

IMPACT REPORT

2018



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WELCOME

As the higher education landscape continues to change and evolve, so does UCAS, ensuring we deliver value on behalf of all our customers, including students, universities and colleges, teachers and advisers, and our UCAS Media clients.

I am proud of what we delivered in 2018 – from new digital products, such as a postgraduate application management service, through to increasing flexibility in our operation of the admissions cycle. In particular, our transparent publication of nearly three million data points during the year was unprecedented in its breadth, including eight chapters of end of cycle analysis, plus specific reports on the TEF, mature students, and unconditional offers.

We delivered effectively for students during 2018, with an encouraging 3% increase in their satisfaction, reflecting the investments in relaunching student-facing information and advice through our different channels, including social media. However, we have much to do as we enter 2019, particularly in the delivery of a more modern, digital experience for higher education providers and teachers and advisers, with the delivery of new products and services to these customers beginning during the first quarter of 2019. Our focus on efficiency continues, with savings made in our contracts and better use of assets, enabling us to freeze application fees for students applying to multiple courses in 2019, and keeping capitation fee increases to universities and colleges to an absolute minimum.

In 2018, 695,565 students applied to study a full-time undergraduate course at UK universities and colleges, and 533,360 were accepted. The rate of entry for UK 18 year olds was the highest ever at 33%. The number of placed students from the European Union rose by almost 4%, and placed students from outside the EU increased by nearly 5%, showing the continuing attraction of our world-class higher education sector. UCAS' commitment in 2019 is to deliver on behalf of its customers across its range of services, with plans for a new online student dashboard, and new digital services for advisers, agents, universities, and colleges, all in the 2019 pipeline.

All the best



Clare Marchant
Chief Executive



**'WE DELIVERED
EFFECTIVELY
FOR STUDENTS
DURING 2018,
WITH AN
ENCOURAGING
3% INCREASE
IN THEIR
SATISFACTION.'**



Who we are

UCAS is an independent charity, providing information, advice, admissions services, and data insights, to inspire and facilitate progression to higher education.

Our vision is to be at the heart of connecting people to higher education – whether that’s young people looking to study an undergraduate course, mature students wanting a career change or to enhance their qualifications, or international students wanting to study in the UK.

We aim to equip all students with the personalised information they need, to make the right choice for them, and to support them through every step of the application process.

Our services are funded by the application fees paid by students, capitation fees paid by universities and colleges for each student placed, and by our wholly owned commercial subsidiary, UCAS Media, which gift aids its profits to the charity. UCAS Media helps universities and colleges, accommodation providers, and businesses connect with interested, verified students.

What we do

Our core purpose is to provide the UK’s national undergraduate admissions service, and timely analysis and insight about demand for higher education and student outcomes.

Our UCAS Undergraduate admissions service handles almost three million applications from 700,000 UK, EU, and international students each year.

We’re proud to help more than half a million students secure a full-time place at one of 400 universities and colleges across the UK, every year. We also offer information, analysis, and admissions services for conservatoire, teacher training, and postgraduate courses. Students can also use our apprenticeship hub to discover more about their options, including searching for apprenticeship opportunities. In 2018, we decided to leave the choices at 16 market, which means UCAS Progress will close in December 2019, at the end of the current cycle.

**OUR
VALUES ARE:
CUSTOMER
FOCUSED,
COLLABORATIVE,
ACCOUNTABLE,
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE,
AND TRUSTED.**

FUTURE FOCUS

Our refreshed strategy, Future Focus, was published in March, following extensive consultation with over 1,000 students, schools, colleges, universities, and higher education organisations, plus our staff. Their passion and ideas are captured in our six strategic objectives, focusing on admissions services, customer experience, information and advice, data and insights, our People Promise, and efficiency and value.



WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED DURING 2018

1. Admissions services

Deliver accessible and trusted admissions services in our priority markets, that are responsive to the needs of the next generation of customers.

