Minutes

SSG/17/M1

Scottish Standing Group meeting

held on Tuesday 9 May 2017, 11:00 – 15:00, at University of Aberdeen

Chair:	Rebecca Gaukroger	The University of Edinburgh
Present:	Betty Thompson	HMC Scottish UCAS Group
	Carol Baverstock	University of Aberdeen
	Claire Morrison	Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
	Emma Corry	The Robert Gordon University
	Ged Lerpiniere	LEAPS & Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP)
	Gillian Nugent	University of Strathclyde (in replacement of Gianna Devin)
	Katy Caudrey	Edinburgh Napier University
	Kirsten Swankie	University of Dundee
	Laura Jeffrey	University of St Andrews
	Lesley Dunbar	Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP)
	Luisa Moreno	Skills Development Scotland
	Margaret Graham	Inspiring Futures
	Marie Swinney	The Scottish Government, Assessment & Qualifications Unit Learning Directorate
	Mark Wild	Universities Scotland
	Mhairi Moore	School Leaders Scotland
	Mike Johnston	University of St Andrews
	Robin Gordon	University of Glasgow
	Ruth Tamsett	University of the Highlands and Islands
	Sarah Bailey	Queen Margaret University
	Sheila Kay	Glasgow School of Art
	Vicki Todd	HELOA, Scotland (in replacement of Kate Barrie)
Apologies:	Alan Scott	SAAS
	Alison Eales	QAA
	Brian Patterson	School Leaders Scotland
	Claire Johnston	Heriot-Watt University
	Geraldine Campbell	Scottish Government, HE & Learning Support Division

	Gianna Devin	University of Strathclyde
	Halena Gauntlett	Scottish Funding Council
	Joan Mackay	Education Scotland
	John Lewis	SQA
	Julie Fisher	Glasgow Caledonian University
	Kate Barrie	HELOA, Scotland
	Kenny Anderson	Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP)
	Kenny Wilson	Scottish Funding Council
	Kirsty Conlon	Universities Scotland
	Kirsty Knox	University of the West of Scotland
	Leia Fitzgerald	The Scottish Government
	Lynne Bewley	Abertay University
	Melvyn Shanks	School Leaders Scotland
	Moira Laing	University of Stirling
	Richard Ogston	Colleges Scotland
	Rowena Pelik	QAA Scotland
	Susan Lee-Kidd	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Guest speaker:	Professor Peter Scott	Commissioner for Fair Access to Higher Education in Scotland
UCAS in attendance:	Deniz Gosai	Groups and Forums Administrator
	Kate Davidson	Senior Relationship Manager
SPA in attendance:	Dan Shaffer	Head of Professionalism in Admissions

A1/17/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting. Each member introduced themselves. Apologies were noted.

A1/17/02 Minutes and actions from the previous meeting

The minutes were approved as an accurate and correct reflection of the last meeting.

The open actions on the log were discussed:

SSG049 – The Group requested information on who attended events. This action remained in progress, as the information previously circulated did not contain the correct data.

SSG055 – John Lewis, SQA, was unable to attend the meeting. However, the action was on SQA's radar.

SSG066 – It was confirmed that SQA did not normally publish information on a school-by-school basis. Conversations were taking place, however, between SQA, Scottish Government, and Universities Scotland to try and widen the data set.

SSG067 – This was an SQA issue. It was noted that, when Higher Nationals were introduced into ABL, National 5s would be too.

SSG069 – A statistical update would be included during the November 2017 meeting. This action remained open.

SSG070 and SSG071 – SPA had not received any responses, although they were still happy to receive feedback.

SSG072 – The toolkit was circulated to the Group after the meeting. This action was closed.

A1/17/03 Results and discussion on the Scottish Standing Group (SSG) survey

All advisory and standing groups which had been running for more than three years were sent a survey to find out the Group members' thoughts on how the meetings were running. The results of the SSG survey were sent to the Group prior to the meeting. It was noted that the Scottish Standing Group's results were slightly more negative than those of other Groups.

To improve the meetings, papers would be sent in advance, outlining discussion points, with the expectation that Group members attend meetings prepared for discussions. Where possible, smaller group discussions would also take place.

The Group was reminded that the [Scottish Standing Group page](#) on ucas.com had all the minutes from previous meetings. Members who could not access this page were asked to inform Deniz Gosai, Groups and Forums Administrator, at d.gosai@ucas.ac.uk.

The Group would also be asked for agenda items prior to meetings, to encourage participation.

It was noted the videoconference worked well when UCAS colleagues had to join the meeting to provide a short update. However, this was not efficient for a member who was participating in the whole meeting, as it was difficult to become involved in the discussion. Attending meetings in person was also good for networking.

A guest speaker was invited to this meeting, so discussions were not solely led by UCAS and the Chair. This could be utilised again in the future.

A1/17/04 Group structure

4.1 Change in membership

A discussion on the current diversity of the Group's membership was held, and it was questioned whether the membership should be broadened. It was confirmed that Colleges Scotland was invited to attend the meetings, to represent the college sector. UCAS would investigate expanding this membership further.

