Advisory Group meeting

Held on Wednesday 29 July 2020 virtually through MS Teams

Chair:	Katie Morton	University of Hertfordshire
Present:	Abhishek Shah	Royal Grammar School High Wycombe
	Amina Riasat	Manchester Metropolitan University
	Caitlin O'Carroll	University of Surrey
	Giulia Folino	Birkbeck University of London
	Grace Cappy	Coventry University
	Harriet Swift	University of Nottingham
	Imaani Mitchell	University of Gloucestershire
	Phoebe Crook	University of Gloucestershire
	Sophia Moreau	Birkbeck College, University of London
	Sophie Banks	Lancaster University
UUK:	Clara Plackett	
UCAS in attendance:	Annie Mabbott	Marketing Manager
	Courteney Sheppard	Senior Customer Experience Manager (Students)
	Deniz Gosai	Provider Engagement Coordinator
	Kate Watson	Senior Marketing Manager
Presenting:	Ben Jordan	Interim Head of Strategy and Public Affairs
	Paul MacMahon	Video Production Manager
	Sarah Barr Miller	Head of Insights - Sales
	Sharon Brennan	Lead Product Manager

A2/20/01   Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and the Group introduced themselves.

A2/20/02   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:

SAG010 – Sharon Brennan, Lead Product Manager, had taken on the apprenticeship portfolio within UCAS. It was agreed that this action would be closed and Sharon would come to the Group in the future if she had any further questions.

SAG011 – Career compass had been paused but the Group's opinions would be sought when required in the future. This action was closed.

SAG012 - UCAS Media's policy in relation to working with third parties was sent to the Group after the meeting. This action was closed.

SAG013 – Due to Covid-19, the Office for Student review had been paused. UCAS' response would be shared with the Group when the review takes place.

SAG014 – The Group's Terms of Reference had been amended to reflect the change in membership. This action was closed.

SAG015 – Due to Covid-19 it was not possible to arrange any work experience or professional development at UCAS. The Group was asked to send specific ideas to Courteney Sheppard – c.sheppard@ucas.ac.uk or Deniz Gosai – d.gosai@ucas.ac.uk on how this could be facilitated.

SAG016 – The Group was reminded to contact Grace Cappy - ab6234@coventry.ac.uk with ideas on how to improve the Group.

SAG017 – Ideas on the future of the Student Advisory Group had been received. Members were invited to attend the Undergraduate and Secondary Education Advisory Group meetings.

A2/20/03   'My application' – overview and strategic direction of travel

The 'My application' presentation was shared with the Group.

It was confirmed that applicants would have the same log in details for The Hub, Search, Apply and Track and the portals would all look the same. Applicants would know which part of the applicant journey they were at and would be directed to the relevant platform for them.

The Group agreed that the new look was good and made sense to improve the applicant experience.

A2/20/04   Big Clearing Show

Since lockdown, UCAS had begun hosting Facebook Live events. These events had attracted high engagement, and so UCAS would be continuing them. On the lead up to A level results day three shows had been planned, presented by Vic Hope, to help applicants make decisions:

Show One – 16:00 – Wednesday 12 August.
Representation from awarding bodies from England, Northern Ireland and Wales, as well as an adviser representative and UCAS' Head of Customer Experience.
Focus would be on:
- Calculated grade
- Clearing – practical advice and real-life stories
- Dr Radha talking about and helping with anxiety etc.
- Sponsorship slots (universities promoting themselves)
- Discussions, lead by the Minister and UUK, on what university would look like from September 2020, as well as from the universities' perspectives (societies etc.).

Show Two – 07.30am – Thursday 13 August
Representation from advisers and UCAS' Head of Customer Experience. The first half would be a recap of show one, around calculated grades and clearing. After the embargo ends at 08:00 the focus would be shifted to helping unplaced applicants.

Show Three – 12.00 – Thursday 13 August
Representation from Dr Radha and a student. Focus would be on:
- Preparing applicants attending university (getting them excited).
- How applicants should look after their mental health.
- How applicants could look after their finances. This will be led by a financial adviser from Barclays.