- > Successfully delivered the UCAS Undergraduate, UCAS Teacher Training, UCAS Conservatoires, and UCAS Postgraduate admissions services, supporting over 765,000 applicants, with 576,990 of those securing a place.
- > Launched our new postgraduate application management service, which offers a significantly improved, more efficient way to support postgraduate students. The redesigned, intuitive application enables students to present a complete picture of their achievements, including uploading supporting documents such as portfolios and certificates. These features, and more, will also be seen in our new undergraduate services, due for delivery throughout 2019 and 2020.
- > Completed development of our new online portal for teachers and international agents for them to manage their students' applications more effectively, due for launch in spring 2019, based on continual feedback from our Secondary Education Advisory Group and groups representing international agents and advisers.
- > Worked with staff from schools, colleges, universities, and stakeholder organisations, through more than 40 meetings of our advisory groups and forums, to develop improvements to the admissions process that can be introduced following delivery of our new application management service. We invite anyone looking to contribute to this work to contact us at groupsandforums@ucas.ac.uk.
- > Worked with 36 awarding bodies, to process over 3.8 million examination results, across 319 qualifications, contributing to a 90% satisfaction for Confirmation and Clearing from universities and colleges.
- > Provided training to 7,315 university and college staff on managing exam results under embargo, and supporting fair admissions, with the online module achieving a 99% satisfaction rating.
- > Published comprehensive data about UCAS' verification service, reviewed the processes and communications for affected applicants, and improved information and advice for independent applicants.
- > Produced a series of guides to support admissions teams making unconditional offers.

2. Information and advice

Inspire and enable students to make well-informed choices, through the timely provision of personalised information and advice.

- > Held 50 exhibitions across the UK, enabling 161,000 students to discuss their futures with universities, colleges, and potential employers. 88% of students rated these as 'good' or 'great'.
- > Launched new information hubs on Clearing and apprenticeships, with hundreds of apprenticeship opportunities shown in our Career Finder service.
- > Answered 135,005 individual questions through social media, across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube.
- > Introduced new, personalised emails for students – targeted, informative results day emails were sent to 25,000 students on SQA results day, and to 300,000 students on A level results day.
- > Enhanced our search tool with new filters and updated information about the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), to support students' choices, and help them find the right course.
- > Improved online advice for estranged students, students with caring responsibilities, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- > Ran the #changeyourlife information campaign, to promote the benefits of higher education to potential mature students.

3. Customer experience

Deliver an excellent service and integrated digital experience to all our customer groups.

- > Achieved high levels of customer satisfaction – student satisfaction increased by 3% to 92%, teachers' and advisers' satisfaction remained high at 95%, while universities' and colleges' satisfaction with UCAS' services was at 84%.
- > Ran our triennial higher education stakeholder satisfaction survey – 83% of respondents said they had a 'great' or 'good' perception of UCAS, up from 71% previously.
- > Launched a new version of ucas.com, based on user-led design, significantly increasing year-on-year traffic.
- > Invested significantly in improvements to UCAS' technology systems and applications, continuously enhancing our search tool for students, and collection tool for universities and colleges.
- > Introduced a new visual identity for the UCAS brand, boosting engagement with students.
- > Achieved 65,000,000 total views across our social media channels. Applicants can also ask questions via five key social media channels, engage through Facebook Live broadcasts, watch our 'how-to' videos, and talk to our experienced advisers.
- > Improved applicant experience through personalised email advice and online content, which has contributed to a 19% reduction in calls on A level results day, compared to 2017.
- > Strengthened student engagement in our governance and decision-making, recruiting the first student trustee to our Board, and establishing our Student Advisory Group. Student surveys, which can attract over 85,000 responses, give us a real-time view on their opinions throughout the year.





4. Data and insights

Provide accessible, timely data and insights, to facilitate progression and participation in education.

