

Minutes

AG/20/M2

Welsh Standing Group meeting

Held on virtually through MS Teams on Tuesday 3 November 2020

Chair:	Lisa Bowen	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Present:	Debra Watkins Gaynor Mew Gareth Jones Helen Wright Jon Jones Karen Thomas Maxine Thomas Nikki Zobole Phil Jones Rob Evans Sally Duval Sarah Whitehead Savanna Jones Victor Morgang Viv Clement	Bridgend College Bangor University Swansea University Swansea University Ysgol Harri Tudur Glyndŵr University (replacement for Andy Phillips) Pembrokeshire College University of South Wales Grŵp Llandrillo Menai Qualifications Wales Cardiff University Aberystwyth University HEFCW Agored Cymru Caerleon Comprehensive School
Apologies:	Andy Phillips Cheryl Kellar Samantha Hobby Samantha McIlvogue	Glyndŵr University Cardiff and Vale College Coleg y Cymoedd Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
UCAS in attendance:	Deniz Gosai Louise Evans Peter Derrick Peter Evans	Provider Engagement Coordinator Head of Customer Experience Head of Service Delivery (Operations) Relationship Manager
Presenting:	Aimee Okafor Angie Hill Carys Fisher Nicola Turner	Head of Events Exhibitions Manager Senior Policy Executive Policy Executive

A2/20/01 Welcome and apologies

The Group was welcomed to the meeting and the apologies were noted. 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:

WSG115 – A discussion on apprenticeships would be added to the May 2021 agenda.

WSG117 –The Welsh Baccalaureate was on the list of qualifications to be included to the Subject Compass section of the Hub. Timescales had been revised in light of the impact of Covid 19 on resources. It was also noted that work to enhance the Clearing Plus tool would begin soon and the ability to add Tariff and mixed qualifications was on the list to be prioritised for future development.

All other actions were closed prior to the meeting.

A2/20/03 Operational update including review of UCAS' response to C&C challenges and plans for 2021

A UCAS update presentation was shared with the Group. The main points noted included:

- There had been no Scottish embargo breaches this year, however, there were a few for JCQ, although these were down to human error. Over 20,000 individuals had completed the embargo training completions.
- Students remained interested in studying in the UK, and although EU applicants had decreased non-EU applicants had risen. The end of cycle report, which would be released in bitesize pieces, would provide further statistics on this.
- It was confirmed that pre-application audience was defined as anyone who had registered with UCAS and was intending to apply to universities during.
- Providers were encouraged to attend the Insights webinars.
- The provider satisfaction survey had been released, and the Group was asked to complete the survey and to also forward it to their colleagues for completion.
- The admissions conference would be held virtually next year. The date was still to be confirmed.
- 'My Application' which would incorporate Track and Apply was being developed.
- UCAS was keen to hear provider and adviser's feedback on Clearing Plus. The Group confirmed the Clearing Plus was positive, however from the Welsh perspective the Welsh baccalaureate and tariff needed to be added. Additionally, Clearing this year was not as good as an experience to applicants compared to past years due to the change in results, although it was acknowledged that this was of no fault of UCAS. Additionally, the Group was

impressed by the communications campaigns through social media as it reassured both advisers and applicants.

- UCAS was exploring provisions of data on academic attainment to advisers to support informed choices. It was hoped that the 2021 cycle would proceed as seamless as possible. Engagement with a number of advisory groups had taken place to seek guidance and advice. UCAS would try to be as responsive as possible to all customer needs and would remain open minded for the summer series of exams.
- Conservatoires were still on the roadmap to be included on the Adviser portal, but it would not be within the coming year.
- Advisers confirmed that applicants studying practical courses were finding local lockdowns challenging and many were considering dropping out and reapplying next year.

A2/20/04 Care Leavers updated best practice

A slide on widening access and participation was shared with the Group.

A good practice briefing for care experienced students was available - www.ucas.com/providers/good-practice/emerging-cohorts/care-experienced-students. UCAS was moving away from the word 'Care Leavers' and more to 'Care Experienced'. The good practice briefing for estranged students had also been updated - www.ucas.com/providers/good-practice/emerging-cohorts/estranged-students.

UCAS had supported the care leavers week 2020 on social media and would also be supporting the fostering network at the end of November 2020.

A2/20/05 Update and discussion for 2021 cycle

UCAS

A lot of stakeholder engagement was taking place especially around the 2021 cycle, and although the sector as a whole pulled together during the 2020 cycle, it was likely that Covid-19 would have an impact for students for a minimum of five years.

The sector and UCAS was waiting for the announcement from Kirsty Williams on Tuesday 10 November. The key message from UCAS would be around the importance of regulatory statements about the robustness and comparability of standards of qualifications across borders.

Communications would need to be clear and communicated as early as possible.

Qualification Wales

Statistical reports on GCSEs and A levels had been produced and were now in the public domain. In addition, Qualification Wales had also produced reports to the Minister.

A consultation on the Welsh baccalaureate was currently taking place, and the initial feedback was positive. This consultation would close on Friday 13 November 2020. The 'Qualify on the Future' consultation would start during January 2021.

HEFCW

A consultation, monitoring conditional offers, began during May 2020 and the feedback was currently being analysed. It was hoped that the consultation would be concluded by January 2021.

Pre-HE updates – schools and colleges

It was currently a challenging time for pre-HE and schools and colleges were waiting on the announcement from Kirsty Williams to hear what would happen and what the potential changes would be due to the pandemic.

HE updates – universities and colleges

The HE sector would like consistency, and too were waiting on the Ministers announcement. Providers were trying to keep applicants updated and informed as much as possible. It was noted that individual groups (such as private candidates) would need to be considered too.

A2/20/06 UCAS virtual events

A virtual event update presentation was shared with the Group. It was confirmed that events were available on demand for 30 days after the event.

The Group noted the following:

- University recruitment teams had fed their thoughts back to UCAS. Attendance numbers were lower than what they had hoped.
- From a school's perspective students had found the events useful. The downside to virtual events was that students could not be made to attend, unlike with physical events. It was asked by UCAS whether their events could be part of timetables next year. Although schools could group students together, they were trying to minimise class contact at present, although this might change by spring/summer. End of June/start of July would be the best time for physical events.
- Although schools liked the videos on ucas.com, they were very much a 'one size fits all', and it was asked whether the events could be more interactive. The idea of a generic event could be run during the school timetable with more subject specific events held in the evening, although this would require parent's engagement.
- Finally, it was confirmed that students were visiting the same number of stands as they would normally do during a physical event.

A2/20/07 Teacher Training update

The following updates was provided:

- The teacher training cycle opened at beginning of October 2020. There had been a few issues with the publications of courses, but this was rectified quickly.

- The DfE pilot was continuing to be run within England, and although there had been no updates for Welsh providers, it had been talked about previously that Welsh providers could use a similar system to the Scottish.
- The skills and equivalency tests could be done when applicants started the programme, which took the pressure off applicants. Providers were looking at putting in other measure for the experience pre-requisite.
- The incentives for studying teacher training at been announced and were competitive with the English incentives.

A2/20/08 Any other business and Close

Applicant days

Universities were struggling with applicant days, but it was confirmed that most would continue to be virtual up to Christmas, and then would decide how they would be held.

Fee status

All providers confirmed that due to the lack of guidance around fee status' this was proving very tricky at present.

Date of the next meeting

Due to the current circumstances the Group asked for an additional meeting during February 2021. The date would be confirmed with the group shortly.