The idea was floated as to whether more recruitment staff should attend the Scottish Standing Group. Although a decision was not reached, it was noted that HELOA could provide an update/report/information-sharing on any issues at each meeting.

It was also noted, however, that the membership was very large, and this had to be considered alongside any future membership issues.

If the Group had any suggestions on how to improve the membership of the Group, they were asked to email Kate Davidson, Senior Relationship Manager, at k.davidson@ucas.ac.uk.

All SSG073

4.2 New Chair

The Group was informed that Rebecca Gaukroger's (The University of Edinburgh) term of office as Chair had come to an end, and the Group required a new Chair, ideally at

senior management level. The Group was asked to send an expression of interest to groupsandforums@ucas.ac.uk if they were either interested in the role, or wanted to nominate a colleague for the role.

Rebecca Gaukroger stated that, if nobody put themselves forward as Chair, she would be happy to continue, although she could not chair November's meeting.

4.3 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference would be reviewed, and an updated version would be circulated to the Group for approval.

A1/17/05 SQA update

John Lewis, SQA, was unable to attend the meeting, and as a result the SQA update was not provided. A paper would be sent to the Group after the meeting.

A1/17/06 Engagement between higher education (HE) and pre-HE

The item on engagement between HE and pre-HE would become a standard agenda item at this meeting.

An update on the **Teachers' and Advisers' Conference** was provided. Historically, this conference was held during May and November, but after consultation with the sector and the Scottish Standing Group, it had been changed to May only to reduce the cost of the event. A lot of work was put into this year's conference agenda, however numbers had dropped significantly, and unfortunately UCAS had to cancel this year's conference. The problem with attendance appeared to be largely due to schools not being able to afford it, or find teaching cover for colleagues who could attend. As a result, UCAS put three options forward to the Group:

1. Make the conference a free event for schools.
2. Universities sponsor specific schools.
3. All universities pay a set amount so schools can attend, with specific focus on widening participation schools.

An in-depth discussion on the three options was held, and university representatives in the room agreed they would support paying a standard fee, if it would encourage more schools to attend. However, the Group was concerned schools might find it difficult to fund travel and accommodation costs as well. In addition, although May had previously been thought to be the best time to hold the conference, several other events also took place during this month, which could restrict schools' ability to attend.

The idea of holding the conference every other year was welcomed. Alternatively, the conference could be held during November again. Mhairi Moore, School Leaders Scotland, agreed to ask the views of the SCF, and Betty Thompson, HMC Scottish UCAS Group, agreed to ask schools. It was noted that the agenda also played a part in schools' attendance, and therefore needed to be very relevant.

MM/BT
SSG076

Ged Lerpiniere, LEAPS & Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP), asked the Group members whether they would welcome LEAPS identifying MD20 students by October. This would give help to pupils at an earlier stage, although there was some nervousness about restricting applicants to only two universities. Although members agreed this information would be welcomed, they noted that other contextualised data was also to be considered.

Pre-HE members brought up the timetable of offer-making by universities and the perceived change in behaviour. It appeared offers were going out even later than usual. A discussion was also had regarding Scottish providers giving preference in offers to students who had received their grades, above those who were still waiting on results. Although there were no set rules on this, SPA was happy to speak to individual universities regarding best practice, as ideally it should be noted in universities' admissions policy from the start.

A1/17/07 Leaner journey project

Mike Johnston, University of St Andrews, reported that he was part of the Scottish Government's Learner journey project. The project's members were working on the advice and guidance given to young people (15 – 24 year olds), as the current information could be viewed as conflicting. It was noted that universities were very good at marketing courses, however applicants wanted 'clean' data with 'nitty-gritty' information. The aim was to have the report published by September 2017. Marie Swinney, The Scottish Government, Assessment & Qualifications Unit Learning Directorate, agreed to give an update at the next meeting.

MS SSG077

A1/17/08 General UCAS update

8.1   Search tool for 2018 going live, and preparation for Confirmation and Clearing

Gavin Bradley, Senior Scheme Delivery Owner, joined the meeting via videoconference. An operational paper was submitted to the Group prior to the meeting. An error was noted on page three: the 2018 search tool was available from 9 May 2017, and not 3 May, as noted on the paper.

It was noted that a full day of preparation for Confirmation and Clearing took place at UCAS. Clearing vacancy search would be open from 5 July 2017.

Decline by default (DBD) took place on Thursday 4 May. 40,404 applicants declined by default, which was similar to previous cycles. Of these, 2,436 were learners who applied to Scottish providers. The reject by default (RBD) couldn't be run on the following day due to technical issues, and was now due to be run on Thursday 11 May. Only 603 applicants were due to be rejected by default for Scottish universities.