- > Published applicant statistics and analysis daily during Confirmation and Clearing, within 15 working days of application deadlines, and within 25 working days of the end of cycle.
- > Published nearly three million data points in an open data format, to download and reuse, including a major set of equalities data on behalf of universities and colleges.
- > Published new analytical reports, providing detailed insight into the use of unconditional offers, awareness of the TEF, and mature students' decision-making.
- > Piloted and launched our new in-cycle postgraduate data product for universities, PG Application Insight.
- > Extended the coverage of our multiple equality measure, which combines various applicant characteristics to provide a holistic view of equality in undergraduate admissions.
- > Published research and insight into the factors affecting postgraduate applicants' decisions.
- > Launched new products and services to help providers refine their recruitment and marketing strategies, including new digital channels in paid media and our data consultancy service.
- > Expanded the UCAS Tariff to include 503 qualifications, and our Qualification Information Profiles to include 203 qualifications.

5. Efficiency and value

Work towards core elements of the charity being self-funded in the medium term, by increasing efficiency, and ringfencing specific initiatives for investment from gift aided monies.

- > Generated a 7% year-on-year growth in UCAS Media's income, through the development of marketing, display, and data services.
- > Concluded an admissions pricing review, to develop clear principles and models for the pricing of admissions services from 2020 onwards.
- > Implemented changes to UCAS' pension scheme, to place it on a more sustainable footing.
- > Saved £0.3m through contract retendering and negotiations.
- > Reduced our staff FTE from 498 in 2017, to 481 in 2018.
- > Worked with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to jointly implement a new way of coding subject data to reflect subject changes, and support national data reporting requirements.
- > Achieved significant savings by closing our London office, and decommissioning legacy technology.
- > Rented out part of our Rosehill offices to a local business.
- > Implemented a number of energy saving measures at Rosehill to increase efficiency, including updating old air conditioning units, and changing all lighting to LED bulbs.
- > Improved our Clearing offer to universities and colleges through UCAS Media, with one university securing 109 placed applicants from a single email on A level results day.

6. Our People Promise

Deliver on our People Promise to be an employer that provides a place where people flourish, perform, and achieve.

- > Created a new portfolio of learning and development opportunities, reflecting business and individual needs. We launched a UCAS development model, and leadership academies to help equip our managers with tools and resources to be successful people leaders.
- > Ran a successful staff engagement survey, in which 96% of employees participated. 84% of staff would recommend working at UCAS to a friend or relative.
- > Developed and implemented a new apprenticeship strategy to support talent acquisition and staff retention, adding degree apprenticeships to our expanding portfolio of Level 2 and 3 apprenticeships.
- > Introduced a remote working policy, offering greater flexibility and digital tools to maintain and increase productivity, enhance work-life balance, and make better use of our assets.
- > Invested in wellbeing, identifying mental health first aiders and champions, delivering mental health awareness events, and promotion of volunteering.
- > Overall staff satisfaction increased by 9%.



FEEDBACK

FROM OUR CUSTOMERS AND STAFF

Applicant feedback

Applicants' overall satisfaction with UCAS' services in 2018 was 92%, up 3% on last year.

- > 89% satisfaction with searching for courses, and the information provided.
- > 81% satisfaction with emails received about their application.
- > 87% of applicants placed in Clearing said they were happy or extremely happy with the application process.

'THE UCAS APPLICATION WAS SIMPLE, AND I ENJOYED USING SERVICES SUCH AS TRACK. UCAS HAS ALSO SENT ME MANY USEFUL TIPS.'

'YOUR CALL CENTRE WAS EXTREMELY EFFICIENT ON SUCH A BUSY DAY (16 AUGUST, A LEVEL RESULTS DAY) – BRILLIANT!'



Total calls from applicants and parents answered	386,120
Email queries answered	18,300
Total hits toucas.com	110,750,060
Total social media fans and followers	418,890
Social media queries answered across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube	135,010
Open rate on applicant emails	84%
Total social media views	65,000,000

'IT WAS EASY TO USE, AND THERE WERE LOTS OF VIDEOS EXPLAINING HOW THIS WORKED, WHICH IS GOOD IF YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO READ EVERYTHING.'





