
UPHOLDING THE RESULTS EMBARGO

Guidance notes for HEPs

We have been talking to some of our providers over the last few weeks about the work they do to uphold the results embargo each year. Here, we have pulled together key messages on good practice, so that you can consider them as part of your planning for Confirmation and Clearing this year.

Key messages

- Plan ahead.
- Include all interested parties in communications and decision-making.
- Be clear on responsibilities and accountabilities during the results embargo period.
- Identify inter-related systems and procedures and ensure information and data exchange loops are closed down for the duration of the embargo.
- Communicate key dates and actions to all stakeholders.
- Ensure training for new and temporary staff is thorough and timely.

Clarify roles and responsibilities

- Assign an owner (possibly the Head of Admissions) to manage the process and authorise who has access to admissions-related data, and at what level.
- Limit access to admissions/CRM systems at this time of year. Identify who else, other than admissions decision makers, needs access to admissions decisions during the UCAS embargo periods. This will help to ensure that applicants or other staff cannot access confidential information.
- Conduct regular checks to monitor who has access and delete accounts/amend permission levels as staff leave or move into other roles.
- The results embargo process owner (cross-checked by other admissions staff) should be responsible for setting a trigger within admissions systems, at which point no data should flow out of admissions.

Plan ahead

- Include embargo planning in your normal Confirmation and Clearing preparations, and confirm the dates. Enter dates in electronic or other calendars for those responsible for turning off the results section of your applicant portal, and for the Admissions Manager who maintains overall responsibility for ensuring the embargo is adhered to.
- Make sure you understand the data/IT systems at your university or college and how they are connected, so that you can be reassured the information security arrangements you have in place are sufficient to safeguard the embargo.

Switch off automated systems

- Make sure you have a 'block' (to halt data flow) with alerts that work within your IT systems, so that you can stop data flow at the appropriate times during the embargo period(s).
- Data systems are often linked to other departments such as accommodation offices and student records – it is vital that you understand the specific linkages in your own university or college.
- Conduct tests ahead of the embargo period, to check your assumptions.
- As embargos are not for long periods, consider a freeze on postal communications from admissions and from the accommodation office, at least for full-time undergraduate applicants.
- Take control of the data information security issue during the embargo period and work with other departments in your university or college who might be temporarily inconvenienced.

Ensure there is clear communication with colleagues

- Make sure your colleagues – particularly those working in admissions in academic departments/schools/faculties, the accommodation office, registry, marketing, student services, IT, etc. - know about the results embargo, when it is in place, and what it means.
- Integrate the message into a schedule of IT support over the Confirmation and Clearing period.
- Ensure that IT colleagues have clear instructions and nothing is assumed. Work with them to test information security protocols.

Other tips

- Include the results embargo in any Confirmation and Clearing training for academic, administrative, and temporary staff.
- Make sure a reference to the embargo is included in any shared communications with schools/faculties and departments ahead of Confirmation and Clearing.

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