The new collection tool had gone live, and providers had carried out an excellent job inputting information which was not automatically migrated across. Advisers were asked to wait a week before using the new search tool, to ensure all information was available. It was confirmed that the two search tools would be available until September 2017, and clear information was included on the website to ensure learners were directed to the correct search tool depending on their year of entry.

8.2 Zero breach embargo project

Due to time restraints, the zero breach embargo project was not discussed.

A1/17/09 Policy update

Ben Jordan, Senior Policy Executive, joined the meeting via videoconference. A paper had been submitted to the Group prior to the meeting.

Only five Scottish universities were participating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) for the first year. It was confirmed that UCAS would explain to learners there were legitimate reasons for a provider to opt out.

There was a question on the paper asking whether UCAS should allow learners to search and/or filter results using TEF ratings. It was confirmed that this filter would not be developed for 2018, and if a filter was eventually developed, it would be clearly noted that not all providers were participating in TEF. It was raised, however, that applicants did like to reduce their number of results using filters. The TEF rating would be displayed in the search tool alongside the provider's information, and a link would be provided in case the applicant required more information.

In addition, the Group asked whether entry requirements would become a filter in the search tool. It was confirmed that, as this was the most requested filter by applicants, it was still on the roadmap. However, it was not currently in the new search tool. Further consultation with the sector was required before it could be developed, and all feedback received to date had been taken on board.

With regards to contextualised admissions, the provision survey had been run during 2017, and UCAS was thinking about running it again during 2018. Rebecca Gaukroger,

The University of Edinburgh, encouraged the Group to become involved in developing this survey.

Finally, the Group noted that UCAS' technological developments had missed out on the travelling community, and should be adjusted to incorporate this audience.

A1/17/10 SPA update

The Group was reminded that, with Confirmation and Clearing coming up shortly, SPA would always be available to provide good practice during this period. In addition, SPA was happy to travel to any provider to help support them.

A SPA update paper was sent out to the Group prior to the meeting, with discussion points highlighted.

The first discussion point referred to entry requirements, and ensuring applicants were provided with the correct information to make informed choices. It was noted that entry requirements currently carried out two purposes – to help learners make decisions, and keep the pool of applicants open for providers. Applicants should be made aware that, even if they did meet their entry requirements, it would not guarantee an offer. Likewise, widening participation had to be taken into consideration. Ultimately, careers advisers had to provide the right advice to learners.

It was also noted that Scottish qualifications were not portrayed well across the UK. Learners needed to understand what entry requirements were, and that they were more than just grades.

The Group asked whether UCAS could develop a rule that, if an English provider requested three A levels, a compulsory field could be added to indicate the equivalent for Scottish qualifications.

The Group was asked to contact SPA if they had placed applicants who were estranged learners. A question (worded clearly) asking this would be included in the new Apply.   All SSG078

A1/17/11 Widening access

Professor Sir Peter Scott, Commissioner for Fair Access to Higher Education in Scotland, DG SSG079 was invited to join the meeting. A presentation was shared with the Group.

The two big issues were noted – 'displacements' and 'free' higher education.

It was confirmed that student numbers had declined since 2010, mainly at pre-1992 providers. Part-time courses had also seen a decrease, whereas graduate debt had

increased. In addition, it was estimated that student loan repayment would worsen, and new for-profit providers were being invited/encouraged to join the market.

There was a detailed update on contextualised admissions, articulation, and targets, which encouraged the Group to raise the following concerns.

- Providers needed to make bolder adjustments on a subject-by-subject basis once students began their studies.
- What would happen to programmes run by universities which were beyond postcodes? The universities would not receive any credit from the Government's point of view, and flexibility for this should be built in.
- Disadvantaged students began thinking about university a lot earlier than the UCAS form, and therefore providers should do a lot more, earlier, to encourage these students to apply to higher education.

Thoughts were also shared among the Group about SIMD. It was agreed that this was quite sophisticated, but no one metric was sophisticated enough.

A1/17/12 Any other business and close

12.1   Discussion on possible change of PGDE closing date

Currently, some providers were receiving up to 4,000 applications to primary school teaching courses, and a substantial number to secondary teaching courses. Providers were expected to interview and make offers to applicants between the equal consideration closing date of 15 January and 30 March, which they were struggling to achieve. This had grown exponentially since the PGDE was included in the UCAS Undergraduate scheme. Robin Gordon, University of Glasgow, wanted to bring this to the attention of UCAS and other providers, in the hope that the closing date for these courses could be moved forward, or a compromise reached.

The Group suggested that, instead of physically interviewing each applicant, psychometric tests could be incorporated. SPA had good practice guidance relating to different types of assessments, which they were happy to share after the meeting. The Group recognised this problem and supported the idea of a separate meeting being held with the relevant universities and UCAS. They would support any outcomes of this meeting.

12.2   Date and venue of the next meeting

The next meeting would be held at the University of the Highlands and Islands on Tuesday 28 November 2017. Deniz Gosai, Groups and Forums Administrator, would

send out an email asking if anyone wished to chair on this occasion, and members were invited to submit their name if interested.