Provider feedback

Providers' overall satisfaction with UCAS' services in 2018 was 84%, a fall from 89% last year.

Based on providers' feedback, it's clear their interactions with our staff are overwhelmingly positive, but our systems continue to cause some concern. We know there's a balance to be struck on making improvements for all our customers, and as we introduce new student-facing services, we're mindful providers also need to see added benefits. We've identified the key areas for improvement to deliver more value for providers. Our new application management service, due for delivery over 2019 and 2020, will play a key part in this, with the new Tracker service coming later this year.

- > **81%** of users were either very or mostly satisfied with the test and training environment, and see the value of being able to test the products UCAS is developing.
- > **71%** of users think we're easy to do business with.
- > **86%** of users were either very or mostly satisfied with the qualification reform and Tariff resources.

Collectively, over 850 staff from providers attended our 42 advisory and standing group meetings, our Annual Provider Update, and our Annual Admissions Conference, in 2018.

'CUSTOMER SERVICE IS ALWAYS EXCELLENT.'

'UCAS' CUSTOMER CONTACT SERVICE IS ALWAYS EXEMPLARY.'

'ALL STAFF ARE VERY APPROACHABLE, KNOWLEDGEABLE, AND HAPPY TO HELP.'



Adviser feedback

Advisers' overall satisfaction with UCAS' services in 2018 remained high, at 95%.

There are 6,300 active UCAS registered centres (mainly schools, colleges, and international agents) worldwide, allowing advisers to manage their students' applications before submission. Around two thirds of undergraduate applications are sent through a centre. Advisers receive a monthly newsletter with important updates and advice, as well as a dedicated section on ucas.com.

- > Our dedicated Schools Team took 45,340 calls for individual enquiries. Our Professional Development Team also offers training in person and online.
- > Over 400 people attended our Annual Conference for Teachers and Advisers, and the International Teachers' and Advisers' Conference.

A new online portal based on new technologies is due to launch in spring 2019, as part of our application management service. This will help teachers to manage, track, and support their students much more effectively, and will also help speed up application processing, and improve data quality.

'JUST ABOUT PERFECT. OUR STUDENTS APPLY ALL OVER THE WORLD AND THIS IS THE BEST SITE EVER.'

'I LOVE THE WAY UCAS ALWAYS SEEKS TO IMPROVE ITS SERVICE, SUCH AS CONSTANT REDEVELOPMENT OF THE WEBSITE, TO MAKE IT EVER MORE USER-FRIENDLY. IN 20 YEARS, I HAVE NEVER HAD A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE WHEN CONTACTING YOU FOR ADVICE OVER ANY ISSUE – STAFF ARE ALWAYS SUPER HELPFUL AND CONSIDERATE.'

'THE BEST PART OF UCAS IS THE SCHOOLS TEAM. THEY ARE LOVELY! AS AN EXPERIENCED ADVISER, PLEASE PASS ON MY SINCERE THANKS TO EACH OF THEM.'



Feedback from our staff

84% of staff would recommend working at UCAS to a friend or relative, and overall satisfaction is up by 9%.

In the current financial year, the number of working days lost due to staff absence is on a downward trend.

'UCAS IS A WORKPLACE WITH A GREAT CULTURE, WHERE PEOPLE GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO HELP THEIR COLLEAGUES.'

'IT'S NEVER BEEN MORE DYNAMIC. I AM ENTHUSED AND EXCITED ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR US, AND FOR ME.'

'IT'S AMAZING TO BE PART OF SOMETHING THAT HELPS SO MANY PEOPLE.'

'IT'S GREAT THAT STAFF HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PERSONAL GROWTH, AND ARE RECOGNISED BY FELLOW PEERS AND EXECUTIVE. COLLABORATION IS AT ITS HIGHEST, AND IT'S IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR OWN AND THE COMPANY'S GOALS.'



