

Minutes

SAG/20/M3

Student Advisory Group meeting

Held on Wednesday 18 November 2020 virtually through MS Teams

Chair: Coventry University

Present: Birkbeck College, University of London (2 representatives)
Coventry University (2 representatives)
Lancaster University
Manchester Metropolitan University
Swansea University (2 representatives)
University of Gloucestershire (2 representatives)
University of Hertfordshire
University of Oxford
University of Southampton
University of South Wales
University of Surrey
University of Wolverhampton (2 representatives)

UCAS in attendance: Courteney Sheppard Senior Customer Experience Manager
Deniz Gosai Provider Engagement Coordinator
Sam Sykes Lead Digital Learning Developer

Presenting: Ben Jordan Senior Strategy and Insight Manager
David Moreno Product Owner
Sarah Barr Miller Head of Insight (Sales)

A3/20/01 Welcome and apologies

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

A3/20/02 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:

SAG016 & SAG017 – the future planning of the Group would be discussed during the meeting. This action was closed.

SAG019 – The Group noted that more information from UCAS was required to students explaining how the student experience, particular with blended learning, would be. Members were encouraged to send further feedback to Courteney Sheppard – c.sheppard@ucas.ac.uk.

SAG021 – The Group was always looking for new, engaged members. This action remained open.

All other actions were closed prior to the meeting.

A3/20/03 Confirmation and Clearing summary report

A presentation on confirmation and clearing was shared with the Group. The following was confirmed:

- 11% more applicants had been accepted onto higher tariff courses last cycle. Further detail about this would be released during April 2021 (*Admissions Conference*) and this will also be shared with the Group.
- UCAS saw an increase in students contacting them on A level results day as they were unable to get in touch with their universities and required additional support. It was noted that some universities had been told that they couldn't provide the information and it was interesting to hear UCAS' role in providing support.

A3/20/04 Youthsight review

A Youthsight review presentation was shared with the Group. This research started when the pandemic began, so year on year comparisons was not possible. Additionally, the research was carried out with year 13 students who were planning on attending university the following year. The following was fed back:

- Open days in April where often the make or break for some applicants.
- The Group was surprised to see that social media contact from universities was at the bottom of resources and activities list. Reasoning for this might be because social media was subliminal. Additionally, the Group felt like there was a disconnect between how universities communicated via social media and how young people absorbed information via social media.

- Members agreed that university websites would be at the top of the list as they often had the most specific course directed information available.
- Student trusted university students more as they attended the university and so they would have the most experience from it.
- Although not listed in the survey, interview days were also an important factor to applicants, as it showed how applicants would be treated and how they would feel on campus. It was noted that it might be too early in the cycle for applicants to experience interview days yet.
- Virtual open days were good, however, it didn't have the same feel as physical open days.
- Location was currently not near the top of applicants priority list however the Group felt that this might change in to the future (especially if the pandemic continued) and parents/families might also play are more pivotal role in the decision making.
- The Group found it interesting that grades or offers were not higher on the list, although it was noted that this might have been one of the first factors considered.
- Members noted that how the course was taught, course prospectus' and in-depth specification on university websites played an important part in their decision making.

A3/20/05 'My Application'

A 'My Application' presentation was shared with the Group. A demonstration of the system was also shown. The aim was to have the same look and feel for the applicant through the whole application journey. It would also be mobile friendly.

The Group agreed that the new layout looked better and that the progress bar was a good feature to have.

There was a comment from a member that in the past there had been issues with how UCAS captured gender and sexual orientation data at the application point and that it was not editable after it had been submitted, unlike data such as a person's address, and asked whether this had now been changed. UCAS was aware of this but unfortunately was not able to change to back-end of the system as information had to flow between numerous different systems. However, it was confirmed that this change was in UCAS' pipeline work.

The following was also confirmed:

- Cannot currently see the final choices from the main page, but UCAS was hoping to implement a different design to show this. The Group confirmed that the overview page was clearer.
- Applicant would be able to see the percentage completion of the whole application and not sub-sections.
- The service should be accessible on all browsers.

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A further update would be provided at the next meeting.

A3/20/06 Apprenticeships – future activity

UCAS' corporate strategy had been discussed during a previous Student Advisory Group meeting and it was clear then that no two students were the same. Apprenticeships was part of UCAS 5-year strategy plan. A presentation was shared with the Group.

There was a mixed response from the Group on who had considered an apprenticeship alongside a degree course. Some had conducted thorough research whereas others had not been aware that an apprenticeship could be studied at a degree level. One member had completed a summer apprenticeship but had struggled to find one relating to the chosen field.

The perception of apprenticeships had been improving over the years particularly with big corporate businesses. The Group agreed that UCAS encouraging apprenticeships as well as the university degree route was a positive move.

It was asked how UCAS would work with employers to advertise the apprenticeship opportunities and whether there would be a vetting process. It was confirmed that this was a challenge UCAS was still to work out, however, there was a strict onboarding process for universities to join UCAS so a similar process for companies was likely.

Finally, it was noted that there had been a lot of media coverage about apprentices losing their apprenticeships due to Covid-19, and this might impact students deciding to take this route.

A3/20/07 Any other business and Close**Future planning**

The Group thanked for attending the meeting.

The Terms of Reference stated that group membership was for two years, however, members whose terms were expiring were invited to continue if they wanted to providing they still had links to student learning/students in some way.

The term of Chair was also coming to an end. The Group was also to contact Deniz Gosai – d.gosai@ucas.ac.uk if they would like to express an interest in chairing the Group. Information about the Chairs role was sent to the Group after the meeting.

Group
SAG023

Meetings would be changed to four times per year, and each meeting would be 2 hours. UCAS was keen to hear students honest and timely feedback.

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 17 February 2021 through MS Teams.