The Group agreed that the shows sounded positive and would be of a big help to applicants. It was noted that there should be a specific focus on accommodation, and it was agreed that this would be factored in. All the shows would be available on Facebook and still could be accessible by students who did not have a Facebook account, although they would not be able to comment during the live shows. The shows would also be recorded, and segments posted during the following weeks. If the shows proved successful, UCAS would hold more in the future. Members of the Group was asked to watch a show and feedback their thoughts to Courteney Sheppard – c.sheppard@ucas.ac.uk.

Group
SAG018

A2/20/05   Apprenticeships

UCAS had previous focused on information and advice for apprenticeships but was now looking to branch out by providing applicants apprenticeship opportunities alongside degrees, with more of the focus around the applicant's endpoint of their journey. In addition, UCAS was also considering 'matching' applicants to potential employers offering apprenticeships, as well as creating 'talent' pools where employers could contact applicants. These ideas were before Covid-19 and the Group was asked whether students would still be interested in apprenticeships due to the current economic downturn.

It was agreed by the Group, that despite Covid-19, and the shortage of employment opportunities, students were still considering apprenticeships and some applicants might now be considering university to not be the right option and would prefer an apprenticeship. In addition, broadening the offering to level 2 and 3 apprenticeships could help mature applicants retrain. The Group also liked the suggestion of information mirroring undergraduate options.

However, it was noted by one student that they would not feel comfortable with the 'talent' pool idea, as an email from an employer could feel like a mass mailing list. Instead it was suggested that employers should only contact applicants if they had more applicant detail and make the contact more personal.

UUK images

Clara Plackett, Universities UK, joined the meeting to discuss the UUK/UCAS images. The first and second draft imagery had been sent to the Group prior to the meeting, and the Group's feedback was thanked. The latest imagery was shared and the Group agreed that they looked a lot more positive and lighter. It was noted that the word 'made' on image three was difficult for a dyslexic to read. The new set of images was sent to the Group post meeting and members were asked to send any further feedback to clara.plackett@universitiesuk.ac.uk.

A2/20/06   Experience of Lockdown and expectations for the future

The following questions were asked to the Group with the responses noted:

How has the impact of Covid-19 affected your studies?
- As everything had moved online, it was hard to form relationships with lecturers.
- Although lectures felt different online, many students were generally OK with them, as they could be recorded. Seminars and group work had not worked so well. There appeared to be inconsistencies between online lectures/teaching styles within and between courses and modules.
- Demand for e-books had increased, which university libraries struggled to deal with. This made completing assignments difficult.

What support have you been receiving from your university?
- There was an inconsistent view depending on what was being studied (undergraduate, postgraduate taught/research). It appeared that support was lesser for postgraduate students.
- Where extra time would have been provided for specific requirements during physical exams, this hadn't been provided for online exams.
- The pastoral support was mixed within Group members which highlighted that universities were support their students in different ways.

The Group was asked to send further responses to the above questions as well as 'how do you feel about online learning?' to Courteney Sheppard – c.sheppard@ucas.ac.uk.

Group
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Clearing Plus

A Clearing Plus presentation and overview was given to the Group. The service went live on Monday 6 July 2020.

A2/20/07 YouthSight findings

The YouthSight slides were shared with the Group.

The following points were noted:
- Applicants were asked to put 'one word' on how they felt about the cancellations of exams during the April survey. The responses would now be very different. UCAS would be asking applicants how they felt about their results on SQA and JCQ result day.
- There was no gender difference regarding the desire to defer.
- It was hard for year 12 students to make a decision about their university without physically attending an open day. During the virtual events students would like to see the campus, student union and speak to actual student on the course.
- The Group would like UCAS to 'push' Unibuddy more.
- Different schools had provided different support to their students during lockdown.
- Year 13 students were not feeling happy about their predicted grades.
- First generation applicants appeared more anxious compared to applicants who had experienced university family members.

The Group agreed that the insights was interesting and further applicant insight would be provided during the next meeting.

SBM
SAG020

A2/20/08 Any other business and Close

The Group was asked to contact Courteney if they knew of anyone who might be interested in joining the Student Advisory Group.

Group
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It was noted that future meetings could either be shorter but more frequent, or as they were currently, longer meetings once a quarter. The Group agreed that they would prefer shorter more regular meetings as it would help them feed into UCAS' projects.

The next meeting would be virtual either in October or November 2020. The date would be confirmed shortly.