UCAS MEDIA

UCAS Media is the trading arm of UCAS, and a key marketing channel for universities, colleges, employers, and commercial customers wanting to connect with potential students.

Universities and colleges use UCAS Media's data services and marketing solutions to support their planning and recruitment activity.

UCAS Media is also expertly placed to provide insight into students' views, as well as supporting brands to make connections at the right times.

This year, we launched our new bespoke consultancy and insights service, sharing detailed analysis with senior leaders in universities, giving them insight into application trends directly affecting their recruitment activity.

2018 saw a 7% year-on-year growth in UCAS Media's income. All profits are reinvested back into supporting and improving our charity services for students through a gift aid donation.

Our free annual student lifestyle report shows the evolving views of students on key aspects of life outside the lecture theatre, studios, and laboratories.

We connect some of the biggest commercial brands in the world to an engaged student and applicant audience, at a time when they are making life choices.

20 marketing leaders form our higher education advisory group, and provide UCAS Media with a representative voice of its customers.



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**'WE WERE
DELIGHTED
WITH THE
ANALYTICS.'**

UCAS Media highlights from 2018:

- > **1,100 clients** across all major industries.
- > **72% market reach** in the student accommodation market.
- > Career Finder has a **27% click to apply** conversion on job applications.
- > **95%** of delivered texts are read within seven seconds.
- > Emails have a **38.1% average open rate**, with a 3.8% average click through rate.
- > Clients using our new paid media service saw an average **click through rate of 2.5%**.



UCAS Media's products fall into these main areas:

> ONLINE MEDIA

Targeted advertising on the UCAS website, our search tool, and in Track, plus paid media campaigns through Google, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

> OFFLINE MEDIA

92% of 16 to 24 year olds open direct mail, and 27% of UCAS applications come from students who receive it. Students keep items they receive through the post for an average of 17 days.

> EMAILS AND SMS

Student newsletters containing adverts have a 40% open rate, and standalone emails sent on behalf of universities and colleges have 31% average open rate. SMS has a near 100% open rate, with 50% of click throughs occurring within five minutes.

> CONSULTANCY AND INSIGHTS

Our consultancy and insights service and in-depth data products support universities with their marketing and student recruitment. They help the sector and commercial brands make informed and data-driven decisions related to their investments, from data all the way to bespoke consultancy.

> EVENTS

Universities and employers find UCAS exhibitions an important means to reach potential applicants. 161,000 students visited our 50 exhibitions to find out about all their options after leaving school or college. 92% of students found a university they'd consider applying to at our exhibitions.

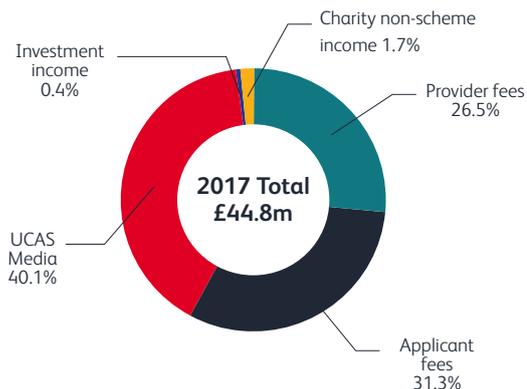
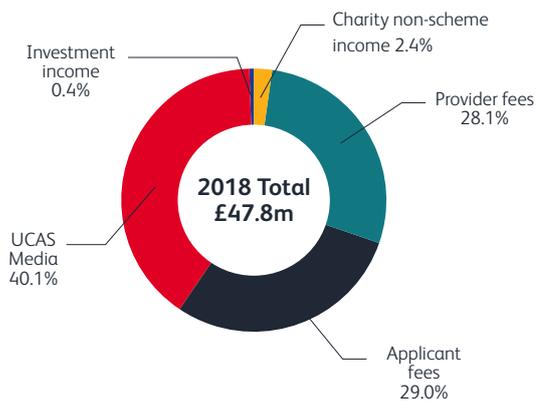


FINANCIAL HEADLINES

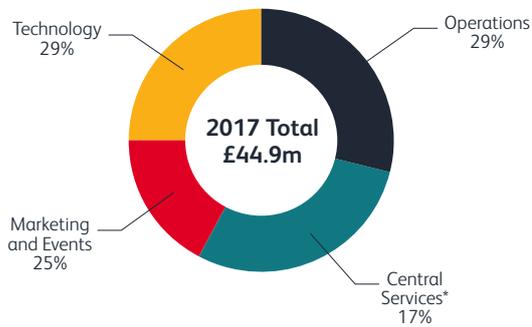
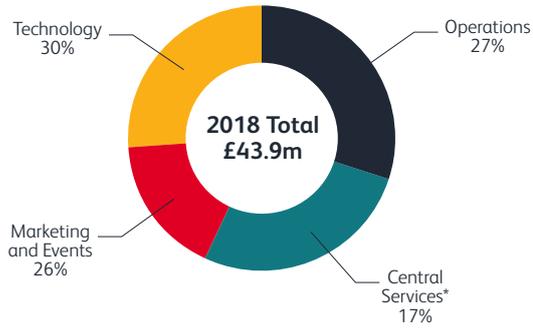
In the 2017/18 financial year, UCAS' income rose by 6.7% to £47.8m, with an increase in revenue seen from both the charity's and UCAS Media's activities. We controlled spending across the organisation, and reduced expenditure by £1.0m.

We reinvested savings into our core products and services, as well as the development of key future projects, such as our new application management service.

Total income in 2018 vs. 2017:



Expenditure in 2018 vs. 2017



- > Our cash balance increased from £3.5m in 2017, to £8.6m in 2018, largely driven by the surplus generated throughout the year. This increased financial resilience will allow much needed reinvestment in services to our customers.

*Central services includes finance and corporate services, HR, data governance, legal, and procurement.



KEY UNDERGRADUATE 2018 CYCLE ANALYSIS

Total applicants: 695,565 (down 0.6%)

Although this comes alongside a 2.5% drop in the number of 18 year olds in the UK population.

Total acceptances: 533,360 (down 0.1%)



KEY ANALYSIS

UCAS CONSERVATOIRES, UCAS TEACHER TRAINING AND UCAS POSTGRADUATE



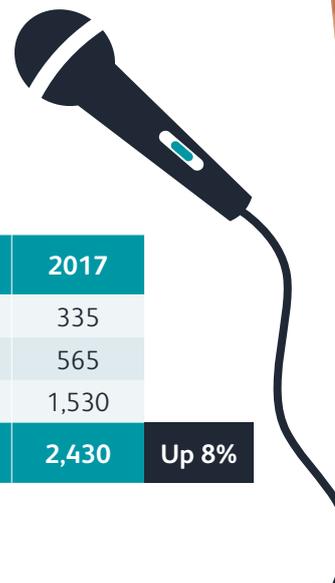
UCAS Conservatoires (2017 cycle)

Applicants

	2016	2017	
EU	1,145	1,225	
Not EU	1,620	1,860	
UK	5,905	5,765	
Grand Total	8,670	8,850	Up 2%

Acceptances

	2016	2017	
EU	300	335	
Not EU	465	565	
UK	1,485	1,530	
Grand Total	2,250	2,430	Up 8%



UCAS TEACHER TRAINING (2018 CYCLE)

45,415
applicants

(down 2% on 2017)



29,200
acceptances

(up 6.5% on 2017)



UCAS POSTGRADUATE

AS OF JANUARY 2019,

16,500
PEOPLE



have applied through our new UCAS Postgraduate application management service, since it launched on 5 June 2018.

APPRENTICESHIPS



565,000

hits to our apprenticeship hub on ucas.com



UCAS

www.ucas.com

For more information, please get in touch:

Email: communications@ucas.ac.uk

Twitter: [@ucas_corporate](https://twitter.com/ucas_corporate)